

St. Columba Preschool

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Parent Handbook

Let the children
come to me...



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Parent Handbook

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Welcome to St. Columba Preschool

Dear Parents,

Hello! We welcome you and your child to St. Columba Preschool. We are here to help your child continue the learning process you have already started at home.

St Columba Preschool offers a wide variety of learning experiences in the Catholic Christian tradition. Learning experiences are structured to help your child grow socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and academically.

Our developmental approach allows each child to explore the world at his/her own pace. Concepts in religion, language, art, math, science, music, and more are learned through “hands on” experiences. Learning centers are set up within the classroom and playground to allow these learning activities and to encourage each child’s individual growth.

We strive to provide opportunities for each child to learn and grow by: stimulating curiosity, encouraging creativity, fostering good manners and behavior, building self-confidence and independence, involving each child as a group member, inspiring a love of learning, creating a happy, Christian atmosphere, and learning to become a secure, happy child. Our goal is for your child to feel safe and secure in our classroom learning environment and to acquire the skills and experience to transition to kindergarten.

We are happy that you have chosen to share your child with us. We hope the time your child spends with us will be quality time filled with fun, learning, and love in a caring, Christian environment.

Philosophy

St. Columba Preschool is a faith community of children, parents, and teachers working together to provide parochial education in the Catholic tradition. The mission of St. Columba Preschool is to provide high-quality education based on an integrated curriculum approach. Values encouraged in our classroom setting are derived from the Gospel. By providing a caring, nurturing environment, we seek to teach children about God’s love for them and their love for God. A sense of spirituality and a respect for themselves and others is fostered through unique classroom learning experiences. Our staff is dedicated to the following goals:

- To provide Catholic values, encourage positive self-esteem, and inspire a spirit of sharing.
- To provide opportunities for children to grow and explore.
- To promote the spiritual, emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development of each child.
- To promote strong communications between our staff and our Preschool families.
- To help each child become a productive, healthy, and self-motivated individual.

Priorities for Admission

St. Columba Preschool serves families in and around the Serra Mesa community. Parents must agree to abide by the school's philosophy and agree with the policies and regulations of St. Columba School. No one shall be excluded from enrollment because of race, color, national, or ethnic origin.

- Families in good standing at St. Columba Church, currently enrolled or seeking enrollment.
- Children of families whose siblings are registered at St. Columba School.
- Children of families in good standing and registered at other Catholic parishes.
- All other children whose parents demonstrate an acceptance of St. Columba Preschool's philosophy.

Age of Admission

Families of children seeking admission into preschool must follow the priority criteria above. Children must be:

- 4 years old to enter Pre-K.
- 3 years old to enter Preschool.

Children will not be accepted unless fully potty-trained. St. Columba Preschool defines a potty-trained child as one who can recognize when he/she needs to use the bathroom, is able to go into the bathroom on his/her own and then follow the physical and hygienic steps. Teachers are available to help with occasional accidents. If a child who is new to the school is having accidents more than twice a week, a conference will be scheduled with the director to discuss the extent of the child's potty-training.

Enrollment Process

Parents are invited to visit our Preschool with their child before applying. The Director will interview parents and provide registration forms if requested. To enroll, parents will complete registration forms, request child's doctor to complete and sign the physician's report, make sure child's immunization card is complete and shots are up to date. Return all required forms to Director, including registration fee, one week prior to the child's start date. Acceptance is finalized upon the Director's approval after a one-month probationary period.

Enrollment Forms

Each family will receive a packet of required enrollment forms including emergency information, physical and developmental history, etc., due to the Director one week prior to the start of school. A meeting will be scheduled the week prior to starting so that the Director can explain school policies thoroughly and the parents will have the opportunity to ask questions. All

completed enrollment forms, including registration fee, are due at this meeting. If any of the information on the forms changes throughout the year, parents must let the Director know immediately. This is especially true of emergency and parental phone numbers.

Health

A pre-enrollment physical examination is required of all children. This must be done by a physician within six months prior to school. All State required vaccinations, including TB test, must be up to date and on file with us on or before the first day of attendance. It is the responsibility of parents to inform the school office in writing concerning allergies, hypersensitivity to drugs, antibiotics, bee stings, food, etc., physical limitations (hearing, vision, etc.) or chronic illness. Any other health factors should also be recorded and kept on file in the school office. The Preschool Director will communicate the information to the appropriate teachers.

Hours of Facility

The Preschool is open from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The morning program (half-day) will begin at approximately 8:00 a.m. and run through 12:30 p.m. with lunch at 12 noon. Extended care is available at the Preschool site before 8:00 a.m. and after 12:30 p.m.

Enrollment Hours

Children may be enrolled for 2, 3, or 5 days a week. We offer both half-day and full-day programs.

