

St. Margaret Mary Catholic School
Early Childhood Learning Center
PreKindergarten-3 and
PreKindergarten-4 Handbook

This handbook contains information regarding the PK-3 and PK-4 programs. Please keep this handbook and refer to it throughout the year. Any changes made to class procedures will be sent home in writing. This handbook is intended as a supplement, not a replacement, for the SMM School Handbook, which can be accessed at our school website: saintmm.org.

Phone Number for the Early Childhood Center: (985)643-3558

We are excited to welcome parents and children to St. Margaret Mary School.
This year promises to be a time of growth and learning.

An overview of our PreK-3 program

Our curriculum is based on a letter-a-week program, and a number, color, and shape a month. Each week we cover letter identification, the letter's sound, and words that begin with that letter. We have a theme that coincides with the weekly letter to further your child's exposure to that letter. The weekly theme often incorporates science and social studies concepts.

Our curriculum is based on the philosophy that children learn best through hands-on play. Therefore, the weekly letter, theme, and math skills will be introduced through art, music, stories, dramatic play, sensory activities, fine motor activities, and circle time. These learning activities will keep children engaged, challenged, and will help them develop recognition and literacy skills.

A large focus of our PK-3 curriculum is to foster independence. The children are taught to clean up the classroom, put on their own outerwear, and set up centers. We encourage families to continue this at home by having the child dress himself/herself, help clean his/her room, and by doing special tasks around the house each day.

A Day in PreK-3

7:30-8:10 Arrival/Fine Motor/Table Top Toys
8:10-9:00 Morning Circle Time
9:00-9:45 Small Group
9:45-10:00 Bathroom & Snack
10:00-10:45 Outdoor Play/Gross Motor
10:45-11:30 Whole Group/Music/Religion/Centers
11:30-12:15 Lunch/Bathroom/Story time
12:15-2:10 Nap
2:10-2:25 Bathroom/Music/Movement
2:30 Dismissal

An overview of our PreK-4 program

Our curriculum is an integrated curriculum incorporating various proven methods of early childhood development. It is in compliance with the Louisiana State Early Learning & Development Standards and the Catholic School Identity Standards. We offer an environment that fosters the child's social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development. We believe that children learn best through "play with a purpose." Each day your child will enjoy small and large group activities, art, music, literature, and outdoor play. Our reading program is a balanced approach to reading, incorporating phonics and whole language. Math skills will be introduced through hands-on activities. Our religion curriculum focuses on discovering God's love through all of creation, prayer, and the liturgical seasons of the year. Science and social studies concepts are taught in a meaningful, active, and integrative manner.

A Day in Pre-Kindergarten-4

Each class has its own daily schedule designed to incorporate structured and unstructured activities throughout the day. The daily schedule addresses all areas of child development and includes the following:

Morning Arrival Activities: 45 minutes

Morning Circle Time: 30 minutes

Learning Activities & Centers: 90 minutes

Religious Activities: 25 minutes

Outdoor Play (twice daily): 50-60 minutes total

Morning Snack: 15 minutes

Music/Movement: 10 minutes

Lunch: 30 minutes

Rest time: 90 minutes

Story Times: 20-30 minutes total

Pre-Kindergarten Policies

Morning Drop Off (7:30 a.m. to 8:10 a.m.):

ALL students should arrive at school wearing their nametags. This assists the staff in directing students to the appropriate class.

Car riders (both PK-3 and PK-4):

- Parents are required to use the drive-through carline.
- Please refrain from using cell phones while in the carline.
- Your child's car seat should be placed on the passenger side of the vehicle.
- Teachers will assist your child in getting out of the car.
- Children may arrive any time between 7:30 a.m. and 8:10 a.m.
- After 8:10 a.m., your child will be considered tardy and parents must escort the child into the building to receive a tardy slip. Teachers will not be on carline duty after 8:10 a.m.
- Pets are not allowed to be in cars during carline.

Drive-through Instructions:

- Enter the school grounds from Independence St.
- After entering, immediately get into the right lane and turn in the first parking area.
- Continue to the covered portico to drop off your child.
- After drop off, proceed forward in the right lane and stop at the intersection.
- If you want to exit campus, please turn on your right blinker and the duty teacher will direct you when it is safe to turn. Exit via Robert Blvd.
- If you need to use the carline for older siblings, please turn on your left blinker and the duty teacher will direct you when it is safe to cross. Drop off siblings and exit via Robert Blvd.

