

EARLY CHILDHOOD

PROGRAM HANDBOOK



St. Joseph Catholic School Early Childhood programs welcome you and your child. This booklet contains information your family will find useful for the upcoming school year. Please call 515-266-3433 with any questions.

Welcome to St. Joseph Catholic School

Welcome!

We are looking forward to a successful year growing with you and your child in our St. Joseph Catholic School Preschool Program.

We believe the St. Joseph Preschool programs enjoy their good reputation largely because of the support and participation of parents such as you. Your active and informed participation is key to the success of our programs. We encourage your involvement. We welcome it!

We have prepared a Program Handbook for your information. In the Program Handbook, you will find important sections on attendance, immunizations, transportation and parent involvement.

The Program Handbook should answer most of your questions. If you have additional questions, first contact your child's teacher or center staff. If you still need help, please call me.

Our doors are always open to you. Feel free to call or stop by to visit the program.

Program Descriptions

Options

St. Joseph Catholic School Early Childhood Programs offer a variety of program options for 4-year-old children and their families. Some of the programs have specific requirements such as age, income and employment status.

Sessions for the Universal PreK program are Monday through Friday mornings from 8:10 am until 11:10 am.

The full day program times are from 8:10am - 3:20pm with UPK in the morning and an enrichment program in the afternoon. The enrichment program includes religion, music, and physical education.

All programs are center based which offers children the wonderful opportunity to develop socially, intellectually, physically and emotionally in a group setting. Teachers with either an early childhood degree or an education degree with an early childhood endorsement staff classrooms. Classroom, building staff, nurses and district support staff work as a team with families to create an integrated early childhood educational experience for children.

A typical day at our preschool center includes:

- Arrival 8:10am
- Group activities
- Snack
- Small group activities
- Learning center time
- Literacy activities
- Outdoor time
- Large group time (circle time)
- Transition activities
- Special activities and events planned by staff, children and building staff

Special Program Features

While you and your child are a part of the St. Joseph Catholic School Preschool Programs you can look forward to:

Home/Family Visits

Your family will be invited for a family visit at the beginning of the year. This is a chance to visit the classroom and meet the teacher. There will also be two parent teacher conferences for Pre-K and one for Preschool per year during the time the K-8 St. Joseph's Catholic School students have their parent teacher conferences. These visits are important for the following reasons:

1. Teaching staff will share current information related to your child's growth and development.
2. Teaching staff will answer questions you may have about your child's progress or refer you to someone who can respond to your questions.
3. You may share information, strengths and concerns about your child that are helpful to the teacher and teacher associate.
4. Learning activities will be demonstrated and developed with parents.
5. Individual goal planning will be completed for your child with your input and guidance.

2025/2026 Preschool Program Details

Students must be 4 years old on or before September 15, 2025. A student who turns 5 before September 15th, but is not quite ready for Kindergarten can attend our program but would not be eligible for the Universal Preschool Funding. A Universal Preschool Funding application must be completed. This will be available on our website in March as well as mailed out to registered families.

Tuition and Fees

Pre-Kindergarten Program| \$433.33/month or \$3,900/year or Universal Preschool Funding (FREE).

Optional Afternoon Enrichment Program| \$450/month or \$4,050/year (**NOT UPK Funded**)

General Policies and Guidelines

Attendance

Good attendance is important for school success. Your child should attend school every day, except when they are ill. It is also important for students to arrive on time each day for the following reasons:

- Children learn the routine and feel comfortable when they know what to expect daily
- Children begin and end the day as a group. It is important to begin and end the day on a positive note.
- The teacher plans each part of your child's day. If your child is frequently tardy, they will miss important learning opportunities.

- Children begin to develop good habits and a positive attitude about school attendance.

Parents should call 515-266- 3433 to report when their child will be absent.

Please call prior to the start of your child's class; before 7:45 am for the morning session. If a child is absent and staff does not hear by the specific time, they will contact the parents to determine the cause of the absence.

If your child has a record of unexplained absences or frequent absences, your child may no longer be able to participate in the program. If your child is repeatedly tardy, leaves early or is left at the center after the program day, your child may no longer be able to participate in the program.

