

Parent Handbook

2025-2026

Revised June 2025



St. Andrew the Apostle Catholic Church
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Apex, North Carolina 27502

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St. Andrew ECC Parent Handbook 2025-2026

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The policies/procedures outlined in this Parent Handbook may be altered/changed in response to recommendations from St. Andrew Parish, the Diocese of Raleigh, Wake County Health Department, and/or the CDC.

MISSION STATEMENT

St. Andrew ECC provides a Christ-centered and nurturing environment where developmentally appropriate, play-based learning opportunities focus on social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

PHILOSOPHY

The ECC program strives to provide an environment in which the spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual, and physical growth of the child is fostered. Being a Catholic center, we will incorporate Bible stories, prayer, and Christian values into our daily lessons. We hope to emphasize the importance of each unique individual and to promote the value of each child's ideas, feelings, and actions.

Daily activities will focus upon appropriate developmental levels for each age. Intellectual and physical activities (both gross motor and fine motor) will be included each day to challenge and stimulate the growing child. Colors, shapes, letters, and number concepts are taught at your child's level of understanding. Most importantly, the children will learn how to play with their peers in a cooperative manner, learning to share with others and create friendships. We will work together with parents to help each child find happiness and security in his/her ever-expanding world.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

St. Andrew parishioners receive priority for admission during registration window. Once our parishioners' needs are met, we open enrollment to Catholics from other parishes and the public. St. Andrew ECC admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin. We follow the North Carolina Public Schools age eligibility date of August 31. Therefore, children must turn the age of their class on or before August 31. (i.e. children eligible for the two-year old class must turn two on or before August 31, etc.) The exceptions to this are our Toddler classes and Pre-K class. Children must turn one on or before May 31 (and be walking independently) to enroll in the Toddler class. Our Transition K class consists of older 4's and young 5's. Children enrolled in this class must turn 5 on or before December 1 (and receive a teacher/director recommendation.) A Student Health Form and **up-to-date** Immunization Record are **required** for enrollment.

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

Arrival: Parents will receive a video to explain the carpool procedure and a tag for the car will be provided. To facilitate efficiency, cars will be unloaded from 9:25-9:40. Your child's teacher assistant will walk him/her into the building each morning. **It is imperative for children to arrive on time to avoid interruption once classroom activities have begun.**

Dismissal: At dismissal time, you must **be prompt**. Your classroom teacher will provide details on the exact location of your **in-person** pick up. For the safety of your child, teachers will not release the child to anyone other than the parent unless the person is listed as an authorized pick up. Teachers need to give full attention to children; therefore, dismissal is not the time for a lengthy conversation with staff. Please send a message via the parent communication app/email or ask the teacher to call you, if needed.

Dismissal policy for sibling families: in the situation when a family has children enrolled in both a toddler class and preschool class, the toddler or younger child should be picked up first. Teachers will dismiss your

child ahead of families without siblings so that you have time to walk to the preschool hallway (or playground) to retrieve your second child. This procedure is in place because the younger/toddler class dismissal process is much faster than older classrooms and allows parents to be on time for both children.

If you need to pick up your child early, please notify the preschool office or teacher in advance to make arrangements. In an emergency, please contact the office directly at (919) 387-8656.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

Should a situation arise that delays your arrival, parents/caregivers are asked to notify the teacher via Brightwheel or to call the office. **These notifications do not excuse the tardy pick up; instead, this provides reassurance to the staff that the parent/caregiver is on the way. After the third time a parent/caregiver is late (more than 7 minutes after dismissal) he/she will be charged a fee of \$10.00; (per child) as well as an additional \$1.00 per minute for every minute after that. This fee must be paid through Brightwheel.**

ABSENCES

If your child is sick or will be absent from school, please message the teachers via Brightwheel and/or email the director. You may also call the office at (919) 387-8656 and we will notify the teachers.

