



Sts. Peter & Paul
Catholic School
Discipleship . Scholarship . Excellence

EARLY CHILDHOOD PARENT HANDBOOK ADDENDUM

Welcome and Philosophy

Our Early Childhood Program reflects the belief that every child is created in God's image and likeness, with unique gifts and abilities. We nurture spiritual, social-emotional, physical, and cognitive growth through developmentally appropriate, play-based learning in a Catholic environment. Families are partners in this journey, and together we build the foundation for lifelong faith and learning.

Curriculum and Learning Approach

We align our curriculum with:

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards

Florida Catholic Conference Early Education Program Standards. Our curriculum weaves Catholic values, daily prayer, and Gospel teachings into play-based, child-led learning experiences. Teachers design environments filled with opportunities for literacy, numeracy, science, and hands-on exploration to inspire curiosity and a sense of wonder in God's creation. Using ongoing, research-based assessments, learning experiences are continually tailored to support the unique needs and growth of every child in our care.

Daily Schedules and Routines

Consistent routines help children feel secure. A typical day includes:

- ✓ Morning welcome and prayer
 - ✓ Center-based learning and outdoor play
 - ✓ Snack and mealtimes
 - ✓ Rest/nap time
 - ✓ Closing prayer and dismissal
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Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

- PreK classrooms open at 7:30 a.m. Children must be in class before 8:00 a.m.
- It is in the best interest of children that they are on time and able to participate in the opening activities of the group as this sets the tone for the rest of the day and aids in smooth transitions.

Dismissal

- PreK students are dismissed at 2:45

Authorization for Pick-Up

- Children will only be released to their parents and those persons listed on the registration form with their placard.
 - A photo ID will be required of someone whom we do not know. Staff have access to all student files to ensure that children are dismissed only by those listed on the emergency contacts.
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Toileting and Self-Care Policies

We encourage and support toileting independence in alignment with Florida DCF and ADOM guidelines.

- **Developmentally appropriate support:** Toileting skills develop gradually from infancy through preschool. Teachers provide age-appropriate guidance, encouragement, and support at each stage of development.
- **PK3 and older:** Children entering PK3 and PK4 programs are expected to be toilet trained and able to manage their toileting needs with minimal assistance. Occasional

accidents are understood as part of development and will be handled calmly and respectfully.

- **Partnership with families:** Open communication between home and school helps maintain consistency and supports your child's success.
 - **Extra clothing:** Families are asked to provide several complete changes of clothes (including socks and shoes) to keep at school for use if needed.
 - **Encouraging independence:** At all ages, teachers gently guide children toward greater self-care skills, promoting confidence and a sense of accomplishment.
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Health, Illness, and Safety

- **When to Stay Home:** Children must stay home if they have:
 - A fever of 100.4°F or higher (must be fever-free for **48 hours without medication** to return).
 - Vomiting or diarrhea (must be symptom-free for **48 hours without medication** to return).
 - Any undiagnosed or contagious rash.
 - Any communicable illness (e.g., flu, chickenpox, pink eye, strep throat, stomach virus).
 - Head lice or nits.
 - Eye discharge (eyes must be clear to return, even with a doctor's note).
 - Excessive nasal or ear discharge.
- **Absences:** Parents must notify the school by email info@stspeter-paul.org
- **Physician's Note:** Required for any absence of **3 or more consecutive days** or after a contagious illness to verify the period of contagion has passed.
- **If a Child Becomes Ill at School:**

- Parents will be contacted to pick up their child **immediately**.
- Staff will assess the illness, keep the child comfortable, and monitor until pickup.
- **Health & Safety Practices:**
 - Frequent handwashing is practiced daily.
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 - Children will be brushing their teeth after lunch with pre-pasted toothbrushes sent from home.
 - Monthly emergency drills are conducted to ensure preparedness.
- **Exposure Notifications:** If a child in the program is diagnosed with a communicable illness, parents will be notified with the illness name and symptoms for awareness.

Immunizations

Before attending school, all students are required to have a valid immunization record on file in compliance with the Florida Department of Health guidelines.

- **A Florida Certificate of Immunization (Form DH 680)** completed by a healthcare provider participating in Florida Shots must be submitted to document:
 - Required immunizations
 - A valid medical exemption (temporary or permanent) if applicable
 - Only medical exemptions certified by a physician are accepted. Exemptions based on religious, philosophical, or personal beliefs are **not permitted**.
 - Students without the required documentation will not be allowed to attend until all immunization requirements are met.
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Communication with Families

- **Partnership and Respect:** We value open, respectful communication and strong partnerships with families to support each child's growth and development. Our primary form of communication will be through a platform called Class Dojo. Please ensure that you have downloaded the application to your phone. You should have received an email

with log-in information.

- **Classroom Updates:** Teachers provide regular updates through our yellow Thursday folders and agendas to keep families informed about daily experiences, learning, and upcoming events.

Parent-Teacher Conferences:

- Held 2–3 times per year to discuss your child's progress, assessments, and overall development.
- Dates will be shared in advance, and families will have opportunities to sign up for a convenient time.
- Additional conferences may be scheduled as needed to support your child's success. Instant conferences are not permitted. Please contact the front office to make an appointment either in person or by phone with your child's teacher.
- **Addressing Concerns:** Sensitive matters should first be discussed directly with your child's teacher. If further support is needed, families are encouraged to reach out to school administration.

Positive Behavior Guidance and Social-Emotional Development

Our Approach:

- We use positive guidance strategies that reflect the dignity of each child and model Christ's love.
- Teachers encourage self-regulation, problem-solving, and making amends when needed.
- Clear and consistent limits are set with kindness and respect.
- Prohibited practices include corporal punishment, shaming, food withholding, and punitive toileting methods.

