



SAINT MARK'S PRESCHOOL



**PARENT**

**HANDBOOK**

»—————> 2016-2017 <—————«

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**HANDBOOK REVISED 05/2016**

Updates to the Handbook will be published on the website or sent by email.



# WELCOME TO SAINT MARK'S PRESCHOOL!

A ministry of Saint Mark's Episcopal Church in Glendale, we serve children 24 months until their entry into kindergarten. We are a year-round school, which means we do not distinguish between the traditional school year and the summer months. With the exception of holidays, Easter Week break and Christmas break, we are open from 7:00am until 6:00pm all 12 months of the year.

Our program is based on the developmental and spiritual needs, interests and experiences of preschool-age children. Each age group and classroom has a program that has been carefully planned to include balance: a balance of indoor and outdoor activities, a balance of quiet activities and those which are more active, a balance of individual and group activities, a balance of teacher-directed activities and child-selected activities and a balance between traditional learning and the learning that comes out of play and exploration.

We are a Christian school that is a ministry of an Episcopal Church parish, and so we take our Baptismal Covenant to heart, that we are to respect the dignity of every human being, and this most definitely includes the dignity of every child in our care. We work with each child based on his or her particular social, intellectual and cognitive style, to help prepare him or her for years ahead in either the public or private school sectors. Our curriculum encourages children to explore their imagination and to develop problem-solving techniques. Our school does not discriminate against children or families on any basis regarding race, religion, national origin or family structure, and you will find that firm belief in the diversity of our students and staff alike.

We have very high standards for our teaching staff, and they have very high standards themselves! Our teachers are expected to teach, guide, nurture and engage with the children in their play and in their classroom learning. All of our teachers are qualified in Early Childhood Education and Child Development. They have completed college-level courses prior to their employment. Our school is licensed by the State of California (facility number 191225860) and certified by the Episcopal Commission on Schools, which has awarded us their highest rating. Our advisory board is the Vestry of Saint Mark's Episcopal Church. We work diligently to ensure that the concerns of parents and children, health and safety issues, educational quality and just plain fun are addressed in the fullest way possible.

All of us at Saint Mark's love this school, and we are confident that your child will also love this school and benefit from time here in untold ways! We hope you will find all the information you need in this handbook, and we encourage you to take any concerns or questions you may have to your child's teacher or any of the management team.

# ADMISSIONS

We have open enrollment and accept applications year-round, space permitting. Priority for the next year is given to families whose children are presently enrolled at Saint Mark's. Enrollment is otherwise accepted on a first come, first served basis. The majority of new enrollments begin in the summer months, as spaces open up when our older children leave us to enter kindergarten.

## PROCESS

- » Complete and submit an application form to go on the waiting list
- » Take an optional tour of the school and/or visit us at Open House
- » When offered a space, pay the registration fee to secure the space
- » Complete the enrollment packet, including up to date immunization record and doctor's form
- » Schedule an optional hour's "visit" for your child and parent(s) a few days before the start date

# CALENDAR

## SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Our holiday schedule is available in the school office or on the website. We are open year round, with closures for major federal holidays, approximately a week at Christmas (usually Christmas Eve through New Year), Good Friday and Easter week, and two or three days in the summer for teacher in-service.

## BACK TO SCHOOL

Each year we have a Back to School event early in the fall on a Saturday over lunch. We encourage parents and children to come by the school, see the child's work and progress and speak with the teachers. We feature a BBQ lunch, activities for the kids and an opportunity for fellowship with other parents.

## OPEN HOUSE

On a Friday afternoon in the spring, we have an Open House for prospective parents. This is a time to visit the school, speak with the teachers and meet other prospective parents.

# CELEBRATIONS

## BIRTHDAYS

Each child's birthday is celebrated in the classroom. Due to multiple allergies and a desire to promote healthy eating habits, we do not celebrate with treats/food of any kind. Children receive a crown and there will be singing and birthday dancing or games on the day closest to his or her birthday. Individual classrooms will find age appropriate ways to celebrate the birthday child.

