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# Preschool

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Early Childhood Development Center

HANDBOOK  
PRESCHOOL

## PHILOSOPHY & GOALS

The purpose of the St. Margaret's Early Childhood Development Center (Preschool) is to provide opportunities for children to grow intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually in a warm, loving Christian environment.

We want the children to build a positive self-image; explore their natural sense of wonder; discover their creative spirit; practice problem-solving skills; develop self-control and consideration of others; increase coordination, balance, and body image; and know that learning is fun!

St. Margaret's Preschool believes that children learn through play. They build their knowledge through active learning. Indoor and outdoor activities are planned with a concern for individual needs and developmental differences. The child-centered curriculum encourages choice-making, autonomy, and social competence. Learning is an on-going, evolving process—an individualized continuum of acquired competencies.

Exploration of music and movement, science and nature, language and numbers, art and drama, and families and culture is integrated into the Preschool day. Children interact with materials, the environment, and classmates while learning. They make choices about their learning and are willing to risk making errors.

The children gather together for chapel to celebrate the joy of living in God's world. Students of all faiths and denominations worship together to explore common bonds, and to create awareness of the needs of others.

St. Margaret's Early Childhood Development Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (N.A.E.Y.C.), which sets the standards for excellence in early childhood education.

### **The Preschool Faculty Staff**

Our teachers are specially trained, highly dedicated individuals with a sincere concern for and interest in the education of young children.

All faculty and staff members participate in a continuous program of in-service education to enable them to remain alert to the ever-changing needs of today's families and to the findings of current research in the education of the young child.

## THE SCHOOL DAY

### Hours of Operation:

8:10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. — HALF DAY

8:10 a.m. – 2:45 p.m. — FULL DAY

### Arrival and Dismissal

Please arrive no earlier than 8:00 a.m. each day and pick up your children promptly at the appointed dismissal time. A prompt arrival is important as this time is essential for your child to integrate with the other children and the program activities. At dismissal, it is extremely upsetting for a small child to be left waiting when all of the others have gone home.

There are no school personnel supervising the Preschool playground before school or after 2:45 pm. For the safety of your children and our liability, there are to be no Preschool/Kindergarten children or siblings on the playground after school unless enrolled in the after school day care program.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Children NOT picked up by 3:00 p.m. will be taken to Extended Day Care and charged the fee for one hour. Please pick up your Preschoolers before your Lower School students.

### It's The Law!

Preschoolers must be signed in and out by an adult. They must be delivered to and picked up from the classroom by an adult. "Sign in" (in the morning) is at the main entrance and "sign out" is in the classrooms.

### Authorization to Pick up a Child

We must have on file the names (in writing) of each person authorized to pick up your child. No child will be released to a person not authorized by you.

### Extended Day Care

Extended Day Care is available Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and on minimum days from 11:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The registration fee is \$25 per family per year and the payment fees are as follows:

**Pre-registered hourly rate for scheduled weekly use – \$5.00/hr. per child**

**Pre-registered minimum day usage – \$5.00/hr. per child**

**Drop-in usage (when space is available) – \$6.00/hr. per child**

**Children may attend extended day only on the days they are enrolled in the school.**

Call the Preschool for information at 661-0108, ext. 295.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### **Back-to-School Night**

Held in September, this is a chance for your child's teacher to share her goals and objectives for the school year. Back-to-School Night begins at the appointed hour and is a prepared presentation for Adults Only.

### **Dad's Day and Mom's Day**

One morning in February, the preschoolers share their school with Dad. Dads will sing, paint, sit crosslegged on the floor, and see the world through their child's eyes. Uncles, Grandpas, or a family friend are welcome if Dad isn't able to be there. A similar day is planned in March for Moms, Grandmas or a female friend.

### **Celebrations**

There are special activities planned throughout the year. Your child's teacher is happy for your help and participation at these events. Your child loves you being there, but please leave younger siblings at home. Younger siblings can detract from the special time spent with your preschooler and may present a potential safety hazard. Check with your child's teacher about her specific plans for these special days.

### **Special Activities**

Occasionally, we will need extra help in putting on some special events. The Family Night in April depends upon many volunteers and we need helpers to assist with costumes for the Halloween Parade, etc. Please read the Wee Bits and your teacher's communications for information about helping. Thank you!

