



## **Family Handbook** Effective June 6, 2023

### **St. Clare's Preschool**

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**[www.stclairespreschool.org](http://www.stclairespreschool.org)**

**St. Clare's Preschool Tax Identification number: 94-3108531**

**California Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing: Facility #010212344**

Welcome to St. Clare's Preschool. We are looking forward to having your child at St. Clare's.

St. Clare's Preschool is licensed by California Department of Social Services. The Department has the following authorities:

“They shall have the authority to interview children, or staff, and to inspect and audit a child or facility records without prior consent. The Licensee shall make provisions for private interview with any child or staff member and for the examination of all records relative to the operation of the childcare facility. The Department has the authority to observe the physical condition of the child, including conditions that could indicate abuse, neglect, or inappropriate behavior.”

Licensing Agency Rights - Code 101200B&C

The purpose of this handbook is to answer many questions families will have regarding our preschool. If you have any questions or concerns, we can be reached at (925) 462-0938, or by email: [Director@stclairespreschool.org](mailto:Director@stclairespreschool.org) and [admin@stclairespreschool.org](mailto:admin@stclairespreschool.org).

Sincerely,

Karen Berry and Martha Bali  
Co-Directors

# Table of Contents

<b>Our Mission &amp; Philosophy.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>General Information.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Non-discrimination Policy	
Our Teachers	
How to Help Your Child to Prepare for School	
What to Bring on the First Day of School	
Saying Goodbye	
Children with Disabilities	
<b>Enrollment &amp; Fees.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Admission criteria	
Tuition Payments	
A Year-round Program	
Enrollment Fees	
Failure to Pay Tuition	
Returned Check Fee	
<b>Policies &amp; Procedures .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Program Times	
Pre-Approved Additional Hours and Days of Attendance	
Unscheduled Late Pick-ups	
Changes of Schedule	
Reporting of Absences	
Class Assignments	
Holidays and Closure Dates	
Birthdays	
Clothing	
What Not to Bring to School	
Toilet Training / Diapers	
Custody and Visitation	
Withdrawing from the Preschool	
<b>The Program.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Education	
Prayer	
Chapel	
Sample Schedule	
Nap / Rest Time	
Field Trips	
PreK Share Days	
Additional Activities	
Special Events	

<b>Communication and Family Involvement.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Open Door Policy	
Family Communication	
Lesson Plans	
Back to School Night	
Preschool Progress Reviews	
Adult Volunteers at the Preschool	
<b>Safety and Security .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Security Access	
Signing In and Out	
Arrival and Leaving the Center	
Security Doors and Gates	
Emergency Contacts	
Child Pick-up Authorization	
Student Record Updates	
Parking Lot	
Emergency Procedures	
Emergency Closures	
<b>Health and Nutrition.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Food and Nutrition	
Sunscreen	
Accident / Illness procedures	
Medication Policy	
Illness	
Reporting Child Abuse	
<b>Guidance and Handling Challenging Behavior.....</b>	<b>20</b>
General Guidance Policy	
Challenging Behaviors	
Challenging Behaviors – Biting	
Very Severe Challenging Behaviors	
<b>Management of the Preschool.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Preschool Advisory Board	
The Vestry of St. Clare’s Episcopal Church	

## **Mission Statement & Philosophy**

*No boundaries on faith, no borders on hope, no limits on love.  
God loves us all...no exceptions.*

### **Mission Statement**

Our mission at St. Clare's Christian Preschool is to create a safe, warm, family oriented, loving environment that supports developmentally appropriate practices and encourages each child to grow cognitively, physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

### **Our Philosophy**

Children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. Research shows that children are capable of great concentration when they are surrounded by interesting things. Children need the time and freedom to explore these areas of interest. With careful observation, we help, encourage and support the learning process in each child, according to their own timetable for growth.

## **General Information**

St. Clare's Preschool welcomes children of any race, religion, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies or admission policies.

### **Our Teachers**

We are committed to hiring educationally qualified teachers who are personally and professionally devoted to the exceptional care, welfare, and quality education of young children. Most of our teachers exceed the academic qualifications required by California licensing regulations and have an average of eight years teaching experience at St. Clare's alone! In addition, our teachers are CPR and first aid certified. Most importantly, they are enthusiastic and enjoy their work with children. This is reflected in the positive environment they create for the children.

We create and maintain an atmosphere that fosters healthy spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social, and physical growth in each child. We acknowledge that learning is enhanced in an environment that encourages sharing, caring, laughing, questioning, risk taking, growing, and playing.

### **How to Help Your Child Prepare for School**

Talk about preschool with your child. Discuss positive experiences that are waiting for them. Listen and discuss concerns that they are expressing. Encourage your child and be reassuring. Establish good routines for eating and sleeping. It is important to have your child up early enough in the morning for them to enjoy a rest/nap time by 1:00 p.m. at the latest (see page 17 for full explanation). Establish an effective communication link with your child's teacher so that you are informed about your child's progress.

