



Saint Paul School
Preschool Handbook

2023-2024

Welcome to Saint Paul School! We are very excited that you have chosen our preschool program for your child's early childhood education. We look forward to providing a fun-filled and positive learning experience that will prepare your child for a successful elementary school career. This handbook outlines preschool classroom policies, procedures, information going home, and the best way to communicate with your child's teacher. Thank you for entrusting us with your child's first experiences in school and learning. We look forward to getting to know you and to helping your child grow socially, emotionally, physically, academically, and spiritually.

IMPORTANT POLICIES & PROCEDURES

PROGRAM HOURS

Half-day students 7:50 am-12:30 pm

Full-day students 7:50 am-2:50 pm

ARRIVAL & PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Arrival

Preschool students may be dropped off between 7:50 and 8:10 am at the North entrance, by the red double doors of our school, or the single classroom door which is adjacent to that entrance. After 8:10 am, you **MUST** use the main (front) entrance of the school on Alling Street and sign in at the office. Your child will then be escorted to the classroom by staff. Parents will not be allowed to bring their children to the classroom. "Specials" subjects (art, library, music, gym) may start at 8:25 am, so if you are arriving late be aware that learning will be in progress.

Dismissal

Half-day Students (12:30 pm): Preschool Students will be dismissed at the same location as arrival, via the North exit.

Full-day Students (2:50 pm): Preschool Students will be dismissed at the same location as arrival, via the North exit or via the exterior back door of Mrs. Oppel's classroom. For the safety of all our children, your vehicle must be parked in a parking spot and its engine turned off. Please do not park in the driveways or the dismissal area. This area is usually blocked off. Students will wait in turn until their name is called. They will then go to the door to greet their pick-up person. Dismissal will be at **2:50 pm**.

ALL-SCHOOL Early Release Days (12:20 pm for preschool.) This includes weather related early closings.

On all-school half-days, ALL PRESCHOOL STUDENTS will be dismissed at **12:20 pm** via the exterior back door of Mrs. Oppel's classroom or via the North Entrance. Lunch will be at the regular time in the classroom. **Lunch on half-days must be PEANUT/NUT FREE from home.** ***Hot lunch will NOT be available from the lunch program on early release days***

DRESS CODE

Children must be fully dressed when they arrive at school. Because play activity is such an important part of the curriculum, clothing should be practical, comfortable and weather appropriate. Students are strongly encouraged to be independent when dressing and undressing while using the bathroom. Pants with elastic waists that are easy for preschoolers to pull up and down are best. Please have your child wear Velcro sneakers to help facilitate independence, to ensure safety on the playground and during gym day, and to help prevent the spread of germs when tying shoe laces. No open-toed shoes, Crocs, flip-flops, jellies or cowboy boots, please. Sandals must have a back strap and be closed-toe if worn to school. A change of shoes is needed when snow boots or rain boots are worn to school. When dresses are worn, biker-shorts worn underneath are strongly recommended. For the safety of our children, please do not leave an umbrella with your child during the school day. During the colder months, children should dress appropriately to play outside, when the weather allows us to do so. This includes a winter coat, hat and mittens. In the cooler months, an extra zip-up sweatshirt or sweater may be left in your child's locker to be used when needed. Please do not allow your child to wear jewelry (stud earrings are permissible) as it is not only a safety hazard on the playground, but also a distraction in the classroom.

Every child must have two complete changes of (seasonal appropriate) clothing in school at all times, including socks, underwear and one pair of shoes. If your child has changed clothing during the day, the soiled items will be sent home and should be replaced the next school day. All clothing items must be labeled with the child's name in a zip-lock bag. Clothing should be swapped throughout the year for proper size and weather via your child's backpack.

BATHROOMS & "ACCIDENTS"

All students in the preschool program at Saint Paul School MUST be fully toilet-trained before the start of the school year; pull-ups are not allowed. Fully toilet-trained students are independent with dressing/undressing, wiping, and washing their hands themselves. Pre-K students will use the bathrooms located on the first floor of the school. The girls' room is down the hall from the classroom and the boys' room is located between the second grade room and the nurse's office.

*** Please read, print, sign and return the Preschool Toilet Training Policy signature page (p.12).**

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Colds, flu and other contagious diseases or viruses can occur frequently and spread easily among preschool children. To help protect your child's health and to minimize the possibility of spreading illness at school, please keep your child at home if you observe any of the following symptoms:

- temperature
- headache
- nasal discharge that is green or yellow
- complaints of ear or throat pain
- productive cough
- eyes that are pink, burning, itching, or producing discharge
- diarrhea or vomiting
- loss of taste or smell

- body aches/muscle pain
- unexplained rashes
- chills

If these or other symptoms of potentially contagious conditions are observed in your child during the day, you will be called to come and pick up your child. The nurse will discuss with you when your child can return to school.

