

2021-2022
Parent Handbook



SAINT RITA

CATHOLIC PRESCHOOL

Amelia Cantu, Director

P: 850-585-2160

F: 850-267-3711

amelia@sainritaparish.org

Jessica Givans, Lead Teacher

P: 850-267-2558 ext. 106

F: 850-267-3711

jessica@sainritaparish.org

Saint Rita Catholic Preschool

14 Saint Rita Lane

Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459

Florida Catholic Conference Accreditation

AND

Florida Department of Children and Families Religious

Exempt Status

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Saint Rita Preschool Mission Statement

The mission of Saint Rita Preschool is to educate and form our students to be disciples of the Lord. Saint Rita Preschool is a ministry of Saint Rita Catholic Church and the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. We are dedicated to teaching Catholic Christian values and providing a nurturing, safe, and loving environment in which children can receive quality education that meets their individual needs.

Saint Rita Preschool Philosophy

To stimulate each child to reach their full potential and to approach developmental milestones with enthusiasm, persistence and joy.

Our job is to make sure each child has successful experiences every day to give them a positive self- concept and to ensure a lifelong love of learning.

Young children learn through play and direct involvement. Our program is designed to meet the physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs of each child.

Classrooms and Daily Classroom Schedule

Here at Saint Rita Preschool we offer childcare ranging from age 6 weeks to 5 years, and have a total of five different classrooms.

1. Infant Classroom – starting at 6 weeks
2. One Year Old Classroom
3. Two Year Old Classroom
4. Three Year Old Classroom
5. VPK Classroom

A general classroom schedule is posted below. Schedules will vary depending on classroom and age. Please see daily class schedules posted in each of our classrooms for a more specific schedule that is appropriate for your child's age group. If your child will be absent or you will be dropping off your child later than 9:00 am you must call the preschool office at 850-585-2160. Your child must be dropped off no later than 9:30 am.

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 7:30 am to 8:30 am | Early Care Drop Off |
| 8:30 am to 9:00 am | School Day Drop Off |
| 9:00 am to 9:30 am | Centers |
| 9:30 am to 10:00 am | AM Snack |
| 10:00 am to 10:30 am | Circle Time |
| 10:30 am to 11:00 am | Outside Play / Gym |
| 11:00 am to 11:30 am | Group Activity |
| 11:30 am to 12:00 pm | Lunch |
| 12:00 pm to 1:30 pm | Naptime |
| 2:00 pm to 2:30 pm | PM Snack |
| 2:30 pm to 3:00 pm | Free Play |
| 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm | Outside Play |
| 4:00 pm | Last Pick Up |

Sign in Sheets

Each teacher signs students into the classroom every morning at drop off and signs their students out of the classroom at pick up each day. Safe arrival and departure procedures have been developed to ensure all children are accounted for throughout the day. In addition to paper sign in sheets, we use the hi mama app to sign your child into the classroom electronically each day. You will receive an invitation via email to sign up to receive daily notifications and photos using this app.

State of FL Classroom Teacher to Student Ratios

1. Infant Classroom, Under 12 months
1:4
2. One Year Old Classroom, 12 months to 23 months
1:6
3. Two Year Old Classroom, 24 months to 35 months
1:11
4. Three Year Old Classroom 36 months to 47 months
1:15
5. VPK Classroom 48 months to 59 months
1:20, 1:10 per VPK guidelines

Curriculum

Saint Rita Preschool follows *Frog Street and The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* to help plan and implement a developmentally appropriate program for our students. Along with Frog Street and Creative Curriculum we teach *Allelu!* which is Christ-Centered curriculum that nurtures young children's natural tendency to seek a relationship with God, reinforcing a strong sense of community and love. Developed by Catholic educators and DREs, lessons are theologically sound, age appropriate, and classroom-tested. *Handwriting Without*

Tears is added in our 3K and VPK classrooms to get our older students ready for their next big milestone, kindergarten!

Our goal here at Saint Rita Preschool is to present your child with an opportunity to expand in the four child developmental theories of growth: the social, the emotional, the cognitive and the physical. Using these developmental theories teachers and children will collaborate to form questions and explore materials through project work, creative themes, center areas and child-initiated play.

