

St. Mary's Healthcare System
for Children



PRESCHOOL PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK

**St. Mary's Hospital for Children
Early Education Department
Preschool Parent-Student Handbook**

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1. Welcome

We are delighted that your child is enrolled at the Preschool in St. Mary's Hospital for Children. Our team looks forward to getting to know your child. Our goal is to make this school year a productive one. We recognize that every child comes to us with a different medical history and our priority is to make sure that every student can learn and make progress at his or her own pace in a safe and supportive environment.

This Handbook has been prepared to help you as you walk alongside your child on this Preschool journey. Our goal is to set high expectations for every student and staff member. We strive for a collaborative environment amongst our team members including you, the parents, guardians, and family members. We look forward to working hard alongside you for our students.

St. Mary's Mission

St. Mary's Healthcare System for Children is committed to improving the health and quality of life for children, young adults, and families with medical complexity and special healthcare needs.

About Us

St. Mary's Preschool provides a free and appropriate education for preschoolers with a disability. All students must be New York City residents. The New York City Department of Education (DOE) determines a child's eligibility for special education services. All students enrolled at St. Mary's are placed in the preschool by the DOE.

2. Starting School

Enrollment Process

Once you have accepted placement at St. Mary's Preschool through the New York City Department of Education (DOE), we begin the enrollment process. Due to the medical fragility status of our student population, every child must be cleared by the school administration and medically cleared before starting. In addition all students are eligible for DOE transportation

and some students require DOE nursing support. Parents and guardians must work with the bus company and nursing agency independently to confirm the child can start school.

Enrollment Checklist

- ☐ Intake paperwork with school administration
- ☐ School Nurse confirms all medical documents are completed correctly
- ☐ Bus Company calls to confirm address and pick up/drop off times
 - Call bus company directly to follow up L&M (718) 257- 2082
- ☐ (If applicable) Nursing Agency Requirements
 - All medical documents are completed correctly
 - Agency will assign RN
 - Call agency directly to follow up; agency info can be provided by the DOE's District Administrator
- ☐ **If you are not sure if your child is cleared, please contact Aishling Kelleher to confirm.**

Supplies for school

Parents and guardians are responsible for sending items your child will need for activities of daily living. This includes formula, special foods, diapers, special ointment (if needed). Students should attend school with a backpack, a Marble notebook, and folder. A seasonal change of clothes should also be stored in school and sent as needed.

Parents and guardians may wish to drop off supplies prior to the start of the first day, such as diapers, or formula. Supplies can also be sent daily or with the bus driver.

Calendar

The program is a 10 month program from September to June, with a 6-week Summer Session that starts in July and ends in August. Please refer to our school calendar for days off. It is important to plan vacations for the weeks off so that your child does not miss any services or accumulate unexcused absences.

3. Daily Schedule & Procedures

Arrival and Dismissal

The Preschool has a 5.5 hour school day. The day begins at 8:15 AM and ends at 1:45 PM. The Early Education Department's hours of operation are 8 am to 4 pm.

If you are driving your child to school, please plan to arrive on time for drop off and pick up. Preschool staff will be available to meet you and your child at your car. Please see *DOE Transportation* for further information regarding busing.

Late Arrival

Many of St. Mary's students are followed by specialists and have regular medical appointments. In order to accommodate the needs of our students, *occasional* exceptions can be made for students to arrive late. All students must arrive in school by 10:30 AM to be marked present for the day. Students will not be received after 10:30 AM.

Classroom Reminders and Dress Code

Reminders:

- Label ALL belongings (extra clothes, backpacks, folders, g-tube supplies, water bottles, feeding supplies, etc.)
- Check the backpack daily
- Send diapers instead of pull ups if child is not toilet trained
- Send extra clothes when soiled clothes are sent home
- Avoid sending foods that are unsafe or hard to chew (too hard, bones, unable to chew)
- As per therapists, please send all required braces and splints in everyday. Our staff will work with children on tolerating and wearing equipment.