Our Curriculum and Assessment

Our Early Childhood curriculum is literacy-based and is designed to provide young children with many ways of playing and interacting with others and the learning environment. Teachers use curriculum focused themed units, Conscious Discipline, PBIS, Scaffolding Early Literacy, and Mature Play, as well as additional research-based strategies to help us meet the needs of our diverse learners. The State of Iowa has developed Early Learning Standards that provide the foundation for our programs. By following the Standards listed below, we are ensuring that all children receive a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate experience that prepares them for Kindergarten. Teachers assess the progress of each child using a variety of tools. Teachers use screening tools to identify children's interests as well as their needs. Teaching Strategies Gold is used to monitor children's progress, and the information gathered assists with planning instruction. Student portfolios are also created to show progress over time. Parents receive information about their child's progress during home visits, conferences and as needed throughout the school year.

- Physical Well-Being and Motor Development
 - Healthy and Safe Living
 - Large Motor Development
 - Fine Motor Development
- Approaches to Learning
 - Curiosity and Initiative
 - Engagement and Persistence

- Reasoning and Problem Solving
- Play and Senses
- Social and Emotional Development
 - Self
 - Self-Regulation
 - Relationships with Adults
 - Relationships with Children
- Communication, Language, and Literacy
 - Language, Understanding and Use
 - Early Literacy
 - Early Writing
- Math
 - Comparison, Numbers, Operations
 - Patterns
 - Shapes and Spatial Relationships
 - Measurement
 - Data Analysis
- Science
 - Scientific Reasoning
 - Scientific Investigation
 - Scientific Communication
- Creative Arts
 - Art
 - Music, Rhythm, and Movement
 - Dramatic Play
- Social Studies
 - Awareness of family and community
 - Awareness of culture
 - Awareness of the relationship between people and the environment in which they live
 - Awareness of the past

Bad Weather

St. Joseph Catholic School Preschool children are part of the school program, so when the school is closed due to bad weather, preschool will be closed. Information regarding closure will be provided to you through School Messenger, our alert system. On the emergency sheet, parents are required to provide the center staff with instruction on who to contact in case of an emergency.

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All center staff, as required by local and state laws, are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Suspected cases of child abuse and neglect are reported to the Child Abuse/Dependent Adult Abuse Hotline at 515-283-9222 or 1-800-652-9516.

Child Release

Center staff will release children to authorized adults only. Authorization must be given on the Permission to Pick Up Sheets or on the Emergency Sheet by the parent or legal guardian. The names, addresses and telephones of adults authorized to pick up your child must appear on this form. An authorized adult must sign all children in and out of the center.

Discipline and Guidance

In the St. Joseph Catholic School Early Childhood Programs, our overall goal is to help develop socially competent children. We do this by encouraging the development of a strong, healthy self-esteem. To support this goal, we provide children guidance and practice in social/emotional skills. Our classrooms use the Conscious Discipline curriculum to enhance children's social skills along with the following methods:

- Positive Redirection: For example, children are throwing toys.
- Positive Redirection means that they are given beanbags and a basket for a beanbag toss instead of throwing toys.

- Ignoring misbehavior when appropriate: Often the best way to discourage negative behavior like showing off or putting it is to ignore it. Instead pay attention and praise the child when demonstrating acceptable behavior.
- Choices to control the situation and not the child: Use choices within limits. For example, “You may sit quietly next to your friend. If you talk, then you’ll have to sit in a chair where you’ll be a better listener.”
- Use of natural and logical consequences: Natural: “You played instead of cleaning up, therefore you used up some of your outside time.” Logical: “You hit a child with this toy, therefore you’re done with the toy for today.”
- Acknowledge children’s feelings and help them solve conflicts: By helping children recognize their own feelings and others, they have a sense of being in control and that everyone’s feelings need to be considered. Helping them solve their own conflict meets their desire for independence.
- Individual Accommodations: A child is provided an alternate activity.

When a child’s behavior hinders his/her ability to handle the classroom environment, a meeting with the center team and support team will occur. The team may be made up of the following people: parent/guardian, teacher, teacher associate, nurse and program director.

