



ST. RAPHAEL  
EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

PARENT  
HANDBOOK

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# From the Director...

Welcome to St. Raphael ECC! This Parent Handbook contains important information on the policies and procedures of our preschool program at St. Raphael Early Childhood Center. Please take the time to read it carefully.

Here at the ECC, we recognize that you as parents are the first and primary educators of your children. As a faith-based Catholic school, we also recognize that children crave moral and spiritual meaning, and so we strive to support your home efforts as we nurture our young students' growth in knowledge and love of Christ. A child who has formed a relationship with our loving God and whose spiritual connections are supported within a secure faith community like the one here at the ECC, will be a child who grows in trust and peace, is emotionally resilient, is happy and hopeful, and who has great regard for himself and for others.

The educational program we offer at Saint Raphael ECC is based on knowledge of how children develop and learn and on an understanding of the essential elements required in order for children to grow in knowledge and ability. Language and literacy, math, science, creative expression, faith development, socio-emotional understanding, physical development, health and safety are all included in our curriculum. Learning objectives within each of these areas are addressed as children participate in active, hands-on experiences that engage their curiosity and interests. Because preschool-aged children are natural 'scientists-in-waiting' and love exploring their world, we place particular attention on science content and skills (*e.g., observing, comparing and contrasting, measuring, predicting, recording*) to expand children's knowledge and growing ability to reason. Finally, because children most certainly learn best in an environment that is responsive, warm, nurturing, and stable and where limits are clear, consistent and reasonable, it is this loving, 'family' environment that we strive to provide at the ECC.

In the Bible we read how God sent the angel Raphael (our patron) to safely guide Tobit, Tobias and Sarah on their life journeys, drawing them into fulfilling relationships with each other. We pray that St. Raphael will similarly guide and protect all our ECC children and their families, and that God will bless the relationships they and we will form this year.

Yours in Christ,

Carrie Griffith

# ST. RAPHAEL EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER PARENT HANDBOOK

Parish Mission Statement	2
ECC Philosophy	2
ECC Mission Statement	2
Goals	3
Policies and Procedures	4
Curriculum	6
Typical Day	7
Parent Involvement	8
Communication	9
School Day Procedures	11
General Information	12

## Parish Mission Statement

St. Raphael Parish is a diverse community of Catholic believers, called by baptism to share in the Christian mission of evangelization, worship, and service. As a Jesuit parish, we commit our time, talent, and treasure to building the Body of Christ together.

## ECC Philosophy

St. Raphael Early Childhood Center understands an appropriate preschool experience offers a nurturing environment where children have the freedom to play, learn and interact with one another, discovering the wonders of God's world in the course of a child-oriented day. The ECC provides children opportunities to form relationships—with God, teachers and peers—and to grow in trust and respect while recognizing the worth of every individual.

We recognize that young children learn effectively through discovery and exploration. Simultaneously, we extend children's thinking and knowledge by providing activities and resources determined by age-appropriate learning goals. We place particular attention on science content and processes to expand their knowledge of the world and their growing ability to reason. Children develop self-confidence in a learning environment that affords opportunities for success and understands that learning involves trial and error.

## ECC Mission Statement

St. Raphael Early Childhood Center provides a safe, nurturing learning environment that promotes Catholic values and fosters the dispositions and competencies that will prepare children for future learning and life experiences. We respect and value each individual and family and the unique contributions they offer to our ECC community.

# Goals

- To meet the individual needs of the young child by allotting time and opportunity in a planned Catholic educational environment for the spiritual, social, intellectual, emotional and physical growth of the child
- To give each child ample opportunity to work and play independently, to learn to live effectively with himself and others, to develop a sense of identity and worth, to experience success, and to enrich and broaden all areas of the child's development
- To provide a religious education program and faith experiences that will nurture the young child's growth in love and knowledge of Christ

# Policies and Procedures

## **ADMISSIONS**

St. Raphael Early Childhood Center admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin. The program makes every attempt to serve children with special needs when modifications can be made within the normal operations of the ECC.

### **Age Requirements and Sessions**

- 5 years old by 12/31 - 5 days - Monday through Friday
- 4 years old by 8/31 - 5 days - Monday through Friday
  - 4 days - Tuesday through Friday
  - 3 days - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
  - 3 days - Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday
- 3 years old by 8/31 - 3 days - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
  - 2 days - Monday and Wednesday
  - 2 days - Tuesday and Thursday
- 2 years old by 8/31 - 2 days - Monday and Wednesday
  - 2 days - Tuesday and Thursday
  - 1 day - Friday

### **Health Record**

A copy of each child's latest health evaluation (including immunization record) is due in the ECC office before the first day of school.