## HEALTH

Your child's health is a matter of major importance to us all. If your child shows any symptoms of illness, please keep him/her at home. There will be an informal health check of each child by the Preschool Director as she greets the children when they arrive. Please be sure your child is seen by the director at the sign-in area before you proceed to the classroom.

We will call you to pick up your child if he/she appears to have symptoms of illness during school time.

**Please Keep Your Child Home if One or More of the Following Apply:**

The child has had a fever within 24 hours,

- is beginning an antibiotic,
- has a cold less than 4 days old,
- has a heavy (green) nasal discharge,
- has a constant cough,
- is cranky and not him/herself,
- has symptoms of a possible communicable disease:
  - red eyes, sore throat, headache, abdominal pain,
  - or bowel problems.

Please notify us at once if your child develops a communicable disease such as strep throat, etc. We will want to notify other parents that their children have been exposed.

### Medication

Prior to a request that nursing personnel or the Preschool Director administer medication to your child, you must complete the necessary forms. These are available in the Preschool office. Medication will be administered only by the school nurse or the director and only at the written order of the attending physician. This includes over-the-counter medication (Tylenol, Benadryl, Advil, etc.) as well as prescription drugs. Medication must be in a properly labeled container from the pharmacy, detailing the dose and time of administration.

**Students may not carry medication with them.** If you have a child who is taking regular medication, please comply with this request.

If your child becomes ill and the physician prescribes medication that will need to be administered at school, we suggest that you ask for a written order at that time. The pharmacist will provide a second container for the administration of medication at school.

Please be advised, neither prescription drugs nor over-the-counter medication will be administered without a doctor's order.

### Sunscreen

Please remember to apply sunscreen on your child every morning. The children spend at least an hour outside every day. If you would like sunscreen applied later in the day, please provide a bottle of your preferred sunscreen labeled with your child's name. For young children, it is recommended that lotions be PABA-free. It will also be necessary to sign a permission slip for the teacher to apply sunscreen.

### **Accidental Injury**

Minor injuries sustained at school are usually handled by the teaching staff. The school nurse is called if necessary. Soap, water, first aid wipes, bandaids, kisses and comfort will be the extent of first aid given. Parents will be notified by an "Ouch Report" in case of severe bumps, bites, cuts, etc.

In case of an emergency, the parents will be called or, if a parent cannot be reached, the doctor on the emergency information sheet. A signed emergency consent form is on file for each child and will be used only in the event that the parents cannot be reached. Paramedics also will be called if the need should arise.

### **Please keep all phone numbers (including cell phones and pagers), emergency numbers, and other pertinent information up-to-date!**

In case of an accident, remember that your child is covered by our insurance. The school office personnel will give you the proper forms, if needed.

### **Nutrition**

We serve a nutritious mid-morning snack. It consists of crackers, apple or orange wedges, raisins, celery or carrot sticks, cheese, cereal, etc., and occasionally juice or milk. Water is always available. The children will also have many opportunities to cook or help prepare snacks. Your child's teacher may ask for help in providing these special treats.

Please keep us informed of any Food Allergies your child may have or develop.

### **Lunch**

If your child stays all day, please send a nutritious lunch and beverage. Be aware of quantities that are appropriate for your child. We will try to send home uneaten portions so you will know what your child is eating at school. No candy!

Because we have children in the school with life-threatening food allergies, we request that you do not send nut products in lunches.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **School Dress**

“In fashion” at Preschool means washable, sturdy play clothes. To decide if your child is leaving home appropriately dressed, ask yourself, “Will I be upset if he/she comes home splattered with paint, dirt, or chocolate pudding?”

We do provide paint aprons, but children have a way of getting paint under the apron. We also try to help out by using washable paint; however, some colors are more difficult to wash out than others. We don't want your child to be afraid to participate because he/she might get dirty. Play clothes, please!

Part of our program is to help the child achieve independence in caring for his/her personal needs. This is best achieved by dressing the child in appropriate, self-help type clothing. For safety, we recommend closed-toe, rubber-soled shoes. Remember to label everything that can come off your child.

### **Extra Clothes**

We request that you provide your Preschooler with an extra set of clothes in case of an accident (paint or water). Please include pants, shirt, underwear, and socks. All items should be labeled with his/her name and sent to school in a big zip-lock baggie. When a bag of soiled clothing comes home, please remember to replace it right away.

When weather permits, we will have a wet sand area and water table. It is important that every child, from biggest to smallest, have a change of clothes.