TUITION

There are nine (9) monthly tuition payments which must be posted electronically to Brightwheel. The first is collected in May. Subsequent payments are due on the first of each month, beginning September 1 and concluding on April 1. **You may pay tuition in full or in half-year or quarterly installments if that works for your budget.** Tuition is late if not received by the 5th of the month and will incur a late fee of \$20.00. Should you have a special circumstance that prevents you from making online payments, contact the office to make alternate arrangements.

	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Toddlers	\$175	\$200
2-year-olds	\$195	\$220
3 Day 2's (step-up)	\$215	\$240
3 Days 3's & 4's	\$235	\$260
3 Day 3's (9:30-1:00)	\$260	\$285
4 Day 4's	\$300	\$325
4 Day 4's (9:30-1:00)	\$320	\$345
5 Day Pre-K (9:30-1:00)	\$345	\$370

**** Tuition, once paid, is non-refundable. ****

Absences for sickness, travel or holidays cannot be deducted from tuition payments.

WITHDRAWALS

Thirty days written notice is required before a child is withdrawn from the program. **Our policy is that refunds will not be made once tuition has already been paid.**

TOYS TO SCHOOL

Children in 2's through Pre-K are not permitted to bring "lUVies" or toys to preschool. When children bring extra toys and small items to school or to the playground, there is a tendency for these items to become misplaced, causing distress for the children. At times, the teachers may ask for items that pertain to the theme of the week, at which time we welcome your child's participation.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE OFFICE

Parents are asked to add the main ECC phone number as a contact on your cell phone. Additionally, parents are encouraged to check the preschool section of the St. Andrew website or refer to Brightwheel. News, calendars, tuition rates, and forms are available on the website. Our Instagram/Facebook pages are updated with photos of class activities, on occasion. When necessary, the ECC will send out alerts and reminders via a combination of email/text/social media posts in case of weather or to provide communications.

ECC Main phone line: 919-387-8656

Website: www.saintandrew.org

Church phone line: 919-362-0414, ext. 121 for the Director; ext. 128 for the Administrative Assistant

Email addresses: Director → ecc@saintandrew.org Administrative Assistant → ecc2@saintandrew.org

Facebook and Instagram: Saint Andrew Early Childhood Center

CONFERENCES

Parent/Teacher Conferences are in January. On the conference day the ECC will be closed, and no additional childcare will be provided. Parents are responsible for acquiring childcare during their conference time. The Lead Teacher will schedule conferences for families. This is the only date offered in January and parents are expected to make every effort to be available on this date. Should a concern arise in the classroom at a different time during the preschool year, the teachers will contact you to schedule a conference. It is our goal to partner with parents and work together to do what is best for your child.

LEARNING STANDARDS

We follow the Diocese of Raleigh's Preschool Standards for children ages 2-5. These standards will be taught through a theme-based unit approach in the classroom. For our general themes, teachers draw from a variety of resources in planning their lessons. For the religion lessons teachers use an in-house program focusing upon Bible stories, Saints and related arts and crafts.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Parents will be kept informed of daily activities through Brightwheel Parent Communication App.

FOOD ALLERGIES

To maintain a safe environment for children with life-threatening allergies, St. Andrew ECC is a peanut free and tree nut free school. Lunches may not contain peanuts and/or tree nuts or peanut and/or tree nut products. Any food items that contain peanuts or tree nuts will be sent home with a notice of our policy. If your child has a food allergy other than peanut or tree nut, notify the office. We will work with you to determine if your child's class needs to make modifications during lunchtime.

LUNCH

Parents should send a nutritious lunch and reusable water bottle for their child each day. Bentgo boxes or similar are recommended as they allow for easier independence. **Glass containers are not permitted.** We request that no sweets or "junk food" be included in the lunch. Children will eat between 11:00 am and 12:15 pm, depending on the schedule of the class.

CLOTHING

Please dress children in clothing that is suitable for play. Shoes should have rubber soles and cover the foot while staying in place securely - **no sandals, crocs, or flip flops**, please. We will go outside whenever possible, so please send jackets, hats and gloves on cold days. All clothing should be **labeled** with your child's first and last name for easy identification.

