

# **St. Michael Preschool Parent Handbook**

The 2010/2011 parent handbook is intended to inform you of the philosophy, goals, curriculum, policies and procedures of St. Michael Preschool.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The St. Michael Preschool program is based on the belief that children learn from interacting with their world. Our hands-on experiences will make that world come to life. St. Michael's Catholic identity and community environment will enhance the well-being of the whole child. Spiritual, social, cognitive and physical development will be promoted through activities that encourage respect, cooperation, independence and a love of God.

## **CURRICULUM**

The St. Michael Preschool curriculum is theme-based and aligned with the Illinois state standards for early childhood education. The children will explore a new theme every week with a complimenting Bible story and weekly gospel presentation using a program from Loyola Press entitled "God Made the World". The centers in the classroom will be prepared with interactive materials to support exploration of the theme's ideas and concepts. Religion, Art, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Reading Readiness skills will be advanced upon in both large and small group settings. Foreign Language (Spanish and French), Music and Physical Education will generally be presented in the large group setting.

## **ADMISSION POLICY**

St. Michael Preschool is operated under the auspices of the Catholic Bishops of Chicago, a corporation sole, in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

St. Michael School admits students of any race, color, sex, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities in this school.

St. Michael School does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, or national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies and school administered programs.

## **REGISTRATION**

At the time of registration, the incoming student's original birth certificate, baptismal certificate, and social security card must be presented. A record of compliance with local and state health requirements must be submitted to the office. Students entering preschool must be 3 years of age on or before September 1 for the Pre-K 3 program and 4 years of age on or before September 1 for the Pre-K 4 program.

**\*Family registration for the next school year will not be accepted until all current year financial obligations are met.**

## **HEALTH REQUIREMENTS, PHYSICAL AND DENTAL EXAMINATIONS & IMMUNIZATIONS**

Illinois State Law requires all students entering Preschool to receive a complete physical exam within 6 months prior to enrollment and provide an up-to-date immunization record.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

The St. Michael School Office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for general office business. The telephone number is (708) 349-0068. The facsimile number for the School Office is (708) 349-2658. Although general business is conducted during these hours, the principal is available for questions or emergencies from 7:00 a.m. to 7:20 a.m., and following prayers after 7:40 a.m. The St. Michael Preschool email address is [smspreschool@gmail.com](mailto:smspreschool@gmail.com) and the direct line into the preschool is (708)873-4675.

### **SCHOOL SECURITY**

**All parents/visitors must enter the school building from the parking lot using the Main Entrance located on the east side of the school. The school office is located at the top of the stairs after entering the building. Parents and visitors will not be allowed into the school building (except in emergencies or to see the principal) prior to 8:00 a.m. After 8:00 a.m., all parents/guardians, volunteers, and visitors are required to ring the doorbell and identify themselves by name to the school office personnel. Visitors are required to state their reason for entering the school. All visitors must sign in at the office and pick up a visitor's tag. For your child's/children's safety, and in emergency situations, it is imperative that we know who is in the building at all times. School doors remain locked during school hours and a security system allows school personnel to admit visitors.**

### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBER**

Parents are asked to notify the school immediately when there is a change of home or business address and telephone numbers. The school MUST be notified immediately if there is a change of information regarding emergency contacts listed on the emergency cards. If you change your phone number at home or at work, or your cell phone number, please remember to contact the school with that information. Please inform your emergency contacts that they are listed in this capacity. The designated person should live in the area of St. Michael Preschool.

### **PUBLICITY PHOTOS, ETC.**

Student photos and work are sometimes submitted for publication within St. Michael Preschool, School and/or Parish advertising. From time to time, photos or work may be submitted to newspapers or other publications which may also identify your child by name. A permission form to use your child's picture and/or name is included in the parent packet and available for printing on our website.

### **ARRIVAL/ DISMISSAL**

The guidelines for drop off and pick up of the children are set forth below. Safety of your child is our number one concern at all times. Establishing a reliable routine is an important component to this safety. Please remain in your car at all times. The staff will act as a valet service. Each family will be provided with a vehicle identification tag to be displayed during arrival and departure.

