

# PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK

*Have Faith, Work Hard, Shine Bright!*



Saint Mary School  
RIDGEFIELD



183 High Ridge Avenue, Ridgefield CT



[www.smsridgefield.org](http://www.smsridgefield.org)



203.438.7288





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- Saint Mary School is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.
- Saint Mary School has been designated as an Approved School by Connecticut's State Department of Education.

# WELCOME FROM THE **PRINCIPAL**



Rachel Ambrosio

## **SMS Principal**

Welcome to Saint Mary School. We are so excited that you have decided to send your child to our school for these important formative years. The Saint Mary School preschool is unique in many ways, and I hope that you will come to love SMS the way I and so many other SMS parents have. At Saint Mary School, we recognize and support parents as a child's first teachers and though our overarching goal is to prepare them for kindergarten, we never lose sight of the fact that we are educating the whole child spiritually, emotionally, socially and academically.

Your child will have the opportunity to make friends, learn from and with others, and participate in specials classes such as music, art and PE. Your child will also benefit from the experience of working with students in the elementary and middle school grades who will serve as role models during buddy lessons and activities throughout the school year. Most importantly, all of these experiences will take place in a Catholic school setting committed to bringing children closer to God and learning about our faith. We truly look forward to partnering with you as your child grows during the preschool years. Thank you for entrusting us with your most precious gifts.

God Bless,  
Rachel





# OUR PHILOSOPHY



KNOWN. LOVED. PREPARED.



We believe that it is important that our students feel safe and loved at school. It is only then that they will grow.

We create a learning environment and a play-based curriculum that allows students to develop socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually.

We feel that parents are the first teachers, and we view our role as partners.





# OUR HISTORY



Saint Mary Preschool opened its doors in 1993, and has grown steadily over the years since then. Through our play-based curriculum, we provide ample opportunities for children to develop social and emotional skills alongside active learning, with the overarching goal of school readiness. As an important part of a Preschool-Grade 8 school, our "Little Penguins" are integrated into a larger school community and all that it offers. Buddy programs with the older students, a full-time nurse, specials classes like PE, art, and music, and full-time security team are just a few of the benefits of being a part of the Saint Mary family.

## OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

### Preschool 3s Curriculum Highlights

- Experience the love for learning through a multidisciplinary approach including art, music and movement, math, and science in a safe, conducive learning environment
- Develop readiness skills such as basic colors, shapes, numbers, and name recognition through both individual and group instruction
- Foster independence and individual decision-making, and ease parental separation through family involvement within the classroom setting
- Engage in activities to build and expand social (working in a group, sharing), attentive (direction-following), and motor skills (fine and gross motor, hand-eye coordination)
- Emphasize and incorporate age-appropriate religious themes to parallel events and celebrations during the school year
- A comprehensive portfolio will be assembled for your child, which will highlight and celebrate his or her progress and growth throughout the year
- Daily notes will be posted on the bulletin board to provide parents with a list of our activities. Monthly newsletters will be distributed to provide lesson plans and information about classroom themes and activities.



# OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

## cont.

### Preschool 4s Curriculum Highlights

- Utilize multi-sensory activities to build a foundation for letter and number recognition
- Continue to foster the love of learning while building and developing self-esteem
- Enhance fine and gross motor skills through hands-on activities, projects, and events
- Feature thematic units of learning that incorporate Physical Education, Art, Music, and Computer lessons
- Integrate age-appropriate religious themes throughout the academic school year
- Celebrate each child through a Star of the Week program
- Participate in Specials Classes – Music, Art, World Language, and Physical Education
- A comprehensive Portfolio will be assembled for your child, which will highlight and celebrate his or her progress and growth throughout the year.
- Daily notes will be posted on the bulletin board to provide parents with a list of our activities. Monthly newsletters will be distributed to provide lesson plans and information about classroom themes and activities.

### Transitional Kindergarten Curriculum Highlights

- ELA: Introduction of pre-reading skills -- focuses more heavily on the phonemic piece of literacy, rather than identification and recognition; emphasis on lowercase letters, blending of sounds that create small words, and understanding how vowels help connect sounds together while blending words
- Writing Workshop: A scaffolding process beginning with writing basic sight words, progressing onto completing small writing passages
- Mathematics: Achieving mastery of number identification, quantity recognition, 1-1 correspondence, introduction to addition and subtraction skills, problem-solving, and pre-algebra concepts
- S.T.E.M. (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics): Continuation of scientific thinking with an emphasis on experiments, observing changes, recording and understanding those changes, as well as introducing the Scientific Method
- Participate in Specials Classes – Music, Art, World Language, Physical Education, and Library
- A comprehensive Portfolio will be assembled for your child, which will highlight and celebrate his or her progress and growth throughout the year.
- Daily notes will be posted on the bulletin board to provide parents with a list of our activities. Monthly newsletters will be distributed to provide lesson plans and information about classroom themes and activities.