### **Toilet Training**

Children in the 3, 4 and 5-year-old classes must be toilet trained before entering the program. This requirement does not apply to the 2-year-old class.

## REGISTRATION

There will be pre-registration in February for children already attending the ECC and their siblings. After pre-registration is complete, priority is as follows:

1. Parishioner alumni
2. Parishioners
3. Non-parishioner alumni
4. Non-parishioners

## TUITION/FEES

Registration fee of \$135 is due at the time of registration. This fee is not refundable.

The first tuition payment and an annual supply fee are due by May 1 for a child's name to remain on the class roster.

For your convenience, tuition is divided into nine equal payments. After the initial (May) payment, all other payments are due the first of the month beginning September 1 and are delinquent after the 10th of the month. Statements will be sent out only for overdue payments. A \$20 charge will be assessed for any checks returned by the bank as unpaid.

Electronic tuition payment is available for your convenience. Continued payment of tuition is required regardless of illness, vacations, family emergencies, etc. Tuition is not refundable with the exception of families moving out of state before February 1 and with 30 days prior notice.

# Curriculum

Early childhood education is a distinct period of learning. Preschoolers acquire a great deal of their knowledge and abilities as they participate in hands-on activities that engage all their senses. The ECC provides experiences that appeal to the interests and abilities of young children, allowing them to feel a sense of achievement in a secure learning atmosphere and setting the foundation for future learning.

- **Developmental Learning Objectives** are the specific competencies, understandings and dispositions that teachers assist children in acquiring. Both teacher-guided and child-guided classroom activities can support mastery of these learning goals.
- **Units of study or themes** help the child explore and acquire specific concepts while reinforcing developmental skills. Topics of special interest to the young child determine classroom themes.
- **Learning centers** create the environment for experiential learning. They normally include activities generated from the unit or theme.

Areas of development upon which the curriculum focuses include:

- Spiritual
- Social-emotional
- Physical (Fine Motor and Large Muscle development, Self-Help, Health and Safety)
- Cognitive (includes: language and literacy; mathematical and scientific concepts and abilities; thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills)
- Creative Expression (Art and Music)

**Classroom environments** stimulate experiential learning and encourage exploration and discovery. They include art resources, block building, dramatic play, writing, library, manipulatives, puzzles, sensory tables, math and science materials.

**Special classes** in Creative Movement, Music and Spanish are offered as well as enrichments in the Cultural Arts.

**Faith education** is integrated throughout the early childhood curriculum. A variety of religious education materials are utilized, including the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (for 4 and 5-year-olds). The goals of faith education for the child are to:

- Learn about Jesus' life and teachings
- Grow in relationship with God
- Discover and appreciate God's creation
- Worship God in prayer and song
- Begin to experience the Catholic tradition
- Exhibit Christian respect for self and others

## Typical Day

All classes are organized to incorporate a variety of activities. The following schedule reflects a typical day at the Early Childhood Center.

- 9:00 - 9:20 **Free-Play:** Children select from a variety of self-directed activities.
- 9:20 - 9:30 **Circle Time:** The children gather for prayer and welcome. The teacher introduces the theme and centers for the day.
- 9:30 - 10:30 **Centers:** Children work in small groups as they engage in teacher-guided and self-directed activities.
- 10:45 - 11:05 **Playground**
- 11:10 - 11:35 **Creative Movement:** The class works with the Movement teacher on gross motor skills and fitness
- 11:40 - 11:55 **Storytime/Closing Circle:** Time used to develop language and listening skills.
- 12:00 noon **Dismissal**

Children sing with the music teacher in a weekly Music Assembly. Four and five-year-olds attend Catechesis of the Good Shepherd each week.

# Parent Involvement

The ECC values parental involvement—a key factor in a successful preschool program. By sharing their talents and skills, parents enhance the curriculum and spirit of the center.

## **PARENT COMMITTEES/SPECIAL PROJECTS**

Parents are invited to sign up for any of the following committees:

- Arts and Crafts
- Lunch Bunch
- Puppetry
- Fundraising
- Field Day (May)
- Senior Citizen Thanksgiving Luncheon (November)
- Advent Family Breakfast (November and December)
- Holiday Gift Bag Outreach (November and December)
- Teacher Appreciation Week (April)
- T-Shirt/Sweatshirt Sale
- Book Fair (October)
- Lenten Quilt Project

## **HELPING HANDS**

During the months of October through April parents of 3, 4 and 5-year-olds are offered the opportunity to spend a morning in their child's classroom as a "Helping Hand" (HH). Parents are then able to experience firsthand the curriculum and philosophy of the ECC. Teachers will post sign-up sheets outside their classrooms. Given that the focus of this program is the student attending the ECC, please do not bring siblings of any age when you volunteer as a HH.