### **What to Bring on Your First Day of School:**

- **A Change of Clothes** in a one-gallon zip-top bag with your child's name on it. (Please label everything)
  - Shirt, underwear, socks, pants/shorts/skirt, and shoes
- **For Nap Time**
  - Nap bag (provided by St. Clare's)
  - cot sheet (provided by St. Clare's)
  - Small crib blanket
  - Very small pillow (only if needed)
  - Small stuffed toy (only if desired)
- **Other Items**
  - Sun block (with child's name on it)
  - Lunch box, and reusable ice block to keep it cool
  - Water bottle
  - Picture of your family

### **Saying Goodbye**

Separations are sometimes difficult, especially at the start of preschool. Having a consistent routine is very important. Talk with your child before you arrive about what he or she is going to do, and the teachers and children who will be at school. Starting the day in a positive manner will help assure a good day for your child. It is helpful to develop a reassuring goodbye routine for each day. For example, find a favorite teacher for your child to say "good morning" to, or a favorite activity your child likes to begin the day with, then give a warm hug good-bye, tell your child when you will be back (after nap time, or after afternoon play time) and leave with confidence. When changes in routine occur, please keep teachers informed so they can help your child. It may help to have a teacher take your child in their lap; they can then help your child find an activity of interest, so you can say goodbye and leave.

Our single most important piece of advice is to say goodbye confidently and briefly, then leave. Don't hesitate to contact the preschool later to check how your child is doing.

## **Enrollment & Fees**

Because of the importance of developing confidence in classroom routines and building strong relationships with teachers and classmates, our policy is to enroll children for a minimum of three (3) months at a time.

### **Admission Criteria**

1. Parent(s) or guardian(s) must complete a tour of the facility and meet with the Director(s) or another staff member. Licensing asks that we meet each child before offering enrollment. During this meeting, the Director(s) will need to understand the state of your child's physical and emotional development, to assess whether our preschool can meet your child's needs.
2. Children admitted to the school must be between 2 – 5 years of age (we are not licensed to admit children before their second birthday).

- Children must have all the immunizations required by the State of California to attend St. Clare’s Preschool.

**Children with Disabilities**

St. Clare’s Preschool provides reasonable accommodations for children with disabilities in line with our non-discrimination policy. If your child has a disability, please inform the Director(s) at the earliest possibility so that we can discuss and determine if St. Clare’s Preschool can provide sufficient, appropriate accommodations for your child in our setting. We encourage open and regular communication with the Director(s) for this purpose. Information regarding your child’s disability will only be shared with individual teachers or staff members to the extent necessary in order to properly support your child.

In cases where a disability may be discovered after the child starts preschool, we observe the child in our setting with our routines for several weeks before discussing our observations with their family. From there, we will meet with you and initiate communications of our professional questions. This provides a structured way to share information about the child’s development and learning styles at school and at home, and discuss any additional supports or accommodations needed going forward. In some situations, we may recommend a full developmental evaluation by your child’s pediatrician or your local school district. In those instances, we encourage you to share those results with us in order to continue discussions regarding how best to support your child. If your child needs more accommodations than St. Clare’s Preschool can reasonably provide, we reserve the right to respectfully request that you find a more appropriate setting for your child.

**Admission / Registration Forms:**

Before your child starts preschool, the following documentation must be completed, signed, and returned to the Director(s):

Registration Agreement	Consent for Medical Treatment
Admissions Agreement	Personal Rights Statement
ID & Emergency Information Form	Parent’s Rights Statement
Pre-admission Health History	Photo Release
Physician’s Report	Sunscreen Permission Slip
Copy of Immunization Record	Field Trip Permission Slip
Tuition Express Enrollment form (if chosen)	Getting to Know You form

**Tuition Payments**

Tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month and is considered late on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month.

We offer electronic tuition payment through **Tuition Express**. Families are encouraged to make automatic electronic tuition payments from your checking or savings account, or by credit card (credit card payments are subject to an additional processing fee). Tuition will be billed monthly. St. Clare’s Preschool processes tuition payments through **Tuition Express** on the 5<sup>th</sup> of every month (or the next business day if the 5<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend or holiday). In August, prorated tuition for the first month of the new school year will be charged on the first day of school.

If you choose not to enroll in Tuition Express, a tuition invoice will be emailed to you and payment is due upon receipt.

Children who are admitted and enrolled at St. Clare's, but who are not eligible to start on the first day of preschool, must pay full (100%) tuition to hold their spot until they are eligible to attend.

### **Failure to Pay Tuition**

If tuition is not paid by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month, you will receive an email reminder. Failure to make payment immediately will lead to a meeting with the Preschool Director(s) to discuss a payment plan. Failure to comply with the agreed repayment plan will result in a request for you to withdraw your child from the preschool.

### **Returned Check Fee**

If your Tuition Express payment is declined or a tuition check is returned, the amount of the tuition plus a \$35 returned payment fee will be applied to your account and must be paid immediately. Upon your request, we will resubmit Tuition Express charges once; if the charge is declined again, payment must be made within 48 hours by an alternate method (cash, check, or credit card).

### **A Year-Round Program**

St. Clare's Preschool provides a year-round program. We do not offer tuition breaks for vacations or time away from St. Clare's Preschool. For continuing students, if you choose to withdraw your child from St. Clare's over the summer, we cannot guarantee a spot for your child in the fall. You may, of course, guarantee a fall spot by paying through the summer for our shortest schedule (Tuesday/Thursday Part-Day), even if you are unable, or choose not to attend over the summer.

If you choose to withdraw from St. Clare's for any other period of time (vacations), we cannot guarantee a space for your child when you return. Ability to enroll when you return is based on availability at the time of the request. Families may withdraw their children any time of the year.

