



**Parent Handbook
2011-2012**

Tips for Success

First day jitters, tears, separation anxiety; these are all very normal and natural tendencies of any young child starting a new school year. Many children fear new experiences and sometimes saying good-bye is difficult.

It is important for children to feel at ease and comfortable at Saint Patrick's Preschool, so we have devised a list of things that parents and teachers can do to make a child's first morning (and every morning) as easy as possible:

Lots of rest and a good breakfast in a relaxed atmosphere gives your child the best start for the day. This is a good time to help your child look forward to preschool as a place to have fun, meet new friends and explore new things.

We encourage you to talk cheerfully about the drop off procedure so your child can anticipate what will happen when you arrive at school.

Experience shows it is best to let the teachers come to the car rather than have parents come into the classroom to say good-bye.

Be matter-of-fact and decisive when ready to leave the car line. Being tentative only increases separation difficulties.

Both teacher and parent need to convey their own sense of security, which can be very reassuring to a child.

Be aware that not every child will have a difficult transition. You know your child best and if he or she is content with the situation, you can feel comfortable in allowing your child the opportunity to begin building a sense of autonomy, which is a building block of self-esteem.

The actual developments of a first day are almost always a learning experience for both parent and teacher. The most important things we can do for our children during this time is to be as confident and calm as possible, comfort them without pleading or being overly apologetic and distract them from grief as quickly as possible.

If your child is crying when you leave, know that he or she will likely settle down as soon as he is taken inside. If your child is still upset at circle time, however, we will call you to come for her. We believe it is better to try again the next time than to have a negative experience at school.

Drop Off and Pick Up Policy

Saint Patrick's Preschool begins at 9 a.m. A teacher or assistant will be outside, on the church side of the building, between 8:50 and 9:10 a.m. to greet the children and take them from the car to the classrooms. Please pull up with the passenger side of the car toward the sidewalk. Teachers must come into the classrooms promptly at 9:10 a.m., so if you arrive after that time, please park your car and walk your child in to the Preschool Director's office.

The preschool day ends at 12 noon. Children will generally be dismissed from their classrooms. Please park your car on the church side of the building and come into the school to pick up your child. For security reasons, we ask that you sign your child out and wait outside the classroom door for the teacher to dismiss the children. After all children have been dismissed to their parents, you are welcome to come into the classroom to check your child's cubbie for projects, notices, and personal belongings; or just to give your child an opportunity to share his environment with you. This is also a good time to chat with the teacher about any issues you may have.

Lunch Bunch ends promptly at 12:45 p.m., and Playdate ends promptly at 2:00 p.m. Please follow the same dismissal procedure as described above.

Please be courteous and pick up your child ON TIME. The staff needs their time after school to prepare for the next day and to attend meetings and conferences.

A \$1.00 per minute late fee will be imposed for late pick up. Understanding however that emergencies do occur, a late fee will not be imposed the first time you arrive late.

No child will be released to anyone other than parents and those designated on the registration form unless prior written permission is provided by that child's parent. Please note that anyone picking up your child may be asked to show photo identification (including parents, if they are not known to the teacher). You are welcome to leave a labeled car seat for the person picking up your child.

Safety and Parking Lots

Your child's safety is our number one concern and our rules are designed to ensure their safety. To that end, it is crucial that **no child leave the building without an adult holding their hand. Children must also be accompanied by an adult when they are on the playground.** Please be vigilant when you are conversing with friends or teachers and keep your children with you. There is a lot of traffic through our parking lot and a child darting from behind a large SUV is impossible to see.

Additionally, there is **absolutely no parking in the lot directly in front of the preschool wing.** That lot is owned by the medical buildings next door and we are prohibited from parking there except in the evening and on weekends. Please help us to be good neighbors and park as directed in the church-owned lot on the hospital side of the church. We appreciate your cooperation with both of these items.

General Classroom Policy

Candy, gum, toys or other personal possessions that might be misplaced, damaged or represent a safety hazard to the children are not allowed at Saint Patrick's Preschool unless specifically asked for by the teacher for Show'n'Tell or other special occasions.

Comfortable play clothes should be worn, easily on/off for those potty training, and soft-soled shoes are recommended for playing outside. Open toe shoes and sandals are not allowed at school for safety reasons. Additionally, crock-style shoes are not appropriate for the playground. A complete change of clothing (all items labeled and in a zip lock or similar bag) is to be left at school for each child. Please be sure to label all jackets and other outer wear.

