

Pre-Kindergarten Handbook



2024-25 Supplement

A brief note...

This is a supplemental document to the St. Joseph School Student/Family Handbook. Please refer to the Student/Family Handbook for all our policies and procedures. This Handbook can be found on FACTS Parent Portal.

St. Joseph School Mission

St. Joseph School educates the young in the spirit of the Gospel, stressing Catholic values, inspiring academic excellence, global awareness, and service to those in need.

Early Childhood Center Philosophy

At St. Joseph School, we appreciate and respect the uniqueness of every child. We believe in identifying and encouraging each child's strengths and interests in meeting the needs of each individual child. We strive to create a program that enriches the lives of our children, families, staff, and community. Our goal for all children is the development of self-confidence and self esteem. Emphasis is placed on providing a warm and intriguing environment that all children need to learn and grow. Our academic program is an excellent foundation to meet the educational demands of a continued career at Saint Joseph School.

Early Childhood Center General Information

Address

115 Stephen Street
Martinsburg, WV 25401

Ages of Children Served

2 months to 5-year-olds

Capacity

18 children 6 weeks-2 years
100 children 2-5 years

Days and hours of operation

Monday-Friday, 7:55 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Before Care from 7 a.m.
Aftercare from 3:30-5 p.m.

Beginning at 7:55 a.m., parents must park and walk their child to the main door and sign them in each day. Parents arriving after 8:10 a.m. can ring the doorbell for admittance. Due to the academic schedule of the day, the staff requests that students are not dropped off after 10am unless prior arrangements have been made with the teacher. Dismissal begins at 2:45 p.m. Parents/guardians must come to the main door and sign their children out daily.

Student/Parent Handbook

In addition to this supplement, Pre-Kindergarten parents are required to read the entire Student/Parent Handbook (listed in FACTS Parent Portal).

Admission Policy

Students must register for the Pre-Kindergarten program each year. The enrollment schedule for returning families is announced on FACTS. All required paperwork and fees are necessary prior to full enrollment.

Age Requirements

Children entering the Pre-Kindergarten program must be four years old by July 1. Children entering the Pre-K Jr. program must be three by July 1. The Little Crusaders program has open enrollment, once a child turns two years old he/she is eligible for enrollment. Children entering our Infant/Toddler program must be 6 weeks to 23 months.

Toilet Training

Students entering the Pre-K Jr. or Pre-Kindergarten program must be toilet-trained. Toilet-trained is defined as children being able to control both urination and bowel movements and are able to use a toilet with little or no assistance. Children must be able to wipe themselves. Pull-ups are not permitted. Parents are asked to always have an extra change of clothes in case the unexpected accident occurs.

Students entering the Little Crusaders program do not need to be toilet-trained. Toilet-training is part of the curriculum for this program.

Toilet trained definition:

When a child has achieved bladder control when there no longer is involuntary leakage of urine during waking hours.

Medical Records

Students in pre-school must fulfill the immunization requirements of West Virginia and CDC. Records of immunizations against diphtheria, polio, rubella, tetanus and whooping cough (MMR-DPT-Oral Polio) must be presented at the time of registration/screening. Problems with vision and hearing must also be determined and documented during enrollment. Parents are also required to provide the students most recent child health assessment. All admission of documentation must be completed prior to the student's first day of attendance.

Acceptance Procedure

After all required documents and fees are received, admittance is determined by the Pre-Kindergarten Director. At times, an additional interview and simple assessment is required.

Upon acceptance, each child is on a one-month probationary status. A conference will be scheduled if a child demonstrates an unwillingness or unreadiness to cooperate/participate academically or repeatedly demonstrates unacceptable or disruptive behavior. Appropriate recommendations will be discussed.

Academics

The formal curriculum of the Pre-Kindergarten program is designed according to the directions and programs established by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Office of Catholic Schools and in adherence with the West Virginia State Instructional Goals and Objectives.

The program for four-year-old students is designed to prepare students for Kindergarten and aims to build faith, social, physical and cognitive development. Our program follows all the regulations and policies outlined by the West Virginia Code 78CSRI.