### **Enrollment and Fees**

Receipt of the completed and signed Registration Agreement, Registration Fee, and Half-Month Tuition Deposit will secure enrollment for your child.

#### **Registration Fee**

The one-time non-refundable Registration Fee is \$150.00 per child, due at the time of registration.

#### **Tuition Deposit**

The Half-Month Tuition Deposit is due at the time of registration. Your deposit will be refunded when you withdraw from the Preschool with two weeks' notice. If you decide not to have your child attend St. Clare's Preschool after registering for the new school year, your deposit will be refunded only if notice is received at least two weeks before the school year begins. Half-Month Tuition Deposits will not be refunded with less than two weeks' (ten weekdays) notice.

#### **Multiple Child Discount**

A tuition discount of 10% will be given to the second and additional children enrolled from the same family attending during the same school year. This discount applies only to tuition, and not to any other fees.

### **Annual Supply Fee**

An annual supply fee of \$150.00 per child is charged in September. This fee is prorated monthly for families enrolling after September. No refunds will be given for early withdrawal.

### **Family Service Fee (annual)**

A Family Service Deposit of \$100 per child is charged in October. Families are asked to volunteer for five (5) hours of service per child, per school year. This fee is prorated monthly for families who enroll after October. Alternatively, families can opt out of family service hours and leave the \$100 with the school. No refunds will be given for early withdrawal.

For those choosing to volunteer, parents/guardians or other family members may select from a wide variety of activities such as workdays, classroom assistance for special events, fundraising events, field trips, washing towels, shopping etc. Once the hours are completed, the deposit will be refunded (partial refunds will be given).

## **Policies & Procedures**

### **Preschool Program Times**

The Preschool offers two program schedules, Full Day (7 AM - 6 PM) and Part Day (9 AM - 3 PM). We strongly recommend that all children are at school by 9:30 AM so they are ready for the morning learning activities and can settle in with their friends and be ready to learn. If a child arrives after 9:30 AM, they must be dropped off with preschool staff in the lobby. The school staff will take your child to their class to minimize classroom disruption after activities have already begun.

**Part-Day enrollment:** Children enrolled in the Part Day program may attend from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Children should be picked up between 2:30 and 3:00 PM. Pre-arranged early arrivals (before 9:00 AM) or late pick-ups (after 3:00 PM) MUST be arranged with the preschool office in advance, and MAY be available, depending on enrollment / attendance. If pre-approved by the Director(s), you will be charged \$20 per hour or part thereof.

**Full-day enrollment:** Children enrolled in the Full Day program may attend preschool from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Parents/guardians must arrive at preschool no later than 5:55 PM, so you have time to sign your child out and get them from their classroom.

### **Pre-Arranged Additional Hours and Days of Attendance (Part-Time Students only)**

Please note that additional attendance of any type must be pre-approved by the Preschool Director(s) so that we can be sure we remain within our licensing-required ratios. Failure to be in the required ratios exposes the school to the risk of a citation by State licensing authorities.

- Pre-approved additional attendance hours will be charged at \$20 per hour or part thereof.
- Pre-approved additional attendance days will be charged at the following flat rates:
  - 2-year olds: additional **part day** = \$110 per day
  - 2 year olds: additional **full day** = \$125 per day



- 3 and 4 year-olds: additional **part day** = \$95 per day
- 3 and 4 year-olds: additional **full day** = \$110 per day

### **Unscheduled Late Pick Ups**

Late pick-ups are a serious safety concern. Our staffing schedule changes at 3:00 PM to accommodate our full-day enrollment at that time. We are not allowed to care for additional children if we exceed our licensing ratio.

All unscheduled late pick-ups (after 3:00 for part-day children, and after 6:00 for full-day children) will be charged a late fee of \$10 for the first five minutes, and \$1 per additional minute after that. If a family has more than two (2) unscheduled late pick-ups, the above late charges will be doubled for the remainder of the school year. If there are four (4) or more unscheduled late pick-ups during the school year, the family will be required to change their part-day child's schedule to full-day effective immediately (if enrolled part-day, and full-day space is available), or to withdraw their child from St. Clare's Preschool.

**For Part-day children:** Children picked up after 3:00 PM require the Director(s) to remain with your child. Your child will wait alone with the Director(s) until you or your emergency pick-up person signs your child out.

**For Full-day children:** Our center is closed (according to our license) at 6:00 PM, and our staff is off duty. Children picked up after 6:00 PM require the Director(s) to remain with your child. Your child will wait alone with the Director(s) until you or your emergency pick-up person signs your child out.

### **Requests for Change of Schedule**

All requests for a change of scheduled days or times must be submitted in writing to the Director(s) for approval. Requests may be accommodated based on availability at the time of the request.

### **Reporting Absences**

If your child will be absent, please notify the preschool office via phone, email, or app. If your child is ill, please notify us as to the nature of the illness, particularly if it is contagious, so that we can consider the health of all the children enrolled in the program.

### **Class Assignments**

The Preschool teachers place students into classroom groups based on "balanced classes." We aim to balance classes by gender, age, schedule, temperament, and how the class will learn best together.