The team will discuss the problem behavior. The plan will be used with the child for a determined amount of time and reviewed by the team. If this is unsuccessful, further strategies will be taken. The St. Joseph Catholic School Preschool Program does not use corporal punishment of any kind.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Des Moines Independent Community School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. If you have questions, concerns or a complaint related to this policy, please contact the principal at 515-266-3433. Complaints can also be directed to the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, 400 E. 14th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319-1004, (515) 281-4121, or Region VII Office for Civil Rights, Citigroup Center 500 W. Madison Street, Suite 1475 Chicago, IL 60661-4544.

Dress Suggestions

Your child should be dressed in clothing appropriate for play. It is suggested that children have an extra set of clothes. Tennis shoes or other shoes with rubber soles should be worn. Outdoor time occurs every day, weather permitting. When the weather is cold, please dress your child warmly in a hat, coat, gloves and long pants. In warm weather, shorts or sun clothes should be worn. Please be sure, as the weather changes, proper clothing is worn. If there is a need for assistance, please talk to your center team.

Eligibility

St. Joseph Catholic School Early Childhood Programs have a variety of options for families. Some of the programs are free to income-eligible families and/or because of the age of the child. These programs have varying income guidelines, ranging from 100% to 185% of the federal poverty guidelines.

Field Trips and District Transportation

Field trips are an important part of the preschool program. It affords children an opportunity to experience community and their environment first hand. When the class plans a field trip, parents are informed and must sign a permission slip in order for them to participate on the field trip. Without a signed permission slip, parents will be contacted to come to the center to sign the form. No child will be transported from the center without the signed permission form.

All children transported by the school district must wear a safety vest and be strapped into the bus safety seat restraint.

Fighting

St. Joseph Catholic School has a zero fighting policy and preschool children must abide by this policy. If you would like to see a copy of this policy, please inquire in the school office or ask the staff for a copy.

Holidays

The St. Joseph Catholic School Preschool Centers follow the school calendar and are closed when the school is closed.

Head Lice

Many children get head lice. It is not a sign of being dirty. Do not panic or be embarrassed, but do take action to prevent the spread of head lice. You may be asked to pick your child up from school and begin to treat the lice. Treatment includes using medicated shampoos, rinses and removal of the nits (lice eggs) from the hair. It is also important to wash your child's bedding, clothing and combs. Be sure to inspect all family members' hair and treat it when you find head lice. Daily inspection of the hair is encouraged. Center staff can provide you with additional information about Head Lice.

Health

- Children are required to have a physical and valid immunization card.
- A dental examination is strongly encouraged.
- Children will have direct contact with staff upon arrival for detection of illness.
- Children who exhibit the following symptoms will not be allowed to remain at the center, or will be sent home if they become ill during the day:
 - Diarrhea – within the past 24 hours
 - Fever (101) – within the past 24 hours
 - Severe continuous coughing
 - Pinkeye
 - Vomiting – within the past 24 hours
 - Unexplained rashes or contagious rashes that cannot be covered (for example ringworm)
 - Swollen glands
- Parents will be contacted immediately in case of illness or serious injury.
- Parents who are working or going to school are encouraged to have a "back-up" plan for illness.
- Parents should notify the center when a child has contracted a

communicable disease.

- The center will post notices of exposure of children to a communicable disease.
 - Staff, parents and children will wash their hands after any restroom activity and before and after any food service activity. They will wash their hands before and after administering non-emergency first aid.
 - The center has written procedures for medical and dental emergencies in which all staff receive training.
 - Parents provide sufficient information and authorization to meet the medical and dental emergencies of the children.
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- For each child with special health care needs or food allergies or special nutrition needs, the child's health provider gives the program an individualized care plan that is prepared in consultation with family members and specialists involved in the child's care.
 - The program protects children with food allergies from contact with the problem food.
 - The program asks families of a child with food allergies to give consent for posting information about that child's food allergy and, if consent is given, then posts that information in the food preparation area and in the areas of the facility the child uses so it is a visual reminder to all those who interact with the child during the program day

Immunization

Immunizations must be current. Required immunizations are:

- DPT
- Polio
- MMR
- Chickenpox
- HIB (3 before 12 months or 1 after 12 months)
 - o Immunizes against the organism that causes meningitis
- Hepatitis B (give at any age)

Immunizations are given free-of-charge at the county health department. Center staff can provide you with additional information.

