

St. Thomas More Preschool
Handbook
2025-2026



If you have any questions you may contact:

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PHILOSOPHY AND GOAL

Each child is a unique individual and a special gift from God. Our Catholic preschool program will strive to create an atmosphere of Christian love which promotes the healthy development of each child. Our goal is to provide learning experiences and play activities that encourage spiritual, intellectual, social and physical growth of each child.

Our preschool program will be fully licensed by the Ohio Department of Education. Students enrolled in our preschool program will take a hands- on approach to learning. Our curriculum follows Early Learning Content Standards from the Ohio Department of Education. The curriculum will be incorporated into learning centers based on appropriate and interesting themes.

Students will take part in daily prayer experiences. Our Catholic preschool will foster an awareness of God's presence in their lives leading them to appreciate God's goodness, value God's world and the people in it. Our learning community will engage children in activities that nurture kindness, honesty, forgiveness and the concern for others.

The child should:

- Develop a positive self - image and acknowledge his/her self- worth.
- Become aware of the fact that he/she is a child of God and will grow in His love.
- Develop basic social skills.
- Increase independence.
- Develop a trust in adults other than his/her parents or guardians.
- Enjoy being a part of a group and accept the need to share and cooperate.
- Respect the rights of others and defend his/her own rights.
- Develop the desire to learn.

GENERAL POLICIES

St. Thomas More Preschool accepts children ages 3, 4 and 5 who are potty trained.

Morning Sessions	8-11 a.m.
Afternoon Session	Noon- 3 p.m.
Full Day Sessions	8 a.m. -3 p.m.

Admission Priority Acceptance Policy:

Current STM students and their siblings

Parish families with new students whose siblings have graduated from STM and whose parents have remained active parishioners

Children of parish families who will be enrolling for the first time at STM

Non-parish members

St. Thomas More Preschool will admit children of any race, color, religion, nation or ethnic origin, provided space is available.

St. Thomas More Preschool is licensed to operate by the Ohio Department of Education.

St. Thomas More Preschool will adhere to the preschool calendar. Please refer to it for days off of school.

St. Thomas More preschool will be closed when the day school is closed for emergency closings. There will be no morning session when there is a 2 hour delay. St. Thomas More School follows West Clermont School District in regard to weather related closings and/or delays. If West Clermont is CLOSED or DELAYED, St. Thomas More will not be in session or will implement a delayed start. St. Thomas More will not be announced independently. You will receive an email notification/text from the principal.

A child will only be released to those designated on the pick- up list unless other arrangements have been made in writing.

A parent roster will be prepared for each child's class. You have the option of omitting your name and phone number from this list.

Snack time will be an opportunity for children to demonstrate independence at preschool. Snack will be provided by the preschool. We will make sure that snacks are considerate for those that have allergies.

A canvas tote will be provided for each child and should be brought to school each day to transport classroom work and important notes from the teacher/school.

ABSENCES

When your child is absent from school, the parents/guardians need to go to the school website (www.sttmschool.org) and fill out an absence or tardy reporting form under the "Parent Tab." You can also email the director, Tracy Waters at twaters@sttmschool.org

CURRICULUM

St. Thomas More Preschool follows the Ohio Department of Education Content Standards, which are aligned with the Diocesan Graded Course Study. The preschool has also adopted the core teaching philosophies of Creative Curriculum which is used daily in the program.

A successful preschool program promotes the development of mind, body and soul of young children. The curriculum should not be centered on very specific subject areas, but rather it should be developed using "hands-on" approach to learning in general. Multi-sensory activities enhance the total development of the children are planned in a sequential manner that follows a theme or is part of a unit.

COMPONENTS

Religion is an integral part of our Catholic preschool program. It is the preparation time for the more formal instruction in the years ahead. The basis for a deep love of God comes from the examples set by the family and spiritual life of the parish community. A child's sense of God comes from the warm atmosphere of love and acceptance in the preschool environment. Classroom prayer prepares him/her to participate in the celebrations of the Church.

Language is the development of communication skills that enable to share his or her world with others. At the preschool level, these skills include listening, speaking, and thinking. Learning experiences are provided that help a child express his/her thoughts and feelings in a variety of ways. Awareness of the five senses, visual discrimination, memory skills and auditory discrimination are important readiness skills that can be taught through play activities. Listening to and sharing stories, poetry, and finger play enhance a love of language. A more formal literacy program may also add valuable, developmentally appropriate experiences that will balance out the language component.