TOTE BAGS/BACKPACKS

A **large, open-top tote bag or backpack** needs to be provided by the parent. Bags must be large enough to hold parent folder, change of clothes, reusable water bottle, and lunch box. The tote bag/backpack must be **labeled** on the outside with your child's first and last name.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthday snacks are not permitted to be shared with the class. However, parents may choose to create a goodie bag with non-edible items that will be sent home with classmates. Teachers will celebrate the child's birthday within the classroom. If your child has a summer birthday, the teacher will work with you to choose a "special day" on which to celebrate. ***Party invitations may not be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited.***

BEHAVIOR/DISCIPLINE

The ECC must be a safe place for all children: free of hurtful words and actions. A positive approach to behavior management that respects the dignity of each child will be used in Preschool. We have been trained in a variety of techniques to support children's development of self-esteem and self-discipline at every stage of development, through positive reinforcement and calm redirection. Class rules, routines, and manners are discussed with the children early in the school year so that behavioral expectations are clear and consistent. Teachers model and reinforce appropriate behavior and encourage positive strategies for resolving conflict in conjunction with our Second Step Social and Emotional lessons.

When undesirable behaviors occur, positive guidance and redirection of a child's attention is generally sufficient action. When necessary, teachers may provide the child with a short time away from a group activity to reflect on his/her behavior and to encourage self-control. Parents will be contacted if a child is experiencing consistent behavioral or social difficulties in the classroom.

Physically aggressive behavior such as kicking, hitting, etc. cannot be tolerated. To protect all children and encourage acceptable behavior, the staff will intervene immediately if a child becomes physically aggressive. Teachers will work closely with parents to help children be successful at school. However, parents must understand that consistently aggressive or disruptive behavior is not acceptable and may result in dismissal from the program.

Specifics Regarding the Biting Policy: For the first offense, the child will be redirected, the parent told at dismissal, and an incident report will be provided. The second time a child bites, the parent will be contacted immediately to come pick up the child and take him/her home. If the child bites a third time, the parent will be contacted immediately to come pick up the child and take him/her home. A conference will be scheduled with the parents, teachers, and director to discuss future prevention and strategies. Repeated biting incidents may result in suspension or dismissal from the program. Anytime there is a bite, the wound will be cleaned, and an incident report will be provided to each family.

SPECIAL NEEDS

The Diocese of Raleigh Catholic Schools acknowledge that there are students who require special services to meet their full human potential. St. Andrew ECC is committed to all students succeeding to the best of their abilities. If a student has a diagnosed special need (documented by licensed medical personnel) accommodations may be offered that can be reasonably made within the normal general education classes and when the school has the resources (academic/staff) available to accommodate the students' needs. However, modifications to academic requirements or alterations in general course of studies will not be made. The Diocese of Raleigh Catholic Schools are exempt from the mandate of providing services for IEP's and 504 Plans. If a student cannot be accommodated within the school program, every effort is made to assist with placement in another school program beyond the ECC.

DISMISSAL FROM THE PROGRAM

The ECC has the right to dismiss any child whose needs are not best being served by our program and/or whose behavior seriously affects the welfare and learning of others. Prior to dismissal, parents will have been informed of concerns and efforts to resolve them will have been made.

TOILET TRAINING

3 years and up: Children in the 3s, 4s and TK must be independently toilet-trained **before** attending preschool. Children are required to wear underwear. We recognize that even toilet-trained children can have an occasional accident and a two-week grace period at the start of the year will apply. However, accidents should be infrequent. Fully toilet trained children must be able to do the following **without adult assistance** and with **minimal adult prompting**:

- Be accident-free in regular underwear (not training pants, disposable diapers, or pull-ups)
- Recognize and be able to tell a teacher in words that they need to use the toilet before they need to go
- Hold their toilet need until they can get to the bathroom from a classroom or the playground or while waiting in line for other children to finish using the toilet
- Get on and off the toilet mostly independently (we have stools in all bathrooms to help children reach the toilet should they need this)
- Pull down/up their pants/underwear or lift dress/skirt (Ensure your child is dressed in clothing that they can manage easily such as elastic waistbands, no belts or buttons, etc.)
- Wipe themselves after using the toilet (teachers are not allowed to wipe/clean children)
 - Flush the toilet
 - Wash/dry their hands

A more detailed independent toilet training letter was sent during the summer and parents are required to read and sign the toilet training contract in Brightwheel prior to the first day of school..