### **Rest Time**

If your child is a full-day student, there will be a short rest time each day after lunch. Your child's teacher will inform you of the items your child will need for this rest period. To provide a sanitary and comfortable space for your child to rest, it is essential that rest items be at school any day your child is staying all day.

### **Backpacks**

Preschoolers may like a small back pack or tote bag to help them carry their treasures back and forth to school. Please no rolling backpacks due to lack of storage space. Please label everything.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips are organized by the teachers and approved by the director. Parents are needed to drive and help supervise, but please no siblings. This is a special time for your Preschooler, and we need you to be watching the class, not siblings. Thanks for understanding.

You will be asked to sign a “blanket” permission slip (kept on file); however, you will always be notified in advance of each trip.

Children must be in a car seat or appropriate restraint as mandated by California law. We need verification of insurance for each driver.

### **See Saw Book Club**

About once a month, the See Saw Club flyer will come home with your child. If you wish to order books, return the form and money to the office by the date stamped on the flyer. For each book ordered, the Preschool receives dividend points for books and materials.

### **Birthdays**

We will be happy to help your child celebrate his or her birthday. Please let your child’s teacher know well in advance. Most parents like to send a special snack, party plates or napkins, cups, and juice. Please no “party favors” or entertainment.

If your child’s birthday falls during the summer months, check with the teacher to see if he/she will be celebrating “Half-Birthdays” or a special “Un-Birthday Day” towards the end of the year.

If you wish to pass out invitations at school for home parties, please be sure that all children are invited (or at least all the boys/girls). If you plan to include only a few classmates, please mail the invitations or call to invite them...feelings can get very hurt.

### **Birthday Book Club**

Many of the children and teachers enjoy contributing a book to the St. Margaret’s library on their birthday. A special label with the child’s name is placed in the book recognizing the gift.

### **How Parents Can Help**

We have many opportunities for parents to become involved in the Preschool. Let us know if you would like to:

- Be a room parent
- Attend workshops
- Help at woodworking
- Lend a hand at parties
- Bake cookies
- Serve on the PTF Board
- Volunteer in the art room
- Save things for us: lids, jars, egg cartons, things to paint with or glue on, dress-up clothes, you name it!
- Read stories
- Drive on field trips
- Share your job
- Share your culture
- Share your talents
- Be a library volunteer

## CHILD GUIDANCE POLICIES

The Preschool years are full of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and creative growth for children. At St. Margaret's, we carefully plan for, encourage, and nurture this growth as part of the curriculum.

During these years, Preschoolers are learning limits and self-control, manners and respect, and empathy and consideration for others, all while gaining self-esteem and pride in their own accomplishments. They are learning to make choices and seeing the consequences of their decisions. These social and emotional skills are learned, taught, and discovered through modeling, gentle guidance, and lots of practice.

At St. Margaret's, we begin by building a relationship with each child as we seek to understand individual needs and developmental differences. We carefully plan the environment and curriculum to prevent problems from occurring, and when they do, we provide loving support.

We want the children to be confident and capable. We want them to have lots of choices but learn to live with limits. We want them to have their needs met in acceptable ways and learn to understand the reasons for acceptable behavior so they will behave even when no one is looking!

When there is conflict, we encourage and support children in the problem-solving process and try to focus on a win/win outcome. When necessary, we let the children know the behavior is not "okay" and involve them in the solution to make it better. We use logical consequences when appropriate: if you spill, wipe it up; if you knock into someone, see if he is hurt and offer help; if you keep throwing sand, you'll have to find another place to play.

If problem-solving doesn't work, we use redirection or, as a last resort, "time apart." Time apart says to a child: "I see that it is hard for you to control yourself right now. Let me know when you are ready to come back." The teacher then sits with the child to discuss the problem and possible solutions.

As a staff, we are careful to separate children from their deeds. We avoid labeling children for their mistakes. Instead of saying, "That was mean to push." We say, "It hurts Johnny when you push him." We try to build empathy by asking children to see another child's sadness: "Look at Johnny's tears; he's feeling badly."

We tell the children that we promised you, the parents, that St. Margaret's is a safe place. We work on building that sense of trust. Social and emotional growth is a process, with skills acquired over time through trial and error. We are here to guide and help children become self-confident and respectful of themselves, property, and others.

Communication between home and school is important to us. Please let us know when something at home might affect the child's behavior at school (relatives visiting, a late night, allergy medicine, family illness, or something your child may be worrying about).

And, we'll keep you posted as to what is going on here.