Proceed northbound on Highland Avenue from 144<sup>th</sup> Street. Enter the area that is coned off for preschool arrival/dismissal. Pull forward to the northernmost point and please have your child's vehicle tag visible. Unbuckle your child from their car seat and a staff person will assist your child out of the car and walk them to the door where they will be met by another staff member or a St. Michael School student helper who will walk with them to the classroom.

For dismissal, again proceed northbound on Highland Avenue from 144<sup>th</sup> Street. Enter the area that is coned off for preschool arrival/dismissal. Pull forward to the northernmost point and please have your child's vehicle tag visible. A staff person will walk your child to your car and assist him/her with getting in. You are responsible for buckling your child into his/her car seat.

In the event your child will be dismissed to someone other than a parent/guardian, please send a note with your child detailing to whom we should release your child. Upon arrival at the car the staff person in charge of valet service will ask to see a photo ID for verification. If you will be carpooling with other families or utilizing a relative/friend for regular pick up and need an extra vehicle tag please let staff know and one will be provided to you. Please ensure that your car pool families are also listed on your emergency release forms. Again, any deviation from your normal routine requires written notification to the school.

#### **SCHOOL SCHEDULE:**

PreK-4 morning classes are scheduled from 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. (drop off on Highland Avenue begins at 8:20 a.m.)

PreK-3 morning classes are scheduled from 8:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (drop off on Highland Avenue begins at 8:35 a.m.)

In the event you have children attending concurrent preschool classes, you may drop them both off at the earlier time and pick them both up at the later time.

Afternoon classes are scheduled from 11:45 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. (drop off on Highland Avenue begins at 11:40 a.m.)

**Please remember that the Highland Avenue doors are for PRESCHOOL CHILDREN ONLY. Any adult that enters the building must use the main entrance to the school located off the West Avenue parking lot.**

The preschool children will closely follow the St. Michael School calendar. A school calendar will be sent home monthly as will your preschool calendar. Any changes to the school calendar will be presented in boldface on your preschool calendar.

## **DAILY SCHEDULE**

- **Circle Time**
  - Opening prayer
  - Attendance
  - Calendar Activities
  - Theme Discussion
- **Large Group Time**
- **Bathroom**
- **Snack**
- **Center Time**
  - Library/Reading Center
  - Dramatic Play Center
  - Math and Building Center
  - Science Center ( including Water and Sand table)
  - Art Center
  - Social Studies/Our world Center
  - Religion Center
- **Large Motor/Music**
- **Story**
- **End of the Day Prayer**

## **SUPPLIES**

- \* Folder for weekly work
- \* Tote bag for delivering weekly news (please try to avoid back pack styles as they can be difficult for preschool age children to manage)
- \* 1 pencil case
- \* 1 box Crayola washable markers 8 pack of classic colors
- \* 1 box Crayola crayons 8 pack of classic colors
- \* 6 Elmer's glue sticks jumbo size (1.4 oz.)
- \* 2 Rolls of paper towels
- \* 1 Box of Kleenex

- \* 2 packages of baby wipes
- \* 2 cylinders of Antimicrobial wipes (equivalent to Wet Ones)
- \* 1 box each: snack, sandwich and quart size plastic zip top bags

We share the paper towels, wet wipes and Kleenex throughout the school year so please send them in at your convenience. A restocking plea may be made in a weekly newsletter later in the year.