Math/Science readiness at the preschool level involves the development of cognitive skills. Math knowledge comes from an understanding of colors and shapes, size differences, basic counting skills, classifying, forming sets and recognizing numerals. These concepts are taught through manipulative and play experiences.

Motor skills are a vital part of the young child's development and are critical to the learning skills he/she will need in the future.

Gross motor skills- Body coordination is enhanced through large motor activities of walking, running, jumping, hopping, dancing and skipping. Arm-eye coordination is attained by throwing a large ball or beanbag, catching and aiming at a target. Rhythm and movement provide an outlet of creative expression and the joy of using the body in dance, games and organized play.

Fine motor- Eye-hand coordination is developed through manipulating clay, stringing beads, hammering, pasting, coloring, painting, poking and using scissors. Dexterity and strength of the small muscles are developing skills that enhance reading readiness. Use of the natural hand preference is observed and encouraged, although dominance is not achieved yet. Eye tracking is another fine motor activity that promotes the left to right progression skill required for reading readiness.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The St. Thomas More Preschool curriculum is designed to promote positive and enjoyable learning experiences for the child, and positive interactions between children and adults. The goal of our program is to help each child develop a feeling of positive self-worth, competence, and mastery. Therefore, discipline will be approached from the realization that children need to learn self-control and to be able to internalize rules of behavior. Clear rules of behavior and clear directions for compliance shall be established at the beginning of the year.

Positive feedback will be given to the child for following class rules. The rules for preschool will be for safety, general health, and social interaction. A comfortable atmosphere and consistent daily schedule will provide each child with a sense of security and confidence. Each child's individual rights shall be respected at all times.

The following list specifies the strategies for discipline and guidance:

Clear, consistent, and reasonable limits will be set, and then followed through when enforcing these limits.

- The rules and direction for guidance will be done in a positive way.
- The child's positive behavior will be emphasized.
- The uncooperative child shall be directed to another activity.
- When a child's negative behavior shall involve frequent hitting, pushing, biting, or harm to himself/herself, other children, or equipment, the child shall be removed from the scene for 'time out.'
- Parents/guardians will be informed of inappropriate behavior.

The discipline policy will be as outlined in the handbook of St. Thomas More School. The form of discipline used will be a 'time out' in amounts of time appropriate for the age of the child. Redirection and oral communication will also be incorporated in daily classroom management, helping the child to avoid 'time outs.' No cruel, harsh, physical or unusual punishments shall be permitted. A written report will be sent home if inappropriate behavior persists. Three reports sent home would result in a conference with the teacher/director and school principal and possible suspension of preschool for a week. (Please refer to the back of packet for discipline statements required to be posted by the State of Ohio.)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

All preschool staff members are alert to potential hazards.

The school secretary/and or health aide will be available if needed throughout the school day. The preschool secretary, health aide, teachers and staff are all trained in CPR and abuse recognition, first aid and communicable diseases.

In case of illness, a child will be removed from the classroom and walked to the school office. If parents/guardians are needed you will be called. Please make prior arrangements to have someone care for your child if he/she becomes ill at school.

In case of an emergency, the parents/guardians will be called and asked to come to the school. If it is a serious accident, 911 will be called. Your child will be transported to the nearest hospital. The preschool director and/or staff member will accompany your child and take your signed permission slip. You will be called immediately and asked to meet us at the hospital.

Medical Emergency Release forms are kept on file. These forms have pediatricians' telephone number, emergency telephone numbers; list the child's allergies, ongoing medications, previous hospitalizations, and permission to obtain emergency care.

The teacher is sensitive to the child's behavior and actions. They will also observe the children for any health problems and refer them to the secretary or health aide who will notify you.

Please do not send your child to school unless his/her temperature has been normal for a minimum of 24 hours. Also, do not send a child with a cold, stomachache, vomiting, diarrhea, runny nose or ear ache.

No prescription medications, vitamins, modified diet, or fluoride supplements will be administered unless instructions to administer are written, signed, and dated by a licensed physician, and are prescribed for your child. Forms are available in the school office.

Staff members responsible for administering prescription medication shall complete the written forms for each time it is administered. Forms will be kept in the school office for one year.

Hand washing will be stressed when entering the classroom, before snacks and after restroom breaks. The teacher will always wash her hands before handling food.

Please notify us of any changes in your place of employment or residence. We must have a working emergency number at all times.

SUPERVISION

All areas used by the St. Thomas More Preschool will have full supervision.