Early Childhood Intervention

Early Steps

Early Steps is Florida's early intervention system that offers services to eligible infants and toddlers, age birth to 36 months, who have or are at risk for developmental delays or concerns. Early intervention supports families and caregivers to increase their child's participation in daily activities and routines that are important to the family. If the parent, director or staff member thinks a child will benefit from services provided by Early Steps, the director will set up a time for Early Steps to do a screening to see if the child qualifies for the program. If the child qualifies for Early Steps, the therapist will come to Saint Rita Preschool during classroom hours to offer services.

Child Find

If the child is older than 36 months, they will be referred out to Child Find Services. Child Find services are offered at elementary schools and assist parents and schools in the early identification of children who are at risk for developmental delays or concerns. If you have concerns about a child's

speaking, understanding, moving or playing, seeing, hearing, getting along with other children, learning or self-help skills, Child Find provides developmental screening free of charge.

Child Development Learning Goals

Social and Emotional:

- Learn to trust others
- Gain independence
- Take initiative and assert themselves in a socially acceptable manor

Cognitive:

- Enhance through dramatic play
- Block building
- Manipulating objects
- Painting and language activities

Physical

- Develop motor skills:
 - Gross Motor: Running, balancing, jumping and climbing.
 - Fine Motor: Eye hand coordination, string beads, cutting with scissors and writing.

Admission and Enrollment

Registration Process Priorities

Parents will be notified according to availability

1. Current student.

2. Siblings of students currently enrolled.
3. Children of those employed by St Rita Parish or Preschool.
4. Active and contributing Saint Rita Parish Members.
5. Children on the waiting list that do not fall in the categories above

Enrollment Procedures

Each family enrolling in the school will meet first with the Director to complete and review the following:

1. Registration Application-parent will complete the registration form and pay the non-refundable registration fee
2. Admission Overview- parent and child will tour the school to review the following information: center schedule, hours, fees, meals, health policies, supervision policies, dismissal and pick up policies, philosophy and curriculum and items the parents need to bring to school for the child.
3. New Students -Students who are new to our school will be on probation for the first two weeks. At the close of the period, they will be evaluated for progress, both academically and behaviorally, to ensure that they are able to progress in our program. Note: Saint Rita Catholic Preschool will make every effort to assist students with special needs. However, the Preschool after evaluating the needs of the child will determine whether the student's educational needs can be met and whether continued enrollment at the Preschool is in the best interest of the student.

4. Health Appraisal- each child needs a current up to date state of FL shot record and school entry physical form for their file. These documents are required by the state of FL. The student cannot attend school without these updated forms. If a form expires during the school year then the child may not return to school until the director receives the updated forms.

5. Family/Child Questionnaire- parents will complete an informational form answering questions about the child and their family, what goals parents may have for their children while enrolled at the school and what traditions or customs the family may have. We use this questionnaire to become more familiar with the family as a whole to incorporate into our curriculum the unique cultural backgrounds and goals you have for your child.

6. Parent Orientation- after forms have been completed, the parent(s) meet with the teacher to discuss the routine and the procedures of the classroom the child is entering. We hold an annual parent orientation at the beginning of the school year. The parents will stay with their child for orientation to spend time with the teacher and to explore the centers. All children transition differently so the teachers work with the parents to make each transition as easy as possible.

The following is the age requirement per class:

- Children in the Infant program must be 6 weeks to enter our preschool program
- Children in the 1 year old program must be 1 by September 1st
- Children in the 2 year old program must be 2 by September 1st
- Children in the 3 year old program must be 3 by September 1st
- Children in the VPK program must be 4 by September 1st

(The director reserves the right to adapt classroom age guidelines listed above as necessary to avoid scheduling/classroom occupancy conflicts.)

Termination- Saint Rita Preschool requires a two week notice in writing for termination. Please give the written termination to the director. Once the termination has been processed, FACTS Management company will be notified of the termination of contract.

Communication

Open communication between parents and staff is essential. The staff here at Saint Rita Preschool wants to build a collaborative partnership with our parents in educating and caring for your children. This partnership will need to be based on trust and a mutual understanding. Be sure to inform teachers of any changes in your child’s life (moves, illness, parent out of town, etc.) so that they can be prepared for the possible changes in your child’s behavior. Each day, children will receive a daily report which will provide parents with information about their child’s day. If a parent has any issues or concerns about their child’s experience

in the classroom a conference can be scheduled to discuss.