We use a theme-based, multi-intelligence approach, which integrates the following:

- Social, Personal, and Emotional Development
- English-Language Support
 - Oral Language Development
 - Early Literacy Skills and Love of Literature
- Physical Development and Movement
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- Health and Safety
- Technology (Pre-K4)
- Music
- Art

Religion

The Pre-Kindergarten program includes daily time for prayer, developing an awareness of God's presence in day-to-day living, scripture, and connecting these school experiences with home.

Physical Education

Children in our Little Crusaders, Pre-K Jr. and Pre-Kindergarten program will have gym class once a week. Be sure your child wears sneakers and comfortable clothes on gym day.

Quiet Time

There will be a daily period of rest after lunch. A small blanket along with a sleep buddy may be sent along to aid in this restful time.

Progress Reports

Students will receive a progress report three times a year to keep you informed about your child's progress and development. The teacher can be reached for an informal chat any school day or by calling the Pre-Kindergarten Director. Parent/Teacher Conferences are available throughout the year.

Educational Field Trips

Students in our Little Crusaders, Pre-K Jr. and Pre-Kindergarten program will participate in field trips throughout the year. Permission slips will be sent home in advance of each field trip to be signed by the parent before the student will be allowed to participate. Permission may not be given over the phone or by a written note. According to diocesan policy, only approved field trip permission forms may be used. Some field trips will involve transportation, while others will be walking trips. If parents are to transport children, forms certifying insurance coverage are filled out in advance of the trip. When children are being transported in private cars, each child, as required by state law, will use seat belts and car seats. These trips are an important addition to the Pre kindergarten experience. As is the St. Joseph School policy, we ask that no siblings accompany the class on field trips. **All students in the preschool program must have a chaperone to attend field trips. No care is provided for the day.*

Parent Participation

All parents must attend the Pre-Kindergarten Orientation at the beginning of the school year so they are acquainted with the school's policies and expectations as well as the West Virginia guidelines.

Hours for Ours

Each SJS family with a student in Little Crusaders to grade eight is expected to volunteer 30 hours per school year. Families of part-time students (Little Crusaders and PreK Jr. only) are expected to volunteer 15 hours. ***If you have students who attend full- AND part-time, you are required to give 30 hours of service per academic year.*** Families with students enrolled in our infant/toddler program are not required to give hours of service to the school, but are encouraged to participate. Hours for Ours may be completed by immediate family members (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles). They are not transferable between SJS families and do not carry over from year to year. **Hours must directly benefit the school.** A \$25 fee is paid to Saint Joseph School for each hour of service not completed, totaling \$750 in a year in which no hours were served. ***Please see our Family & Student Handbook for details about ways to earn hours.***

Protecting God's Children (VIRTUS Program)

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has put into practice safeguards to protect our children and students. The three primary components of protecting our students are that all volunteers participate in VIRTUS training, have a background check completed by US Investigation Services, and receipt of the Diocesan Handbook. A volunteer is defined as "any person having direct contact with children."

Visitors

Diocesan policy states that all visitors must report to the main office and pick up a Visitor's Badge. Anyone who does not display a badge will be escorted to the office immediately or asked to leave the building.

Celebrations

Parties

We celebrate the special times in our lives, but for all our students, every day is special. So, our days of class celebrations will be limited to Thanksgiving, Advent/Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, and the End of the School Year. Dates for these celebrations are scheduled by the Pre-Kindergarten Director.

Parents are encouraged to help with the planning, implementing, and chaperoning of these annual parties. More information can be found prior to the celebrations on ParentsWeb.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays can be shared with classmates at school if they remain simple in nature. These birthday acknowledgements take place during our snack time. A birthday snack such as a special cookie and apple juice works well. Some other items such as fruits, vegetables, cheese and crackers, popcorn or pretzels can be sent instead of a sweet birthday snack. Please keep the Nutrition Guidelines in mind when planning a special birthday treat (see Nutrition Guidelines section).

Private Parties

Parents may give party invitations to the teacher for distribution to students **only if all students in the classroom are invited**. Those wishing to invite a small group to parties should do so outside of school.

Behavior

The following plan is followed when children need to learn appropriate behavior. The Pre-Kindergarten staff formulated its steps to meet the needs of these young children.