For safety of students, the following items are NOT allowed in school: sandals, necklace chains, hoop earrings.

We recommend the following:

- Closed toe shoes/sneaker with straps rather than shoe laces
- Send your child wearing shorts under dresses.
- Children who are getting braces need to take the braces to the shoe store to be fitted for shoes.

Meals in School

Feeding is individualized by your child's specific needs. If your child is a picky eater, it is recommended parents send in food from home for the first two weeks of school. During this time, classroom staff will work on introducing school foods. The therapist can also work on transitioning children to school meals.

Please note:

- Our staff must follow doctor's orders and what is stated on the script from the doctor. Any changes to feeding must be written by doctor and sent to school nurse. Please make sure the orders are signed and dated by Doctor.
- Children are fed for 30-40 minutes and are on a specific routine. Feeding sessions are unable to take place every hour.
- Please communicate if feeding supplies (utensils, bottles, etc) are to be kept in school or sent home.

4. Communication Policy

During school hours, teachers and therapists are working with children and unable to check their email or phone messages between 8:15 AM and 1:45 PM.

Please direct all non-medical questions and concerns to Janine Frattaroli, Early Education Coordinator, at 718-281-8857.

All medical concerns will be addressed by School Nursing, please call 718-281-8737. Please note our School Nurse email is SchoolNurse@stmaryskids.org.

Communication Notebook

A communication notebook is sent home and returned to school daily. In the notebook the teacher will make attach a daily information form about your child's day. The therapists will write once a week. The notebook is a great place to mention any changes in your child's routine, sleep, eating, or medications and is where most of your communication should take place.

If you need to speak outside of the notebook, calls and emails can be accepted during after hours from 1:50pm to 3 pm. If you want to make a quick phone call to make the teacher aware of something, please call the main line at 718-281-8857 and the message can be delivered.

Parent Teacher Conferences and Appointments

Parent Teacher Conferences are held twice a year (Fall and Spring) to discuss progress and goals. If you have any specific questions or concerns for your child's team, please do not hesitate to call and set up an appointment to discuss.

If you want clarification regarding your child's therapy, please contact your child's therapist directly through e-mail or your child's communication notebook. Your child's therapist will touch-base with you (after school hours) to answer any questions you may have regarding your child's therapies.

Visitors' Policy

As St. Mary's Preschool shares the building with the skilled nursing facility that is St. Mary's Hospital for Children, our visitor policy is guided by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

Policies are subject to change as the guidance around COVID-19 protocols changes. Currently, visitors can be accommodated by appointment. All individuals entering the building must complete the screening tool, temperature check, and may be asked to show proof of vaccination or negative PCR test.

Address Changes

When you change your address the school needs to be notified in advance. The bus company can take 7-10 business days to re-route your child. Your child's district administrator also needs to be aware of an address change as your new home may be in a different school district.

Contacts at a Glance

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Carol Park, Director (普通话) | (718) 281-8501 |
| • Aishling Kelleher, LMSW Program Manager | (718) 281-8856 |
| • Debra Wilson, Curriculum Coordinator | (718) 281-8853 |
| • Janine Frattaroli, Early Ed Coordinator | (718) 281-8857 |

5. Attendance Policy

St. Mary's Preschool is required to follow the DOE's attendance policy. When a child is NOT in school for five consecutive days (and it is not for a medical reason.) When absences are excessive and not excused, the DOE is allowed to reassign your child's seat to another student. St. Mary's is required to report to the DOE unexcused absences on the 5th consecutive day.

Excused absences include medical reasons, doctor appointments, and transportation issues.

Students who are absent due to vacation, the feeding program, camps etc. is NOT guaranteed a return to St. Mary's preschool. The decision will be at the discretion of the District Administrator at the DOE.