No child will ever be left alone or unsupervised.

The child/staff ratio will differ according to age:

3 years old- 1:12

4/5 years old- 1:14

Children will be greeted in the classroom by the teacher or aide and turned over to parents/guardians at the end of the day.

All children will practice tornado and fire drills according to school policy and there are evacuation diagrams posted in all areas.

PARKING-PICK UP AND DROP OFF PROCEDURES

Parking lots are a source of danger to young children. Please enter and leave the parking lot with extreme caution. Be on the lookout for wandering children.

No child will be released to a person not authorized by a parent to pick up the child. We must have written authorization for changes in this respect. A photo ID will be required at time of pick up.

If you are parking your car to drop off or pick up your child, or to visit our preschool, please park in the parking lot in front of Heider Hall and enter through the main school entrance/EAST entrance.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURE

If you choose to utilize the drop off car line at arrival (preferred method), we ask that you follow the drop off route on the facility map for preschool. The drop off point will be directly in front of the handicapped parking spots in front of Heider Hall. DO NOT park in these spots. A teacher or staff member will assist your child out of the car. Please do not let your child exit the car unless a teacher/staff member is at your car door. Please refrain from using cell phones while utilizing the car line. Children will be gathered under the awning leading to the main school entrance and will be escorted to the classroom at 8 a.m. (morning session) and 12 p.m. (afternoon session).

Arrival after 8 a.m. (morning session) or after 12 p.m. (afternoon session) will require the parent to bring the child to the school office.

Parents are always welcome to walk their child up to their preschool class at the beginning of the day for the first few days. A short and sweet goodbye in most cases works best. The teacher is very comfortable at calming your child if he/she should become weepy after your departure. Often the child is calmed before the parent leaves the building! After the first week, we ask that you remain in your car and pull through our pickup line in the front of the building.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

Children enrolled in the **morning session** will be brought outside through the main school/EAST entrance. Parents can park in the parking lot next to Heider Hall to greet their child at 11 a.m. We ask that you respect the teacher's planning period and lunch and be sure to pick up your child on time. Late fees will be assessed for consistent late arrival at pick up.

Children enrolled in the **afternoon session** will be brought to the rear of Heider Hall in the day school pick-up line at 3 p.m. A staff member will walk him/her to your car, but parents are required to assist with buckling children into car seats/booster seats. Directions for traffic flow at afternoon dismissal will be discussed at orientation.

RECORD REQUEST POLICY

Student records shall be maintained in accordance with Board of Education Policy 8330 and State/Federal laws and regulations. Many student records are kept by the teachers and administrative staff. All student records are confidential.

Confidential records contain educational and behavioral and directory information that has restricted access based on the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Ohio law. This information can only be released with the written consent of the parent or legal guardians of the student. The only exception to this is to comply with State and Federal laws that may require release without consent.

The student record is the legal record for each student who is or has attended schools within the school. All information contained in the student record must be factual, verifiable and of a constructive nature.

Student "personally identifiable information" includes, but is not limited to: the student's name; the name of the student's parent(s); the address of the student or student's family; a personal identifier, such as the student number, or bio-metric record; other indirect identifiers, such as the student's date of birth, place of birth, and mother's maiden name; other information that, alone or in combination, is linked or linkable to a specific student that would allow a reasonable person in the school community, who does not have personal knowledge of the relevant circumstances, to identify the student with reasonable certainty; or information requested by a person who the school reasonably believes knows the identity of the student to whom the education record relates.

TOILET TRAINING/ACCIDENTS

The preschool teachers are happy to help with your child's transition to be independent while using the restroom. We ask that you have your child use the restroom right before leaving for school each day. Children will be encouraged to visit the restroom throughout the day. If a child has a urinary accident throughout the day, we will assist your child in changing into his/her extra clothes. *If a child has a bowel movement accident during the day, we will call home immediately. We will require a parent or adult listed on the emergency medical form to come to school to assist the child in changing his/her clothes.* The child can then return to class to finish the day. Great caution will be taken in order to be discreet around other children in the classroom.

COMMUNICATION

Our usual means of communication with the parents/guardians are written and carried home by the child in their tote bag. Check the child's tote bag daily to see if he/she is carrying a message. Parents will also receive periodic newsletters from the preschool teacher informing them of upcoming events and important information.

St. Thomas More School issues a weekly newsletter via email to all families keeping them up-to-date on all important news pertaining to the entire school.