If your child has a fever, they may return when they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication. If they are experiencing diarrhea or vomiting, they may return to school 24 hours after the last episode AND are eating/drinking and acting themselves.

Please email both the nurse AND your child's teacher if your child will be out of school. Good attendance is crucial to learning – it is important that your children attend school when they are in good health.

In the case of a confirmed case of COVID-19 of a student or family member, the school follows the current recommended CDC and local health official guidelines. Please contact the nurse to report a positive case with your child or family member, and she will direct you on the latest protocols. Information on any classroom and/or school closure will be communicated to families promptly.

TOYS & PERSONAL ITEMS FROM HOME

We kindly ask that children **do not** bring in personal toys and electronics from home to school. This will help to ensure that your child's belongings are kept safe. The classroom offers a wide variety of items to keep children engaged throughout the day. Blankets, pacifiers, and other "security" items should be left at home as well.

NO SCHOOL DAYS

Please be aware that preschool follows the Saint Paul School calendar. There will be no school on major holidays, professional development days, etc. Please refer to the school calendar on the school website.

Inclement Weather

We follow Berlin Public Schools with regard to closing school due to inclement weather.

If Berlin Public Schools announce a **cancellation - there will be NO school.**

If Berlin Public Schools announce a **delay - there will be a two (2) hour delay**

In the event of a cancellation or early closing, you will receive a message from Saint Paul School via phone, text and email through SchoolMessenger. SchoolMessenger interfaces with EduConnect and populates its phone number and email lists from these files. It is important that your contact information in the parent portal (EduConnect) is current. Please take a moment to [sign in](https://stpaulkensington.eduk12.net/) (https://stpaulkensington.eduk12.net/) to your parent portal account to ensure that your information is accurate. Remember to update this information during the school year if phone numbers, email addresses or any other information changes.

Parents: Please make sure you have filled out emergency cards and an authorized pick-up form for your children. This allows us to determine who is allowed to pick up your child in the event we cannot get in touch with you in an emergency situation. These will be provided during student orientation.

ACTIVITY FEE

Your Blackbaud account has been charged a Class Activity Fee. This fee covers the cost of field trips, special craft activities, auction projects and other activities we will be doing throughout the year. In addition, this money will cover the cost of supplies needed for your child such as crayons, pencils, glue sticks, portfolio and home/school folder etc. These supplies will be handed out at the beginning of the school year and will be kept at school.

SNACKS & LUNCH

We do have children at Saint Paul School with life-threatening food allergies. All preschool **classrooms** are **100% peanut and nut FREE**. Please be sure that labels are checked to assure that food is not processed in a peanut/tree nut facility. We want to provide all our students a safe environment. The school cafeteria has peanut/tree nut free tables if your child has an allergy.

All Preschoolers will be eating lunch in the cafeteria.

Lunch is about 25 minutes. Peanuts and tree nuts **are** allowed in the cafeteria. Families are responsible for packing a lunch and drink for their child or may pre-order a lunch through the school lunch program. Lunch menus are available on the school's web page on a month-by-month basis. School lunches will need to be ordered three days prior. Information about ordering lunch will be sent to you from the office prior to the start of the school year. Milk or chocolate milk may be purchased. Please be sure the envelope is labeled with your child's name and "milk money" if you would like your child to purchase milk.

A few notes about lunch for **all** preschoolers:

- A reusable (cloth) napkin is strongly recommended to be used as a placemat for when your child is eating their lunch from home. This is to help prevent children from eating off the table and spreading additional germs.
- Please be sure to include any necessary utensils your child may need (i.e. fork, spoon, napkin or straw.)
- A "bento box" style lunch is strongly recommended.
- Ice packs are a necessity. Your child's lunch is **not** refrigerated throughout the morning.
- Please send all necessary items that your child will need to eat his/her lunch in the lunch bag.
- No glass containers please.
- If your child would like a hot meal from home, try a thermos, we **do not** heat-up lunches.
- Please prepare your child's lunch the way he/she likes it, and ready-to-eat, i.e. fruit and veggies are cut and peeled, food is cut up, etc.
- Items that your child can open independently are strongly encouraged to prevent additional spreading of germs; i.e., foods such as Go-GURT should be avoided since they are difficult to open and staff would be putting their hands on the part that goes in your child's mouth. Yogurt smoothies are best with a straw.
- Please note that healthy meals are encouraged. Candy and sugary treats should be limited.
- Please be sure your child's lunch bag and containers are labeled with your child's full name.

