



Parent Handbook

2011-2012

Staff Contact Information

Meghan Kaplan, Preschool Director	630-858-1020 x234 preschool@stmarksglenellyn.org
Savannah Stewart, Assistant Director	630-858-1020 x234 preschool@stmarksglenellyn.org
Holly Hampson, Teacher	630-858-1020 x234 preschool@stmarksglenellyn.org
the Rev. George Smith, Rector	630-858-1020 x222 rector@stmarksglenellyn.org
the Rev. Elizabeth Molitors, Assoc. Rector	630-858-1020 x226 associatorector@stmarksglenellyn.org

St. Mark's Preschool Board Members

Cindy Flynn, Chairperson	630-942-8152 notnowkato@gmail.com
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St. Mark's Preschool Administration

The St. Mark's Preschool Board oversees the operations of the preschool and works closely with our Preschool Director. The preschool is a program of St. Mark's Episcopal Church and the Churches' Wardens and Vestry oversee the operations of the Church.

Friends of the Preschool

St. Mark's Preschool is very fortunate to have the help and support of The Friends of the Preschool. The Friends of the Preschool is a committee of the St. Mark's Preschool Board and is composed of dedicated St. Mark's Preschool parents and volunteers from the parish. Volunteers assist with fundraising and providing needed resources and volunteer support for the school. The group this year is also planning parent education opportunities on the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education for our preschool parents, members of the parish and community.

We have two fundraisers scheduled for the 2011-12 school year:

Children's Clothing, Toy, Book and Sporting Good Resale

October 1, 2011 from 8 am to 1 pm in Mahon Hall at St. Mark's

St. Mark's Talent Night

March 10, 2012 at 7 pm in Mahon Hall at St. Mark's

Please contact Cindy Flynn, Board Chairperson (630) 942-8152, if you would like to become more involved with the Friends of the Preschool or volunteer for one of the above fundraisers.

Statement of Purpose

St. Mark's Preschool is an Episcopal preschool welcoming and embracing children of all faiths and socio-economic backgrounds into a supportive community that integrates the arts, academics, health and social and emotional learning. Our school is a place where children can develop a love for learning and an appreciation of the world around them. Our approach to education is inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

Our Goals at St. Mark's Preschool

Celebrate community, diversity, and individuality,

Value the child, parent, teacher and community,

Maintain a commitment to our core values of respect, participation, nurturing, and sharing,

Listen closely,

Communicate clearly,

Treat each other with honesty and dignity,

Be mindful that parents and Teachers are the primary role models for the children,

Ensure that children learn through play and interaction with their environment,

Strive to impart the spirit of participation by being involved in the life of our school and the world at large,

Appreciate each individual's unique gifts, challenges, and triumphs,

Provide a loving, healthy, safe, and supportive environment that emphasizes positive reinforcement, acceptance, and mutual appreciation,

Give our talents and our abilities as parents and staff by extending kindness, support, and respect to our school community,

Protect this time and this place so each child learns fully with his or her hands, mind, heart, and soul,

Fund and promote accessibility for those in our community who might not otherwise be able to attend.

Our Philosophy

Our philosophy is influenced by the Reggio Emilia project approach to teaching which features child-directed learning. Children are celebrated as individuals and their learning is a personal journey supported through a partnership between the child, his/her parents and Teachers.

Teachers act as documenters, observers and researchers, and the environment as a “third teacher”; learning is facilitated through exploration and project work. An emergent curriculum, it builds on the interests, passions and play of children while also encompassing developmentally appropriate concepts and skills. Teachers thoughtfully and purposefully introduce knowledge and materials the children need to grow both academically and emotionally.

Partnerships with the parents and community are a cornerstone of our philosophy. Children’s interests and curiosities are brought to life through direct interaction with the world around them. Walking field trips, parent participation and community involvement help facilitate lessons and understanding for the children.



Our Episcopal Identity

St. Mark’s Preschool is a member of the National Association of Episcopal Schools. An Episcopal School is founded on the love of God and the belief that God calls us to love all of God’s children. Love for children and their unique gifts are the foundation of everything we do.

In the Episcopal tradition and in keeping with the Vision of St. Mark’s, we believe in inclusiveness and seek diversity as an integral aspect of the preschool experience. We respect and affirm the traditions of other faiths and make no effort to proselytize. We

will look for the values that unite our preschool families rather than those that divide. Moreover, an Episcopal education begins with the premise that we are all explorers and we invite our families and students to explore and celebrate the differences among us. Children of all faiths are welcome.