Parent-Director conferences can be scheduled throughout the year as needed. We have an open-door policy for these conferences. If needed, at the request of the parent or teacher, parent/director meetings can be scheduled as often as needed if concerns or problems arise.

Parent-Teacher conferences are offered twice a year. Appointments may be made directly with the teacher. If needed, at the request of the parent or teacher, parent/teacher meetings can be scheduled as often as needed if concerns or problems arise.

Procedures for Parents with Concerns

1. Parents should first talk to their child's teacher about any questions or concerns being careful not to talk about children in front of them or parents. Please feel free to talk to your child's teacher briefly at arrival and if you need more time then please schedule a private meeting with the teacher. Discussions of concerns between families and staff about specific children must be held in private.
2. If after talking with the teacher a parent feels the issue has not been resolved and/or if questions still remain, please contact the director.
3. If there are any further concerns about the same subject then the director will call on the Pastor to offer any further assistance to the problem. A final determination of the

problem will be discussed with the parent.

Custody Concerns

Because custody issues can be contentious, the director will deal with these delicate situations on a case by case basis. Each case will be decided on the best interest of the child first.

- Preschool must be advised and given a copy of all legal documentation on custody rights before they are implemented.
- Custody arrangements and visitation schedules must be fully disclosed to the director and the teacher via direct communication. Legal documentation of the agreement must be on file with the director. Any changes to the agreement on file regarding the scheduling must be directly communicated to the director and a legal copy of the changed information should be given to the school immediately.
- Parent information (such as newsletters, notices, etc.) will be sent home to the primary custody parent. Written documentation should be provided to the director and the teacher of any requests for any additional copies of school information regarding the child from the primary custody parent.
- **Parental Responsibility Clause:** We acknowledge that relationships can become difficult, particularly during custody negotiations. Our basic expectations at Saint Rita Preschool of parental conduct on the campus include courtesy to all parents and staff members and age appropriate language at all times. Profanity, crude and foul language and rudeness to others have

no place in front of our children, other parents and staff. This behavior will not be tolerated in our program.

General Communication

Most information for parents (information sheets, important notices, things needed, etc.) will be updated on HiMama. Monthly newsletters will be sent home directly with the student. Be sure to login to the HiMama app and check your child's bag daily for important notes or information.

Additional communication is provided to our students through:

Weekly Lesson Plans- all classes have weekly lesson plans. These will be posted on the classroom bulletin board along with any other important information related to the class activities.

Newsletters- a monthly newsletter will be written by the classroom teacher including themes, activities, important information to remember and calendar events.

Classroom Behavior

The behavior guidance techniques used by the staff will center around positive reinforcement, positive role modeling by adults, intervention techniques and redirection.

We attempt to help the child process feelings, recognize consequences, explore alternative solutions and outcomes. We try to develop safe and appropriate ways of interacting with others and the environment. Young children are beginning to learn how their actions can affect others. It is our responsibility to give them feedback and help them grow in respecting the

rights and feelings of others. To accomplish these goals, we use the following techniques:

Respecting Others

According to their developmental level, children will be shown to:

- Respect the rights of other children
- Care for equipment and return things to the appropriate locations
- Have quiet time during directions, stories, nap, etc.
- Have the right to be given clear expectations for their use of the materials

Setting Limits

According to their developmental level, the children will be given limits in the following ways:

- Tell the children what they are to do in a positive tone
- Post rules prominently throughout the classroom for parents and staff to read
- Specify rewards for following rules
- Explain the rules and apply them consistently

Problem Solving

We appeal to the preschooler's growing intellectual and moral reasoning by using natural and logical consequences and asking questions to encourage problem solving. Teachers help the children identify their needs, feelings, causes, alternatives and choices. We provide cues such as the statement, "use your words."

Unmanageable Children

In an extreme situation, if a child continues to act out by biting, hitting, kicking or spitting on a staff member or other children, the parents will be called to come to the preschool. In some instances, the child may need to be removed from the preschool. Every effort will be made to work with the parent and child to control any disruptive behavior. If the child continues to display disruptive or dangerous behavior, the parents will be required to meet with the director to discuss the best plan of action for the child and the preschool.