1. Teachers will model the appropriate behavior.
2. If a student displays inappropriate behavior, the teacher will reteach the appropriate behavior.
3. If a student displays an inappropriate behavior a second time, the teacher will reteach the behavior and assign the student a time-out according to their age level.
4. According to the severity of the behavior, the teacher/administrator will contact the parent/guardian no later than the third infraction.
5. According to the severity and frequency of the infraction(s), and to preserve the safety or learning environment of other students, the administration reserves the right to dismiss the student for the day.
6. If behaviors are severe and frequent, the teacher, parent and administration will meet to discuss and create a plan to correct the inappropriate behaviors. A grace period will be given to implement the plan that is agreed upon.
7. At the end of the grace period, if the inappropriate behavior(s) continue, the administration reserves the right to dismiss the student from the program.

Some examples of inappropriate behavior: Intentional pushing, hurting a friend, throwing objects, yelling at the teacher or other students, running from the teacher, defiance, etc.

**St. Joseph School prohibits corporal punishment by staff or parents/guardians on- or off-site (field trips).*

The school retains the right to discipline students for their actions, regardless of when or where they occur, when those actions negatively impact the school's image, reputation and/or the safety and well-being of the school community. Failure to abide by this policy may result in disciplinary action as described in this handbook or as determined by the administration.

Biting

Children bite for many reasons. They bite to gain a reaction and/or because they lack language and social skills required for a particular situation. It is an indication of their developmental age, and not in any way a reflection of child rearing practices.

Although it is not uncommon for very young children to bite, it is a behavior that is taken very seriously, and is strongly discouraged. Even though biting is a natural and inevitable occurrence in group situations for our preschoolers, the most teachers can do is prepare for biting, maintain perspective while it is happening, and do all they can to minimize the occurrence.

The Experimental Biter: Bites and mouths objects in the process of discovering the world around themselves. These children need to be shown that some things can be bitten/mouthed like toys and food BUT some things cannot such as people and animals.

The Teething Biter: Children experience a lot of discomfort when they are teething. A natural response to this discomfort is to apply pressure to their gums by biting on things and relieving the teething pain. .

The Social Biter: Many children will bite when they are trying to interact with another child. These children have not yet developed their social skills. These children need close supervision and assistance with positive interactions, encouraging them to use their language.

The Frustrated Biter: Young children lack the social, emotional and language skills to cope with frustration in an acceptable way. Staff need to be aware when a child is becoming frustrated and must provide words for the child to help them express themselves.

The Threatened Biter:

For some children biting is a way to gain a sense of control over their lives, especially when they are feeling overwhelmed by their environment or events. These children need nurturing support to show them that they are safe.

The Attention Seeker Biter: Some children learn that they can receive a lot of attention when they bite. These children need to have a lot of positive reinforcement provided to them when they display appropriate behavior and provide less attention when they bite.

The Power Biter: Children can have a strong need for independence and control. Often the response children get from biting helps to satisfy this need. These children need opportunities provided to them where they can make simple choices throughout the day and they need all attempts at positive social behavior reinforced.

When children are older than 24 months, biting is less common. Language is beginning to become the tool of choice, with "No!" and "Mine!" being used most frequently. These verbal warnings alert the teachers that it may be time to intervene, and redirect the playmates involved in another direction.

When Biting Does Occur:

- When a bite does occur, staff will check for broken skin. All bites, whether the skin is broken or unbroken, will be washed with soap and water. A cold compress will be applied to the bitten area.

- Staff will inform the school nurse to visit the student and check the bite.
- The school nurse will communicate with the family of the child that was bitten if the skin was broken.
The teacher will communicate with the parent of the child who bit.
- A record of all biting incidents will be kept. This is especially useful in determining any patterns of biting behavior and in anticipating incidents and preventing them.
- The teacher will remind the biter that we only bite food, not people and place the student in “time-out” for no longer than the child’s age (two years old = 2 minutes) .

If Biting is reoccurring:

The child’s parents will be asked to keep their child at home for the same number of days that the child attends preschool each week, and focus on helping the child understand that biting is unacceptable.

- Staff will develop a behavior management program for “repeat offenders” in conjunction with parents, the Director, or other Health Care Professionals.
- If, at any time, a child's biting behavior becomes especially excessive or hazardous to the children or staff, the Director will expel the child from the Pre-school in accordance with the “Discharge Policy”.

** When a child bites three times on a given day, the child’s parents will be called and the child must be picked up from the School immediately. This is to prevent further incidents and to calm the biter.**

Health & Wellness

Emergency Information

Current emergency numbers and information are to be on file for each student in case of illness or accident. Information regarding emergency phone numbers and contact persons should be up-to-date.