Students will from time to time visit our chapel and meet our clergy with their class to experience the space and listen to stories from the Judeo-Christian tradition that reflect our Episcopal values. Parents are always welcome to attend activities that involve the discussion of God to ensure that they are comfortable with our message. Parents are encouraged to share any concerns they may have regarding their child attending a school based in the Episcopal traditions with the Director, so that that we may fully respect and honor their beliefs.

Licensing

St. Mark's Preschool is licensed by the State of Illinois, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). As a licensed preschool, the program must meet standards related to providing activities appropriate for preschool children, as well as have a well-qualified and trained staff. The preschool is in compliance with health and safety standards established by DCFS and the DuPage County Health Department

Admission Policy/Enrollment

St. Mark's Preschool is open to children ages three to five based on class offerings. Children are eligible for our program based on their age as of September 1.

Enrollment will be on a first come, first serve basis. Parents must complete and submit an application for their child and submit a \$75 deposit. St. Mark's Preschool holds a priority enrollment period for parish families from January 1 to 15. Our open enrollment period begins January 16.

Fees and Plans for Payment

The cost of St. Mark's Preschool is \$250 a month (x nine months) = \$2,250 a year. The first payment of \$250 will be due with your registration forms by May 15th, 2011. For the 2011-2012 school year, tuition may be paid in full by August 15th or on a payment

schedule of three times a year: by August 15th, by November 15th, and by February 15th or monthly by the 15th of the month.

A late fee of \$15.00 is charged to any payment received after the 25th of the month due. Parents' withdrawing their child's registration from our program prior to September 1st will receive a 50% refund of the first tuition payment. Our staffing is based on the number of children enrolled in the daily programs. Since tuition is an annual fee, no refunds are available for absences due to illness, vacations, or snow days. Please note that returned checks will be subject to a \$20 service charge.

Discount for Siblings

We are happy to offer a discount for siblings. We ask that parents pay the full tuition for their first child. Each sibling enrolled for the same year will receive \$125 off his or her annual tuition. This discount currently amounts to half of a monthly tuition payment, which will be taken off the final payment for the year.

Discharge and Withdrawal

If your child is going to withdraw from the program for any reason, St. Mark's requests a two week written notice. This allows us time to notify any families on our waiting list. No refunds of the \$500 due by August 15, 2011 will be given for students withdrawing from the program after September 1st.

Adjustment is an individual process for every child. Teachers and staff will work with children and families to make it as positive a process as possible. If your child is unable to adjust to the program and every effort has been made to work out matters with the family, your child may be discharged upon the Director's recommendations. In that event, the tuition will be pro-rated and the balance refunded. All refunds will be up to the discretion of the Director.

Please note that the Board of St. Mark's Preschool has the right to withdraw a child because of unsatisfactory adjustment of the child to the program or because of delinquent fees or parent(s) failure to adhere to school policies.

In all instances, when St. Mark's decides that it is in the best interest of the child to terminate enrollment, the Director will meet with the parents to suggest the best alternative program for the child.

Days and Hours of Operation

St. Mark's Preschool offers both a morning and an afternoon class. The morning session begins at 9:15 am and ends at 11:30 am. The afternoon session begins at 12:45 pm and ends at 3:00 pm. Classes are held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays.

St. Mark's Preschool will closely follow the School District 41 academic calendar. The school year will begin on September 13, 2011 and will run through May 24, 2012. All holiday closings will follow the District 41 calendar as closely as possible. A school calendar with holidays, important dates and events will be provided. The calendar is subject to change as needed. A monthly newsletter will also be sent home; any changes to the calendar or schedule will be highlighted in the newsletter. Families may also check our website for our school calendar.

Families will be notified by email and by parent phone tree of school closings due to emergencies or inclement weather.

Arrival and Departure

Doors will open at 9:05 for the morning session and 12:35 for the afternoon session. Children should be brought directly to the classroom by a parent or guardian. Parents can park in the parking lot that is located on the east side of the building (off Hillside). A door to the school is off that lot (the door is marked for the Preschool).

Children will be dismissed at 11:30 for the morning session and 3:00 for the afternoon session. Parents or guardians will pick their child up in their classroom. A child will not be released to any person not authorized by the parent to pick up the child. Written authorization is needed and an individual may be asked to provide identification to the Director or Teacher. We ask that you provide the name, address and telephone number of the authorized person. **Parents or guardians must sign out their child.**

Parents or authorized individuals who are more than 15 minutes late will be assessed a \$5 fee. Appropriate authorities will be notified if 30 minutes has lapsed and parent(s) or emergency contacts on file have not been reached.