Visitors are always welcome at Saint Patrick's Preschool. Visitors are required to sign in and out and are asked to respect the daily schedule and rules and to defer to the teachers during visits to the classroom. Saint Patrick's Preschool is designed for children 18 months – 5 years old so alternate arrangements should be made for younger siblings during school hours. All siblings are welcome on special event days.

On special event days, preschool will proceed normally until the time of the event. Parents are asked to wait outside the classroom or at a specified area until invited in by the teacher or the children are brought to the specified site. Parents then assume responsibility for the supervision of their child.

Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times when outside the church building, including on the playground.

Discipline Policy

With commitment to the ideal that *all* children can succeed at Saint Patrick's Preschool, the following discipline policy shall be set forth to guide teachers, assistants and volunteers in the discipline of children under their care. Staff will:

provide a safe and positive environment in which social, intellectual and physical competencies can be developed, and where there is minimal opportunity for unacceptable behavior.

provide an environment which encourages self-respect, respect for others and for property.

set limits and rules which reflect realistic expectations for the age and development of the children.

be fair and consistent in their guidance of the behavior of children.

use positive reinforcement of acceptable behavior.

The teachers, with input from the director, shall be allowed to establish appropriate discipline strategies for dealing with the following unacceptable behaviors:

Throwing toys, equipment, etc.; hitting, biting or hurting others; climbing indoors; running indoors

If "time-out" is used, it shall last between one and three minutes in an area of quiet, supervised isolation. Conflicts will be avoided by offering the child a choice of acceptable behaviors. If "time-out" is not effective, the teacher will refer the child to the director for discussion and redirection.

Children who are having an unsuccessful day at preschool may, as a last resort, have parents called to remove the child for the rest of the school day and have the child start fresh the next day.

Should your child be involved in an altercation with another student, whether as the aggressor or recipient, you will be advised by the teacher at dismissal.

Health and Illness Policy

In striving for a healthy preschool, we ask that you keep your child at home if they have any of the following:

Any contagious disease (flu, chicken pox, strep throat, etc.)

Green or yellow nasal discharge

Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye)

Impetigo

Diarrhea or vomiting in the past 24 hours

Fever within the past 24 hours

We ask that you keep your child home while awaiting confirmation of any contagious illness (i.e., strep throat, pinworm, chicken pox) or upon detection of head lice. Please inform your child's teacher of any diagnosis of contagious illness.

If a child becomes ill during school hours, he/she will be separated from other students and parents will be called to pick up their child immediately.

Please remember that frequent hand washing is the key to controlling contagious illness. We promote it at school and encourage you to do the same at home.

Potty Training Policy

Children other than 2-year-olds must be fully potty trained. This means that children must wear appropriate clothing and be self-sufficient in their toileting needs. No diapers or pull-ups are allowed in age groups other than 2s.

Children will be considered not potty trained if they have three accidents in one week or if they have accidents on a regular basis. While teachers understand that there may be accidents the first week of school, they should subside by the second week. If there are continual accidents, the director and teacher will evaluate the situation and discuss it with the parents. The director may then ask that the child remain at home until fully potty trained.

Please provide a complete set of extra (labeled) clothing including underwear, pants, shirt, and socks, to be kept at school for use in case of accidents.

Inclement Weather Policy

There may be times when Saint Patrick's Preschool must close for the day or delay the start of school due to inclement weather. The safety of our families and staff is always our primary concern. If we must close for the day, we will make every effort to make up the time missed. If we delay, preschool will start at 10:00 a.m.

Please tune to your local television station for closing or delay information.

If we are able to schedule make up days, we will generally use a scheduled teacher workday. We will not schedule make up days during spring break, on Saturdays, or later than our closing date in May.

Financial Policy

Tuition for Saint Patrick's Preschool is divided into nine equal monthly installments. Invoices will be issued on the 15th of each month beginning in August and ending in April. Payment is due by the 1st of the month. Automatic credit/debit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover) is the preferred payment method. Checks are accepted but valid credit/debit card information must be provided to be used in the event payment is not received by the 10th of the month. Checks can be mailed to the school at P.O. Box 1491, Mooresville, NC 28115, or dropped in the payment box located in the classroom lobby. ***Please DO NOT put payments in backpacks.*** A fee of \$25 will be charged for returned checks.