Bus riders (PK4 students only): Exit the bus and proceed to the cafeteria. If your child has an older sibling, please ask them to escort the PK student to the cafeteria. From 7:30 – 8:00, a duty teacher will supervise the children. At 8:00 a.m., the children and the teacher or teaching assistant will ride a shuttle bus to the Early Childhood Center.

Before Care: If you need this service, enroll your child at Check Registration Day. When you arrive at the building, ring the doorbell to alert the staff.

Afternoon Dismissal (2:30 p.m.-3:15 p.m.):**Car riders (both PK-3 and PK-4):**

- Parents are required to use the drive-through carline.
- Please refrain from using your cell phone while picking up your child in carline.
- Your child's car seat should be placed on the passenger side of the vehicle.
- Any adult picking up a student must display the SMM-designated ID card. Adults may pick up only those students whose names appear on the card.
- Teachers will escort students to the vehicles and will assist in loading and securing students into car seats.
- Pets are not allowed to be in cars during carline.
- Afternoon carline ends at 3:15 p.m. After 3:15 p.m., any child not picked up will be brought to the aftercare program and a fee will be incurred.

Drive-through Instructions:

- Enter the school grounds from Independence St.
- After entering, immediately get into the right lane and turn in the first parking area.
- Continue to the covered portico to pick up your child.
- After pick up, proceed forward in the right lane and stop at the intersection.
- If you want to exit campus, please turn on your right blinker and turn when safe. Exit via Robert Blvd. Independence St. cannot be used as an exit.
- If you need to use the carline for older siblings, the right lane cannot be blocked until after 2:55 p.m. If it is before 2:55 p.m., please pull off to the side so that cars can exit campus.
- When K-8th graders are dismissed, proceed to the intersection in the right lane. Please turn on your left blinker and the duty teacher will direct you when it is safe to cross. Pick up siblings and exit via Robert Blvd. Independence St. cannot be used as an exit.

Bus Riders (PK4 students only): We have arranged for one bus to pick up all bus riders and deliver them safely to the bus line area by the gym. One teacher is assigned to supervise this group and ensure that children ride the correct bus. Your child will be provided with a nametag at the beginning of the school year for this purpose. It is vital that bus riders wear their nametags every day to school.

After Care: If you need this service, register your child at Check Registration Day.

PLEASE READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY:

Any special instructions regarding your child, such as who is picking up a student or if a student will attend aftercare that day, cannot be accepted verbally or relayed through the duty teacher. Please remember to communicate to your child's teacher through a written note any pertinent information for that day. It is the responsibility of the parents to document in writing any changes in daily routines. If a note is not received, your child will be dismissed according to the information we have on file.

Early Check-Out Procedure:

If a child must leave school before 2:15 p.m., school policy requires that parents come into the reception area of the Early Childhood Center and sign out the student. A student will only be released to adults listed on the Student Information Sheet on file. After 2:15 p.m., students will only be dismissed through the drive-through carline, which starts at 2:30 p.m.

Absences:

If a student is ill, please keep him/her home from school. If a student will be absent, please call the Early Childhood Center at 643-3558 on the morning of the absence. It is school policy that following any absence, parents must send a note explaining the absence. If you know in advance that your child will be absent for family travel or a doctor's appointment, it would be much appreciated if the teacher is notified.

Health Considerations/Medications:

Children must be kept home if they show signs of illness. **In order to return to school, children must be fever-free and symptom-free without medication for 24 hours.**

If a child becomes ill at school, parents will be called and asked to pick up the child as soon as possible. If parents cannot be reached, the emergency contacts on the Student Information Sheet will be called.

We do not administer medications, except in accordance with the SMM school policy. Special requests are handled through the main school office. If your child is taking a new medication at home, which may affect behavior, please alert the classroom teacher.

Assessments:

Throughout the year, the PK teachers will assess students to document progress. Teachers will use daily observations and individual testing to determine a student's skill level in various areas of child development. PK-4 report cards will be issued to parents at the end of each nine weeks. PK-3 parents will have a parent-teacher conference at mid-year to discuss student progress. A final progress report will be sent home to PK-3 parents at the end of the year.

Uniforms:

All students are required to follow the school uniform policy. Uniforms must be purchased through School Time Uniforms, ABC Uniforms, or the PTO used uniform sale.