Classroom Management and Discipline Statement

The Saint Rita Preschool teachers will create a safe, active, age appropriate environment for your child. They will set clear, consistent, fair limits for classroom behavior. The children will not be “subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating, frightening, or associated with food, rest or toileting, spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited by all child care personnel.” This is per Florida Administration Code 65C-22.001(8)(b). Teachers encourage appropriate behavior by reminding the children of the rules and rationale appropriate to their age. When inappropriate behavior does occur such as hitting, pushing, biting, calling names or teasing, etc. the teachers will discuss the situation with the child, redirect them to a more acceptable behavior or activity and apply logical consequences appropriate to their age and developmental level.

When a child’s response is aggressive, unacceptable, or harmful the teacher will intervene quickly and apply the previously

mentioned strategies. The teachers will use positive guidance in talking to children. They will guide the children to resolve conflicts and model appropriate skills that will help children begin to solve their problems on their own. Older children are encouraged to verbalize their wants and feelings; teachers help younger children recognize their feelings. Physical punishment, harsh or humiliating techniques, or denying play due to punishment will not be utilized or tolerated. While at the center, we ask that parents not use harsh discipline tactics either. Parents may not discipline other children at our school. It is the job of the teachers to handle classroom behaviors.

Most often the teachers will anticipate and eliminate potential problems before they happen, but they will not be able to see or stop every inappropriate behavior that occurs. If another child hurts a child an Incident Report will be written and signed by the parents of both children, the teacher and director; the teachers will not disclose who the children were and we ask parents to respect this. The report will include what happened and how the incident was treated.

Upon serious incidents such as broken skin due to bite or a scratch, the parents will be notified immediately. If it is a biting incident and the skin is significantly open, the child should see a physician to reduce the risk of infection.

Administrative Discipline

Our teachers are trained when a student whose behavior becomes more than what the teacher can handle he/she will be sent to the director. A student/director conference

will result in a notice to the parents advising of the discipline issues and requesting a conference with the parents immediately. In the event of consistent unacceptable behaviors with a student, disciplinary actions include immediate parent notification, parent conferences with the teacher and director, requiring the parent to come to school to stay with the child for the entire day and possible expulsion.

School Policy and Director’s Right to Amend:

Any student action that is not in keeping with the philosophy/objective of Saint Rita Preschool is subject to the review of the administration and may lead to withdrawal from school.

Since situations can arise that were not foreseen at the time of writing this Handbook, the school reserves the right to initiate, change or modify the policies as needed. Parents and students will be notified of any amendments.

The director and the Pastor are the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and may waive any disciplinary rules for just cause at his and/or her discretion.

School Hours

Early Morning Care: 7:30 - 8:30am

School Day Hours: Monday thru Friday 8:30 am to 4:00 pm

Drop off procedure: We request that you arrive with your child no earlier than when their scheduled school day begins. Our teachers arrive early to ready themselves and their rooms for the day. Classrooms will be locked until the school day is scheduled to begin.

We understand there will be doctor appointments, vacations and such, so please communicate in writing any planned tardiness or absences that you may have with your child's teacher.

Pick up procedure: For your child's safety, we do require each child be picked up by you or an authorized person no later than 4:00 pm. If an authorized person is picking up your child, they must present a photo ID to the teacher.

A late fee of \$50.00 will be charged if your child is picked up after closing time. If an emergency presents a delay and you will be late picking up your child, please call the preschool before closing time. In the event that your child is still at the center after closing and we have not heard from you, we will take the following steps:

1. Attempt to reach you at the designated numbers on file.
2. Call the authorized pick up person you designated on the enrollment packet.

3. Call the authorities in conformity with state law.

Drop off and Pick Up Reminders

- Make sure the teacher is aware of your child's arrival and departure from class.
- Parents/guardians must fill out an authorized pick up list in the child's enrollment packet. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the preschool of any changes in this authorization.
- If someone other than an authorized person is picking up the child, the parent must notify the teacher and director of this.

Fees and Enrollment

FACTS Management Company handles all billing on behalf of Saint Rita Preschool. Once you have been accepted into the preschool program you will receive assistance with setting up a FACTS account for billing purposes. The registration (non-refundable) and the supply fees are exclusive of your monthly tuition and are paid once a year. You may choose the 5th or 20th of each month as your monthly tuition payment date. Automatic payments can be made from a checking or savings account or from a variety of credit cards, if applicable.