- Full Days: 7-10 hours (maximum 10 hours). Any child left over 10 hours will be charged an overtime fee at the current rate.
- Half Days: Up to 6 hours. Our scheduled program will be 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with lunch at 12 noon.

Extra Hours:

Occasionally, extra hours may be taken by half-day children, subject to availability of space. The current hourly rate will be charged, payable on pickup.

Please be aware that the half-day program ends at 12:30 p.m. so all children registered for half-day **need to be picked up by 12:30 p.m.** Children registered for full-day need to be picked up by 5:50 p.m. as the Preschool closes at 6:00 p.m. *A fee of \$5.00 for every 15 minutes past 12:30 p.m. or past 6:00 p.m. will be charged for children who are picked up late.*

Tuition & Fees

There is a yearly family registration fee of \$75.00 effective 7/01/14. This fee is due one time during an enrollment year (September-August) even if a second child joins within the same year.

Tuition is paid monthly over a 12-month period, beginning in September, or pro-rated if your child begins the program after September. The final tuition payment will be due in August, unless your child leaves the program before that time. Monthly tuition payments remain the same throughout the school year regardless of absences due to illness or vacation. **Tuition is NOT pro-rated if your child leaves the program mid-month.**

Tuition payments are processed monthly through FACTS Tuition Management. Please review the FACTS flyer included with enrollment forms. With FACTS, the parent authorizes their bank to transfer the tuition payment from a checking or savings account on either the 5th or the 20th of each month. FACTS terms and conditions will apply regarding missed payment, etc.

If tuition becomes delinquent within a calendar month, the following may apply according to Preschool policy:

- Your child may not be permitted to continue enrollment the following month unless or until the past-due balance is resolved.
- Your child will not be permitted to re-register for the following school year if fees go unpaid at the time your child leaves the program.

Holidays

St. Columba Preschool follows the same schedule of holidays as the elementary school with the exception of minimum days. The Preschool will not observe the monthly elementary school minimum days, but will observe two Preschool half-day in-service days during the year (see In-Service Training).

Lunch

Children are expected to bring a nutritious lunch on a daily basis unless otherwise advised. ***Please, no canned soda or candy.*** Since the Preschool does not have a supply of lunch food on hand, we cannot supply children lunch should they forget to bring their lunch. Parents will be contacted to bring a lunch if a child is missing their lunch from home on a given day. In addition, parents are required to have a cold pack in the lunch pail that will keep food cold until noon. The Preschool does not have the capability of storing lunch pails in a refrigerator.

Hot lunch is offered through St. Columba School's catering service during the school year for a charge. Forms to order hot lunch are located on the parent sign-in counter, and the lunches are ordered a month in advance. Hot lunches are brought to the preschool classroom. All children eat either in the Preschool classroom or outside play area, depending on weather.

Snacks

Nourishing snacks will be served in the morning and afternoon. When it is a child's birthday, parents may provide ice cream cups and/or cookies for a small celebration. Please let your child's teacher know in advance (about one week.) We ask that candy treats for the other children not be included in the celebration. A posting of snacks to be served is located in the parent sign-in area.

School Attire

Children should be dressed in comfortable, washable clothing which enables the development of self-help skills.

Types of clothing to avoid:

- Overalls, one-piece jumpsuits, leotards, and pants with difficult snaps and buttons on the bottom. These are very frustrating for children and tend toward toileting accidents.
- Thongs, flip-flops, or clogs will not be permitted. Feet need to be securely anchored in the shoe.

In addition, sandals do not adequately protect the foot, so it is suggested that children do not wear sandals to school. If a sandal-type shoe is worn, the child must additionally wear socks. **SOCKS ARE REQUIRED WITH ALL SHOES AT ALL TIMES.** Athletic shoes that are easy to tie or that have Velcro closures are suggested as this shoe type fully protects your child's feet. Keep clothing easy to play in. As a general rule, if the parent could be upset about a child coming home with dirt, sand, paint, water, or stains on their clothing, then the child is probably overdressed for preschool.

EACH CHILD MUST HAVE A CHANGE OF CLOTHING IN HIS/HER CUBBY, INCLUDING SOCKS AND UNDERWEAR AND, IF POSSIBLE, SHOES.

Many an accident has occurred that has led to wet shoes as well. If a child has an accident, and there is no change of clothes in the cubby, parents are required to either bring the child a change of clothes or pick the child up for the day. Please mark these and all clothing with child's name (especially sweaters and jackets). Please also ensure that your child comes to school each day with a jacket or sweater to be worn during outside play. It is important that children have an option of putting on their own sweater or jacket throughout the day. We also ask that at the end of the day, the jackets and sweaters go home with the children.

