



Saint Thomas



the Apostle Catholic School

dynamic education centered in Christ  all kids, all abilities, all in!



Preschool Parent Handbook

License Number — DC410017420



Mission

A dynamic education centered in Christ.

Mission

A dynamic education centered in Christ.

Vision

A leading innovative Catholic school that invites students to love and serve Christ and engage culture with a saintly passion.

Preschool Philosophy

At Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School, we follow a Catholic framework and incorporate Catholic values and faith in our lessons. Our program includes elements of the Journeys Reading program, Handwriting without Tears and Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. We believe that:

- play is a child's work and that learning occurs during developmentally appropriate, child centered activities.
- children learn concepts best when they are meaningful and relevant to them.
- meaningful play encourages curiosity, discovery and problem solving which allows individual growth and development of a positive self-image.
- providing a secure and nurturing environment allows children to learn, grow and develop at their own rate.

License Number – DC410017420

Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School Contact Information

School Address: 1429 Wilcox Park Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, Mi. 49506

Phone: (616) 458-4228

Website: www.stthomasgr.org

Principal: Ryan Corcoran ryancorcoran@stthomasgr.org

Program Director: Veronica Perdue veronicaperdue@stthomasgr.org

Preschool Teachers:

Sue Hieshetter suehieshetter@stthomasgr.org

Emily Brunner emilybrunner@stthomasgr.org

Sheila Kelly sheilakelly@stthomasgr.org

Preschool Assistants:

Bonnie Burke bonnieburke@stthomasgr.org

Samantha Fair samanthafair@stthomasgr.org

Admission Policy

Children are admitted to Saint Thomas the Apostle Preschool programs after completing and submitting the following requirements:

- Registration Form
- Registration with SchoolAdmin
- Payment to school or SchoolAdmin of \$100 registration fee
- Child Information Card
- Health Appraisal (completed by your child's physician)
- Record of immunizations or Health Department waiver (the child's health waiver must come from the Health Department)
- Licensing Notebook and Preschool Handbook Notification
- Concussion Awareness Form
- Medical Administration Form (optional)

These guidelines have been developed for the protection and wellbeing of each child. Failure to provide the items listed above will result in the child's enrollment being delayed or canceled. We accept new registrations throughout the year, provided space is available.

Licensing Notebook

The licensing notebook contains all the licensing inspection, special investigation reports and related corrective plans. This notebook is available during business hours for parent viewing. Please refer to the State of Michigan website if you have further questions about the licensing process at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

Preschool Program Location

1429 Wilcox Park Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 495096

(616) 458-4228

The Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School preschool program is located within the School. It is on the second floor of the Ministry Center. The Preschool has its own entrance door, next to the Ministry Center. Parents may enter through that door or the School's main door. Both doors are locked and must be opened from within for admittance.

Preschool Hours of Operation

P-3	Tuesday/ Thursday	8-11am
P-3 Enrichment	Wednesday	8-11am
P-4	Monday/ Wednesday/ Friday	8-11am or 12:15-3:20pm
P-4 Enrichment	Tuesday/ Thursday	12:15-3:20pm
P3/P4 Childcare	Monday-Friday	11am–3:20 pm

Preschool Daily Schedule

Our day is designed to provide each preschooler with experiences for growth in social-emotional development, physical development including fine and gross motor skills, cognitive development, and language development.

8am / 12:15pm **Sign-in, welcome, free play**

8am / 12:45pm **Circle time activities**

- Prayer
- Calendar
- Instruction
- Story
- Song
- Games

9am / 1:15pm **Center Time**

- Dramatic play
- Letter recognition/Writing
- Water/sand/Texture table
- Art activity/Math activity
- Puzzles/ Fine motor activity

9:45am / 2pm **Snack Time**

10am / 2:15pm **Story Time**

10:30am / 2:45pm **Outdoor/Gross motor**

10:50am / 3:10pm **Ending circle time / Prayer / Good Bye song**

Once a week, preschoolers will visit the library for early literacy activities, engage in Music and Movement and participate in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

Drop Off/Pick-up Procedures

- Preschool parents/childcare providers park in the lot directly next to our Ministry Center entrance.
- The Ministry Center (MC) doors will be opened by the preschool paraprofessional ten (10) minutes prior to the start of the school session.
- Parents bring their children to the classroom, using their assigned hook for coats, boots, and more.
- Parents bring their children into the classroom and sign them in and depart through the exit door.
- Pick up is the same process with children departing with a parent or childcare provider.