1's and 2's: Children should come to preschool in diapers with tabs, until the final stages of potty training (defined as the child having successfully used the toilet consistently and independently for at least one week.) At this time, he/she may attend wearing pull-ups or underwear. During this newly trained time, parents should send plenty of extra clothes including socks and shoes in case of an accident. Teachers are willing to support the parents' toilet-training efforts providing it does not become too disruptive or time-consuming.

LICE

Parents will be notified if a confirmed case of lice is present in your child's classroom. If you find that your child has lice, please notify the ECC so that we can take the necessary steps to prevent it from spreading in the classroom. Parents are encouraged to contact their physician to seek treatment. Students may return to school after appropriate treatment has begun. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill all crawling lice. According to a June 2015 notice from the CDC both the Association of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses advocate that "no nit" policies should be discontinued. "No nit" policies that require a child to be free of nits before they can return to school should be discontinued for the following reasons:

- Many nits are more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the scalp. Such nits are usually not viable and very unlikely to hatch to become crawling lice, or may, in fact be empty shells called "casings".
- Nits are cemented to hair shafts and are very unlikely to be transferred successfully to others.
- The burden of unnecessary absenteeism to students far outweighs the risks associated with head lice.

Parents, please understand that lice is treatable and can happen to anyone! Personal hygiene and cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

HEALTH POLICY

General Health: For your child's comfort and out of consideration for the other children in the class, children should remain home if they have had any of the following symptoms within the past 24 hours:

- fever over 100 degrees
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- frequent cough
- continuous nasal discharge
- rash
- conjunctivitis (pink eye)

**Children must be fever-free
(without the use of medication)
for 24 hours before returning to school.**

Allergies: Children with *chronic* allergies with symptoms such as a frequent cough or runny nose, may need to visit their pediatrician to determine an effective way to reduce symptoms. The preschool reserves the right to request a written note from the doctor.

Infectious Diseases: Parents should notify the office if their child is diagnosed with an infectious disease (such as COVID-19 and/or Hand, Foot, and Mouth).

COVID-19: Parents are responsible for being knowledgeable of symptoms related to COVID-19. Staying home when sick is essential to keeping infections out of childcare settings. Children/staff who have symptoms of COVID-19 need to stay home and contact their health care provider for guidance.

- **Positive COVID diagnosis:** Per the CDC update on March 1, 2024, individuals positive with COVID no longer need to isolate for five days. Individuals can return to preschool once symptoms are improving, and they have been fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications.

MEDICATION DISPENSATION PLAN

The ECC staff is not allowed to dispense medication unless we have a medication authorization form (completed and signed by the doctor) on file. Forms are available in the office or on the website.

INJURIES/MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Parents will be informed of any accidents or injuries sustained by their child during the preschool day. A written record of such occurrences will be provided to the parent and a copy kept in the student file. Should a child experience a medical emergency requiring immediate medical care, parents or their "emergency contact person" (as listed on the Registration form) will be notified immediately. The child will be transported to the nearest hospital by ambulance, depending upon the severity of the problem.

It is essential, particularly in relation to sudden illness, that the office have current phone numbers where parents can be reached during school hours in case of illness or emergency. Please update the office immediately if there are any changes to your contact number. If the office is unable to reach a parent or other emergency contact for pick-up of a sick child within 30 minutes, there will be a \$50 fine charged to the account.