Description of Our Daily Program

A typical class at St. Mark's begins when parents bring their children into the classroom where they explore engaging and interesting materials. The Morning or Afternoon Meeting, when children and Teachers make their plans for the day, follows their arrival exploration time. Students work individually or in small groups at an exploration center of their choosing. Possible explorations include dramatic play, construction, exploration of light and shadow or exploration through painting, weaving, or work with clay or wire. After a snack and clean up time, the children head outside, or to the large motor room in the basement, to get some exercise and explore the outdoors. The preschool enjoys monthly visits from our Rectors, librarians and community artists and guests. At the end of the day, children gather together for their second meeting to reflect on their activities and read stories.

Potty Training

We ask that all students be potty trained prior to the start of their first day of school at St. Mark's. We understand that being in a new environment, and out of normal routine, can cause some lapses. All accidents will be brought to the attention of the person picking up for the day. If there are repeated accidents, parents and guardians will need to meet with the Director to discuss the best potty plan of action for the child while they are at school.

Health Policy

Our Health Policy is as follows:

1. All children must have proof of insurance to enroll in St. Mark's Preschool and documentation of immunizations and record of health prior to the first day of school. Families who choose not to immunize their children should discuss this with the Director.

2. Please notify the school whenever a child will be absent by calling the preschool office at 630-858-1020 x234.
3. We require that you notify the Director immediately if your child contracts a communicable disease, such as, chicken pox, measles, strep throat, RSV, or head lice. The Director will take the appropriate steps to notify the rest of the school within 24 hours.

We ask that you do not bring your child to school if he or she has any of the following conditions listed below. If the Teacher or Director observes the child with any of these conditions, the child will be sent home.

- a. Temperature of 100 degrees F or more. The child must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school (without medication).
- b. Continuous coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, swollen glands, rash or open sores, inflamed eye with discharge.
- c. The presence of head lice or pinworms.
- d. Conjunctivitis or evidence of the possibility of conjunctivitis.
- e. Sore throat or difficulty swallowing.
- f. Stiff neck.
- g. Infected skin patches or open draining wounds.
- h. When a child complains of pain and it interferes with normal activity.
- i. Excessive fatigue.

If the Teacher feels a child is unwell, they will consult with the Director and the parents will be called.

In the event of an emergency, every attempt will be made to reach the parent at home or work. Only if necessary will an emergency contact be notified.

Administration of Medications

All arrangements of the administration of medication must be made through and approved by the Director in advance. All medications will be distributed in accordance with state regulations and school policy. If administration of medication is permitted, it will only be with written permission from the **parent or legal guardian and the child's**

physician. This includes all “over the counter” drugs such as Tylenol and Benadryl as well as cough drops.

All prescription drugs must be in the original container showing a label with the child’s name, name of medication, expiration date, dosage, and frequency per day. All medication brought to the school must be checked in and will be stored in an area not accessible to children. Always hand any medications, including inhalers, directly to the Teacher immediately upon arrival. Children are not allowed to take any medication not administered by the staff, including cough drops and lozenges. The school is not responsible for and will not administer any medication that has not been labeled, delivered, and authorized as described above.

Injuries/Accidents

If an injury is not serious:

The Teacher or Director will administer first aid and fill out an incident report. The Director will notify the parent either by phone before departure time, or when the child is picked up.

If the injury is an emergency:

- A. The Director will call 911 while the child’s Teacher stays with the injured child. At no time will the child be left unattended.
- B. The Director will notify parents or guardians and advise them on where the child is being taken
- C. School personnel will accompany the child to the hospital, with or without an ambulance; bring the child’s complete file and remain with the child until the parent or guardian arrives.

Please note: St. Mark’s Preschool does not provide medical emergency insurance for the children. The parent or guardian assumes financial responsibility. The medical emergency personnel treating the child will determine the decision of which hospital is used.