Emergency Drills

State Law requires that fire drills be held monthly. During the fire drills, students should follow these regulations:

1. Rise in silence when the alarm sounds;
2. Close windows and doors;
3. Walk to the assigned place briskly, in single file at all times, and in silence;
4. Stand in a column of twos, facing away from the building;
5. Return to the building when a signal is given.

Tornado drills are held periodically. The procedures are:

1. Rise in silence when the alarm sounds;
2. Walk briskly to the assigned place in single file;
3. Sit, face wall, and put hands overhead;
4. Return to the classroom when a signal is given.

In the event Saint Joseph School is evacuated for an emergency, students will be escorted to Saint Joseph Church at 225 S. Queen Street. Parents should call the St. Joseph Parish Office (304-267-4893) for information.

Student Illness or Accident

Please see our Family & Student Handbook for policies regarding illness and accidents.

Medication

Please see our Student/Family Handbook for policies regarding medication.

Fever Policy

Students must be fever (anything over 100* is considered a fever), vomit, and diarrhea free for 24 hours prior to returning to school.

Nutrition

Snacks

Snacks will be provided daily for your child during the morning for students in our care starting at 12 months of age. If, however, your child has food allergies, please write us a note about how this applies to Pre-K snacks. If the allergy is extensive, you must meet with the Pre-Kindergarten Director to discuss nutritional concerns.

Afternoon snacks are not provided. Children attending aftercare should pack an afternoon snack in accordance with the Nutritional Guidelines listed below.

Lunch

We supply a hot lunch through the Saint Joseph School cafeteria for children in our care starting at 12 months of age. A monthly menu is posted on FACTS Parent Portal.

If you choose to bring a packed lunch please follow the nutritional guidelines provided below. If your child does not bring lunch or the packed lunch does not fall within these guidelines, the student will be offered hot lunch.

Be sure your child's lunch box has his/her name on it along with an ice pack to keep foods cold. Do not pack anything that needs to be heated. A thermos works well to keep food hot. Children are not allowed to share their lunch with their classmates.

Nutrition Guidelines

We follow the Leap of Taste, West Virginia Child Care Nutrition Standards. Providing good nutrition for your child is a partnership.

We at St. Joseph School ask for your support; for packed lunches please:

- include only water, milk, or 100% juice limited to 1/2 cup (4 oz.). When packing milk, please provide 1% or fat-free milk.
- include fruits and/or vegetables.
- provide protein, such as lean meat, skinless poultry or cheese. Pre-packaged lunches and other baked pre-fried or high fat items such as chicken nuggets and hot dogs are discouraged.
- provide grains, cereals, crackers and breads that meet the guidelines. High fat products (containing more than 35% of calories from fat) and high sugar products (containing more than 35% of calories from sugar) are discouraged.

Item	Lunch	Snack
1% or fat-free milk	3/4 cup (6 oz.)	1/2 cup (4 oz.)
Meat, poultry, boneless fish, or alternate protein product	1 ½ oz.	½ oz.
Cheese	1 ½ oz. (3 Tbsp.)	1/16 cup (½ oz. or 1 Tbsp.)
Egg	¾ egg	½ egg
Beans or peas	⅜ cup (3 oz. or 6 Tbsp.)	⅛ cup (1 oz. or 2 Tbsp.)

Nut butters (peanut or soy)	1 ½ oz. (3 Tbsp.)	½ oz. (1 Tbsp.)
Nuts and/or seeds	¾ oz (1 ½ Tbsp.)	½ oz. (1 Tbsp.)
Yogurt	¾ cup (6 oz.)	¼ cup (2 oz.)
Bakery items including, but not limited to, bread, bagels, and other bakery items	½ slice	½ slice
Cereals (cold)	⅓ cup (2.5 oz.)	⅓ cup (2.5 oz.)
Cereals (hot)	¼ cup (2 oz.)	¼ cup (2 oz.)
Pasta, noodles, or grains	¼ cup (2 oz.)	¼ cup (2 oz.)
Fruits and Vegetables (non-fried)	Exempt from portion-size upper limits: children may eat as many vegetables and fruits as they like.	Exempt from portion-size upper limits: children may eat as many vegetables and fruits as they like.