Fee Reminders:

- If the tuition payment is not received by the end of the month, the child may not return to school until the bill is resolved.
- Parents may request to change the days a child attends school. Requests will be granted if the space is available and the director approves this change.
- In the event of a temporary school closure, St Rita Preschool will not prorate tuition. Monthly tuition is due regardless of vacation, illness or any temporary school closure.
- In the event of a permanent school closure, St Rita Preschool will hold an emergency meeting and discuss prorated tuition.
- Tuition sheet is included in the back of the handbook.

VPK Program

St. Rita Preschool participates in the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program that is provided by the Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida. Our class is led by VPK certified teachers. The program operates during the school year and consists of 540 hours. The hours are from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. Attendance is mandatory for this time period. A parent or guardian must sign

the VPK attendance form at the end of each month. For an additional fee, wrap around care is provided from 12:30 to 4:00 pm.

Illness & Medication

As children begin to have contact with people outside of their own families, they come into contact with germs and bacteria that are foreign to their bodies. Even though the child can become sick, being exposed to these germs can strengthen a child's young immune system. Building immunities can help the child fight off things such as the common cold. Although building immunity is a good thing, we do want to protect a child from an unusually high exposure to germs.

In a preschool setting, children come into contact with groups of other children outside of their families. It is in this situation that the illness of one child can spread rapidly throughout the group to other children and staff members. The staff at the preschool will take constant precautions to prevent the spread of disease. Many common childhood diseases are contagious. Intestinal tract infections spread through coughing, sneezing and runny noses. Other diseases are spread through direct contact. Careful hand washing by staff and children can eliminate approximately 75% of the risk of spreading these illnesses. Other precautions include separating sick children from those who are well, taking extra precautions with diapered or toilet training children and working to maintain sanitary conditions throughout the preschool.

Sick Child Policy

Do not bring your child to school if he/she has had any of the following symptoms within the past 24 hours. If your child is at school and shows any sign of the symptoms listed below, you will be called to pick them up. Please help us protect the other children by responding promptly.

- **Diarrhea**
- **Vomiting**
- **Unidentified Rash** – rash must be identified and treated before returning
- **Fever-100.4** - You may return 24 hours after fever has broken without the administration of medication. If your child requires to be on an antibiotic, he/she must be on the antibiotic for 24 hours before returning to school
- **Severe Coughing**—child gets red or blue face, child makes a high-pitched croup or whooping sound after cough, difficult or rapid breathing— esp. in infants, yellowish skin or eyes

Parents will be notified if the child has any of the previously mentioned symptoms and the parent notified is expected to pick up the child within **one hour**.

Communicable Disease

In the event of an outbreak of a communicable disease, all parents will be notified by an Illness Alert posted on the bulletin board in your child's classroom. An email alert from the director will also be sent out to parents. Parents should report all communicable illnesses to the director as soon as possible. The name of the child who is ill will not be given to other parents.

Children with contagious diseases must not attend school during the contagious period. Common guidelines for returning to school are:

- **Strep Throat-** 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins
- **Mumps-** 9 days after onset of swelling
- **Chicken Pox or Shingles-** 7 days from onset of rash or until all lesions are crusted
- **Influenza-** until all symptoms are resolved
- **Impetigo-** 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins
- **Hand Foot and Mouth-**24 hours after fever has broken and all blisters have scabbed
- **Colds-** after continuous cough ends and there is no purulent discharge from eyes and nose
- **Conjunctivitis (Pink eye)**– 24 hours after antibiotic treatment begins
- **Lice-**24 hours after treatment begins and all nits are removed. Must be seen by director before returning to the classroom
- **Pinworms-**24 hours after medication has been administered, a Dr. note and absolutely no itching
- **Ringworm-**24 hours after medication has been administered, area must be covered
- **Coronavirus-**we will follow local health department guidelines

Medication

A staff member may administer medication to a child provided:

- The medication is brought in the original container with the child's full name clearly marked. (no sharing between siblings).