Invitations for parties outside of school may be distributed at school in the parent folders only when there is an invitation for each child in the room. We distribute a roster of parent email addresses twice a year, usually in September and February, that can be used for sending invitations.

## CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Our school, like our world, is incredibly diverse. To do honor to both, Saint Mark's Preschool celebrates a different country and culture nine months of the year. Each school year has a different pattern to our Diversity Calendar, based on that which represents our currently enrolled students. Parents are encouraged to help us introduce students to the countries and cultures of which they are most familiar. This can include stories, games, food, native dress, song, and arts and crafts. Let your child's lead teacher know how you might be able to help so that we can build it into the curriculum plan.

## **HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AND SPECIAL DAYS**

We celebrate special times of the year, Christmas, Halloween, Easter, etc, as well as other wacky or special activity days, with classroom parties. We ask parents to bring in items for parties, and sign up sheets are available in advance for volunteers. We hold an annual Halloween Parade and we have an Easter egg hunt before we close for Easter break. Announcements about other celebrations throughout the year will be sent in the weekly email.



## **CHAPEL**



Wednesday morning is chapel for our Pre-K students with the warm and wonderful Mother Andrea Maier, assisting priest at Saint Mark's Church. Mtr. Andrea introduces the children to a time intentionally set aside for God, and exposes them to the worship traditions of the Episcopal Church that include candles, bells, singing, prayer, Bible stories, and most of all: that God loves each and every child. Green Room students start attending chapel midway through the school year. Chapel takes place around the altar or in the beautiful church memorial gardens. Parents are more than welcome to join us!



## **CLASS PLACEMENT**



Children are assigned to an age-and developmentally-appropriate group when they start at our school. We work hard to balance rooms in many ways: schedule, gender, age and development. Children will usually transition to a new older class grouping during the summer months, depending on availability as spaces open up in our older classrooms when students transition on to kindergarten. Occasionally if there is availability and if it is in a child's interest, we may move children to an older grouping at other times during the year, typically January 1 or after our Spring Break. Parents are notified in writing about four weeks in advance and, if needed, children spend time "visiting" their new rooms to facilitate a slow and smooth transition.

## **RE-REGISTRATION**

Re-registration of current students for the upcoming school year (August 1 to July 31) takes place in March. Families will be asked to complete a re-registration form, to be returned with the re-registration fee, by the deadline given on the form to maintain their enrollment beginning August 1. Schedule change requests will be honored on a first-come first-served basis. After the re-registration deadline, any open spaces will be offered to families on our waiting list.



## **COMMUNICATION**



### **EMAIL NEWSLETTER**

We communicate almost exclusively by email to families. Upon enrollment, families are asked to provide one or two email addresses and agree to monitor any emails from the preschool on a regular basis in order to keep updated with news and activities. An email is distributed weekly, usually on Friday, with information for the following week and beyond. This includes a link to items such as the school calendar and weekly lesson plans. Parents are required to keep the school office updated with any email address changes.

### **WEBSITE**

The school's website [www.saintmarksschool.la](http://www.saintmarksschool.la) is to be used by families for retrieving forms, keeping updated with calendar items and retrieving general information. We encourage you to bookmark our address and log on often!

### **CLASSROOM EMAIL DIRECTORY**

Upon enrollment, parents and guardians are asked to provide any email addresses that they wish to be included in a class email directory. Rosters are distributed twice a year, usually in September and in February. These lists are to be used solely for personal reasons, to arrange play dates or for birthday party invitations.

### **TELEPHONE**

Please communicate with the school via email or by telephone through the main church and school number. Please do not ask teachers for personal cell phone numbers.

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

One of the tasks of our school is to help very young children find constructive ways to communicate their needs, fears, anger and frustration. Our teachers establish limits and maintain an environment that promotes desirable behavior. Indoors and out, we arrange for a variety of activities with interesting, challenging and age-appropriate materials that also promote sharing and cooperation.