Girls:

- The blue-checked smock with bloomers
- Plain white (no lace) crew socks
- Navy blue, “Mary Jane” style shoes with Velcro
- During cold weather, navy blue, footless leggings may be worn under the smock. Socks must be worn with the leggings. Stockings and tights are not allowed.

Boys:

- The blue pique knit shirt (short or long sleeves) with the SMM logo
- Uniform navy blue all-elastic waist shorts or pants
- Shorts may be no shorter than “fingertip” length.
- Plain white or navy blue crew socks
- Solid black, rubber-soled tennis shoes with Velcro
- Only solid white undershirts (if desired)

Cold Weather Attire for both Girls & Boys:

We do go outside in cold weather. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for outdoor play.

- Please label all outerwear.
- Solid white turtlenecks may be worn under smocks or shirts.
- Only SMM-labeled sweatshirts, sweaters, and jackets are allowed.
- If the weather is extremely cold, students may wear an overcoat in addition to the SMM outerwear. We suggest layering clothing in cold weather.

Grooming Policies:**Girls:**

- Hair accessories should be of reasonable size and color.
- One earring (studs only) per ear may be worn.
- Scapulars and religious necklaces may be worn; no other necklaces or bracelets are allowed.
- Make-up, nail polish, temporary tattoos or torn uniforms are not allowed.

Boys:

- No extreme hairstyles are allowed. Hair must be out of the eyes, above the ear lobe, and may not touch the shirt collar.
- No earrings are allowed.
- A religious necklace or scapula may be worn under the shirt.
- Temporary tattoos and torn uniforms are not allowed.

Spirit Day/Free Dress:

Throughout the school year, we have special days called “Spirit Days.” Spirit Day is usually the second Thursday of the month for 5-day and 2-day students and the second Wednesday of the month for 3-day students. Parents should consult the monthly calendar for the exact date. On Spirit Day, the children may wear their red “spirit” shirts, available at School Time or the used uniform sale, and any bottoms. Socks and Velcro tennis shoes are required, but they do not have to be school shoes. Sandals, boots, Crocs, slip-ons or lace-up shoes are not allowed.

“Free Dress” is a day set aside periodically by the principal when students do not have to wear the school uniform. Clothing should be appropriate for school. Socks and Velcro tennis shoes are required, but they do not have to be school shoes. Sandals, boots, Crocs, slip-ons or lace-up shoes are not allowed.

For “Spirit Day” and “Free Dress Day,” remember to send your child in clothes they can handle independently while using the restroom. Please no hard snaps, buttons, belts, etc., which require adult assistance.

Lunch:

For ease in getting children out of vehicles in the morning, please place your child’s lunch box in his/her schoolbag. Each child must bring his/her own lunch and drink each day.

Lunches should be wholesome, with appropriate portions. The following items are not allowed: frozen dinners, carbonated drinks, candy, chocolate, glass containers or anything that requires preparation beyond heating.

We will help your child open packages and drinks; however, we ask that everything in the lunch box be “kid-friendly,” i. e. fruit should be washed, peeled, and cut if necessary, sandwiches cut, etc.

Our classrooms are equipped with microwave ovens. We can heat food that requires less than one minute to heat and are in microwavable containers.

Snacks:

Parents are asked to provide one snack for the class each month. Snacks are collected at the beginning of the month, with the exception of fresh fruit, which can be sent at any time during the month. Large bags or boxes of snacks are preferred over individually-packaged items. Teachers will give each child an age-appropriate portion. Some suggested healthy snacks are vanilla wafers, animal crackers, pretzels, popcorn, fruit, cheese, and goldfish. Please do not send cupcakes, cake, or individually-packaged items. If your child has food allergies, parents must provide a list of safe snacks that can be offered. Students will be offered water with the daily snack.

Rest Time:

We have a daily rest time as part of our schedule. Students do not have to sleep, but must rest quietly.

Parents must provide a covered rest mat and blanket or an all-in-one mat. Blankets should be a reasonable size, but no larger than a beach towel. We do not have enough room to store pillows or stuffed animals, so please refrain from sending these with your child.

Mat covers and blankets will be sent home regularly for cleaning. Please be sure to return all laundered items on the following Monday. In the event that your child has an “accident” during naptime, all wet items will be sent home that day to be cleaned and must be returned the very next school day.

Communication:

Good communication between school and home is a fundamental component of a partnership that ensures a successful and rewarding educational experience for your child.

If you need to contact us, please do so through a written note, e-mail, or phone call to the Early Childhood Center (643-3558) and leave a message with the receptionist. Phone calls should be returned within 24 hours. Please do not e-mail any information that must be received immediately. We do not typically have the opportunity to check e-mail during the day.