- The medication is brought to the director's office and kept in a locked cabinet.
- An authorization for medication form must be filled out and accompany all medication. Instructions on the form must agree with the prescription label, over the counter label or doctor's instructions as appropriate.
- Complete prescription information, if any, is clearly marked on the container.
- Medications of any kind including ointments, lip balm, pills, vitamins or liquids may not be placed in a child's lunch box, bookbag or carried in the student's pockets.

Routine medication such as diaper cream, sunscreen and bug spray may be sent in, but must have an authorization form filled out. Authorization forms must be filled out monthly.

No medications are directly accessible to children. Staff members will document the time and dosage of medication administered on the authorization form. All empty medication containers will be returned to the parents.

Items from Home

Clothing

Each child will be required to bring a labeled zip lock bag with a seasonably appropriate change of clothes. The change of clothes will need to include underwear and socks. These clothes need to remain at the school for emergencies.

Personal Belongings

The Preschool is not responsible for any misplaced, lost or

damaged personal items. Please put your child's full name on every item. We ask that you do not allow your child to bring toys to school. The teachers may have Show and Tell Days at their discretion. It's hard to share them with all of our friends and they are often lost or damaged. Toys and items of value should be left at home.

Meals and Snacks

If your child has any type of food allergy, the parent is responsible for notifying the school in writing. If your child will need an EpiPen, you must provide it to the director and fill out a medical form. The EpiPen will be locked in the director's office. Special food restrictions, including food allergies are shared with child care personnel and posted in a conspicuous location in the classroom to ensure your child's safety during snack and lunch time.

We are a **peanut free** school. All children at the preschool will bring a separate AM & PM snack and lunch to school. Please include a separate drink with snack and lunch. All lunchboxes, thermos cups, sippy cups, bottles, baby food and pouches should be labeled with your child's name. Children may do cooking projects in the classroom and a signed consent form from the parent must be kept in the student's file.

Nap & Rest Time

Infants

Infants are provided with their own crib. Infants up to 6 months nap on their own schedule. Infants 6 months to 1 year have scheduled nap times but are able to sleep when they wish. You will need to bring two clean crib sheets at the beginning of each school week. The first dirty crib sheet will go home for washing on Wednesdays and the second dirty crib sheet will go home for washing on Fridays.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

Each child will receive a nap mat. Please bring in a nap mat or crib sheet and blanket on Monday of each week. The nap linens will go home for washing on Wednesdays and again on Fridays. Nap time is provided for all children in our preschool program, please see their class schedule for specific nap time.

Birthdays

Birthdays are very important to you and your child and we will be glad to help you celebrate. If you would like to bring a special snack, please make arrangements with your child's teacher. The state of Florida does require that any refreshments brought into the classroom must be store bought.

If you plan to have a birthday party for your child outside of school and you plan to invite all students in your child's class then we welcome you to hand out your child's invitations at school. If you do not intend to invite all students then please handle your invitations outside of school.

Bathroom Needs

For those children in diapers- Please provide disposable

diapers and wipes for your child to be kept at school in their cubby. We do not accept cloth diapers. We will notify you when the supply needs to be replenished. All of our students must be potty trained by age three.

For those children who are potty trained- We encourage you to visit the bathrooms with your child to familiarize them with the potty, sinks, soap and paper towels.

Cleaning policy

Teachers will wipe down appliances such as but not limited to jumpers, exersaucers, swings, bumbo seats, etc. three times a day. Tables, chairs, toys, surfaces will be wiped down as needed during the day and at the end of each day. Classrooms are swept, mopped, and disinfected at the end of each day.

Emergency Procedures

We have developed procedures to ensure the safety of your child in case of an emergency. These procedures and evacuation routes are posted at the door of each classroom. Local police and fire authorities have been notified of our location and assure speedy reactions to any emergency. Monthly fire drills are also conducted at the school.

If any child should need emergency medical care, he/she will be transported to Sacred Heart Hospital ER by ambulance and parents will be contacted immediately. The director/teacher will accompany the child and remain with the child until parents arrive.

For minor injuries, first aid kits and the teachers will clean the injury with soap and water and apply ice if needed. All minor injuries that occur are reported to the parent on an Incident Report. The parent, the teacher and the director will sign and keep the incident report filed in the director's office.

Bad Weather Days

When the threat of weather is in the area, our school will follow the Walton County School District closings. You may also check with the director for any other closings by calling 757-660-4670.