We encourage children to express what they are feeling, and to find the words to do so. They are encouraged to talk about anger, sadness and fear, as well as joy, gratitude and excitement. We work with them to teach them that physical expressions of anger and frustration, such as hitting, scratching and biting, are not acceptable and help them redirect their expression of these normal emotions in more positive ways. We do not threaten children, use physical forms of punishment, or in any way demean a child trying to learn these social and life skills.

The following are examples of positive discipline:

- » REDIRECT THE BEHAVIOR Example: if children are racing about dangerously indoors, they might be taken outside for an organized running game. Or if they are throwing toys at one another, a game of ball or bean-bag toss might be organized. Age appropriate explanations for the redirection are always provided.
- » FIX-UP - Children are asked to help fix the results of their actions. Examples: if food has been thrown or spilled, they are asked to help the teacher clean it up; if one child hurts another, he or she helps the teacher with comforting the hurt child.
- » TIME-AWAY/QUIET TIME - When a child is disruptive or out of control, he or she may need to be removed from the situation for a short while. This is not a punishment, but a way to calm the child down. During the time-away period, the teacher and child talk about the situation in an age appropriate way.

## DRESS CODE

Children should be dressed comfortably for school activities and appropriately for outdoor play and messy artwork. Please do not dress your child in anything you would be uncomfortable seeing dirty or that cannot be easily laundered! Children must wear shoes at all times—we suggest sneakers. For safety reasons, flip-flops and dress shoes are not appropriate. All sandals must have a heel strap.

Please label all clothing with your child's last name so that if items are left behind we can return them to the proper cubby.

### LOST AND FOUND

Please make note of the lost and found basket in the school office. Each year dozens of articles of clothing end up in this basket without a label. Please periodically check it for your child's belongings. Every three months, all unclaimed articles are donated to a children's shelter or similar organization.

## EMERGENCY OR DISASTER PROCEDURES

We conduct emergency disaster drills each month for the benefit of the children and staff, so that all may be prepared in the event of an earthquake, fire or other emergency situation. Should such an emergency situation arise, please find assurance that our staff is prepared to protect the physical safety of your child and to handle basic first aid.

The procedures below will be followed in the event of an emergency:

1. Do not call the school! We know this is incredibly hard, but all staff members will be directly involved in caring for the children and not available to answer your calls. In addition, the phone lines must remain open for contacting emergency services and the parents of any children who have been injured. If your child has been injured, we will call you immediately.
2. We will post information on our Facebook page and also through a school-wide email as soon as we are able. Please check these avenues of communication rather than calling the school office.

3. If there are not instructions on Facebook and you do not receive an email, come directly to the school. Children will remain at the school until they are released to parents or to an authorized representative. Children will not be released to anyone who is not listed on the emergency form filed in the school office.
4. Children who have not been picked up by a parent or person authorized for pick-up within one hour of closing will be taken to the nearest evacuation center. Local radio stations will be issuing this emergency information, and we will also be posting it on Facebook and through a school-wide email.
5. Emergency supplies are provided by the school.

## »—————» **ENROLLMENT POLICY** «—————«

### **HOURS OF OPERATION**

We open at 7:00am and close at 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. For children on a half-day program, pick-up is by 1:00pm. We encourage parents to bring their children to school by 9:00am, as that is when the primary classroom experience begins.

### **PROGRAMS/ENROLLMENT SCHEDULES**

We offer three program schedules, each of which is available on a half-day or full day basis. We have Tuesday/Thursday enrollment, Monday/Wednesday/Friday enrollment, and Monday through Friday enrollment. Special schedules cannot be accommodated.

### **EXTRA HALF-DAYS OR FULL-DAYS**

Provided we have the space, you can arrange for an extra half-day or full day added to your child's regular schedule as the need arises. Please call the school office to verify that we can accommodate the request. You will need to complete and sign a Change of Schedule form, available in the school office or on the website. There is a charge of \$40 for an extra half day and \$50 for an extra full day.

### **ABSENCES**

Please notify the school office or your child's teacher if your child will absent for any reason.