# Communication

## **ECC WEBSITE**

Parents are encouraged to check the ECC website: [saintraphaelecc.org](http://saintraphaelecc.org) for important information posted there, including calendars, weekly memos, forms and the latest news.

## **WEEKLY MEMO**

A memo from the Director will be sent home Wednesday or Thursday of each week. It is extremely important that the memo be read carefully as items may require immediate attention. If a parent wishes to include an item in the weekly memo, it should be submitted to the office in writing the Friday prior to the week it is to be published.

## **TEACHER COMMUNICATIONS**

Teachers will provide parents with information specific to their child's activities in the classroom. In addition, important information will be posted on classroom bulletin/dry erase boards located in the ECC hallways.

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in January. Children will not attend school on these days. The conference is used to give parents a report on their child's progress and to discuss the child's placement for the following year. Conferences may be scheduled by a teacher or parent any time during the year should questions or concerns arise.

## **PARENT CONCERNS / RESOLVING DIFFERENCES**

Parents are encouraged to share helpful information about their children with teachers in order to foster an optimal learning environment for each child. Any questions or concerns a parent has about his/her child's adjustment or progress in the classroom should be first directed to the child's teachers. Most questions can easily be resolved at this level. If further discussion is necessary, parents may request a conference with the Director.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Outside resources are available to make recommendations to both parents and staff to better serve individual children's needs. These may be utilized with parental permission. Specialized consultants offer screenings and may assist with referrals for intervention and support services.

**Project Enlightenment:** "Project Enlightenment is a comprehensive mental health early intervention/prevention program. Services offered by Project Enlightenment include consultation to teachers...parent education, family counseling, teacher training, a demonstration preschool, and community consultation. Its multi-disciplinary staff of early childhood educators, parent education workers, and psychologists work as a team to provide effective community-based services."

**Talkline (856-7800):** Talkline is a service provided by Project Enlightenment to answer parents' questions and concerns about children.

## PARENT SURVEYS

Once yearly, parents will have the opportunity to evaluate how well the ECC program is meeting their children's needs by responding to a survey. Parental input is very important to our early childhood program, and parents are strongly encouraged to complete and return this questionnaire.

# School Day Procedures

## **ECC HOURS**

Office:	8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (M-F)
Students:	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon (most classes)
	9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Eagles, Red Ties, Bunnies)

## **EARLY ARRIVAL SERVICE**

This service will begin the first full school day in September. It is available from 7:45 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. for daily or occasional use. It is not available for 2-year-olds. The cost is \$3.00 per day (or \$45/month). Fees are paid and children are signed in upon entering the Early Arrival room. This service is not provided on those days that the ECC is closed or has a delayed opening.

## **ARRIVAL**

Teachers use the time before class to prepare for the day's activities and are unable to supervise children. If it is necessary to bring a student before class begins, early arrival service (as described above) is available.

## **DISMISSAL**

Children must be picked up promptly at the end of the school day. Parents arriving late must pick up/sign out students in the ECC office. Fees will be assessed for habitual lateness.

## **SIGN IN/SIGN OUT PROCEDURE**

Upon arrival, each student must be signed into the classroom by the parent or the adult responsible for that child. Children must also be signed out when they leave their classroom for the day. No child may be released to any adult other than his/her parent without prior written permission.

## General Information

**Absence:** If a child will be absent from school for any reason the parent must notify the office. It is fine to leave a message on the answering machine.

**Accidents:** Parents will be informed of any accidents or injuries sustained by their child during the school day. Should a child experience a medical emergency, an attempt will be made to immediately notify parents. Depending upon the severity of the problem, emergency personnel may be contacted and the child may be transported to the hospital.

**Birthdays:** Your child's teacher will inform you how birthdays are celebrated in your child's class. It is a Center-wide policy that any cakes, cupcakes or cookies brought in for a birthday celebration not be frosted. To avoid hurt feelings, party invitations may be distributed at school only if all the children in the class are invited.

**Child Abuse:** St. Raphael ECC abides by the Child Abuse laws of the State of North Carolina. This law mandates that all cases of suspected abuse and/or neglect be reported to Child Protective Services.