### **Closure Dates & Holidays**

A calendar of school closure dates will be provided in the enrollment packet. No discounts are given for holidays and closure dates that fall on your child's regularly scheduled day. The holidays are as follows:

Labor Day

Veteran's Day

Thanksgiving Day & the day following

Typically seven (7) weekdays surrounding Christmas and New Year's holidays

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Presidents' Day  
Good Friday or Easter Monday  
Memorial Day  
Juneteenth (June 19)  
July 4th  
Four Teacher Workdays (August, January, and June)

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays may be celebrated at school. We ask that if you want to have a celebration for your child at school, that you discuss the arrangements with your child's teacher ahead of time. ***Please make sure that all food treats are nut free.*** Feel free to seek the advice of your teacher for treats that the children really enjoy. Some classes prefer popsicles, fruit, cake pops, ice cream, or brownies to the traditional cupcake.

### **Clothing**

Please dress your child in "play clothes" for school. Some preschool activities are messy, and we want your children to be comfortable while they play and learn.

Please dress your children in clothes they can put on and take off by themselves. This enables them to be much more independent when using the bathroom. Overalls, tight jeans with zippers or buttons, and laced shoes, for example, are not easy items for young children to manage by themselves. Elastic waist pants and Velcro shoe closures are the best for helping the children feel competent and independent.

For safety and comfort, children should wear rubber soled shoes, and have plenty of protection for their heels and toes. **Please do not allow your child to wear flip-flops or backless sandals to school; these can easily cause injuries and accidents.** High-heeled "dress-up" shoes are not safe for playing on the playground. Children wearing skirts or dresses should wear shorts or leggings underneath.

### **Bathroom/Clothing Accidents**

All children must bring a complete change of clothes in a labeled zip-top bag. **Please label all clothes and the bag with your child's name.** If your child uses these clothes, we will send them home with a note; please send a new change of clothes the next time they come to school.

### **What Not to Bring to School**

For the safety of our children and in consideration of our philosophy we ask that you leave the following at home:

Any food or snack containing nuts	Lip balm or "Chap-Stik" items
Toys promoting violence	Flip Flops, or sandals without backs
Candy or chewing gum	Anything unlabeled
Vitamins or throat lozenges	Personal toys/items, except on Share Days

### **Toilet Training and Diapers**

We accept children who are not toilet trained in our 2's program (Playful Pandas class). Parents provide diapers. We will leave you a note when we need more. We need to be able to change your child without taking off their shoes, socks, and pants. For this reason, we prefer diapers. If you choose to provide pull-ups, please provide the type with Velcro fastenings. When your child is showing signs of readiness to be toilet trained, we will talk with you. Signs of

readiness include, but are not limited to: verbally making it known she or he needs to use the bathroom, ability to pull own pants up and down, going for periods of time without wet diapers, and willingness to cooperate in trying the training processes.

**All children need to be toilet trained by the time they move into the 3-4-year-old program.**

The 3-4 year-old classes have a 1:12 ratio and a reduced tuition rate, which is based upon children being toilet trained and ready to use the main preschool bathroom with independent skills. Children should be able to:

1. wear underwear to preschool every day.
2. tell us when they need to go.
3. manage their clothing.
4. wipe themselves.
5. They may still wear a pull-up at naptime if needed. (Parents provide the pull-ups).

**Custody and Visitation**

Occasionally, issues arise as to the release of a child to the appropriate parent or legal guardian. Please note any custody or visitation restrictions on your enrollment forms. Additionally, please provide the preschool Director(s) with any legal documents supporting those restrictions. We will strictly adhere to the instructions provided in such legal documents. Please provide updated legal documents as needed.

**Withdrawing from the Preschool**

Any family that is withdrawing from the school must notify the Director(s) in writing at least two weeks prior to the leaving date. Your half-month deposit will be credited to your tuition account if we receive two weeks’ notice. If you decide that your child will not attend St. Clare’s in the fall, notice is required at least two weeks before the school year begins.

**The Program**

**Education**

The preschool doors are open from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm. Between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm the children are in the “preschool” part of their day. To get the most from our program we recommend that families arrive at school at the 9:00 am start time. It really helps your child to settle into the day with their teacher and friends.

**Prayer and Chapel**

The children say or sing grace together before snack and lunch times. Once a week, the children have Chapel time with the Chaplain of St. Clare’s Preschool. This is a 20-minute story and song time, usually held in the Church. The focus is on how much we are loved, and how much we are called to care for each other. We welcome and respect families from many different faith traditions. If you do not want your child to attend Chapel, please notify the Director(s) in writing. Your child will spend chapel time with a different class.

**Sample Daily Schedule – Full Day**

7-8am	School opens, mixed age group activities
8-9am	Playground time (weather permitting)

9-9:30am	Bathroom break, morning snack
9:30-10am	Circle time (greetings, songs, story etc.)
10-10:30am	Free choice / play centers
10:30-11am	Art and/or table activities
11-12 noon	Playground time
12-12:30pm	Bathroom break, lunch
12:30-1pm	Transition to naptime
1-2pm	Nap and rest time
2-2:45pm	Wake up time, afternoon snack, center activities
2:45 - 3:00pm	Closing circle
3:15-5pm	Playground time (weather permitting)
5-6pm	Transition inside, bathroom, wash hands, story time, indoor toy time

Exact schedules vary according to class. Please check with your child's teacher for an actual classroom schedule. Please note that schedules do change based on weather and class energy!