## **WEEKLY FOLDERS**

Each child should bring a folder to school on their first day. Your child's work from the week along with the weekly newsletter will be sent home in this folder. Please return the folder on the first day of each week as the children will be responsible for filing their work and papers as the week progresses. Some work, though, will be used to decorate the room and hallway and will be sent home at a later time.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Parents are encouraged to become involved in our preschool program. St. Michael Preschool parents are always welcome to visit the classroom. Any person visiting his/her child's class or working that day as a "parent helper" must sign in/out at the school office and receive a "visitor" badge to be displayed at all times during your visit. Listed below are some of the parent involvement opportunities:

**Room Parent:** This person helps the teachers coordinate class celebrations and contacts other parents when needed.

**Parent Helper:** These people will assist teachers with special activities and/or projects in the classroom.

**Classroom Presenters:** These people will present their career or passion to the children.

**Classroom Photographers:** These people will photograph the children throughout the year at special events or working on projects in the classroom.

**Memory Book Helpers:** These people will assist the teachers throughout the year with preparing and assembling the pages of the children's end of the year memory books.

**Mystery Readers:** These people will surprise the children with a special story.

All employees and all volunteers who work with children must attend the Virtus/Protecting God's Children training program within three months of beginning employment, ministry or service. Verification of the completion of Virtus Training is filed in the personnel or volunteer file at the place of employment/ministry. Dates and sites for the Safe Environment Training (Virtus/Protecting God's Children) are posted on the Archdiocese of Chicago website. (Register online, after being hired or accepted as a volunteer.) If the new employee or volunteer has previously completed the Virtus training, inform the local school administrator and provide a copy of the certificate received at the time of training.

All employees and all volunteers who work with children must read, sign and date the Code of Conduct Personnel Acknowledgement Form. The signed Code of Conduct form is to be kept in the personnel file or volunteer file at the place of employment/ministry.

All employees and all volunteers who work with children must complete the Illinois Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS 689) form. The form is to be given to the local administrator. One copy is mailed, by the local school administrator, to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Springfield; a copy is retained in the personnel or volunteer file at the place of employment/ministry.

**NOTE:** All of the above forms are available online at [www.archchicago.org](http://www.archchicago.org) under the Protecting God's Children link.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

There will be no field trips outside the school setting. We will invite visitors and professionals in house for presentations to the students.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Discipline issues that arise in the St. Michael Preschool will be handled in a positive manner. Our approach includes setting limits, redirection, modeling and positive reinforcement. The children will be encouraged to become active problem solvers.

For preschool children aggression is a normal expression of emotion. Children who have not yet mastered their ability to control anger or frustration often resort to aggressive behavior. Aggression may take the form of hitting, throwing things, name calling, spitting or pushing. They have not yet learned acceptable ways to channel anger. The staff of St. Michael Preschool will help children find and master acceptable methods to express anger and manage aggression.

Children will be encouraged to express their feelings in words and to negotiate resolutions to conflicts. Staff will facilitate conversations between children when problems arise. In time, with adult support, the children will develop appropriate social skills to solve their own problems.

## **TOILETING**

The staff of St. Michael Preschool encourages the children to be as independent as possible during toilet time, offering assistance only when necessary. Please encourage your child to use the toilet before he or she leaves home each day. Pull up style pants are easiest for young children to manage. Skills utilized in dressing with zippers, snaps, tights, belts and buttons are often emerging at this age and may be difficult for young people to manage independently. Please dress your child in clothing that they are able to manage on their own.

## **CLOTHING**

Comfortable play wear that your child can easily manage is ideal for the St. Michael Preschool experience. Preschool children work with paint, play dough, sand, even mud during the course of their days...washable clothes work best due to the fact that accidents do happen. Please send an extra set of clothing marked with your child's name in case of such accident.

## **SNACK**

Snack will be provided by the St. Michael Preschool using items similar to those on the healthy snack menu below. The monthly calendar will detail the snacks for the following month. If your child has food allergies or dietary restrictions please let us know and we will adjust the food selections accordingly.

~Fresh fruit or vegetables

~Animal crackers

~Wheat thin, Townhouse or Ritz crackers

~Pretzels (not buttered)

~Raisins

~Yogurt

~String Cheese

~Milk or juice will be served daily

## **BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS**

Birthday students will be honored with a birthday sticker, birthday crown, and snack served on a special birthday plate. Your birthday child is welcome to bring a favorite book to school on his/her birthday. Parents are welcome to come in and read to the class. Children with birthdays in the summer months are welcome to celebrate their ½ birthday, just let us know.