Prayers

We pray together with the children throughout the day, but especially in the morning and before snack and lunch. The prayers are posted in the back of this handbook. We ask that you say the prayers with your child at home.

Field Trips

Saint Rita Preschool does not go on field trips. The children do go on nature walks on church grounds, walk on the church walkway and play at the church playground. Students go to the Church and Parish Life Center to use the gym. The children also go on a walk to Helen McCall Park and play on the playground. The teacher will notify the parents if the classroom will be going to Helen McCall Park. Parents or guardians will need to sign a form giving their child permission to go on walks to Helen McCall Park. This signed form will be kept in the student's file.

School Pictures

School pictures of the students will be taken in the fall and spring of each year. Purchase of the pictures by parents is optional. Parents will be given picture information accordingly.

Use of Student Picture and Information

Parents or guardians of students who attend Saint Rita Preschool must sign a consent form giving permission or not giving permission for all photographs taken during the school year to be used by Saint Rita Preschool for HiMama, our website, advertising or publicity. This signed consent form will be kept in the student's file.

Fingerprinting

According to the Department of Children and Families and the Diocese, all staff are required to be fingerprinted and background checked before hiring. Any parent or adult who intends to have routine contact with the students is required to be fingerprinted and background checked before working with the students. Parents who are not fingerprinted are not permitted to be left alone with the students for any reason. A teacher should accompany the parent while with the class.

Parent Volunteer Program

We believe our school is built upon the relationships between our parents and our school. Parent involvement is one of the many factors which contribute to the success of our school. We request that each family please complete 5 volunteer hours during our school year. As a volunteer you could become a room

mom or help us coordinate the following events:

- Fundraisers
- Trunk or Treat
- Thanksgiving Feast
- Christmas Program / Family Dinner
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Saint Rita Feast Day
- VPK Graduation Party

Reporting and Confidentiality

Child Abuse

Florida law requires that persons who work with children and have reason to believe, that a child is coming before them in their professional or official capacity is a victim of child abuse are required to report suspected child abuse to the Child Abuse Hotline. They are also required to notify the person in charge of the institution of suspected abuse and to make a written report. All staff members are oriented to this policy. Child abuse is defined as: serious physical or mental injury that is not explained by the available medical history as being accidental; or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation; or serious physical neglect of a child under 18 years of age.

Confidentiality

The DCF regulations state that staff may not disclose information concerning a child or family, except in the course of inspections and investigations by agents of the Department. The staff must keep confidentiality concerning children at all times. The staff will not disclose information regarding the children as

to which the child has an illness (although the illness itself will be posted), which child is biting or behaving inappropriately in the room, or the developmental progress of other children.

In order to provide mutual respect and consideration for other children and families, we ask that parents not discuss other people's children, classroom situations, or teachers while within the Saint Rita grounds or on campus.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The school has an open admission policy. No person, on the grounds of race, color, disability or national origin, is excluded or otherwise subjected to discrimination in the receiving of services. Nor does the school discriminate in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral and other aspects of employment on the basis of race, color, disability, age, gender, or national origin.

School Calendar

Each family will be given a copy of Saint Rita Preschool school calendar during the parent – director orientation that is required for parents or guardians to attend at the beginning of each school year. Saint Rita Preschool follows Walton county school calendar. Therefore, Saint Rita Preschool will be closed the same days as Walton county schools.

Handbook Agreement

The last official act of enrollment and acceptance of each student into Saint Rita Preschool is the signing of a contract that states this handbook has been read and accepted as the governing vehicle between home and school. **The parent handbook acknowledgement form must be signed by the child's parent/legal guardian during the mandatory parent orientation meeting and returned to the director.**

The following prayers are those that will be said with your child while at Saint Rita preschool. We encourage you to pray with your child each day.

The Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father,
And of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
Amen

Grace before Meals

Bless us, O Lord,
And these your gifts
Which we are about to receive
From your bounty
Through Christ our Lord
Amen

Morning Prayer

Dear lord,
We thank you for the morning light,
And for the dark skies at night
For rest and food and loving care,
And all that makes the day so fair

Help us to do the things we should,
To be to others kind and good
In all we do, in work or play,
To grow more loving every day.
Amen.