Arrival & Departure Procedures

When the parent arrives at school, he/she is required to sign-in their child and walk the child into their classroom. Children are not permitted to run ahead of their parent and enter the Preschool on their own. Until the child is signed in, the child should be with the parent at all times. Please make sure that your child is being supervised by the teacher before you leave.

Use the same procedure when you pick up your child at the end of the session, making sure the teacher sees you leave. A full signature is required when children are signed in and out.

Each child must be signed in and out each day by a person over the age of 18 years. The person signing must use his/her own signature. If someone other than a known parent is signing a child out, the person must be on record as having permission to pick the child up from school. Identification will be requested of anyone not known to the staff. No one else will be permitted to remove a child without written permission.

Please pick up your child promptly. The half-day program ends at 12:30 p.m. so all children registered for half-day **need to be picked up by 12:30 p.m.** Children registered for full-day need to be picked up by 5:50 p.m. as the Preschool closes at 6:00 p.m. ***A fee of \$5.00 for every 15 minutes past 12:30 p.m. or past 6:00 p.m. will be charged for children who are picked up late.***

Absences & Illness

If a child will be absent from class, please notify the Preschool office before 9:00 a.m. There will be no tuition credit given for absences due to illness or vacations.

Please be considerate of your child's health and that of the group and staff. Your child should be kept at home if he/she shows any of the following:

- Sore throat, ear ache, swollen glands.
- Heavy runny nose, red watery eyes, coughing.
- Rash or unexplained spots.
- Fever of 99 degrees or above.
- Untreated head lice, pink eye, or impetigo.

State law requires teachers to observe the health of each child as he/she arrives in the morning. You may be asked to return home with your child if any of these symptoms are observed by the teachers upon arrival in the morning.

State law also requires parents to notify the Preschool when their child has a communicable disease such as chicken pox, measles, mumps, streptococcal infections, pink eye, sore throat, head lice, scarlet fever, or whooping cough. The Preschool must then notify parents of other students exposed to the disease.

St. Columba Preschool is not able to provide care for children when they are sick. ***To ensure that your child has completely recovered, we ask that you keep him/her home for a full 24-hour period after the temperature has returned to normal and your child is symptom free.*** A child who has been prescribed antibiotics may return to school 24 hours after his/her first dose of medication.

Please make note of any allergies your child may have on his/her health card and bring to the attention of the Director.

Emergency Policy

The Preschool will call paramedics to come to the Preschool to assess the situation. If necessary, paramedics will transport your child to the nearest hospital. Parents will be contacted immediately. If the parents cannot be reached, we will keep calling the numbers listed on your emergency card. PLEASE KEEP ALL PHONE NUMBERS AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION UP TO DATE. The Preschool Director will accompany your child to the emergency room and remain until a parent arrives.

Illness or Accident at School

If a child becomes ill at school, he/she will be isolated from the other children and parents notified to pick up the child. Minor injuries will be handled by the teachers (ice, soap and water, Band-Aid, *hugs*). Parents will be notified of minor bumps, cuts, bites, and scrapes through an "Ouch Report."

Medications

When a child must take medication during the school day, the medication must be given to the Preschool Director. Only current prescriptions, prescribed for the child and so indicated on the label, will be administered according to prescribed directions. Over-the-counter medicines must be clearly labeled with child's name and dosage. We require the parent to sign the medication form located on the parent sign-in counter in order for your child to receive medication. The container must be marked clearly with the child's name and directions for dosage. If the medication requires refrigeration, it must be clearly indicated.

Napping

Naps are taken each day by full-day children usually from the hours of 1:00-3:00 p.m. Parents provide a small sheet (crib size), pillow, and blanket to cover the child. It is required that all bedding be sent home for laundering every Friday afternoon and returned with the child on the first day of their school week.

Since the Preschool classroom is used for other purposes over the weekend, parents should be mindful of safeguarding items left in cubbies. This includes: bedding, jackets, sweaters, and clothing. The Preschool is not responsible for these items left in the classroom over the weekend.

The need for a sheet underneath each child is a State requirement. If a child does not have a sheet, he/she is not allowed to sleep directly on the cot. Since the Preschool does not provide bedding for children, the parent will be called to either bring the proper bedding so the child can take a nap, or the parent will need to pick up the child. There will be no exceptions to this important rule and State requirement.

Sleeping bags are not allowed unless the parent has also provided a crib sheet to be placed on the cot underneath the child. Large sheets from home are also not allowed as they tend to slide off the cot thus exposing the child to the cot. ***Only fitted crib sheets with elastic fitted ends are acceptable.***

Each child is assigned a school pillow case in which to hold their bedding. This pillow case and bedding is then stored in the classroom bedding cubby.

Teachers help children to fall asleep by gently rubbing their backs or heads. If individual parents prefer that teachers not rub their child's back or head to help them fall asleep, then the parents need to request this of the teachers.