Our holiday celebrations will be low key and age appropriate. Details for holiday celebrations will be included in the weekly newsletters and monthly calendars.

## **CLASS DIRECTORY**

A class directory authorization form is included in your welcome packet. If you wish to be included please return your authorization form by the end of the first week of school. The class directory will be made available during the first few weeks of school. This directory will be helpful to plan play dates, social activities and car pools.

## **REPORT CARDS**

During the first few weeks of school the St. Michael Preschool will staff will be conducting informal assessments of the students' skills to determine a baseline from which to plan for each group. A developmental skills report will be distributed in January and again at the end of the school year. Although we will be hosting formal parent teacher conferences in late January and early February, you are invited to call and/or meet with your child's teacher at any time.

## **ILLNESS AND MEDICATION**

A child should be kept home from preschool if he/she has a fever of 100 degrees or higher and/or any other following symptoms: sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea or rash. Your child should be symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of a fever reducing medication before returning to school.

A child who appears to be ill or is injured while in attendance at St. Michael Preschool will be taken to the St. Michael School nurse for assessment. In the event the nurse determines the student needs to go home, a parent or guardian will be contacted to pick him/her up. Parents

**must** furnish the school (in writing) the names of three persons as emergency notification contacts who are authorized to pick up the student and give permission for emergency treatment if needed when the student's parent(s) cannot be reached. The school requests that these alternate emergency contacts live locally if possible. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep this information updated.

## **SCHOOL ABSENCE**

If your child is going to be absent, please call (708) 349-0068 and notify the school regarding the nature of the absence. Please try to call the school prior to the start of class, as preschool children worry about their classmates.

## **SCHOOL CLOSING/EMERGENCY CLOSING**

In the event of inclement weather or emergency situations, it is possible our facility will be closed. Please check the link on our website or check the "More Ways to Know Before You Go" included in your parent packet for options in checking the status of St. Michael School. In addition, we have also subscribed to "Parent Reach". In the case of an emergency, or an emergency closing an automated message will be sent to the phone number listed on your emergency card. (Provided phones are working)

## **WHENEVER SCHOOL DISTRICT #135 CANCELS SCHOOL DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER, ST. MICHAEL WILL ALSO CANCEL SCHOOL.**

If severe weather develops after school begins, we try to keep our students in school until the usual dismissal time. However, we suggest you have a "contingency plan" for your children if severe weather or any other circumstances force us to close school early. Please be sure your child knows of this plan, so he/she will know what to do and where to go should we be forced to close school before the usual dismissal time. As in all cases parents should use their own judgment regarding what is best for their child.

## **TORNADO WARNING**

In the event of tornado warnings for the local vicinity, students will remain in the school building until weather permits them to leave. Students may not be released to parents at this time.

## **CHILD ABUSE**

### **Allegations/Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect by School Personnel**

The principal must contact the Office of Catholic Schools immediately when an allegation is made about a school employee or volunteer. The principal will be directed regarding the steps that must be taken to

report the allegation or suspicion of child abuse to the appropriate Archdiocesan agency and to civil authorities.

**The Illinois Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act** mandates that school personnel report alleged or suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) when the alleged abuser is a parent, guardian, relative, or other caretaker who has some responsibility for the child's welfare at the time of the abuse or neglect.

Illinois law requires school personnel to notify DCFS even if there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Thus, the school professional need not have proof or convincing evidence of the abuse; merely suspicion of abuse to make a call to DCFS necessary. Furthermore, Illinois law protects school professionals from litigation if the DCFS call was made in good faith.

#### **ADMENDMENT TO HANDBOOK**

Statements in this handbook are subject to amendment with or without notice. The school principal will attempt to keep the school families informed of all changes as soon as practical. Some changes might have to be made immediately due to unforeseen circumstances.