### **Nap/Rest Time**

State Licensing requires that all children are offered a nap/rest time, and most children do sleep. We encourage sleep by dimming the lights, playing soothing music, keeping the room quiet and cool and for the younger children, rubbing backs. We know that young children need a nap/rest during their busy preschool day. Some children do not fall asleep; however, please note they are expected to rest quietly for a developmentally appropriate period of time. Please get your child up early enough in the mornings for them to need a nap by 1:00 latest; this makes nap/rest time more enjoyable for all concerned.

We ask that you provide a small blanket and a small soft toy (if your child rests better with the soft toy). We will provide a cot sheet and nap bag. Bedding bags are to be taken home by families and laundered on a weekly basis, or more frequently if necessary.

### **Field Trips**

Occasional walking field trips are taken. For identification purposes, we ask that each child wear their St. Clare's t-shirt for field trips. Families will be notified in advance of all trips or outings.

### **PreK Share Days**

Each PreK class may have a periodic "Share Day" (please check with your child's teacher for days and times). Children may bring a toy, book or other item of their choice (please, no weapons). This provides valuable time for the child to develop their speech and language skills as well as self-confidence. The toy must be put in the designated "Share Day" box and will only be brought out for "Share Day" time.

### **Additional Activity Options**

Each school year we may offer additional activity options taught by outside agencies. For example, soccer is currently available for our 3- and 4-year-old classes. These additional activities are arranged at the discretion of the Director(s). These optional classes have fees in addition to regular monthly tuition. A member of St. Clare's staff is always present during these activities, even though they are facilitated by staff from the contracting organization.

### **Special Events**

There will be several fun events during the school year, including Back to School Night (adults only), Family Fun Night, Christmas Celebration, and PreK Graduation Celebration. We strongly encourage family involvement on these occasions.

## **Communication and Family Involvement**

### **Open Door Policy**

Parents/guardians are always welcome. We encourage you to visit at any time. Open communication between families and staff is important, and so is your input. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have regarding the preschool with the Director(s). If there are elements of the program you don't understand, or you have suggestions or concerns you wish to share, please contact the Director(s).

### **Family Communication**

The teachers will inform you what the children's day was like via the ProCare Parent Engagement App. This provides a quick means for you to be informed of your child's daily activities and can promote a conversation between you and your child.

You will receive a monthly newsletter containing information on curriculum, activities, the snack menu, and upcoming school events. Additional communication will be distributed as needed. Please note that it is your responsibility to read them carefully. The information they contain is important to your child and you.

### **Back to School Night**

This is an adults-only evening for you to get to know your child's teachers and the other families with children in the class. Curriculum, teaching methods, progress reports, schedules, and guidance techniques will be discussed at Back-to-School Night at the beginning of the school year.

### **Developmental Progress Reviews**

Progress Reviews will be completed twice a year in the fall and spring (only in the spring, in the 2 year-old class). The purpose of the progress review in preschool is to monitor each child's progress in all areas of the child's development. The reviews help us to meet both the current and future needs of the child. Parent-teacher conferences are available upon parent request at any time.

St. Clare's also offers parent-completed developmental screening tools called *Ages and Stages Questionnaire*, and *Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional*. If you are interested in using the questionnaire at any time, please contact the Director(s).

### **Adult Volunteers at the Preschool**

All adults who volunteer in the preschool and have close contact with the children are required by State Licensing to provide evidence of the following:

1. Statement signed by the volunteer saying they are in good health (we will provide a document for volunteers to sign)
2. Results from a TB test showing no TB is present (test result no more than one year old)

3. Proof of current Pertussis (whooping cough) vaccination (part of the DTAP shot)
4. Proof of measles vaccination (part of the MMR vaccine), or proof of immunity to measles (blood test result)
5. Proof of current year flu shot, or note declining flu shot (we will provide a document for volunteers who want to decline)

To ensure the safety of all the children and to enhance their enjoyment we ask that parents/guardians who are helping please follow these guidelines:

- Teachers consider you as part of a team and ask that you follow their guidance in assisting the children.
- We ask that field-trip helpers keep their attention focused on the children and not on adult conversation.

## **Safety and Security**

### **Building Access**

For the safety of our children, please do not admit anyone you do not know into our building. Remember to latch every door and gate as you enter and exit the building and playground. All additional visitors should ring the doorbell and wait for admittance by preschool staff.

Each family will be assigned a security access code. This allows you access to the school building from the front door Monday through Friday from 7:00 am - 6:00 pm. Families must not share their security access code with anyone outside their own family. Your security code may be changed, upon request, for a \$10 administrative fee.

In the event that you believe your code has been compromised, we require that you inform the preschool as soon as possible. If a caregiver is no longer associated with your family, be sure to inform the school immediately, in case changes need to be made to your family security access code. One-time visitors should use the doorbell/intercom system at the front door to contact the office for access.

### **Signing In and Out**

*Your signature (or permitted electronic signature) signifies the legal transfer of the child to the care of the preschool, and back to you at the end of the day.* The CA State Licensing Department requires that children must be signed in when brought to school and signed out when picked up. Signatures must be *your full legal name, no initials please*, and the time must be noted. The school can be cited and fined by State Licensing if children are not signed in or out.