Communications Plan

We believe a successful preschool program is contingent on parent involvement and communication. You will receive a classroom newsletter weekly or bi weekly to let you know what is going on as well as key concepts being explored in the classroom.

Periodically we will send home other notes via email regarding special events, field trips, etc. These will also be included in your child's folder on a daily basis. It is good practice to check your child's folder daily.

The school uses remind.com to communicate information to families such as school closings due to inclement weather. Please make sure to sign up for these important text reminders! To receive messages via text, text @saintth to 81010.

Attendance

Regular attendance is expected. In the event your child will be absent, please call (616) 458-4228 or email the school by 8am the day of the absence.

Student Attire

Please send your child in clothing that can handle paint, glue, and other signs of creative learning. Preschoolers should wear simple, comfortable and washable clothing that they can easily take on and off for bathroom purposes. Students may not wear diapers or pull ups to school. All preschool students must be completely potty trained.

Please note: We understand accidents will happen! Each child must have a complete change of clothes (including socks) stored in their backpacks in a Ziploc. Please label the Ziploc bag as well as the clothing items. In the event of an accident, the soiled clothing will be returned in the Ziploc bag. All coats, backpacks, sweatshirts etc. should be clearly labeled with your child's name.

Outdoor Play

Playing outdoors is integral to the development of our students. We will have time outdoors each day, weather permitting, meaning it is NOT pouring rain and is NOT below zero.

Appropriate clothing for outdoor play must be provided by parents. During winter, this would include a coat, snow pants, boots, hat, and mittens.

To ensure the safety of your child while they run, climb and walk, appropriate shoes are necessary. This includes shoes with a back, such as a tennis shoe. Sandals may be worn but they must have the heel strap.

Discipline Policy

Saint Thomas the Apostle Preschool teachers use positive methods of discipline that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem and cooperation. Our objective is to help the child learn rather than forcing him/her to conform to adult standards. We give each child freedom and encouragement to express individuality as long as it does not intrude on or endanger the freedom of others, especially on the freedom of his/her peers to receive instruction.

As a Catholic School, Saint Thomas “works with and teaches children of varying competencies, personalities, and temperaments to be living members of the Body of Christ---to be (a community of faith) within the Church.” To this end, we teach our children as Christians and future leaders to be the hero in each moment by letting their light shine. #BeTheLight

Snack Policy – We are a peanut-free environment!

Snack time is an important component of our preschool day. It provides the preschoolers with an opportunity to gain independence while learning to interact with each other in a supportive environment. It fosters communication between the students, practice using utensils, trying new foods and learning the importance of prayer before meals.

Families take turns providing a snack for the classroom. A monthly calendar will be posted in the classroom and sent home. The snack will consist of two food groups and a glass of water.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthday celebration guidelines are provided on the Saint Thomas the Apostle All School Healthy Snack Management and Allergen Policy.

Allergen Policy and Healthy Snack Management

Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School recognizes the increased prevalence of student food allergies including but not limited to nuts, peanut butter, dairy, gluten, and eggs. Research shows that poor snacking habits can negatively affect a child's academic performance. As a result, we have developed an allergen and healthy snack management policy to eliminate accidental exposure to any possible allergens *and* promote healthy eating habits.

Saint Thomas faculty and parents share a common goal of supporting the link between healthy eating, physical activity, and improved academic achievement for our students. We recognize the gravity and threat a student with a food allergy faces. Using food as a reward undermines nutrition education and encourages over-consumption of foods high in added sugar and fat. Research shows that obesity and Type 2 diabetes are linked to diets high in sugar and fat.

Saint Thomas believes the focus on allergy management and healthy eating go hand in hand in providing prevention, education, and communication.