PLAYGROUND

When the weather permits, children will play outside on the playground each day. In the interest of safety, only ECC children are allowed on the playground during preschool hours.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

St. Andrew's ECC generally follows Wake County Public School System's decision regarding closings and delays due to inclement weather, however, the Wake County school district is a large district with factors which affect it's closing that do not necessarily impact the ECC (i.e buses). St. Andrew's ECC reserves the right to make independent decisions regarding inclement weather, if necessary. If Wake County is operating in remote learning status or chooses a virtual learning day due to inclement weather, the ECC will use St. Michael Catholic School and/or St. Mary Magdalene as a guide in deciding about whether to open. The decision will be communicated via Brightwheel message, Facebook and website. *If the ECC opens on a delayed start, children will still need lunch. Parents are encouraged to use their best judgment about whether it is safe to travel to campus during inclement weather.

In the event of excessive closures due to unforeseen circumstances, we will make every attempt to reschedule the days missed. However, it may not always be possible to make-up each day missed. The make-up days will be determined by the Director.

SAFETY DRILLS

The ECC has a comprehensive "crisis plan" to respond to various types of emergencies (ex. fire drills, severe weather, lockdown). Teachers and staff are aware of and practice procedures that are designed to keep children safe. In the event of a true emergency, parents will be notified through text messaging and told where/when to pick up their child. Drills are conducted in a calm and caring way to provide reassurance to children.

- Fire drills will be held within the first ten days of the school year and monthly thereafter.
- Lockdown drills and procedures will be practiced throughout the year.
- Severe Weather drills are scheduled two times per year.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

There are many ways for parents to become involved at the ECC. **When volunteering, parents need to make other arrangements for siblings, so that full attention can be given to the preschool students with whom they are working.** Teachers in the 3s, 4s, and TK classes will communicate offerings for parent volunteers at various times throughout the school year. Other volunteer opportunities include room parents, playdough makers, class librarian, sewing committee, etc. The Diocesan policy requires that all volunteers sign "in" when they arrive and "out" when they leave. This helps us monitor visitors for our students' protection. The "**Sign in/Sign out**" clipboard is located in the preschool lobby.

IN-HOUSE FIELD TRIPS

Threes, Fours, and TK classes will experience curriculum enhancement programs twice a year.

CUSTODY AGREEMENTS

The safety and well-being of our students and staff is always our priority. To ensure the protection of all our students, staff and teachers, we request a copy of family custody agreements to keep in our records.

PARENTAL CONCERNS

Any parental questions or concerns should be **first** directed toward your child's teachers. Most questions can be easily resolved at this level. If further discussion is necessary, parents may then request a conference with the Director to voice their concerns.

If a child should experience any learning difficulties during his/her ECC enrollment, the parents and teachers can utilize Project Enlightenment, a Wake County Schools child/parent/teacher advisory service that specializes in the preschool-age child. With parental permission, Project Enlightenment consultants can observe a child in the classroom (at no cost to the parent) and make recommendations to both parents and staff as to ways to best serve the child's needs. Further testing, parent consultations and parenting workshops are also available through Project Enlightenment.

DISTANCE LEARNING

The ECC has a plan for transitioning to temporary distance learning strategies in the event of a natural disaster, disease outbreak or any other circumstances that make it unsafe or imprudent to continue on-campus education. The judgment of the school administration, in consultation with our pastor (where applicable), and in conjunction with the Catholic Schools Office of the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh, will determine when the change to our school's normal instructional model warrants the transition to distance learning. The strategies used for distance learning will be developed by the school administration and faculty.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Annually, parents will have the opportunity to evaluate the program. During the second semester, a survey will be sent home. We welcome your input and encourage you to complete the survey

2025-2026 Important Dates

Dates subject to change. Check website or Brightwheel for most accurate calendar.