To keep you informed of classroom news, each teacher will send home a class newsletter. In addition, all families must sign up for Edline, our school’s administrative program, in order to receive important school announcements. Check Edline regularly for important school news, activities, and schedules.

Student Folders:

Each student will have a folder to maintain the communication between home and school. Notes to the teacher should be placed in the folder, which is checked and emptied by the teacher each morning. Please check your child’s folder on a daily basis.

Discipline Policy:

“Discipline” means “to teach.” Discipline and guidance play an important role in the classroom. A positive approach to behavior is established to encourage acceptable behavior in the classroom. We use a variety of guidance techniques such as distraction from undesirable behavior, redirection of inappropriate behavior, and verbal praise for good behavior.

A child who continues to show undesirable behavior may be asked to take a break from playing with his/her friend or toy. During this short period of separation, the child will be

spoken to about his/her inappropriate behavior before returning to the activity. If the child continues the undesirable behavior, he/she will be removed again for a break and further explanation will be given. In cases of severe disruption or if the child is hindering the safety and learning of others, the parent will be called. At no time will corporal punishment be used.

To check a child's behavior on a daily basis, each child will have a monthly calendar in his/her folder. This allows the student, teacher, and parents to work together for a positive learning environment. Each day the teacher will record the student's daily conduct. Please refer to your child's classroom discipline policy as discussed at the parent-teacher interview.

Physical Contact between Students:

A child who bites or hits another child will be removed from the group for a break. If the misbehavior continues, the teacher/administrator will assess the situation and work with the parents to redirect the behavior. Physical aggression will not be tolerated. The child who is injured will receive immediate attention and the parents of all children involved will be notified.

Personal Hygiene Expectations:

All students must be completely potty trained before entering the PK programs. Students are expected to be able to sit on the toilet seat unassisted, wipe themselves completely, and redress themselves. "Pull-ups" are not allowed.

Our daily programs include many scheduled bathroom breaks. It is not uncommon for some children to temporarily regress when they are in a different environment than the one in which they were potty-trained. Therefore, we understand that a child may have an occasional accident. If a child has a "wet" accident, they must be able to change themselves. If a child soils themselves, parents will be called to change the child. It is archdiocesan policy that school staff cannot assist students in the restroom. If a child has persistent accidents, the teacher and administrator will assess the situation and work with the parents to resolve the issue.

Birthdays:

Birthdays are a very special time in the life of a child. Although we cannot host any birthday parties at school, we can allow you to send a special snack on or around your child's birthday. Treats such as brownies, cookies or ice cream cups can be dropped off on the morning we celebrate your child's day. The classroom teacher will decide when the child will be honored and the special snack will be shared. Parents do not attend. Please no large sheet cakes, cupcakes, gift bags, or snacks with peanuts.

School policy allows party invitations to be distributed at school only if the entire class is invited. Please do not address the outer envelopes.

Volunteers:

We will have many opportunities throughout the year for parents to volunteer. Each teacher will notify parents when and how volunteers are needed. For the safety of all of our students, parents are encouraged to attend the “Safe Environment” training. All volunteers are required to sign in at the reception desk and wear a visitor’s badge.

Toys:

It is school policy that toys stay at home. Anything brought to school creates a distraction for your child. However, there may be special occasions when your child is allowed to bring something to share with the class.

Student Performances:

There are four performances that showcase our students: the school fair in mid-October, the Thanksgiving program, the Christmas program, and the Closing Ceremony.

Enrichment Programs/Field Trips:

Throughout the year, the teachers will schedule special visitors and programs covering a variety of topics including fire safety, dental health, etc.

PK4 students are allowed one field trip per year. Usually, the field trip is scheduled in the spring, and we encourage parent attendance. Students are required to ride the school bus for the field trip.

PK-3 & PK-4 HANDBOOK SIGNATURE SHEET

Parent signature indicates that you and your child(ren) are familiar with contents of the PK-3 & PK-4 handbook and agree to adhere to all rules and regulations, policies, codes, procedures, etc. contained within the handbook.

_____ /____/____
Parent Signature **Date**

_____ _____
Student Name **Class**

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS HANDBOOK SIGNATURE SHEET TO YOUR CHILD'S HOMEROOM TEACHER NO LATER THAN THE DEADLINE DATE AS ANNOUNCED BY THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.