Snack: Families of FULL DAY students are responsible for providing an afternoon snack for their child daily. This should contain one or two healthy food items. A snack pouch or container is recommended and should be labeled “snack” separately from a lunch box. A reusable water bottle is strongly encouraged instead of juice. Please be sure to include any necessary utensils your child may need (i.e. fork, spoon, napkin or straw). Children have about 15-20 minutes for their snack time, and when given too much food it is overwhelming for them. Again, snacks must be NUT-FREE since we will be eating in the classroom.

Reusable Water Bottles: A reusable water bottle with a covered top is strongly recommended to help keep the straw of the water bottle clean. A “water station” will be available in the classroom where water bottles will be kept for students to access. There are two touchless refill stations on the first floor to refill as needed. The water bottle will need to be washed out and filled up at home daily. **Water only** - no juice, teas, sports drinks etc. Please be sure the bottle is labeled with your child’s name. Glass water bottles are prohibited.

COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHER AND SCHOOL

Home/School Communication Folder

During orientation you will receive a folder labeled with your child’s name. Please be sure this folder is emptied and returned to school every day. We will use this folder to send information, work, notes, etc. home to you. If there is something that you would like to send to school such as lunch payment, Friday treat money, pick-up change notes or other communication, please be sure to put it in your child’s folder. *Please label all envelopes with your child’s name, grade and who/what it is for (teacher, office, lunch money, etc.).* Please be sure that your child’s backpack and take-home folder are cleaned out daily.

We communicate primarily through e-mail messages and teacher pages on the school website, under the “Academic Tab.” It is very important that families check the teacher pages on a daily basis. There will be information in “Ask Me About,” about upcoming events, classroom happenings, family homework and current learning topics and donations to the classroom. Please do not hesitate to ask questions if you have them. If there is an emergency situation, please contact the main office (860) 828-4343 and your child’s teacher will be notified accordingly.

A weekly newsletter from the principal is emailed to all families at the beginning of each week. It includes pertinent information regarding upcoming events and activities. Please take time to read the newsletter so you remain in the loop.

Security Reminder: For the safety of our students, any and all changes to dismissal plans should be sent via email to the school office (ourschool@stpaulkensington.org). Please be sure to contact the school office if there are any changes in home or cell phone numbers, addresses and email addresses in your household, or designated pick-up person.

PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH/VIDEO RECORD

Families are **strongly encouraged** to check the school website (ourschool.stpaulkensington.org) and its teacher pages frequently to stay up-to-date. With the use of technology comes many digital photos and even videos of the fun things we do throughout the day. Please let us know in writing at the beginning of the year if you **do not want** your child to be in any social media or print publication.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences with your child's teacher are scheduled twice a year. Fall conferences are mandatory for all preschool families enrolled in the program. During this time goals will be set. During winter conferences, we will share your child's progress report for the first half of the school year. Spring conferences are on an as-needed basis. Conferences are a time for you to discuss your child's progress, goals and concerns with his/her teacher. If you would like to meet with your child's teacher at another time, please contact him/her to set up a time. Progress reports will be sent in January and June.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

It is necessary that children learn to develop self-discipline skills in order to further their learning. We ask that you discuss with your child the importance of and need for making good choices. Good communication between home and school is crucial for a successful year. We recognize that preschool children are young and are learning social skills. Positive behaviors are recognized. For the safety of all our preschool students and staff, unkind and unsafe acts that occur at a preschool level will be handled by the child's teacher(s). A child may need to be redirected or "sit out their age" if unsafe or unkind behaviors occur. The teacher(s) will work with the student, family, director and principal (as needed) to address situations. If needed, parents will be contacted.

Should a child display excessive verbal or physical behaviors that cause harm to other children and the learning environment, the teacher, along with the principal and counselor will conference with the parents to create a behavioral plan. This could include the recommendation to seek advice and testing from the child's pediatrician or other medical professional. After intervention methods have been set in place, should the verbal and/or physical behavior continue, there may be an administrative decision to disenroll the child.

HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (HSA)

Parent Service Requirements

The Home and School Association (HSA) is an organization for the parents/legal guardians of each student of Saint Paul School. Automatic membership is given to the family upon registration of the student. It is the goal of the HSA to communicate regularly with parents about upcoming social events as well as to conduct fundraising activities in support of the school. Since the HSA runs a variety of fundraisers to help keep tuition costs down, it is important that all parents/guardians do their part to support the HSA and its fundraising efforts. Each parent is required to enter into an agreement with the Home & School Association to raise monies, either through a direct buy-out of financial obligations or through various fundraising activities. Funds raised by the Home and School Association go directly into the school's operating budget. We strongly encourage your participation in volunteering; in doing so, we come together as a family with a common goal.

PARENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

We love to see what special talents and traditions our families have. Let us know if you would like to share yours with the class. Families may also come to read or volunteer in the classroom. Please make arrangements ahead of time with your child's teacher. Volunteers **MUST** be VIRTUS (Safe Environment) trained. You may visit www.virtus.org to sign up for this one-time, online training.

BIRTHDAY & HOLIDAYS

We enjoy making your child's birthday special! Some things may include having your child pick a book out to read, be a special helper, pick out a song to dance to, receive a special sticker, etc. At this time for birthdays, you may order popsicles from the school cafeteria five (5) days in advance. Please email Donna McPherson at d.mcpherson@stpaulkensington.org to order. Payment may then be sent in an envelope with your child's name, grade, "birthday treat" and date for celebrating. Students may not distribute birthday party invitations in school.

FIELD TRIPS & VISITORS

This year, we may have visitors from our community, or other visitors, or "in house" field trips. There may be a field trip where we will travel off school grounds to experience certain curriculum topics first-hand. Your activity fee covers all our class field trips.

REST TIME

Each full-day student is provided with an individual rest mat. Rest mats are cleaned after each use. Rest time is about an hour long. Children are not required to sleep during this time, however we do require them to rest quietly for a portion of this time. Families are responsible for providing their child with a one-piece nap pad in a reusable bag. At the end of each week your child will bring home his or her rest items to be washed and returned on the following school day. Please be sure your child's rest belongings are labeled with your child's name.

CLASSROOM SCHEDULE

As we all know, when dealing with preschoolers one must be flexible and patient. The daily schedules for each classroom are set up to maintain structure and routine for your child. Classroom schedules will follow a similar order each day so they become predictable and comfortable for all students. Pre-K schedules will vary slightly on days that "Specials" occur. A Specials schedule will be posted on the teacher web page. We will also be taking advantage of enjoying our beautiful campus, weather permitting.

PARTS OF THE CLASSROOM

Learning Centers

The classroom offers many different learning centers, based on NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) standards for early learning. Your child will be able to explore these areas during planned curriculum activities and through self-guided free play exploration throughout the school day. These centers provide structured educational experiences for children while engaged in individual play, partnering in teamwork building activities, and/or participation in small groups.

Lockers & Cubbies

Each student is assigned a personal locker or cubby. The lockers and cubbies are located in the hallway, outside the classroom doors. They provide plenty of space for the children's belongings. Lockers and cubbies will be individually labeled with names.

Portfolios

Your child's teacher will collect pieces of your child's work throughout the year. This may include artwork, writing samples, language samples and pictures. At the end of the school year, you will receive the work that your child has completed. We hope that you will be able to see the growth your child has made throughout the school year. Some changes you will hopefully notice may include the way your child has written his or her name, coloring and drawing skills, cutting skills, attention to detail, and the growth in all areas of your child's development.

Please be sure all of your child's belongings are labeled with their name.

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2024-2025 Requirements for Enrolling in a Kindergarten Program

The Connecticut General Assembly has raised the minimum age for automatic entry into public school in Connecticut. Specifically, Section 1 of Public Act 23-208, states that children will need to turn five on or before September 1 of the school year in order to be automatically eligible to enroll in a school kindergarten program.

As a nonpublic school, this is a law with which we must comply. However, there are caveats that we can put in place that do not require approval from the CSDE or Department of Early Childhood.

The AOH Catholic early childhood programs will comply with the following state mandates:

- All remains as is for the duration of this upcoming school year (2023-2024).
- Enrolling students for the 2024-2025 school year:
 - Students must be five years of age by September 1 to enter Kindergarten.
 - Students must be four years of age by September 1 to enter PK4.
 - Students must be three years of age by September 1 to enter PK3.

Implications for 2024-2025 Early Childhood Enrollment in our Catholic Schools:

- Students enrolled in the 2023-2024 PK4 program **and** whose birthdays fall between September 1 and December 31, will have to repeat PK 4 for the 2024-2025 school year.
- Schools must make every effort to ensure those PK4 students who must hold before being advanced to kindergarten do not repeat the exact same experiences and activities during this one transition year.
- If in the assessment of a school, a PK4 student whose birthday falls between September 1 and December 31 **and** the student demonstrated high aptitude in PK4 **and** the school administers a formal assessment demonstrating evidence that the student can meet with success in kindergarten, **a waiver can be requested to advance that student into the school kindergarten program.**
- Families who wish to enroll a child in a school's PK3 program and whose birthday falls between September 1 and December 31, and the student meets the criteria for entry into a school's PK3 program, may enroll in PK3 with the understanding that the child will repeat the PK 3 program before advancing to the PK 4 program to ensure criteria is met for the state's and AOH kindergarten age.
- Early entry for PK 3 for children who meet entry criteria and whose birthdays are between September 1 and December 31 will continue for all consecutive school years.