Rationale: Saint Thomas recognizes the importance of celebrating birthdays, accomplishments, and milestones within the classroom. Traditionally, food has been an important part of these events. To promote good nutritional practices and provide the safest and healthiest environment for ALL children, we ask parents to provide non-edible class treats. Saint Thomas school and teachers are happy to suggest a few non-food treats for birthday celebrations that comply with this policy.

Action Plan: (Parent Information)

1. Saint Thomas will inform parents, verbally and in writing, when there is a student with food allergies in the classroom to avoid known products with allergens at all times, including all special classroom activities and celebrations.
2. Classrooms that have a student with severe food allergies will post a notice of the specific allergens that could potentially cause a life-threatening reaction.
3. Saint Thomas lunch service will avoid the use of nuts and peanut butter in the preparation of food. There will be an allergen free table in the lunchroom that allows students to enjoy a safer eating environment while at the same time allowing those without allergies to eat food that may contain allergens such as peanut butter.
4. Saint Thomas will initiate disciplinary consequences for any student that intimidates or intentionally exposes an allergic student to a known allergen.

Procedures for Management: (Student Information)

1. Posting outside classrooms of students with severe/life threatening allergies
2. Teachers will instruct students to wash hands and clean surfaces at the beginning of the school day, after meals in the lunchroom, and after snacks in the classroom when there is a student with food allergies in the classroom to avoid contamination by contact.
3. School Personnel are instructed in the use of an Epi pen and what symptoms to watch for in the event of an allergic reaction.

Birthday Celebrations at school:

1. Saint Thomas acknowledges student birthdays and milestones at Chapel. With the announcement of their name, students are recognized and the entire school applauds their very own special day.
2. If you choose to celebrate your child's birthday in the classroom, please do so with non-food items such as pencils, stickers, notepads, or a donation of a game or book to the classroom or school library.
3. Any food items sent for the class will be distributed at the end of the school day and taken home by each student for parent approval.

Health and Medications

If your child has a communicable disease or any contagious health problem that will affect the health of the staff and other children in the program, please do not send him/her to school. Your child may return once they are no longer contagious and fever free for 24 hours without the use of a fever reducer.

If your child suddenly becomes ill or symptoms of illness appear such as a fever of 100 or higher, vomiting, or diarrhea, you will be called and your child will need to be picked up immediately. If you are unreachable, your child's emergency contact will be notified and your child will be taken to the office to await pick up in a designated area for such purposes.

We follow the State of Michigan school medication recommendations. All medication, prescription or nonprescription (over-the-counter), must be brought to the school office in its original container by a parent with appropriate authorization and a completed Parent Medication Consent Form must be on file in the school office. Parents should also inform the teacher with an email. No school staff member may dispense medication of any kind without written permission.

Student Illness and Medical Needs:

- **Fever:** If your child presents symptoms of a fever, they will be brought to the office. If the student has a fever of 100 degrees or higher, you will be called by the office to pick up your child. Your child must be fever free, without fever reducer, for 24 hours before returning to school.
- **Vomiting/Diarrhea:** If your child is vomiting or has diarrhea a parent will be called to pick the child up immediately. Students must be free from vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school.
- **Lice:** If we suspect lice, teachers do the initial hair check and then send the child to the office for confirmation. The office will call you to pick up your child if Lice is seen or suspected. Students may return to school when there is no evidence of lice and must be checked by the school office before they return to the classroom.
- **Injury:** If your child suffers any serious injury during the school hours, he/she will be assessed by the adult in charge and treated as necessary. We will complete an accident report and a copy will be sent home to notify you.

Accident/Injury

You will be notified by phone or email when an accident, injury, or illness occurs. If your child receives a head injury, you will be notified immediately. In the case of an accident or injury, adequate First Aid supplies are available. If the situation requires immediate medical attention, the staff will first call 911 and then notify you via phone. If the situation requires professional medical attention, we will complete an accident report. You will receive a copy of the accident report and a copy will be kept on file.

If a minor injury occurs, the adult in charge will attend to the injury as needed, applying ice, band aids, as well as comforting your child. We will complete an accident report. You will receive a copy of the accident report and a copy will be kept on file.