Aug. 27 & 28	Meet the Teacher (details in Brightwheel calendar)
Sep. 1	Closed - Labor Day
Sep. 2	Onboarding Day: Bunny, Panda, Monkey, Turtle, Ladybug, Horse, Owl, & Lion (9:30-10:30)
Sep. 3	Onboarding Day: Duckling, Bee, Penguin, Koala, Elephant (9:30-10:30)
Sept. 3	First full day: Horse, Owl, & Lion
Sept. 4	First full day: Bunny, Panda, Monkey, Turtle, Ladybug
Sept. 5	First full day: Penguin, Koala, Elephant
Sept. 8	First full day: Duckling, Bee
Sept. 26	Closed- Professional Development Day
Oct. 8 & 9	Picture Days
Oct. 24	ECC Trunk or Treat and Fall Festival
Nov. 4	Closed - Teacher Workday
Nov. 11	Closed -- Veteran's Day
Nov. 26-28	Closed -- Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec. 10 & 11	Narrative Summaries Distributed to Parents
Dec. 15	Christmas Party: Duckling and Bees
Dec. 16	Christmas Party: Bunny, Turtle, Monkey, and Pandas
Dec. 16	Christmas Family Social: Ladybugs
Dec. 17	Christmas Program: Elephant, Horse, Owl, Lion (12:30 dismissal for all classes)
Dec. 17	Christmas Family Social: Penguin & Koala (12:30 dismissal for all classes)
Dec. 18	Staff Christmas Luncheon (12:30 dismissal for all classes)
Dec. 22 - Jan. 4	Closed -- Christmas Break
Jan. 13	Parent/Teacher Conferences for 2s-TK (ECC closed)
Jan. 19	Closed - Martin Luther King Day
Jan. 29	Bundle Up for Bedtime Stories 6:30pm (to celebrate Catholic Schools Week)
Feb. 16	Closed - President's Day
Feb. 17	Closed - Diocesan Retreat Day for Staff
Mar. 19	St. Joseph Day: Ladybug, Horse, Owl
Mar. 20	St. Joseph Day: Penguin, Koala, Elephant, Lion
Mar. 25	Spring Picture Day: Duckling, Bee, Penguin, Koala, Elephant, Lion
Mar. 26	Spring Picture Day: Bunny, Panda, Monkey, Turtle, Ladybug, Horse, Owl
Apr. 2-10	Closed - Spring Break (Easter is April 5)
Apr. 17	Spring Music Program: Penguin, Koala, Ladybug (12 pm in the church)
Apr. 23	Family Fun Night (5:45 to 7 pm)
Apr. 22 & 23	Narrative Summary (2s-TK) sent home
May 7	Crowning of Mary (12 pm): Panda, Monkey, Turtle, Ladybug, Owl, Horse
May 8	Crowning of Mary (12 pm): Bee, Penguin, Koala, Elephant, Lion
May 13	End of Year Program: Elephant, Horse, Owl
May 13	End of Year Family Social: Penguin & Koala (12:30 dismissal for these classes)

- May 14 End of Year Program: Lions (12:30 dismissal for this class)
- May 14 End of Year Family Social: Ladybug
- May 18 Last Day of School: Duckling, Bee, Penguin, Koala, Elephant
- May 19 Last Day of School: Bunny, Turtle, Monkey, Panda, Ladybug, Horse, Owl, Lions
- May 20 & 21 Snow Make Up Days (if needed)

Extended Day Schedule 2025-2026

(Three 7-week sessions)

	Session 1 Registration Dates: Sep. 3-5	Session 2 Registration Dates: Dec. 3-5	Session 3 Registration Dates: Feb. 18-20
Tuesday	Oct. 7- Dec. 9	Jan. 6 - Mar. 3	Mar. 17 - May 5
Wednesday	Oct. 8- Dec. 10	Jan. 7 - Mar. 4	Mar. 18 - May 6
Thursday	Oct. 9-Dec. 11	Jan. 8 - Mar. 5	Mar. 19 - May 7

Discovery Day Schedule 2025-2026

(Three 7-week sessions)

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Thursday	Oct. 9 - Dec. 4	Jan. 8 - Mar. 5	Mar. 12 - May 7
Friday	Oct. 10 - Dec. 11	Jan. 9 - Mar. 6	Mar. 13 - May 8

Extended Day and Discovery Day classes will not meet the weeks of November 3, November 10 and November 24, December 15, January 12, February 16, March 30, and April 6.