Food

1. Parents must bring all knowledge of their child's food allergies their child have to the attention of the Director.
2. The preschool follows all state requirements while preparing and serving a daily snack. Only food that is prepackaged and sealed by the manufacturer or food items prepared in compliance with state Food Safety and Sanitation requirements are served.
3. Parents should contact the Director directly if they would like to provide a special treat for the class (e.g. Birthday or other special occasion).
4. The preschool attempts to maintain a nut-free environment at all times. While we cannot and do not have an environment that is totally risk free of exposure to nuts or nut products, every effort is made to monitor the environment for exposure to nuts, nut products or food items made in a facility where nut products are made.
5. We reserve the right to not serve any food item we feel will put a child at risk of exposure to nuts or possibly cause an allergic reaction.
6. The following procedures are followed for food service:
 - All food products are stored in a locked cabinet away from any contamination.
 - Food is discarded on its expiration date.
 - Products requiring refrigeration are immediately placed in the refrigerator upon arrival.
 - Staff members wash their hands with soap and dry with single use paper towels before preparing and/or serving any food or beverage to children.
 - Teacher(s) and/or aides assist children in washing their hands with soap and drying them with single use paper towels.
 - Plastic/paper cups, napkins, bowls and utensils that are used for snack will be discarded in lined trashcans after use. No two children are allowed to use the same eating utensils or eat off the same product, (i.e. take a bite off another child's cracker).
 - All tables are washed with bleach and water solution before serving snack.
 - Children are served small bite sized food that is appropriate for their age.
 - Teachers sit with children at the tables while they eat their snack.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

St. Mark's philosophy of discipline is based on the premise that all children should experience success and the wonder of learning. We strive for an environment that gives children the opportunity to explore and experiment within consistent, age-appropriate limits. In this climate, most problems are prevented. We also seek to understand the reason behind the behavior; *why is the child upset and acting out? What is he or she upset about?* It is through this understanding that we gain a better picture of the child as a whole and work to address issues most effectively.

We define discipline as setting limits, guiding behavior and helping children to know what appropriate behavior is. Discipline should be solution-oriented and designed to help solve problems while seeking to understand the reason behind the problem.

Some methods of discipline we employ are:

Distraction - Involves changing a child's focus from an activity that is unacceptable to one that is acceptable without confronting inappropriate behavior. Examples: Handing a toy to a child who is attempting to take another child's toy or physically putting an adult or Teacher between two children that are warming up to an argument or fight without even commenting on the situation.

Redirection - Puts the Teacher in a more interactive role than does distraction. Redirection is preventative in nature and involves anticipating problems and intervening with a solution, before the problems occur. For example it may be suggested that the child move away from the water table and play in the block area because the child is splashing water at the other children. Offer to read a book to a child rather than allowing the child to topple block structures another child is building.

Ignoring - Teacher asks, "Is this a behavior I can live with in the classroom?" If it is, he or she will ignore it, making sure the behavior does not hurt the child or destroy the environment and any materials.

Time Out - The purpose of Time-Out is to help the child calm down, regain control and feel comfortable. Time-outs typically last between 1-3 minutes for preschool age children.

Discipline Procedure

When a student's behavior becomes disruptive to the class or creates an unsafe environment, the following steps will be taken until the problem is resolved:

1. Staff intervention and mediation to try and resolve the issue in class.
2. Call home to parents.
3. Parent meeting to set up a behavior modification plan designed to resolve the issue at hand.
4. If the previous three steps have not produced a resolution to the problem, the matter will then be brought to the attention of the St. Mark's Preschool Board.

Teacher and staff will work with children and families to make it as positive as process as possible. If your child is unable to adjust to the program and every effort has been made to work out matters with the family, your child may be discharged upon the Director's recommendations. Please see Discharge and Withdrawal Section for more information.

Communication Policy

Communication with families is an extremely important value in the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Parents are seen as the first Teachers in their child's life and encouraged to work in partnership with the classroom Teacher. Prior to the beginning of the school year, staff will conduct a home visit and children will be invited and encouraged to visit the classroom and meet the Teachers. The school will work with family to set up a mutually agreed upon time for both visits.

Parents are encouraged to participate in school life as much as possible. Opportunities for parent participation include classroom volunteers, field trip volunteers, and classroom visits for families to share their culture and traditions with the class. Arrangements for classroom participation should be discussed with the Director before hand.

A monthly newsletter will be sent home providing information regarding school closing and holidays. It will also include information about both past and future classroom happenings.

Three Parent Teacher Conferences will be held each year. The scheduling of these conferences will be determined by the Director at the beginning of the year and will be included in the school calendar. If a parent would like to set up an individual conference at any point throughout the school year, they should contact the Director by calling the preschool office.

Walking Field Trips

In keeping with the Reggio Emilia philosophy we will be interacting with our local community. Classes will take walking field trips to different locales in the community throughout the year. Parents will be notified before each trip and, when needed, encouraged to attend as both chaperones and as partners in the experience.

Consent and Publicity

Parents will be asked to give their consent for their child to be taken on walking trips near the church and to use photographs, video and audiotapes of their children for information for publicity purposes. Throughout the year parents will also be asked for written consent for their child to participate in walking field trips around Glen Ellyn. If consent is not received, the child will not be allowed to participate and parents/guardians will be notified.