To help protect your child, all staff members have been trained to handle bodily fluids and are required to follow the proper procedures when dealing with bodily fluids.

All Preschool staff members are trained in CPR and First Aid.

Children are taught the importance of proper hand washing and are provided with the opportunity throughout the day to wash their hands when necessary.

Volunteer Policy

We welcome parents and other volunteers into our program. However, everyone must meet the following criteria.

- IChat Background Check – every five years.
- National Sex Offender Registry Check.
- Virtus Protecting God's Children class attendance.
- Agreeing to and signing the Standards of Ministerial Behavior.

All criteria must be complete and approved before any volunteering in the school can be done.

Emergency Information and Procedures

Name of Preschool: Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School
Address: 1429 Wilcox Park Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Phone: (616) 458-4228
Nearest Cross Streets: Fulton and Carlton, Enter off Carlton onto Grace Street
Point of Reference: Behind Holland Home on Fulton

Fire: Meet behind Church at Preschool designated line on fence.

At sound of fire alarm:

1. Preschool Teacher (PT): Lead all the children to the above meeting place, taking child information cards and attendance to account for all children.
2. Preschool Parapro (PP): Check the bathroom and classroom for children, grab the to-go bag and then follow to the above meeting place to help children calm and quiet.
3. PT: Once all children and adults have been evacuated, proceed to the gym.
4. PT: Contact parents using a cell phone.
5. PT/PP: Assist parents in signing children out, then assure that all children have been picked up by parents or designated persons.

Tornado: Children will be taken down to the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Atrium (Basement of Ministry Center)

At sound of tornado alarm:

1. Preschool Teacher (PT): Lead all children, taking child information cards and attendance records and cell phones to the above meeting place. Take attendance and account for all children.
2. Preschool Parapro (PP): Check the bathroom and classroom for children, grab the to-go bag and then follow to the above meeting place to help children calm and quiet.
3. PT: Once all children and adults have been accounted for, use a radio to let the Principal know that all are secured safely.
4. PT/PP: Wait for the all clear notice from the Principal.
5. PT/PP: Lead all children back to the classroom.

Serious injury, accident or illness

1. Preschool Teacher (PT): Stay with the injured child, help the child stay calm and quiet, administer first aid/CPR as needed.
2. Preschool Parapro (PP): Contact emergency personnel, if necessary. Contact the school office, who will then contact the parent.
3. PP: Stay with the other children, reassure them and keep them occupied.
4. PT: After the child is appropriately cared for, file an accident report with the office, if necessary. Send a copy home to the parent.

Crisis

Saint Thomas staff is trained on what to do in a crisis situation. Our priority is the safety of our students. Teachers will follow the trained protocol or instructions from authorities. If students are relocated, parents will be notified by email, text or phone. After 30 minutes, we will make phone calls to those parents whose children remain at the location. If a crisis occurs and the children remain at Saint Thomas, we will send home a letter or email with each child explaining the situation that occurred. Lock downs and/or shelter in place are practiced twice a year.

*If specific plans for students with special needs or chronic health conditions are required, alternate arrangements will be provided for staff.

Power outage

Principal will announce a power outage and message parents to come pick up students.

1. Preschool Teacher (PT): Release children to parents. Communicate with parents of children who are scheduled to arrive to inform them not to come. Post notice on the Preschool entrance door.
2. Preschool Parapro (PP): Remain with children and occupy them while PT releases children to parents.

Gas leak: Meet at the Aquinas Gym.

Principal will announce the need to evacuate the school.

1. Preschool Teacher (PT): Lead all children, taking child information cards and attendance records and cell phones to the above meeting place. Take attendance to account for all children.
2. Preschool Parapro (PP): Check the bathroom and classroom for children. Grab the to-go bag and then follow to the above meeting place to help keep children calm and quiet.
3. PT: Once all children and adults have been evacuated, proceed to the Aquinas Gym.
4. PT: Contact parents using a cell phone.

5. PT/PP: Assist parents in signing children out. Ensure that all children have been picked up by parents or designated people.