We use the ProCare Parent Engagement App (with QR code or a personal PIN) to sign children into and out of preschool. If you have forgotten to sign in or out, we will contact you to return to school and check your child in by scanning the QR code. If it happens a second time will send a second reminder via email or ProCare. Thereafter, you will receive an email reminder and we will add a \$30 fee to your account each time your sign-in or sign-out is missing.

### **Arriving and Leaving the Center**

When the center opens in the early morning and attendance is low, children will be gathered in



one classroom or on the playground before they move to their respective classrooms with their teacher at 9:00am. When arriving at preschool, you must accompany your child to the classroom or playground and ensure a teacher knows they have arrived, by making acknowledged eye contact. ***Please never leave a child unattended in the corridor, bathroom, or preschool classroom, even if you think the class will be coming inside in a minute or two.***

Likewise, after the part-day children have been dismissed, the full-day children will come together again on the playground or in classrooms after 3:00 PM. When you pick up your child you must make sure a teacher knows you and your child have left; eye contact with a teacher or a quick word is critically important. When you come to pick up your child, for the safety of all children, please keep your child with you from the time you pick them up until you get them into the car.

### **Emergency Contacts**

For your child's security, please provide us with at least two additional emergency contacts, and keep their numbers up to date.

### **Child Pick-up Authorization**

You must inform the school if someone other than an authorized pick-up person is going to be taking your child home. On the emergency form, please be sure to list all persons you authorize to take your child from St. Clare's. They must be 18 years or older and must present a photo ID before we release the child to them. No child will be released to any person not authorized by a parent or guardian.

A PIN will be assigned by ProCare to each person on your pick-up list, and you will be responsible to provide that person their PIN. In case of an emergency pick-up change, we will accept an email from you, but licensing prohibits us from accepting authorization over the telephone. This is for your child's safety.

### **Student Record Updates**

Please inform the preschool office whenever there are changes or additions to the information originally provided on your enrollment forms. This is especially important for telephone numbers where you can be reached while your child is at school. In an emergency, we want to be able to reach families quickly.

### **Parking Lot**

***Please be sure your child holds your hand while in the parking lot.*** Please drive very slowly in the parking lot, following the directional arrows. Exit your parking space very carefully as it is almost impossible to see small children walking behind your car.

### **Emergency Procedures**

We schedule emergency drills (fire and earthquake) four times per year. We have developed an emergency evacuation system designed to meet the needs of our center, in compliance with our licensing requirements. Evacuation plans are posted in each classroom. Should such an emergency occur, the Director(s) will notify you as soon as possible. In the unlikely event that our center is severely damaged or declared unsafe, all children will be evacuated to a safe distance from the building, where we will await your arrival.

## **Emergency Closures**

In the event of an emergency closure of the preschool (due to natural disaster, water supply failure, power failure of more than two hours, fire or smoke emergency, illness outbreak or pandemic, events beyond our control), the preschool reserves the right to close the school for two (2) days per school year to ensure the health and safety of the children and staff, without considering a tuition refund. These days may be consecutive or non-consecutive during the school year, from the first day of school until the last day of the summer program. If the preschool is closed for more than a total of two (2) days during the school year, the Preschool Advisory Board and the Church Vestry will consider refunds on an incident-by-incident basis.

## **Health and Nutrition**

### **Food and Nutrition**

***Some students have life-threatening allergies. St. Clare's Preschool is a "nut-free" facility. Please check all processed food items packed in lunches to make sure they are nut-free, and are not "processed in a facility that also processes nuts".***

We promote good nutrition at St. Clare's Preschool. Snack and lunch time is a learning time when we talk about the growing body and what children need to eat for strong bones and healthy bodies. We provide a morning and afternoon snack and ask that you provide lunch. A snack schedule is posted monthly.

***Grapes, cherry tomatoes, hot dogs, and carrots are considered choking hazards*** for young children. We ask that you cut these items into lengthwise quarters when you prepare your children's lunches at home. ***Popcorn is also a choking hazard*** and should not be sent to school.

### **Sunscreen \***

We ask that you provide the sunscreen you want us to use (cream or lotion ONLY – no spray), with your child's name on it. St. Clare's will not apply sunscreen if you have not provided it and filled out the sunscreen approval form. Please apply sunscreen to your child before coming to school. We will apply again later in the day for children in the Full Day program.

*\* St. Clare's Preschool shall have no responsibility for any kind of reaction caused by the application of sunscreen provided by the family.*

### **Accident/Illness Procedures**

If your child is involved in an accident or suffers a major illness during school hours, we will make every effort to notify you immediately about the condition and any medical treatment needed. Concurrently, we will contact the appropriate emergency agency (consistent with your requests set forth in the ***Identification and Emergency*** form completed at registration) to provide the necessary medical care that your child needs.

In the case of an emergency, and if we cannot contact you or your designated emergency contact, St. Clare's Preschool, in its sole and unlimited discretion, shall seek any necessary treatment, including, but not limited to, calling 911. The parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be responsible for all



expenses incurred, if this course of action becomes necessary.

### **Incidental Medical Services: Medication Policy \***

Prescription medication will be administered if prescribed by a physician. Medication must come to school in the original bottle or container, with a current prescription label attached. It must always be ***handed to a staff member and must never be placed in a child's pocket, lunch bag, or cubby.*** The parent or guardian is required to complete a Medication Administration form, available from the Director(s).