### **AUTHORIZATION FOR DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP**

California State Law requires that every child be signed-in and signed-out by a authorized adult, with the time of arrival and the time of pick-up. Sign-In and Sign-Out Logs are in each classroom. No one under the age of eighteen can sign your child in or out. There will be a charge of \$25 for each instance in which your child has not been signed-in or signed-out as required by law. Please ensure that adults other than parents who may be dropping off or picking up from school know about and comply with these requirements.

By law, either parent is authorized to pick up your child unless we have a copy of a court order restricting visitation. Only other adults you authorize with the office will be allowed to sign-out your child and have the child released into their care. If the situation warrants it and you wish someone other than those listed as emergency pick-ups to pick up your child on any given day, you must notify the school office and provide his or her full name and their relationship to the child. We will check his or her identification (must be a photo ID) before we will release your child. If there is a permanent change in those you have designated as authorized to pick-up your child, please let the school office know in writing or by email.

NOTE: Please do not leave other children in the car alone while dropping off or picking up your child from school.

### **CAR SEATS**

California State Law requires that every child under the age of eight should be in a car seat. We have car seats available for loan should you or the person authorized to pick-up your child not have a car seat available. Please ask a teacher to get a seat for you if needed.

### **LATE PICK-UP POLICY**

It is important that your child is picked up on time: for half-day students by 1:00pm (as our full day children commence rest time at that hour), and for full day students by 6:00pm. There is a late pick-up charge of \$3 per minute which will be charged to your account in the event your child is not picked up by the prescribed times. We reserve the right to cancel the enrollment of any child after three late pick-ups or for unpaid late charges.

If you know you are going to be late, please call the school office to let us know so that we can inform your child's teacher and make appropriate arrangements.

## **WORK, HOME OR SCHEDULE CHANGES**

It is important that the school office has up-to-date information regarding address, phone numbers, emergency contacts and adults authorized to pick up your child. Please ensure that you notify the office if your email has changed as this is now the primary method of communication between the school office and parents. Should you desire a change in your child's schedule, please contact the school office to inquire about availability of a new schedule. A Change of Schedule form, available in the school office and on our website, will need to be completed by you prior to any change.

## **WITHDRAWAL**

If family circumstances or other needs require you to withdraw your child from our school, we require one month's written notice so that arrangements can be made with families on our waiting list. Please complete the Last Day Notice, available in the school office and on our website, and ensure that your account is current.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Occasionally off-campus field trips are planned for our older students. Field trips are always within easy walking distance of the school. You will be informed of any upcoming field trips, additional fees they may require, special instructions, and how you might be able to help with child supervision. Please look in your parent folders, classroom bulletin boards and in the weekly email for such announcements and permission forms.

## **FOOD**

### **DIETARY RESTRICTIONS**

If your child has allergies (including food allergies) or dietary restrictions, please record this information on your Application for Enrollment and on the Child's Pre-admission Health History forms, both found in the enrollment packet. Your child's teacher will be alerted and precautions will be taken.

### **LUNCH**

Parents provide lunches for children. Please pack a balanced nutritional lunch for your child. There are microwaves in all the classrooms, so teachers can reheat food if desired. As we do not have refrigeration space, we suggest you pack an ice pack to help keep foods cool if necessary. Lunch boxes, thermos, and food containers should be labeled with your child's name. Please do not send sugary foods, candy, gum, or carbonated beverages.

Water is available in all classrooms and on the yards. Please pack an additional healthy beverage for your child for lunch if desired.

### **NUTS**

We are a NUT FREE school in order to keep all our children safe who have, or may have, nut allergies. Please do not send peanut butter sandwiches, whole nuts, or granola bars with nuts etc to school. If you have packed sunflower spread sandwiches (that resembles peanut butter), please let your child's teacher know to avoid confusion.

### **PIZZA FRIDAYS**

Every Friday, we offer cheese pizza from a neighborhood pizzeria, fruit and beverage. The cost is calculated per child for a calendar quarter. Sign-up sheets will be in classrooms one week prior to the beginning of the quarter. You can include the fee in your tuition check.