Saint Paul School, Kensington, CT

Preschool Toilet Training Policy

Children enrolled in preschool must be toilet trained before attending preschool. A child having daily accidents is not considered toilet trained. By definition, “accidents” are unusual incidents and should happen infrequently. In these instances, students will work to change independently, the teacher or staff will support a child if needed. A parent or caregiver may be called to pick up or help assist their child if the accident requires extra attention during clean-up.

Wearing disposable training pants (i.e., Pull-Ups) is NOT considered toilet trained. Children enrolled in preschool must wear underwear.

Why do children have to be toilet trained before they begin preschool?

- Strict standards exist with regard to changing and disposing of wet or soiled diapers or disposable training pants, and our classrooms are not equipped for this.
- When teachers or staff are out of the room assisting a child with changing soiled clothing it removes that adult from the direct supervision of and interaction with the rest of the class, thereby taking away from learning time for all students.

Toilet trained children are children who can do the following:

- Communicate to the teachers that they to go to the restroom before they need to go
- Postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom or if they are away from the classroom
- Alert themselves to stop what they are doing, to go and use the bathroom
- Wake up during nap time should they need to use the bathroom
- Pull down their clothes and get them back up without assistance
- Get on/off the toilet by themselves
- Wipe themselves after using the toilet (with minimal assistance for 3 year olds)
- Wash and dry hands

Preschool children will be asked many times throughout the day and before nap time if they need to use the bathroom. A teacher will assist as needed, but children should be able to complete toileting activities independently. This is an issue which protects all concerned.

It is not uncommon for children who are fully toilet trained to have setbacks when they are in a new environment. Preschool staff are aware of this and will assist the children when necessary. Children should be dressed in clothing that they can easily manage independently. Please send two complete changes of clothing and one pair of shoes appropriate for the season. These will be left at school in case of accidents, and returned at the end of the school year. Parents will be notified if a child has a toileting accident.

We understand that each child arrives at this milestone differently, therefore we will allow 4 weeks from the first day of school for your child to demonstrate accomplishment of this goal. However, if the situation is not manageable within the classroom environment, we will discuss the issue with the parents and reserve the right to suspend attendance of the child at such time.

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A child will not be considered toilet trained for our preschool program if the child continues to consistently have toileting accidents after the first 4 weeks of school. After the first 4 weeks of school, the following policies will be in place for children who have accidents:

- If one or two accidents occur in one week, the parents will be notified with the understanding that the issue needs to be addressed and corrected.
- If three or more accidents occur in one week, the parent will be notified with the understanding that if the issue is not corrected by the end of the second week the child will have to stay home at least one week or longer until completely toilet trained.
- If multiple accidents occur in one day, the parent will be notified on that day; and if not corrected by day three, the child will have to stay home at least one week or longer until completely toilet trained.

Please note that this policy is not in place to shame or punish a child or inconvenience primary caregivers. Rather, cleaning accidents in the preschool setting is time consuming, and this time that teachers spend attending to and cleaning accidents is time that they are not spending interacting with children and facilitating the curriculum in a safe manner. This policy is intended to ensure the safety and happiness of children and staff at Saint Paul School.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

PLEASE SIGN AND DATE BELOW INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE REVIEWED AND UNDERSTAND OUR TOILET TRAINING POLICY.

PLEASE COMPLETE, DETACH AND RETURN THE SECTION BELOW TO YOUR CHILD’S TEACHER.

I have reviewed and understand Saint Paul School’s Preschool Toilet Training Policy:

CHILD’S NAME: _____

PARENT’S SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Parents/Guardians are responsible for reviewing the 2023-2024 Saint Paul School Student/Parent Handbook. Please sign and return this page, confirming that you understand and comply with the Preschool Handbook.

Preschool Handbook 2023-2024

Please acknowledge you have read and understand the contents of the Preschool Parent Handbook and the obligation to your child’s school and classroom, by signing below and returning this page to your child’s teacher.

I/we, _____, parent(s)/guardian(s)
of _____ in Pre-K _____ have read and understand
the policies and procedures set forth in the 2023-2024 Saint Paul School Preschool Handbook.

Parent/Guardian signature

Parent/Guardian signature

Date