Family Information

A class list of student's name, address, telephone and parent's email are provided for social purposes to other members of the class.

Personal Belongings

Children should attend school in comfortable, easy to use play clothing. Preschool is an active environment involving running, climbing, and multiple art mediums. Preschool can sometimes be a messy place, so we cannot be responsible for damage to clothing.

You may choose to send in an extra set of clothing with your child in case of emergency. All clothing should be labeled. No slip on shoes, flip-flops, "crocs" or clogs will be allowed.

As appropriate, children will be encouraged to bring items in for show and tell. **Personal items that are brought to school should be appropriately labeled.** Additionally, comfort items (such as a blanket or favorite stuffed animal) can be brought into school and will be left in a designated area.

Release of Information and Confidentiality

No child's record will be made available to anyone other than the child's Teacher, the Director, and an authorized employee of the licensing agency, or the child's parents or legal guardian unless a release form is signed. All files are maintained in a locked cabinet.

Pest Control

St. Mark's strives to maintain a clean and healthy environment for all. Our church building has monthly pest inspections by a licensed pest control company. In the event there is evidence of pests, the company treats as necessary.

Our Director will be notified prior to any treatments to the building, so that she can insure that children will be kept away from these areas. St. Mark's maintains a log of all treatments. All treatments will follow procedures as specified in DCFS Licensing Standards.

Parents or guardians will be notified in writing prior to any treatments to areas of the building where children attend school or visit with their class. Any necessary treatments will be made in minimal amounts and when no children are present.

Fire Emergencies

1. The Director will take attendance each morning by 9:30 a.m. for the morning session and 1:00 for the afternoon session.
2. The preschool is connected directly to the Glen Ellyn Fire Department.
3. The preschool is equipped with smoke detectors and alarms, and a sprinkler system.
4. If any of the fire alert systems mentioned above is activated, the following procedures will take place:
 - Children will be instructed to line up with their Teachers at the classroom door where one of the Teachers will then lead the children to the preschool's doors on the east side of the building.
 - One of the classroom Teachers will bring the attendance book out of the building to do a student head count. This book must contain a current list of emergency phone numbers for reaching the parents.
 - One of the Teachers in the classroom will close the classroom door once all the children and both Teachers have left the classroom.
 - Either Teacher or the Director will open either doors to exit onto Hillside or the East parking lot (by playground) to allow the children to exit easily and count each child as they exit.
 - Either Teachers or the Director will lead students out of the building by following the pre determined fire exit route, depending where they may be located in or around the building. They will open doors to allow students to exit easily and count each child as they exit.
 - Once outside the building, the Teachers or Director will lead the children to the upper parking lot where they will take a head count. If necessary due to a dangerous proximity to the St. Mark's building, the Teachers will lead the children to the Allison's backyard (on Hillside Ave., one house east and adjacent to the lower parking lot next to the church), where a head count will be taken. The Allison's are long standing parishioners of St. Mark's Church.
 - The Director is responsible for making sure classrooms are empty, the hallway is empty, no children remain in the building, hallway lights are off and the east exit doors are closed as he or she leaves the building.
 - The children and preschool staff will remain outside the building, until the Fire Department gives clearance to return to the preschool.

- In the case of severe weather, the staff and children will go inside the Allison’s house until the Fire Department gives the clearance to return to the preschool. The children may be kept inside until the weather permits.
- Once the building has been deemed safe by the proper authorities, and the staff and students reenter the building, parents will be notified of the emergency. In the case the building is not safe for reentry; parents will be notified via either the Director or Teacher’s cell phone, or the phone of another staff or church member.

Tornado and Thunderstorm Emergencies

In the event that the Village of Glen Ellyn sounds the emergency siren or the director feels there is threatening weather, the following steps will be taken:

1. All children will be led by a teacher out of the classroom and taken to the basement via the North stairwell of the St. Mark’s building.
2. Teachers will turn off classroom lights, close the classroom doors, and bring the attendance book with them.
3. Children will be instructed to sit down against the interior walls away from any windows and assume a protective position with their legs drawn close to their body and their head lowered.
4. Teachers will do a head count using the attendance book they have taken with them from the classroom.
5. All children and preschool staff will remain in the basement in protective positions until the Director deems it safe to return to the classroom.

Parent Notes:



St. Mark's Preschool

St. Mark's Preschool
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
393 North Main Street
Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137-5068

630-858-1020 x234
www.stmarksglenellyn.org/preschool
preschool@stmarksglenellyn.org

Direct classroom extension for emergencies during school hours
(when you cannot reach anyone in the St. Mark's Preschool office)
630-858-1020 x 238