Positive Guidance Strategies:

- Redirecting children from inappropriate behavior toward positive choices.
- Teaching appropriate social-emotional skills to address challenges.
- Reassessing the environment, activities, and supervision to support positive behavior.
- Using positive language and celebrating appropriate behaviors.
- Maintaining consistent, age-appropriate consequences for classroom rules.
- Building and maintaining strong, supportive teacher-child relationships.

Family Partnership:

- Parents will be notified if disruptive behaviors arise.
- Conferences may be scheduled with the teacher, director and/or principal and family to discuss strategies for supporting the child.
- A specialized team may be formed to create a plan that promotes the child's success.
- To reinforce their Catholic faith, parents should take their child to mass once a week. Doing this will build habits that will enable them to smoothly transition to school masses during the week. Students will attend mass once a week on Fridays.

Prohibited Practices:

- Any form of corporal punishment (e.g., hitting, spanking, shaking, rough handling).
- Isolation where the child cannot be seen or supervised.
- Binding, tying, or restricting movement.
- Using or withholding food or beverages as punishment.
- Demeaning or humiliating toileting practices.

- Emotional abuse, threats, profane language, or verbal abuse.
- Placing a child in a crib or portable crib for disciplinary purposes.

Expulsion & Suspension Policy

Our program is committed to creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment where all children can grow, learn, and thrive. We align with the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Office of Early Learning's position on supporting children's social-emotional and behavioral health through positive practices.

- **Our Commitment:**
 - Promote positive, developmentally appropriate classroom environments.
 - Prioritize the social-emotional well-being of all children.
 - Encourage developmental screenings and referrals for additional support as needed.
 - Support parent involvement and partnership in addressing their child's needs.
 - Provide professional development for staff on alternatives to expulsion and suspension.
 - Collaborate with early childhood mental health consultants and interventionists when appropriate.
 - Track and analyze data on expulsions, suspensions, and dismissals to ensure fair, thoughtful decision-making.
- **When Enrollment May Be Terminated:**

While every effort is made to avoid expulsion or suspension, the program reserves the right to discontinue a child's enrollment for reasons including, but not limited to:

 - Failure to follow the policies and procedures outlined in the Parent Handbook.
 - A child's needs exceed what the program can safely and effectively support within current staffing and resources.

- Behavior that poses a serious risk to the health and safety of the child, other children, or staff.
- Parent or guardian behavior that is disruptive, unsafe, or violates childcare licensing regulations (e.g., vulgarity, intimidation, harassment, or interference with program operations).

We strive to work closely with families to address challenges and seek solutions before reaching this point. Every decision to terminate enrollment is made thoughtfully, with the best interests of all children and staff in mind.

Nutrition and Mealtime Expectations

- **Parent-Provided Snacks:** Parents are asked to provide nutritious snacks for their child's afternoon snack times. Please ensure all snacks are cut into small, bite-sized pieces to avoid choking hazards.
- **Lunch Program:**
 - A well-balanced, hot lunch is available daily through our on-site caterer Maschio's.
 - Meals exceed USDA minimum standards and include:
 - Home-style cooking
 - Generous serving portions
 - Monthly menu cycles
 - Meals prepared fresh the same morning
 - Kid-friendly options
- **Mealtime Practices:**
 - Teachers model gratitude and lead children in prayer before meals.
 - Mealtime is treated as a social and learning opportunity where children practice self-help skills and table manners in a supportive environment.

Special Diets and Allergies

Parents are encouraged to review the posted menus regularly. If a child has an allergy to an item on the menu, families must provide nutritious alternative food options for their child.

Our school is a nut-free facility. Please refrain from sending nut-based foods such as peanut butter, almond butter, trail mix, nutella, etc. for the safety of all students.

Rest Time Procedures

Daily rest/nap time is provided. Please provide a crib fitted sheet for your child's mat and a simple blanket (not comforter or sleeping bag). These will go home on Fridays. Please make sure that they are washed and sent clean on Monday. Soiled sheets will be sent home during the week and must be returned washed the next day.

Celebrations, Birthdays, and Holidays

- **Religious Observances:** Classroom celebrations and activities reflect the liturgical calendar and Catholic traditions.
 - **Birthdays:** Classroom celebrations should have minimal impact on instruction. The Administration must approve and the main office must be informed of celebrations going on at all times. Staff and parents need to be cognizant of food allergies and no home cooked goods can be shared or eaten. Students are recognized by their HR teacher for their birthday, however, no birthday celebrations or guests with snacks and goody bags are permitted on campus. Birthday invitations are not distributed by staff or during the school day.
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Transition to Kindergarten

Teachers and administrators support a smooth transition by:

- Building readiness skills
- Offering parent resources
- Coordinating visits to Kindergarten classrooms when possible

Possessions from Home

- **Toys and Personal Items:** Toys from home are not permitted unless a teacher has requested an item for a specific classroom activity or event.

What Students Need Daily

- Each child is assigned a labeled cubby for personal belongings.
- A **complete change of clothes** (shirt, shorts/pants, socks, and underwear) must always remain in the cubby.
- **Labeling:** All personal items, including clothing, water bottles, and blankets/sheets, must be labeled clearly with your child's first and last name.
- **Water Bottles:** Water bottles must have a secure cap and be labeled with the child's name.
- **Prohibited Items:** Bottles, pacifiers, and sippy cups are not permitted at school.



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Parent Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge receipt of the Sts. Peter and Paul Early Childhood Parent Handbook Addendum. I understand it supplements the Archdiocese of Miami Parent Handbook and agree to abide by the policies and procedures outlined.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____