Formal goal reports will be created in October. Scheduled conferences will take place in October and February. However, conferences are welcomed and encouraged at any time throughout the year. Contact the teacher to arrange a conference if needed.

Parents who wish to participate volunteering for school activities must be Safe Parish trained and a background check must be completed. More information regarding this policy may be obtained from the school office.

NECESSARY CLOTHING

We ask that a complete set of clothes, including underwear, socks, pants and shirt, be brought in a gallon size Ziploc baggie and labeled with the child's name. This will solve any problem that may arise with spills, wetness, from weather or accidents, etc. The classroom teacher will inform the parents in writing if the child's clothes were changed and the reason for the change.

STATE OF OHIO PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK ADDENDUM 1/6/11

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT/DISCIPLINE POLICY

- A preschool staff member in charge of a child or a group shall be responsible for their discipline
- The school shall have a written discipline policy describing the school's philosophy of discipline and the specific methods of discipline used at the school. This written policy shall be on file at the school for review. Constructive, developmentally appropriate child guidance and management techniques are to be used at all times, and shall include measures as redirection, separation from problems situations, talking with the child about the situation, and praise for appropriate behavior.
- There shall be no cruel, harsh, corporal punishment or any unusual punishments such as, but not limited to, punching, pinching, shaking, spanking, or biting.
- No discipline shall be delegated to any other child.
- No physical restraints shall be used to confine a child by any means other than holding a child for a short period of time, such as in a protective hug, so the child may regain control.
- No child shall be placed in a locked room or confined in an enclosed area such as a closet, box, or a similar cubicle.
- No child should be subjected to profane language, threats, and derogatory remarks about himself or his family, or other verbal abuse.
- Discipline shall not be imposed on the child for failure to eat, failure to sleep, or for toileting accidents.
- Techniques of discipline shall not humiliate, shame or frighten a child.
- Discipline shall not include withholding of food, rest, or toilet use.
- Separation, when used as discipline, shall be brief in duration and appropriate to the child's age and developmental ability, and the child shall be within sight and hearing of a preschool staff member in a safe, lighted, and well-ventilated space.
- The center shall not abuse or neglect children and shall protect children from abuse and neglect while in attendance in the preschool program

STATE OF OHIO PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK ADDENDUM 1/6/11

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES POLICY

All employees will be aware of the signs and symptoms of illness and hand washing and disinfection procedures. This will be reviewed periodically.

All children will be observed as they enter each day. A parent or guardian will be notified if signs and symptoms of communicable disease are observed.

No employee will attend St. Thomas More Preschool if they show signs or symptoms of communicable disease.

Any child who has been absent from preschool because of illness will be readmitted when both the parent and school agree the child is well.

The St. Thomas More Preschool will follow all school and Ohio Health Department guidelines in observing, caring for, and readmitting children to the program. (Please refer to the back of packet for statements required to be posted by the State of Ohio.)

- The following precautions shall be taken for children suspected of having a communicable disease. The school shall immediately notify the parent or guardian of the child's condition when a child has been observed with signs or symptoms of illness.
- A child with any of the following signs or symptoms shall be immediately isolated and discharged to his parent or guardian:

Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool within a twenty-four hour period)

Severe coughing (causing the child to become blue or red in the face or to make a whooping sound)

Difficult or rapid breathing

Yellowish skin or eyes

Conjunctivitis

Temperature of one hundred degrees Fahrenheit taken by the auxiliary method (when in combination with other signs of illness)

Untreated infected skin patch (es)

Unusually dark urine and/or grey or white stool

Stiff neck

Evidence of lice, scabies or other parasitic infestation

- A child isolated due to suspected communicable disease should be cared for in a room or portion of a room not being used in the preschool program.
- A child isolated due to suspected communicable disease shall be within sight and hearing of an adult at all times. No child should be left alone or unsupervised.
- A child isolated due to suspected communicable disease should be made comfortable and provided with a cot. All linens and blankets used by the ill child shall be laundered before being used by another child. After use, the cots shall be disinfected with an appropriate germicidal agent, or if soiled with blood, feces, vomit or other bodily fluids, the cots shall be cleaned with soap and water then disinfected with an appropriate germicidal agent.
- A child isolated due to suspected communicable disease should be observed carefully for worsening conditions.
- A child isolated due to suspected communicable disease should be discharged to parent or guardian as soon as practical.
- Each program shall have a written policy concerning the management of communicable disease. The policy shall include, at a minimum, the program's means of training all preschool staff in signs and symptoms of illness and in hand washing and disinfection procedures.
- Procedures for isolating and discharging an ill child and policy for readmitting ill children.
- Procedures for notifying the parent or guardian immediately when a child is exhibiting signs or symptoms of illness or has been exposed to a communicable disease.
- Procedures regarding the care of a mildly ill child. "Mildly ill child" means a child is experiencing minor common cold symptoms, but who is not exhibiting any of the symptoms specified in the above listings of this rule or a child who does not feel well enough to participate in activities, but who is not exhibiting any of the symptoms specified in the listings shown above this rule.
- Procedures for notifying all parents of enrolled children when children are exposed to a diagnosed communicable disease such as pink eye, ringworm, chicken pox, or lice.