We do not administer fever reducers at Preschool. If your child has a medical condition that requires emergency use of such medication, then it will be treated as a prescription medication with the same requirements.

Non-prescription lotions/soaps/lip balms etc. are considered by licensing to be in the same category as over-the-counter medications. They will only be administered if accompanied by a note from a physician saying that it must be administered during the school day for the health of the child. The non-prescription product must be in its original container and will be applied according to the label directions once a parent/guardian has completed the Medication Administration Forms.

*\*St. Clare's Preschool shall have no responsibility for any kind of reaction caused by the ingestion of prescribed or over-the-counter medication provided by the family.*

### **Illness**

One of the best ways to keep preschool children healthy is to limit their exposure to others with obvious signs of illness. **When your child has an illness that could pose a health risk to others, they need to stay home.** If you will be keeping your child home from school due to an illness, please notify the office so that we may advise their teacher (and other families, if the illness is contagious).

State Licensing requires that upon arrival at preschool, staff confirms that your child is well enough to attend preschool. The determination that a child is well enough to attend school is made by preschool staff, and if necessary, you will be asked to take your child home.

State regulations prohibit us from admitting any child who:

1. is too ill to participate in regular daily activities.
2. needs more care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children or staff members.
3. has an illness that poses a risk of spreading to other children and adults.

Do not medicate your child with fever reducers, cough medicine, etc. before sending them to preschool. We find that when medications wear off in 2-3 hours we have an ill and unhappy child on our hands. A child who is ill enough to need these medications should remain at home.

If your child becomes sick while in preschool, you will be contacted to pick them up as soon as possible. An authorized person must pick up your child within one hour. When a child returns to school after being sent home for illness, they must be checked and cleared by a staff member before they can rejoin their class. We will ask you to come and collect your child from preschool

if:

1. they cannot participate comfortably in daily activities.
2. they require more care than we can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children or staff members.
3. they have an acute change of behavior – lethargy, difficulty breathing, spreading rash, persistent crying, etc.

Every family with a child at St. Clare’s is required to have a documented backup plan for care if their child is ill and needs to stay home or if their child becomes ill at school and needs to be collected during the school day (LIC 702 Form).

If your child is exposed to a contagious illness at preschool, a notice will be sent so that families are made aware of symptoms to be alert for (without identifying the child). To keep the children healthy, we ask that you adhere to the following guidelines and keep your children home if any of the following apply:

- **Coughing:** If a child is coughing uncontrollably and unable to participate in a preschool day due to the cough, we will ask you to take the child home.
- **COVID-19:** St. Clare’s Preschool adheres to all CDC, State, and County COVID-19 mandates, guidelines, and advisories regarding health protocols for children and staff, attendance at preschool, exclusion from preschool, return to school after illness or exposure, and return to school following travel. These procedures supersede all regular health and safety procedures. As the COVID-19 health situation is constantly changing, these protocols may be changed by St. Clare’s Preschool whenever necessary to ensure the safety of our children, staff, and families. Any changes will be communicated to families immediately and will require a signature acknowledging agreement to abide by the new protocols.
- **Diarrhea:** The child must stay home for 24 hours without diarrhea.
- **Ear Infection:** The child must stay home until they are well enough to participate in preschool activities without the aid of fever reducers.
- **Fever:** A child with a fever of 100 degrees or higher (two readings, taken 15 minutes apart) must go home. The child must stay home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours with no fever reducing medication.
- **Fifth Disease (“Slapped Cheek”):** The child must stay home until fever free for 24 hours (without the use of a fever reducer).
- **Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease:** The child must stay home until all the lesions are crusted and dry, and they are well enough to participate at school.
- **Impetigo:** Is a skin infection caused by bacteria. It causes blisters that break and become oozing, yellow, crusty sores. A child can usually return to preschool after 24 hours of treatment with antibiotics.
- **Lice:** The child may return 24 hours after they have had an over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medication treatment for lice, followed by using a fine-toothed nit comb to remove the nits. A member of staff will check your child’s hair (privately) to make sure they are nit-free before they go back into a classroom. If they are not nit/lice free, then you will need to take them home for another combing.
- **Pinkeye (conjunctivitis):** Please consult with your child’s physician. If the child has a *bacterial* infection, the child must stay home on antibiotic eye drops or ointment for at

least 24 hours. If the child is diagnosed with a *viral* infection, the child may return to school with a note from their doctor confirming that they are well enough, and not contagious, and can therefore be at preschool. If your child's eyes are red, swollen, crusting, or draining when they arrive at school you will be asked to get a clearance note from the doctor before they can stay at school.

- **Rashes:** If a child has a rash or other skin bumps, the parent will be asked to take the child to a doctor to diagnose it. If it is not contagious, the child may return to school with a doctor's note stating what the condition is, and that the child may participate in the preschool program.
- **RSV (respiratory syncytial virus):** RSV is one of the many viruses that cause respiratory illness of the nose, throat, and lungs. Watch for a high temperature, ear tugging/drainage, chest pain, and fussiness. Children can return to school when they have been fever-free (without fever reducers) for 24 hours, don't have any trouble breathing, and can participate fully in a preschool day.
- **Runny Nose:** A child with an excessively runny nose may be sent home, particularly if they are not well enough to participate fully in preschool activities and the nose needs constant attention from teachers to stop yellow or green mucus getting on hands, toys, and furniture.
- **Scabies:** Scabies is a very itchy skin problem caused by tiny bugs called mites. It is treated with a medicine or ointment prescribed by a doctor. Your child can return to preschool on the day after treatment ends.
- **Strep Throat:** Keep your child at home and away from other people for at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotics. In addition, your child must stay home until well enough to participate in preschool activities without the aid of fever reducers.
- **Vomiting:** The child must stay home for 24 hours without vomiting. If your child has vomited the night before, or in the morning, please do not send them to preschool.