In addition, children are required to wear their shoes while napping. The purpose of wearing shoes is for children to be able to get up and walk out of the classroom easily during an emergency.

All children are required to lay quietly on their cots during nap time even though they may not be able to fall asleep. The Preschool does not allow for children to read books, play with toys, etc., during nap time. Teachers will assist children who do not want to nap by gently rubbing their back or sitting with them until they fall asleep. If a child continues to not want to take a nap and is disruptive to those sleeping, the parents will need to come and pick up the child. If several disruptive instances occur, the Director may meet with the parents to determine if the child should remain in the Preschool's afternoon program. For those children who find it difficult to sleep or lay quietly during nap time, it may not be feasible to have them remain in an afternoon napping environment.

Communication With Parents

We use the parent sign-in counter near the entrance of the Preschool to post announcements. Every single parent needs to be aware of the information posted there. Please take the time to read over the items there each day. The elementary school newsletter will be sent home weekly, and an elementary school calendar is available monthly to keep you informed of school activities. Additionally, a preschool newsletter is published several times throughout the year. Any additional notices are placed in the child's cubby. Please also take the time to check your child's cubby at pick-up time each day. You will find children's art work and writing activities there as well.

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year, once in the fall and once in later winter/early spring. Parents will have an opportunity to schedule time to talk about their child's progress and other concerns. Teachers are available to talk with parents daily about any questions or concerns.

Lesson plans, themes, and special event information are all posted in the parent sign-in area. State licensing information continues to be posted on the parent bulletin board in the parent sign-in area. Teachers also use the comments section in the daily child sign-in log for short notes to parents and for notification of Ouch Reports.

Please keep us informed of anything unusual happening in your child's life. Happenings at home usually affect a child's behavior. It makes it easier for us to deal with problems if we are prepared. We encourage daily communication. Parents who have questions, comments, or concerns about the Preschool and/or your child are encouraged to speak to the teacher at the earliest possible time. The parent is also welcome to set an appointment with the Director about special concerns, needs, feelings, or problems.

Discipline

St. Columba Preschool's discipline policy states that children may not be disruptive to our teaching or to the student's learning, safety, or development. As a Catholic preschool, we include in our policy the teaching of kindness and gentleness. Most disciplinary problems are handled immediately by a quiet word to a misbehaving child. Corporal punishment, or any other violation of a child's personal rights, is strictly prohibited.

For the first instance of disruptive behavior:

- Teacher will talk to the child about behavior.
- Child may be asked to choose a different activity.

For the second instance of disruptive behavior:

- The child will be asked to spend some quiet time at a nearby table thinking about ways to make better choices.
- The child will be asked to let the teachers know when he/she is ready to rejoin the group.

For the third instance of disruptive behavior:

- The Director will spend time talking to the child about choices the child can make that will help him/her stay in the group.
- If the behavior continues, the Director will work with the parents to establish a behavior plan which meets the needs of the staff, family, and child.

Final step:

- If the behavior continues, parents will be contacted for further suggestions and planning.
- Dismissal from the program may occur if the behavior continues beyond this point.

It is our hope that children will learn to be kind and gentle in their behavior with each other.

Aggressive Behavior

Due to the safety concerns of others, aggressive behavior is not tolerated at St. Columba Preschool.

Biting: If a child bites either another child or a teacher, he/she will be sent home. If the child bites a second time within a three-month period, the child will be sent home and suspended for two days. If the child bites a third time within a three-month period, the child will be permanently dismissed from the program.

Aggressive hitting, tackling, pushing, and other harsh physical activity: If a child uses harsh physical activity toward another child or teacher, the child will be separated from others for a period of time to quietly think about the action and the safety of others. If the child uses harsh physical activity a second time that day, the child will be sent home. If a child is sent home for harsh physical activity a second time within a three-month period, the child will be suspended for two days. If a child is sent home a third day for harsh physical activity within a three-month period, the child will be permanently dismissed from the program.

Toys

It is the policy of St. Columba Preschool that no toys be brought to class from home. If a toy is brought to class, the toy will be held in a classroom file cabinet until the end of the day. Small stuffed animals may be brought in bedding bags for nap time only. The stuffed animals need to remain in the bedding bags during the day. This policy helps focus children's attention on classroom activities as well as prevents the loss of children's toys from home.

In-Service Training

In-service training for preschool teachers is held two times per year. Each training session is held on the first Mondays of October and March. The Preschool will be open from 6:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on those two days. Consequently, there will be no lunch time on those days.

Visits

We welcome visitors to observe our program at any time. However, please be aware that the teachers must remain with their class and will not be able to visit or give visitors personal attention during class time.

Requirement to Report Suspected Child Abuse

All preschool teachers and staff are mandated to comply with the child abuse reporting requirements as stated in the Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing, Title 22 Handbook.