### **SNACKS**

We serve nutritious mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks, and publish each month a snack calendar for your information. The snack calendar is posted on classroom bulletin boards and is available in the school office.

# HEALTH CARE

## ACCIDENTS OR INJURIES

When an incident occurs that results in a minor injury to your child (such as a scrape, bruise, scratch, or bump), the witnessing teacher will complete an Ouch Report with a description of the circumstances and the actions taken; one copy is given to the director and one copy is placed in your parent folder.

If there is an accident that results in a more serious injury to your child, you will be contacted immediately and an Incident Report will be completed detailing the circumstances of the injury. In cases of severe injury, we will call emergency personnel. In the event a parent cannot be immediately reached, we will contact the persons listed as emergency contacts, and/or the child's pediatrician, and/or emergency personnel.

## IMMUNIZATION POLICY

An up-to-date immunization record is required prior to your child's first day of enrollment, except when California State Law allows exemption for one or more immunizations based on rare medical issues. In such cases, we require information about the exemption in writing from your child's doctor. Children entering preschools at age two and older are required to have received immunizations as follows: 3 doses of Polio, 4 doses of DTP, 3 doses of Hepatitis B, 1 dose of Varicella (chicken pox), 1 dose of MMR 1 or 3 doses of HIB (one is sufficient if given after a child's first birthday). As part of the enrollment packet, a signed doctor's form is required including immunization record and details of a child's general health status.

## MEDICATION

All medications brought from home must be in the original container and properly labeled with your child's full name. All prescription and non-prescription medications will be administered only with the written approval of the parent and instructions from the child's pediatrician. Your child's teacher will ask you to complete a Medicine Sheet form, available in the office and on the website, and the medication itself must be given directly to the child's teacher or other adult staff member upon arrival at the school. IT IS A VIOLATION OF LAW TO KEEP THE MEDICINE IN THE CHILD'S LUNCH OR BACKPACK.

We have an Incidental Medical Services Plan which allows us to administer epi-pens and breathing treatments with written authorization from your child's doctor, completed medicine sheet including your doctor's contact information and staff training by a parent or medical practitioner. Please discuss any such requests with the director upon enrollment or when appropriate.

## REPORTING CHILD ABUSE OR CHILD NEGLECT

We are legally and morally obligated to report to the appropriate agencies any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or child neglect.

## SICK POLICY

Please do not send your child to school when he or she is sick. Children with a fever, diarrhea or vomiting should be kept home. This is for the protection of your child, the other children in our school and our staff. Children may return to school only when they have been fever, diarrhea and/or vomiting free for 24 hours.

Should your child become ill after arrival at school, we will call you or a designated emergency contact to pick him or her up. Your child will be kept comfortable and as isolated as possible from the other children until you arrive.

Please notify the school office if your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease such as measles, chicken pox, head lice, etc.

## SUNSCREEN

With permission, we apply sunscreen for outside play, when necessary. We ask that you provide sunscreen for your child. If none is on hand, we will apply a generic SPF 50 / waterproof sunscreen. If your child is sensitive to particular types of sunscreen, or has a particular requirement, please note on the Enrollment Agreement. Please bring in sunscreen for your child, clearly marked with his or her name, and hand it to a classroom teacher.

# NAPS

We are required by the State of California to provide a two-hour period each afternoon for napping or resting. Children who do not nap are required to rest quietly, either looking at books or participating in activities which are non-disruptive to the children who are napping.

## PARENT / TEACHER CONFERENCES

We offer formal parent-teacher conferences once a year, typically either in the early spring or in the late summer. Sign up sheets will be available in advance and notice given in the weekly emails. If at any other time during the year you would like to speak with your child's teacher in private, please contact the office and we will make arrangements. We encourage daily brief communication with teachers at either drop off or pick up, depending on availability, but ask that you request an appointment for a more lengthy discussion or if you have a particular concern.