### **Reporting Child Abuse**

St. Clare's Preschool is concerned about the wellbeing of all the children and families. The preschool has a legal and moral responsibility to report any case of suspected child abuse. In cases of suspected abuse and neglect, no evidence will be excluded on grounds of confidentiality, including preschool records.

## **Guidance and Handling of Challenging Behaviors**

### **General Guidance Policy**

At St. Clare's Preschool our behavior policies encourage positive, healthy, and safe interactions between children, and between children and adults.

- Our staff provides all children with positive role models of acceptable behavior.
- Our curriculum and practices are tailored to be developmentally appropriate for 2-5-year-old children.
- We redirect children away from problems and toward constructive activity to reduce conflict.
- We teach children to use acceptable alternatives to problem behaviors.

In general, we use consistent rules for behavior and deal with specific problems in a caring and positive manner. The staff acknowledges positive behaviors, offers reasonable choices,

recognizes feelings, and makes clear what behavior is unacceptable. If a behavior becomes dangerous or destructive then staff will intervene in order to protect people in a way that protects the child's self-esteem and helps them understand the problem with the behavior.

### **Challenging Behaviors**

Discipline is based on an understanding of each child's individual needs and level of development. When correcting a child's behavior, the teacher's response is individualized and consistent for each child, appropriate to the child's level of understanding, and directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

The goal of managing challenging behaviors is prevention. We will always do our best to be reflective about the environment we create for children, the curriculum and our awareness of personal temperaments, biases, and feelings about challenging behaviors. Being reflective helps our staff improve things such as the classroom environment and/or routines to foster success for all children and to avoid certain kinds of stimuli associated with challenging behavior.

There are times that children's behavior warrants a response other than helping them talk it through, either because of severity or repetition of action. We use consequences that follow closely in time to the behavior. When a child repeats a challenging behavior, a variety of methods for encouraging cooperation are used. These include the positive methods described above, conferencing with other staff, parents, and Preschool Director(s). Every effort is made to understand the child's needs and modify classroom practices so that he or she will be successful. Teachers work closely with parents/guardians to understand each child and to determine which methods work best for him or her.

In most instances, when repeated challenging behaviors are exhibited and the above strategies have not worked well enough, a family/teacher/Director(s) conference will be arranged to discuss possible methods of dealing with challenging behaviors. A written plan of action will be developed by the Director(s) laying out behaviors that need improvement, proposals to improve them, and actions the Preschool will take if no improvement occurs within a specified timeframe.

### **Biting**

Biting can be a typical developmental process for some young children. Biting can also be an emotionally difficult issue for everyone concerned. We focus on effective techniques to address the specific reason for biting, rather than on punishment. When biting does occur, the following procedures take place:

- Care and appropriate First Aid for the child who was bitten.
- If the bite is severe enough to break the skin of the child that is bitten, we will call the injured child's parents and ask that the child be taken to the Doctor for a check-up.
- Inform the parent/guardian of the child who was bitten and the parent /guardian of the child who bit, by phone or via an Incident/Injury Report (which must be signed by the parent of the child who bit).
- Encourage the child who bit to participate in the care of the bitten child, if appropriate.
- Help the child who bit learn other behaviors to deal with anger, frustration, or lack of verbal or communication skills.
- Examine the classroom environment and routines and make changes that may stop further occurrences.

If biting is a repeated and severe behavior that requires further action by the preschool, the Director(s)/teachers will decide on appropriate action, considering the age of the child, the situation that preceded the bite, and severity and frequency of the bites. A family conference will be arranged with the Director(s) and staff to discuss what will happen next. A written plan of action will be developed by the Director(s), laying out behaviors that need improvement, proposals to improve them, and actions the Preschool will take if no improvement occurs within a specified timeframe.

### **Very Severe Challenging Behaviors**

St. Clare's Preschool may issue notice of dis-enrollment immediately, without following the guidance steps outlined above, to any family whose child's behavior creates a significant risk of harm to the health and safety of others.

## **Management of Preschool**

### **Preschool Advisory Board**

The Preschool Board assists the Director(s) in setting policies for the Preschool, overseeing financial matters, fundraising, and arranging appreciation events for the staff, to name just a few. There are a maximum of 14 members on the Board. Members may be preschool parents, church members, or child development experts from the community. Membership terms are 2 years, and prospective members are interviewed by the Board. If you would like to serve on the Preschool Board, please let the Director(s) know.

### **The Vestry of St. Clare's Episcopal Church**

The Preschool is wholly owned by St. Clare's Episcopal Church. Consequently, all that is done at the school is with the consent of the Church's governing body known as the Vestry.

Handbook approved by the Preschool Advisory Board, 5/31/2023.