	At least 1/2 cup of each fruit and/or vegetable should be offered at each meal and snack.	At least 1/2 cup of each fruit and/or vegetable should be offered at each meal and snack.
100% fruit and vegetable juices with no added sweetener	No more than 1/2 cup (4 oz.) per day	No more than 1/2 cup (4 oz.) per day

For children up to 12 months of age:

Parents must clearly label each bottle of formula with the child's name, contents, and date received.

Parents must clearly label each bottle of breast milk with the child's name, date expressed, date frozen if applicable, and date received.

Age	Breakfast	Lunch/Supper	Supplement
Birth to 3 months	4-6 fl. oz. formula or breast milk	4-6 fl. oz. formula or breast milk	4-6 fl. oz. formula or breast milk
4-7 months	4-6 fl. oz. formula or breast milk 0-3 Tbsp. infant cereal	4-6 fl. oz. formula or breast milk 0-3 Tbsp.. infant cereal 0-3 Tbsp. fruit and/or vegetable	4-6 fl. oz. formula or breast milk

8-11 months	6-8 fl. oz. formula or breast milk 2-4 Tbsp. infant cereal	6-8 fl. oz. formula or breast milk 2-4 Tbsp. infant cereal or 1-4 Tbsp. Meat, fish, poultry, egg yolk, cooked dry beans or peas or ½ - 2oz. Cheese: or 1-4 oz. Cottage Cheese, cheese food or cheese spread; and 1-4 Tbsp. Fruit and/or Vegetable	2-4 fl. oz. formula or breast milk, or fruit juice 1/2 Bread or 0-2 Crackers
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Food Allergy Policy

Saint Joseph School recognizes that life threatening food allergies are a serious condition affecting many school children and positively welcomes all pupils with food allergies. In order to minimize the incidence of life threatening allergic reactions, Saint Joseph School will maintain a system-wide procedure for addressing life threatening allergic reactions and maintain an Emergency Action Plan for any student(s) whose parent/guardian, and physicians have informed the school in writing that the student(s) has a potentially life threatening allergy.

Insurance (Supplemental)

There is a mandated Diocesan insurance that each student must have. The fee for each student is included in the annual Enrollment fees.

Clothing Policy

Suggested Clothing

Children will have the opportunity to play outside every day, weather permitting. Please make sure they are dressed for the weather and for play. Clothing should be comfortable for free movement with no fear of getting dirty. Your child will be using the bathroom a few times each day. To aid him/her with this be sure that he/she is able to handle the removal and redressing of the clothing that is worn. Many zippers, buttons, snaps, and shoulder clips hamper your child's ability to get to the bathroom in time.

Dress Code Items

- Open-toed shoes, high heels and sling-backs are not allowed.
- Girls should wear shorts or tights under dresses.
- No clothing, shoes or accessories are to have any emblems/symbols that are considered violent.
- All clothing must be marked with your child's name, especially jackets/coats.
- During snowy/rainy months a pair of rain boots (labeled with your child's name) may be left in the classroom to allow your child to play on the playground during slushy-like conditions.

Extra Clothes

Please provide two extra full sets of clothes (shirt, pants, underpants, and socks) in case of a bathroom accident or spillage from work, play, or lunch. Include the child's name on each article of clothing. These will be kept at school unless laundering is necessary or the changing of seasons occurs (one outfit should be for winter, and one for spring).

Additional Items

Lost & Found

It is imperative that a student's belongings be marked clearly with his/her name. When these items are lost, and

later found, they can be returned promptly to the owner. Lost and Found items can be recovered in the Director's Office. Items in the Lost and Found remain there for 30 days. After 30 days, items are donated to charity.

Toys From Home

Please do not allow your child to bring any toys to school.

Child Advocacy & Reporting

West Virginia Law requires that all educators and other school employees, including volunteers or other adults, report suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities within 24 hours in order that children may be protected from harm and the family may be helped. St. Joseph School reports suspected child abuse and neglect to child protective services as required by West Virginia Law.

Right to Amend the Handbook

St. Joseph School reserves the right to amend this handbook. Notice of amendments will be conveyed via the FACTS Family Portal. This Handbook is an informative booklet for parents and students setting forth rules and policies of the school, and it is not intended as an expressed or implied contract.