

ST. RAPHAEL PRESCHOOL



PARENT HANDBOOK

WWW.STRAPHAELPRESCHOOL.ORG

From the Director...

Welcome to St. Raphael Preschool! This Parent Handbook contains important information on the policies and procedures of our program. Please take the time to read it carefully.

At St. Raphael Preschool we recognize that you as parents are your child's first and most important teachers. As Catholic educators our goal is to support your family as we work together to provide a warm, stimulating, and secure environment where every child grows in God's love. We strongly believe that collaboration between home and school creates a caring community that encourages all young students to reach their full potential.

Since its conception in 1979, St. Raphael Preschool continuously strives to meet the diverse needs of families in our community by offering a high quality, faith filled early education for children. This includes before and after school care options as well as a variety of class schedules. All domains important to nurturing the whole child— language and literacy, math, science, creative expression, social-emotional understanding, physical development, health and safety, and most importantly faith development— are incorporated into our curriculum. Our teachers plan hands-on learning activities based on their knowledge of children's interests and strengths as well as developmentally appropriate teaching practices. Active learning through play, self-initiated investigations, and peer interactions encourage children to develop independence, self-confidence, and respect for others as they explore the world around them.

As the preschool year progresses, you will see your child experience the joy of success and develop lasting relationships while growing spiritually, physically, socially, and intellectually. It is our sincere hope that each child's positive preschool experience fosters a love and excitement for learning as well as a lifelong relationship with Christ. We joyfully welcome you to our St. Raphael Preschool family!

Many blessings,

Molly DeAngelo

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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 stewards of this community, we commit our time, talent, and treasure to building the Body of Christ together.

Preschool Philosophy

St. Raphael Preschool understands an appropriate early learning 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 Preschool 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.

Mission Statement

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

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
 - 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 - 3 days - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
 - 3 days - Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday
 - 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 Preschool office before the first day of school.

Toilet Training

Children in the 3, 4 and 5-year-old classes must be fully toilet trained before entering the program. Pull-ups and diapers are not permitted for this age group. This requirement does not apply to the 2-year-old class.

REGISTRATION

There will be pre-registration in January for children already attending the Preschool 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

A 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.

Tuition due dates are determined by the payment option chosen (1,2, or 9 installments). Payments are due the 1st of the month and are considered delinquent after the 10th. Electronic tuition payment is available for your convenience. Families who enroll in this program will have funds automatically drafted on the 5th of each 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.

Continued payment of tuition is required regardless of child absence due illness, vacations, family emergencies, etc. In the case of withdrawal/dismissal from the program, tuition is not refundable with the exception of families moving out of the area with 30 days written prior notice. If a child is withdrawn from the program without 30 days written prior notice, parents are responsible for paying an additional tuition payment.

A limited amount of scholarship funds are available each year for families with financial hardship. Please contact the office if you would like application information.

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 Preschool 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. Conceptually-connected 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 program for 4 and 5-year-olds and a religion class for 3-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 traditions
- 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 Preschool.

- 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:** This time is 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

St. Raphael Preschool values parental involvement—a key factor in a successful early childhood 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
- Puppetry
- Marketing/Advancement
- Field Day (May)
- Senior Citizen Thanksgiving Luncheon (November)
- Holiday Gift Bag Outreach (November and December)
- Teacher Appreciation Week (April)
- Book Fair (October)
- Lenten Quilt Project
- Science
- Office Help
- Community Spirit

HELPING HANDS

During the months of October through May 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 Preschool. Teachers will post sign-up sheets outside their classrooms. Given that the focus of this program is the student attending the Preschool, please do not bring siblings of any age when you volunteer as a HH. All Helping Hand volunteers must sign in at the Preschool office and receive a visitor badge.

Communication

PRESCHOOL WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Parents are encouraged to check the Preschool website (straphaelpreschool.org) for important information posted there, including calendars, weekly memos, forms and the latest news. Our website also includes a link to our Facebook page, which is updated often with photos of class activities.

WEEKLY MEMO

A memo from the Director will be made available on Wednesday 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 memo, it should be submitted in writing by the Friday prior to its publication.

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 Preschool 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 (919-856-7808): 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 Preschool 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

PRESCHOOL HOURS

Office:	8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. (M-F)
Students:	9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon (most classes)
	9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Eagles/LunchBunch
	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Extended Day

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 Preschool 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 Preschool 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 and proper identification.

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. Also, please no goody bags. 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 Preschool 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 Preschool office immediately if there are any changes in your contact number.

Crisis Plan: The Preschool 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, parents will be notified through our automated rapid 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 Preschool 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 concerns and efforts to resolve them will have been made.

Health Concerns: Parents must inform the Preschool 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, inhaler), 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 without the use of fever reducing medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Inclement Weather: In the event of inclement weather, you will receive an automated call informing you of a preschool closing or delayed opening. You may also tune to WRAL-TV (NBC Ch. 5), WRAL-FM (Radio 101.5) or check online at www.wral.com for closing or delayed opening information. The Preschool 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 Preschool 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 students, background checks are completed on all Preschool staff members. In addition, all Preschool 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 Preschool staff will be available to work with parents in finding an appropriate and beneficial alternative for the child.

Violent/Aggressive Behavior: St. Raphael Preschool 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 Preschool is warranted if a child is sent home for aggressive behavior three times.

St. Raphael Preschool
5801 Falls of the Neuse Road
Raleigh, NC 27609
(919) 865-5728
www.StRaphaelPreschool.org