Saint Rita Preschool Updated Immunization Policy

Starting in August of 2018 the Diocese will require immunizations for our preschoolers. Prior to entry, attendance, or transfer to preschools/schools (Kindergarten through 12th grade), each student must present proof of having had the immunizations as required by Florida state law. There are generally recognized to be three types of exemptions sought from the schools' immunization policy: religious, conscience, and medical.

*Religious exemptions: There is nothing in Catholic moral teachings which would hold that the use of vaccines is immoral and sinful. Accepting the opinion of the much respected National Catholic Bioethics Center, the Bishops of Florida take the position that, "Catholic schools or a Catholic diocese cannot

grant an exemption from vaccines on religious grounds since the Catholic Church does not teach that the use of vaccinations ... is intrinsically evil." Accordingly, requests for exemptions based on religious beliefs will not be considered in any Catholic schools in this Diocese.

*Conscience exemptions: The risk to public health in our Catholic schools has been determined to be too grave to allow exemptions from immunizations on the basis of conscience, or even for parents who erroneously believe that it would be sinful to have their children immunized. Social teachings of the Catholic Church are firm and consistent on the "common good" as the principle guide to reason in this regard. In justice, we consider and sometimes place the needs of others above our own. It is in that spirit that the Catholic Church recognizes a parent's right to decide what is in the best interest of their child, so long as the effects of that decision only impacts them or their child. It is clearly a different matter when the consequences of that decision potentially put others at risk. The good of respecting the conscience of parents of a single child is outweighed by the harm which could come to many as a result of an exemption on the basis of conscience. Accordingly, requests for exemptions based on conscience will not be considered in any Catholic schools of this Diocese.

*Medical exemptions: Medical exemptions will be considered, but only if a determination can be made by Diocesan officials that, based on medical evidence, admission of the child without a vaccination would not constitute a health risk to the school community under the circumstances. If such a determination cannot be made, a medical exemption will not be granted. This

exemption is reserved to Diocesan officials and is not to be granted at the Parish or School administration level.”

2021-2022 Summer Camp Policy and Dates

Here at Saint Rita Preschool we do offer summer camps to our current students who attend the school year with us. Registration for summer camp will be done in January of 2022. Summer camp spots are opened up to current students first, then if we have any additional spots available we will open them to siblings that attend other schools and families on the waiting list.

Summer camp dates for the 2021-2022 school year will be as follows. Monday, June 6, 2022, will be the first day of summer camp. Saint Rita Preschool will be closed Monday, July 4, 2022, through Friday, July 8, 2022, in honor of the 4th of July holiday. The last day of summer camp will be July 30, 2022.

There is a nonrefundable registration fee of \$75 and a supply fee of \$100 for summer camp students. If you register your child for summer camp and withdraw after April 2022 you will be charged for the full summer camp agreement regardless if your child is present.

2021-2022 School Year Calendar

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| August 5, 2021 | Parent-Director Meeting 5:00 pm |
| August 9, 2021 | Open House 5:00 pm |
| August 10, 2021 | First Day of School |
| September 6, 2021 | No School Labor Day |
| October 29, 2021 | Trunk or Treat 5:30 pm |
| November 11, 2021 | No School Veterans' Day |
| November 19, 2021 | Thanksgiving Feast 11:00 am |
| November 22-26, 2021 | No School Thanksgiving Holidays |
| December 17, 2021 | Christmas Program 6:00 pm |
| December 20, 2021-January 3, 2022 | No School Christmas & New Year's Holidays |
| January 30-February 5, 2022 | Catholic Schools Week |
| January 17, 2022 | No School MLK Day |
| February 21, 2022 | No School Presidents' Day |
| February 25, 2022 | Donuts with Dad |
| March 21-25, 2022 | No School Spring Break |
| April 15, 2022 | No School Good Friday |
| April 17, 2022 | Easter Mass and Egg Hunt 11:00 am |
| May 2-6, 2022 | Teacher Appreciation Week |
| May 6, 2022 | Muffins with Mom |
| May 26, 2022 | Last Day / VPK Graduation 11:00 am |
| June 6, 2022 | First Day of Summer Camp |
| July 4-8, 2022 | No School 4th of July Holidays |
| July 29, 2022 | Last Day of Summer Camp |