**Children's Programs:** Musical programs for parents and families are scheduled at Christmas and in the spring. You will be notified of the dates and times of the children's programs.

**Clothing:** Children should be dressed in clothing suitable for active play. All removable garments (*e.g.*, sweaters, hats, coats, mittens) should be marked with the child's name. Assume children will be spending some time outdoors each day and dress them appropriately for the weather. For playground safety, closed-toe shoes with rubber soles are required.

**Contact Phone Number:** It is essential that the office have current phone numbers where parents can be reached during school hours in case of illness or emergency. Please update the ECC office immediately if there are any changes in your contact number.

**Crisis Plan:** The ECC has implemented a “crisis plan” to respond to various types of emergencies (*e.g.*, lockdown, severe weather, evacuation). Teachers and staff are aware of and practice procedures that are designed to keep children safe. In the event of an emergency, the ECC will attempt to notify you through the ALERT NOW emergency communication system.

**Discipline:** Teachers use a variety of techniques in the classroom to support children’s development of self-discipline and social skills. Class rules and routines are discussed with the children early in the school year so that behavioral expectations are clear and consistent. Teachers model and reinforce appropriate behavior, redirect inappropriate behavior and encourage positive strategies for resolving conflict. 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 behavioral or social difficulties in the classroom. Corporal punishment is never permitted.

**Emergency Drills:** Children participate in monthly fire drills. Tornado drills are conducted during the month of February.

**Enrollment Termination:** 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 of others. Prior to dismissal, parents will have been informed of these concerns and efforts to resolve them will have been made.

**Health Concerns:** Parents must inform the ECC Administration and the classroom teachers of any medical conditions that may require emergency medical treatment. If emergency medical supplies are necessary (*e.g.*, epi pen, nebulizer), it is the parent’s responsibility to provide these to the office along with a completed Student Medication Authorization form that has been signed by the child’s physician.

**Illness:** Please keep your child home if he/she has a contagious disease or shows symptoms of illness including fever, vomiting, diarrhea, conjunctivitis (pinkeye), persistent coughing, heavy nasal discharge, evidence of contagious infestation (*e.g.*, lice). Children must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school.

**Inclement Weather:** In the event of inclement weather, you will be contacted by the ALERT NOW phone system utilized by the ECC for emergency communications. You may also tune to WRAL-TV (CBS Ch. 5), WRAL-FM (Radio 101.5) or check online at [www.wral.com](http://www.wral.com) for ECC closing or delayed opening information. The ECC will be listed separately from St. Raphael Catholic School and Wake County Public Schools since we do not necessarily follow the same inclement weather schedule. You may also call the ECC office to hear a recorded message. Early arrival service is not available if school is closed or there is a delayed opening. Scheduling of make-up days will be at the discretion of the Director.

**Playground:** All children must be attended by an adult on the playground. Parents must enforce the same safety rules that apply during school hours. A copy of the rules is posted on the playground.

**Safe Environment :** To ensure the safety of all St. Raphael students, background checks are completed on all ECC staff members. In addition, all ECC staff and classroom volunteers must complete a diocesan information form annually.

**Snacks:** Parents are asked to provide nutritious snacks for their child's class three times during the school year. We ask you to bring only healthy snacks (*e.g.*, cut-up fruit, vegetables, yogurt, cheese). We serve only low fat milk or water, no juice please. Teachers post monthly snack sign-up calendars outside their classrooms. Teachers will inform parents about any food allergies in the class.

**Special Needs:** A child's successful adjustment in the classroom may be affected by his/her special needs. Teachers will consult with parents in these circumstances, and an opportunity for outside professional consultation can also be made available. The goal of intervention is the child's successful adjustment to the classroom. Classroom modifications may be made as long as the needs of all students can be reasonably met. A parent may be asked to spend time in the child's class to smooth his or her adjustment. If modifications and interventions are ineffective in helping a child to successfully assimilate to the classroom, the ECC staff will be available to work with parents in finding an appropriate and beneficial alternative for the child.

**Violent/Aggressive Behavior:** The ECC offers a safe, courteous and orderly learning environment respecting the dignity of all students. Student violence directed at self, other children or adults cannot be tolerated. Should a child engage in any form of violently aggressive behavior, the child's parent will be contacted to immediately remove the child from school that day. Dismissal from the ECC is warranted if a child is sent home for aggressive behavior three times.

St. Raphael Early Childhood Center  
5801 Falls of the Neuse Road  
Raleigh, NC 27609  
(919) 865-5728  
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