Licensure

The state monitors our licensed centers for compliance with the safety, health and quality regulations. Copies of DHS Licensing Regulations are available upon request.

Our centers are using the Quality Rating System and/or Iowa Quality Program Standards to ensure quality. We are also fully accredited by the Iowa Department of Education.

Medicine

Families are encouraged to give medication at home where children are under the supervision of a parent/guardian. Occasionally, children will need to take medication at school or have medication available for an emergency. The school district's medication policy is as follows:

- Only nurses or other trained district staff will give medicine to a child at school.
- The parent or guardian must sign a permission form in order for the school to administer medication.
- The parent must personally deliver medicine in its original pharmacy container to the teacher or school nurse.
- No over-the-counter medications will be given without a doctor's order.
- All medications are stored in a locked cabinet or locked container inaccessible to children. Access is limited to authorized school personnel only.

Maintaining a Healthful Environment

- The routine frequency of cleaning and sanitizing all surfaces in the facility is as indicated in the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table. Ventilation and sanitation, rather than sprays, air freshening chemicals, or deodorizers, control odors in inhabited areas of the facility and in custodial closets.
- Procedures for standard precautions are used and include the following:

- a. Surfaces that may come in contact with potentially infectious body fluids must be disposable or made of a material that can be sanitized.
- b. Staff use barriers and techniques that minimize contact of mucous membranes or of openings in skin with potentially infectious body fluids and reduce the spread of infectious disease.
- c. When spills of body fluids occur, staff clean them up immediately with detergent followed by water rinsing.
- d. After cleaning, staff sanitize nonporous surfaces by using the procedure for sanitizing designated changing surfaces described in the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table.
- e. Staff clean rugs and carpeting by blotting, spot cleaning with a detergent-disinfectant, and shampooing or steam cleaning.
- f. Staff dispose of contaminated materials and diapers in a plastic bag with a secure tie that is placed in a closed container.

Safety

- Children will be supervised at all times within the facility and on the playground.
- When dropping off or picking up a preschool child, it is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to supervise and monitor all children under 3 years of age.
- Emergency evacuation plans will be posted by all exits. Emergency numbers for police, fire department, poison control center and ambulance service will be posted by all phones.
- Children's emergency information will be posted or be accessible. Tornado and fire drills will be practiced monthly.
- All full-time staff will be certified in First Aid and CPR.
- No smoking is allowed within the facility, with the facility vehicles or on the playground.
- Children shall be individually secured by harness when being transported in school district buses.

- Staff do not routinely transport children.
- · Emergency telephone numbers for each child shall be taken when transporting children to school and on field trips.
- ·The center has written emergency plans for fire, tornado, flood, intruders, intoxicated parents, lost or abducted children, power failures, bomb threats, chemical spills, earthquakes and blizzards. These plans include transportation arrangements.
- The center provides written incident reports to parents when there are minor injuries, minor changes in health status, or behavioral concerns. Incidents resulting in a serious injury or significant health change will be reported immediately to the parent.

Family Partnerships and Family Engagement

- You are your child's best teacher
- Children do best when parents and classroom teachers work together
- Parents who support and extend their child's learning contribute to their child's success in both school and in life
- Parent input is vital to program improvement. Input can be provided through parent surveys.

Toilet Training

- Children who are not potty trained can attend preschool. The goal of our toilet training policy is to promote developmentally appropriate self-help skills and independence.
- If your child is not toilet trained, teachers will ask for your help in developing a toilet training plan for your child that is appropriate for his/her needs. This plan will include full involvement from you as the parent/guardian.
- Expectations for families may include frequent toileting of the child while at home, establishing a consistent routine, providing extra clothing/diapers/pull-ups/wipes for use at school if needed. Pull Ups are preferred to help encourage the child's independence.
- All families are encouraged to keep a change of clothing for their child at school,

in case of toileting accidents, or spills.