Tuition unpaid 15 days after the due date may result in the student not being allowed to attend classes until the account is current. *Please contact the Administrator immediately if there are extenuating circumstances. Do not wait. The Administrator can be reached at (704) 663-5659 x203.*

In the event that a child must be removed from the preschool for any reason, the family is responsible to provide one month's written notice to the Administrator. The family is responsible for paying tuition for the month of notice whether or not the student attends.

Please refer to the Classes & Curriculum tab on the school web site for a schedule of tuition fees.

Curriculum

Saint Patrick's Preschool promotes physical, social, emotional and cognitive development with age-appropriate activities.

The school uses a theme-based curriculum. Each week has a different theme on which lessons are built. Daily lessons include shape, color, letter, and number recognition; weather; calendar; etc.

Kindergarten readiness is a primary focus in the 4-year-old classrooms. Our goal is for the children to be able to recognize numbers to 20, and all the letters of the alphabet. We will help them learn to write their name, know their address, and to understand classroom etiquette.

Research shows that children who are actively involved in music (who play it or sing it regularly) do better in reading and math when they start school, are better able to focus and control their bodies, play better with others and have higher self-esteem. To foster this development, our program incorporates a weekly music lesson using **Kindermusik**[®].

Overall our program:

- Teaches educational fundamentals
- Creates self-confidence
- Develops interpersonal skills
- Teaches following directions
- Develops fine and gross motor skills
- Uses music to enhance learning

Music Program

Research supports skills learned through music carry over into study skills, communication skills, cognitive skills and abstract reasoning skills useful to all parts of life. That's why we are proud to offer Kindermusik[®] as an integral part of our curriculum. Kindermusik is a fun music education program that encourages children to explore self expression and creativity through rhythm, marching, and dancing.

Field Trips

Field trips can be a great social outing for the children with families and friends. They give the children an opportunity to interact with teachers and classmates outside of the classroom environment, have educational value and are just plain fun. Field trips can either involve traveling to a special venue or having a special program brought to the school.

These may be scheduled in the fall and/or spring. If we opt to travel to a venue, we are not equipped to transport children so families are asked to provide transportation for their children. Entrance fees to the venue will be collected prior to the event for all those attending. There is no limit to the number of family members who may attend and we encourage your participation. If we opt to have a special program visit us, a small fee may be charged to offset any cost and all family members are invited to participate on site.

Information on date, time, place, and fee will be communicated to families approximately four weeks before the event. Be sure to check backpacks when they come home.

Snack Information

A snack program is organized by the Class Room Parent. Parents have the option of signing up to provide snacks for their child's class on a weekly basis. These snacks replace and/or supplement the basic snack provided by the school (Goldfish, pretzels, crackers, water, etc.). Parents are encouraged to be as creative as you would like, but to try to be healthy too. It is fun for the kids if the snack incorporates the theme for the week (which is shown on the sign-up sheets), but it is not necessary. Any kind of fruit or vegetable is always a good choice.

This program is voluntary; no parent is required to participate. Reminders and suggestions for each week are sent from the room parent to the parent who signed up for that week.

If you want to bring in a special treat during a week that you have not signed up for (to celebrate a birthday, etc.), please coordinate with the person who did sign up for that week, or through your room parent or the teacher.

If your child has any food allergies or special dietary needs, please notify the school so that accommodations can be made as necessary.

Early Morning Care

For your convenience, early morning care is available Monday — Friday, beginning at 8:30, for a small additional fee. You are asked to sign up for your child's entire schedule. You are also asked to park your car and bring your child into the building. The form to register for this program is available under the Enrollment tab on the school web site. Note that the form is entitled Playdate & Lunch Bunch Form. Fees are listed on the form.

Lunch Bunch

Saint Patrick's Preschool offers Lunch Bunch as an option. It provides time for your child to enjoy having lunch with friends. Lunch Bunch helps rising Kindergarten students develop good manners and confidence in handling their own food. It also helps them adjust to the longer school day.