## STARTING SCHOOL

### SEPARATION ANXIETY

A child's first school experience can be difficult for parents and children. We wish to make this period of time as comfortable a transition as possible. We recommend a short stay for parents on their child's first day. Parents are always welcome to call the school office for updates on their child's progress and to speak to the teacher if desired. It is common for separation anxiety to last for up to two weeks, particularly for children who have not spent any time in a daycare or school situation before, or who have no siblings. Children generally quiet down when their parents have left the campus, and generally within two weeks, all children have embraced their new environment of friends and learning. Separation anxiety that persists past the first two weeks is handled on an individual basis and as a cooperative effort between parent, teacher and director. If desired, a handout is available with more detailed information is available in the school office.

### WHAT TO BRING

#### ALL CHILDREN:

- » Lunch, including drink. We are able to heat your child's lunch but do not have refrigeration space, so we suggest that you pack an ice pack to keep foods cool if necessary. Lunch boxes, thermos and food containers should be labeled with your child's name. Please do not send sugary foods, candy, gum or carbonated beverages.

NOTE: We are a nut-free school. As a precaution and due to the severity of peanut allergies in some young children, we ask you NOT to pack peanut butter in your child's lunch. If your child is severely allergic to other foods, this must be noted on your registration forms--if it is deemed necessary, your child's teacher will post further food restrictions for his or her classroom.

- » A complete change of clothes to be kept at school in the event they are needed. All items should be labeled with your child's name (especially jackets or coats) and placed in a shoebox or small backpack for safe keeping in your child's cubby. Please remember to periodically take home the change of clothes to be laundered and returned or to be swapped out for something more seasonally appropriate.

#### FULL DAY CHILDREN:

- » Crib sheet or blanket to cover his or her sleep mat, and a blanket or cover, labeled with your child's name. These are to be brought in clean each week and taken home each week for laundering.

#### CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT POTTY TRAINED:

- » A sufficient weekly supply of diapers and wipes to be kept in your child's cubby.

## TOYS

Toys from home are allowed only on Share Days or during the first week of school as your child makes the transition to being away from home. We do not allow toys that implicitly or explicitly promote violence; therefore, toy guns, knives, or weapons of any kind are not permitted, even if they represent "the good guys"! A soft toy is allowed for comfort at nap time but must remain in the child's cubby at other times.

## TUITION POLICY

Saint Mark's Preschool is funded solely by tuition monies. Tuition is determined based on the annual cost of caring for your child and the expenses associated with running a school and maintaining the buildings and grounds. The annual cost is divided into twelve equal installments to arrive at the monthly amount due, with a discount factored in for full day enrollments. Parents are required to sign an annual tuition agreement as part of the enrollment and re-registration packets.

For families with more than one child enrolled at the same time, a sibling discount of 10% will be applied to the lesser tuition rate, and the registration fee will be discounted 50% for the additional child or children. Tuition will not be prorated or refunded for holidays, sick days or days your child is otherwise absent.

We do not routinely send out tuition invoices. Tuition is due the first school day of each month, and we accept cash or checks, but not credit cards. Tuition checks can be placed in the tuition box located in the school office or mailed to Saint Mark's Preschool, 1020 N Brand Boulevard, Glendale, CA 91202. There is a grace period of seven days. If tuition has not been received by the seventh day after it is due, a late fee in the amount of \$30 will be charged to your account. If your check is returned NSF, the returned check fee is \$25. We reserve the right to cancel the enrollment of any child for unpaid or chronically late tuition.

Typically there is a modest increase in tuition each year that is based on increases to our cost of doing business. Such increases are effective August 1. You will be informed of any increase well in advance.

For current tuition, refer to the tuition schedule posted on our website or in the school office.

## **ANNUAL STATEMENTS**

If you require annual statements for income tax purposes, please contact the school office. Our tax ID number is 95-1782327.



## **VISITS**



Parents are welcome to visit their child's classes at any time and observe their child's interaction with the teacher and other children. Please check in at the school office before going to your child's class to observe.