Transition Policy

There are a number of transitions that children will encounter within their early years. Change and transitions can be unsettling and upsetting to children when in unfamiliar surroundings, introduced to new caregivers or routines. As children develop from birth throughout childhood they move, or transition, from one learning environment or setting to another. At St. Thomas More we recognize children learn best when they feel safe, nurtured, and have positive experiences with their caregivers and peers. Your child is assigned a teacher, and we aim to develop a caring, professional, and respectful relationship with our children and families. We feel transitioning takes time, preparation, planning and patience. Adults can help a child by supporting them before, during and after transitions occur. These transitions occur when starting at a new environment, everyday transitions from home to daycare setting, transitioning into a new age group and classroom, with a new provider, and transitioning to school. We are committed to assisting our families and children in making these traditions as seamless and comfortable as possible. Transitioning into our school, parents and teachers need to work together, share information they have about the child and what support he or she needs. Transitioning into new care includes a few visits if possible to acclimate the child to the environment, meet their teacher(s) and peers. Additionally, days may need to be shorter to begin with, to allow children to have a positive experience, and to have as little stress placed upon them as possible. We ask that parents have some flexibility during these first days of transition and attendance. When a teacher is preparing for transitioning a child they will first discuss this with the parents. Children are transitioned into new classrooms according to space availability, age, as well as physical, social and emotional development. When preparing to transition your child, he/she will visit the other classroom for short times to meet the teacher and other children in the classroom, and explore and become familiar with the environment. This also allows teachers to gauge when and if your child is emotionally ready to transition to the older classroom. Before transitioning a child, the teacher(s) will:

- * Talk to parents about their child before they start in the setting, to become familiar with their needs.
- * Allow all children to have the opportunity to spend time with the environment and with their teacher where possible before starting in the new setting.
- * Support children through the transitions. This is also to support staff and parents in getting to know each other as well as children, keeping lines of communication open.
- * Ensure all parents know who their child's teacher(s) are and by providing a confidential area (staff lounge/ office area) where parents can discuss any concerns.
- * Provide contact through verbal and written exchanges, as well as the acknowledgement that parents can call the school/ teacher.
- * Inform parents when children are ready for their transition to another classroom and provide the new teacher with information to support the child, alongside with parents, in as smooth a transition as possible.
- * Have parents complete a Family Information survey to assist teacher(s) in providing a smooth transition.
- * To provide ongoing communications throughout the transition period among staff and parents. Communication is an essential means to aid a smooth transition for each and every child.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

Problems, misunderstandings and frustrations arise in any school. It is the organization's intent to be responsive to our families and their concerns. Therefore, an employee/family who is confronted with a problem should utilize this policy to resolve or clarify the situation.

The purpose of the conflict resolution policy is to provide a quick, effective and consistently applied method for employees/families to present concerns to and have those concerns resolved. Proactively identifying and resolving conflicts is a way to strengthen the relationships between school employees/families.

STEP ONE Families should attempt to resolve issues with employees involved. This attempt should take place in private. Issues should be approached with humility and the intent to learn. The conversation should focus on problem solving and improving the overall process. Finger pointing should be avoided.

STEP TWO If issues cannot be resolved, the employee should direct their concerns with the preschool director.

STEP THREE If the discussion with the director does not resolve the problem to the mutual satisfaction of the employee and the family, the family should direct the issues with the school principal. Families may direct their concerns through mail, email, phone or private discussion. Resolving issues will be treated with confidentiality and respect, in a timely manner, serving as a learning experience.

Handbook Acknowledgement Form

I have read and reviewed the St. Thomas More Preschool Handbook. I understand and agree to adhere to the policies stated within.

(Parent signature)

(Date)

(Student's Name)

*Please return to school on or before the first day of school