Notification and Clearance

- **Planned Absences:** please inform teachers and the nurse and send any updated medical documents provided by the doctor to partake in school activities and return on assigned date. This letter must be submitted prior to the child missing school.
- **Medical Absences:** Children having any emergency room visits, surgery or medical procedure must attain a doctor's note for clearance that has a date to return to school. The note must clearly state that child can partake in school activities and return on assigned date. This letter must be submitted prior to child returning to school.
- **3 Day Rule:** If your child is absent for more than 3 days medical clearance is required.
- **Medical Clearance Notes must be received in the School Nurses' office by 3:45pm of the business days.** Notes received in the evenings or over the weekends will not be reviewed until the next school day.
- Students must be cleared by the School Nurse to return to school. Please do not send your child to school if you have not received a confirmation.

6. School Medical Policy

The health and safety of our students and staff is our first priority. Therefore, we ask all parents and guardians for your cooperation to follow our policies for all of the students in attendance.

Medical Requirements for Enrollment

Requirements per the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH):

- Child must have an updated physical every year.
- Child must keep with immunizations as per the DOH guidelines. Please send all updated immunization records and physicals to the school nurse.
- Flu vaccine is a requirement every year and must be taken in order for the child to attend school. At least one dose of the influenza vaccine must be taken between July 1st and December 31st of each year.
- Medical issues that arise need to be communicated with the school nurse.

- Our student population is medically fragile. It is important to keep your child home if you see signs of illness such as fevers, stomach virus, vomiting, and diarrhea. Your child must be free from fever and vomiting for 48 hours to attend school.

When to Call School Nurses

Chantelle Jones, R.N, (718) 281-8737 & Amrita Singh, RN (718) 281-8725

- When your child is sick
- When anything changes with your child's medical status
- If you are unsure if you can send your child back to after your child was sick
- Any time your child goes to the hospital (for any reason)
- If your child was exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19
- When your child has upcoming doctor appointments
- If you have any medical questions regarding your child's medical needs throughout the school day.

If your child presents with any of the following please notify the school nurse. Your child must be kept home for 48 hours until it is resolved.

- Lice
- Bedbugs- this is on a case by case basis. Please notify the nurse.
- Ringworm
- Hand foot mouth Disease

Medication

- All Medication that is to be administered via nurse must come in original packaging with labeling from the pharmacy. Medications not in their original bottle will not be given.
- Any changes to feeding, medication, medical interventions or therapy orders must be written by doctor and sent to school nurse. Please make sure the orders are signed and dated by Doctor.

Emergency Contacts

- If your child develops symptoms of illness during the school day, the School Nurse will reach out to ask you to pick up your child.
- Children will not be allowed to go home on the school bus.

- Students who are not cleared to attend school due to a medical absence should not be sent on the bus.
- All emergency contacts listed will be called in the order provided by parents/guardians until an emergency contact can be reached.

Daily Health Checks

Together we are taking steps to minimize the spread of all viruses. As the protocol surrounding the COVID-19 virus changes, St. Mary's Preschool will continue to follow the most up-to-date guidelines and set by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and requirements set by the DOHMH.

Prior to coming to school complete a health check of your child. Are there any signs of illness? If your child is showing signs of illness, please keep them home. If there are any significant marks or bruises please document them in the notebook before sending them to school.

In general, cooperation from parents and guardians is required for the safety of all students and staff.

- Do not visit or send your child if there are any signs of symptoms such as fever, body aches, sore throat etc.
- Visitors must be vaccinated and boosted or show a negative COVID-19 PCR test result within 48 hours of school visit. Home test results are not accepted.
- Visitor screenings and temperature checks are completed upon arrival.
- Children arriving and leaving school will have their temperatures taken.
- Masks are required for visitors over 12 years old.

7. DOE Transportation and Nursing

Busing and Pick Up Policy

Busing can take 5-7 business days to route. If you have any questions regarding busing please contact L&M Bus Company directly. Busses can be late but if you have a complaint you can call the OPT complaint line. Contact the busing company if your child will be absent. If the bus comes to pick up and no one is there for 3 days the bus will stop coming to that pick up site.