Water main break

In the event of a water main break or loss of water at school, the school will close. The Principal along with emergency responders will determine if the children may shelter in place until parents can arrive for pick up. If evacuation is needed, fire emergency procedures will be followed.

Winter storm

Should a winter storm arrive while children are in school, the Principal will determine if the school will remain open. If the school closes, the Preschool Teacher will post a notice on the Preschool door outside and begin calling parents to notify them that the children need to be picked up as soon as possible.

Preschool Immunization Information

Read and check all boxes that apply in the written statement below. If all information is accurate and on file with Saint Thomas the Apostle Preschool, please sign and date at the bottom of the page:

- My child, _____, is in good health.
 - My child, _____, is in good health with restrictions
(please list restrictions in the lines below)
-
-

- My child's immunizations are up to date.
- My child's immunization record or appropriate waiver is on file in the school office.

Parents who choose NOT to immunize their preschooler must provide a signed immunization waiver for the child.

X _____

(Parent/Guardian)

Date: _____

Please sign and return this page to the Preschool Program Teacher.

Preschool Statement of Abuse and Neglect

Simply stated, abuse is mistreatment of another person. It can take many forms – physical, sexual, mental, neglect, and misappropriation. Abuse means the willful infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or punishment with resulting physical harm, pain or mental anguish. Willful means the individual must have acted deliberately, that he/she must have intended to inflict injury or harm.

Saint Thomas the Apostle's the Preschool keeps on file a written statement that is signed and dated by all staff and volunteers at the time of their hiring or before volunteering indicating the following:

- The individual is aware that abuse and neglect of children is against the law.
- The individuals have been informed of Saint Thomas' policies on child abuse and neglect.
- The individual knows that all staff and volunteers are required by law to immediately report suspected abuse and neglect to children's protective services.

Staff training plan and paperwork

- Complete a Department of Human Services Center Registry Check Authorization.
- Be fingerprinted through LiveScan.
- Be certified in First Aid and CPR.
- Complete health physical and TB screening and submit a medical form to the school office.
- Be aware of and enforce Childcare licensing rules.
- Take Blood Borne Pathogens Training.
- Be aware of and utilize, as is necessary, child abuse and neglect reporting procedures.
- Be aware of and practice emergency evacuation procedures. Procedures are posted in the classroom and should be reviewed/practiced with the children at least twice a year.

Ongoing training requirements

- Attend 16 hours of professional development opportunities annually in the areas of: child development, health, safety and nutrition, family and community engagement, management, teaching and learning, documentation and assessment, interactions and guidance, and professionalism.
- Renew CPR training annually. Renew First Aid training every two years.

Preschool Enrollment/Withdrawal Information & Fees

2024-2025

- There is a \$125 registration fee per child with a maximum registration fee of \$250 per family.
- Registration information must be completed online.
- Payment Plan: Preschool tuition is billed via SchoolAdmin in the same manner as school tuition.
- Tuition for P3 is \$1,356 (parishioner)/\$1,891 (non-parishioner) for the year.
- Tuition for P4 is \$ 1,803 (parishioner)/\$2,746 (non-parishioner) for the year.
- Tuition for P3 Enrichment is \$678 for the year.
- Tuition for P4 Enrichment is \$ 1,428 for the year.
- Parents withdrawing prior to the start of the school year will receive their first SchoolAdmin refunded.
- Registration fees are non-refundable.

If a student is starting after the beginning of the year, please note we make changes at the quarter and tuition will be prorated.

School Calendar

Visit www.stthomasgr.org/parents/school-calendar/ to see our School Calendar.

Sign off for Receipt of Preschool Handbook

I hereby certify that I have been provided with a copy of the Saint Thomas the Apostle Preschool Handbook and that I understand and agree to these policies as presented.

I understand that this handbook supersedes all previous handbooks and replaces any oral/written representations contrary to the provisions in the handbook. I understand that the handbook may be amended or revised in whole or part at any time by the administration of Saint Thomas the Apostle at their sole discretion.

Parent name (printed)

Parent Signature

Date