Parents should pack a healthy lunch, including a drink that does not need refrigeration. Children will be instructed to bring home any food they do not eat (unless it would spill) so that parents can monitor their child's food intake. We also ask that children not share their food with others.

Lunch Bunch will be directed by a teacher. It will be held Monday through Thursday. Sign up can be done at any time and you may sign up for as many days per week as you choose. The first month's fee is due at sign-up. Thereafter, fees will be billed monthly with regular program tuition. Fees are listed on the registration form for this program which is available within the Enrollment tab on the school web site. No refunds will be made for days not attended except in the event of extended illness, for which a doctor's statement may be required.

Pick up is **promptly** at 12:45 p.m. Please follow the normal pick-up procedure. Lunch Bunch will generally not be held if a field trip is scheduled for that day, and fees for that day will be prorated.

Playdate

Bring your lunch and join our afternoon Playdate with friends. Your child will enjoy supervised free play, primarily on the playground, while you run errands, keep appointments, shop, etc. Playdate is available Monday through Thursday from 12 noon to 2:00 p.m.

Parents should pack a healthy lunch, including a drink, that does not need refrigeration. Children will be instructed to bring home any food they do not eat (unless it would spill) so that parents can monitor their child's food intake. We also ask that children not share their food with others.

Playdate will be directed by the teaching staff. It will be held Monday through Thursday. Sign up can be done at any time and you may sign up for as many days per week as you choose. The first month's fee is due at sign-up. Thereafter, fees will be billed monthly with regular program tuition. Fees are listed on the registration form for this program which is available within the Enrollment tab on the school web site. No refunds will be made for days not attended except in the event of extended illness, for which a doctor's statement may be required. Please note that a minimum of three children must be enrolled in the Playdate program for it to be held.

Pick up is ***promptly*** at 2:00 p.m. Please follow the normal pick-up procedure.

Room Parent Program

Saint Patrick's Preschool Room Parent program provides an opportunity for parents to participate in their child's preschool experience in an organized, productive manner.

Parent volunteers act as coordinators for each classroom working as a liaison between the teacher and parents, and the school and parents, to organize various events.

Room parents will maintain a list of parent contact information for their classroom. They will contact parents periodically with reminders of upcoming events, or to request parents to volunteer for an event. The Room Parent organization is a primary source of information and communication for the school.

You will be contacted by your class' Room Parent within the first few weeks of school. If you would like to volunteer to serve as the room parent for your child's class, please be sure to tell the teacher!

Ideas for Parents

Parents often ask how they can help or how they can be involved at school. Let us count the ways!

You may have a profession, hobby or special interest to share with the children. A doctor might let the children listen through a stethoscope. A race team member might have a helmet and ear protection for the children to try on. A gardener might like to supply fresh vegetables for snack. You might just enjoy coming into the classroom at circle time and reading a story. There is no end to the possibilities.

Maybe you have some unused clothing, jewelry, hats or costumes to donate. Boys and girls alike enjoy playing dress-up. Or, perhaps your preschooler has a set of blocks or other toys they no longer play with that would have new life in our classrooms. Again, there is no end to the possibilities.

If you have something to share, donate, or would just like to be part of our day, let your child's room parent know and we will be happy to arrange it.

Fund Raising Programs

Saint Patrick's Preschool is a not-for-profit program and, as such, we rely on fundraisers to supplement our revenue to keep our tuition rates affordable. The Preschool Board of Directors has established several fundraising projects, some of which are ongoing, others are annual events. Your participation in them is always voluntary and greatly appreciated.

We participate in the Harris Teeter Together in Education, and Food Lion Shop & Share programs. Each of these helps our school raise funds without asking you to contribute any money! All you do is link your VIC and/or MVP cards to Saint Patrick's Preschool. We earn a percentage of your purchases at Harris Teeter and Food Lion to spend however we choose. It's an easy way to support your school!

At least once during the year, we bring in a photographer to take student and family portraits. Pictures make great gifts and our school earns a percentage on your purchases.

Gallery Hop is an annual event that showcases student artistic and musical talents. It is a fun-filled family event that includes a student art show and musical performances. Bring your family and friends to enjoy your child's artistic achievements and support your school.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of Saint Patrick's Preschool meets regularly and parents of children attending the school are always welcome to attend. Your child's teacher can provide the meeting schedule. She can also provide information if you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors or one of its standing committees.