- Contact the school and bus company when you know your child will not be in school
- The school staff need to be notified in advance when you will pick your child up early or in place of taking the bus.

DOE Nursing

If your child has a DOE nurse (All Day 1:1 Nurse or Transportation Nurse for the bus ride only):

- The nursing agency will work with you directly to assign your child a nurse.
- You must make sure that your child's nurse has all the equipment they need for your child
- Confirm your child's nurse before they go to school, that they have all the scripts and they know exactly what support your child requires
- Your child's 1:1 nurse is not to be used for communication between home and school. If you have any questions or instructions for your child's teacher, or therapists, you must contact them directly.
- When your child is with their 1:1 DOE nurse in the school, the nurse is responsible for the well-being of your child.
- Children cannot ride the bus or attend school without their nurse if the nurse is absent.
- The two primary nursing agencies are Horizon Agency or White Glove Nursing

8. Educational Meetings and Documents

Every student in St. Mary's Preschool has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to guide the education towards your child's individual goals.

Annual IEP Meetings

Your child will have an annual IEP meeting coordinated by St Mary's staff with the DOE's District Administrator to discuss child's services, progress, and goals for the school year. You will be notified and reports on progress will be sent home.

Education Binders

Your child will receive an educational binder at the beginning of the school year. Important educational documents will be kept in the binder including your child's IEP and any reports sent home regarding your child's progress. Each time you receive documentation for the binder, you will sign a form that lets us know you have received and reviewed the documentation.

Turning 5 Meetings for Kindergarten

If your child is turning five years old this school year, they will go through a *Turning 5* (T5) process to be evaluated and placed for Kindergarten. The Early Education program will support you and keep you informed through this process.

If a district contacts you to do a Turning 5 Meeting, please request for our representatives here at St. Mary's Early Education program to be present. Flyers will go out around November and the process will take place January through May.

Graduation

All students who are graduating the program will be invited to a moving up ceremony in August.

9. Remote Learning

After experiencing the impact of COVID-19, our preschool needs to be prepared for the possibility of engaging in Extended Remote Learning. Remote learning requires students to have access to:

- An updated device (i.e. computer, tablet, etc.)
- Internet Access
- Access to our Remote Learning Platform: Zoom

Given the extensive needs our students, many of whom require adult support, our expectation is that each family will collaborate to the best of their abilities to maintain a quality education. Remote learning options will be offered to families based on our staffing and ability to meet the IEP requirements. Our priority will be to provide as much in-person learning as possible. At times students may not be offered remote therapy in favor of make-up sessions upon a child's return to school. Children who are sick due to direct exposure to COVID-19 or having tested positive for COVID-19 will not be offered remote learning.

10. Additional St. Mary's Services and Programs

Feeding Program

Feeding is addressed in the Early Education department during speech therapy and is carried over into the classroom. Separate from our program, the hospital provides an onsite feeding program. For more information please contact Jaime Russell at JRussell@stmaryskids.org.

Care Coordination Services

St. Mary's Care Coordination Services assists families with finding the best supports to achieve quality of life at home and in the community. Skilled care coordinators will assist families with meeting the medical, social, developmental, educational and financial needs of your child or young adult with a chronic condition and/or medical complexity.

To refer a child/family or to learn more about eligibility:

Phone: 631-844-4834

Email: carecoordination@stmaryskids.org

Medical Day Healthcare Program (After School)

St. Mary's Medical Day Healthcare Program is a medical program that offers therapeutic and medical after-school, weekend, and summer camp programs for children 5-18 years of age and a young adults program or those 18-25 years of age who have cognitive and physical disabilities.

Using therapeutic, rehabilitative, and recreational activities, St. Mary's MDHC staff help children with special healthcare needs develop every capability to his or her fullest. Children receive onsite homework assistance, indoor and outdoor play, field trips, a hot meal, and round-trip transportation, plus the camaraderie of friends and fun social activities. Assistance with homework is provided

CONTACTS: Jillian Quinn, Assistant Director 718-281-8508

jquinn@stmaryskids.org