# PRESCHOOL CONTACTS


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NAME	POSITION	EMAIL
Rachel Ambrosio	SMS Principal	ambrosiore@smsridgefield.org
Wendy Harco	Family and Staff Services Manager	harcow@smsridgefield.org
Monica Harron	Business Manager	harronm@smsridgefield.org
Carolyn Canavan	School Nurse	nurse@smsridgefield.org
Carolyn Swan/Danielle Constantine	Lead/Assistant PK-3s Teacher	swanc@smsridgefield.org / constantined@smsridgefield.org
Cathleen Curtin/Erin Caviola	Lead/Assistant PK-3s Teacher	curtinc@smsridgefield.org / caviolac@smsridgefield.org
Tricia Misurelli/Lisa LeFevbre	Lead/Assistant PK-4s Teacher	misurellit@smsridgefield.org / lefevbre@smsridgefield.org
Taylor Sechi / tbd	Lead/Assistant PK-4s Teacher	sechit@smsridgefield.org
Jennifer Santangelo / Carrie DeStefano / Veronica McNicholas	Lead/ 2 Assistant Transitional Kindergarten Teachers	santangelo@smsridgefield.org / destefanoc@smsridgefield.org / mcnicholasves@smsridgefield.org

The school office is open on all school days from 7:00am-3:00pm.

Phone: 203.438.7288

Fax: 203.431.8742






# OUR ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS



## 2024-2025 School Year Requirements

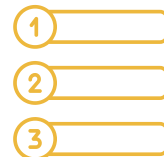
- PK-3s you must be 3 by December 31, 2024
- PK-4s you must be 4 by December 31, 2024
- TK you must be 5 by December 31, 2024
- All preschool students must be potty-trained
- All candidates for admission are required to provide a birth certificate, Baptismal Certificate (if applicable) and record of immunizations.

Once the application period closes, preference goes to:

- Current Preschool students
- Siblings of current/former students
- Practicing members of the Catholic faith

Other Considerations:

- date of application submission
- if spots remain we move to rolling admissions



**PRIORITY**

Current families will be asked to enroll for the 2024-2025 school year in December, 2023, and have priority until the end of January, 2024.

*Non-Discrimination Policy Saint Mary School admits qualified students of any race, color, religion, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Saint Mary School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ancestry, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs*





# OUR DAILY PROCEDURES



## Arrival and Dismissal Procedures


Preschool students begin their school day at 8:30. Preschool teachers will meet parents at their designated drop-off/pick-up doors at 8:30 each morning. If you arrive after 8:40, please enter the school building through the main entrance, and our office staff will escort your child to class.

Half-day preschool students are dismissed at 12:00 and full-day preschool students are dismissed at 2:00 each day. Parents are asked to notify the main office if there is a change to your child's dismissal schedule by 9:00 in the morning. As you know, the safety of your children is our number one priority. If there is someone scheduled to pick up your child who is not on his or her emergency contact list, that person will be asked to show a form of identification. Please keep this in mind when arranging for dismissal.

In the event of a weather event or other emergency, parents will receive a text or email notification indicating that students need to be picked up. Please be sure that all contact information including your emergency contact information is accurate and up to date. In the event that a child needs to be picked up due to illness brought on during the school day, the nurse will contact the child's parent(s) and then emergency contact. In these instances is important that someone be available to pick up the child in a timely manner.

## Lunch/Snack

Saint Mary School promotes a nut-free environment, and we ask parents to provide a healthy variety of food so that your child can learn his/her best and have the energy to get through the preschool day. Children will have one snack time allotted during the day along with a scheduled lunch time. Classrooms do not have microwaves and refrigerators. Lunches should include ice packs/thermoses if needed. In addition, we ask you to provide a refillable and labeled water bottle with your child each day. As our preschool students work toward independence, we encourage you to pack items that are easy to open for your child so that he or she can feel the accomplishment of opening lunch/snack items and eating them independently. TK students are invited to order from our hot lunch program. All orders are done for the month ahead during a prescribed time period.



## *(Daily Procedures continued)*

### Attendance/Absences

Consistent attendance is important for young learners for them to become comfortable and to adapt to their new learning environment. However, children do not learn when they do not feel their best, so it is important to keep a child home if he/she is not feeling well. Please use the link on our school website to report the absence. Students who are unable to actively participate in their school day will be sent home at the teacher's discretion and/or with guidance from our school nurse.

### Illness Guidelines

A primary step in preventing the spread of infection is keeping your child at home when he/she is ill. Parents are the best observers of their child and know when he/she is out of sorts. In this early stage, a child is infectious and it is important that they be kept out of school at this time. He/she will get better faster and not spread the infection to others. We know this puts a burden on parents, as they may have to use time from their work and scheduled activities to be with their sick child. While we are sympathetic to working parents, our first concern is the sick child and all of our other students. If a child appears to be ill, he/she will be taken to the school nurse for evaluation.

Here are some guidelines to follow if your child is ill. If you see any of these symptoms, it is best to keep your child at home.

- Fever of 100.0 or more (taken orally)
- Vomiting two or more times in a 24-hour period
- Severe coughing
- Eyes that are pink/red, with drainage

It is best to check with your doctor if you have any questions about your child's condition.

The next decision is when your child should return to school. A child should be fever-free for 24 hours without any fever-reducing medications and be able to resume his or her normal diet and activity. Certain other conditions require a child to stay at home or be under a doctor's care according to school policy. These conditions are:

- Chicken pox (Varicella): May return to school when all blisters have scabbed over, approximately six days.
- Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis): May return after treatment has been started with antibiotics and doses given for 24 hours.
- Fifth Disease: May return to school on doctor's recommendation.
- Impetigo: Exclude from school until evaluated and treated by a health care professional.
- Head Lice: Exclude from school until under medical treatment and have been checked by school nurse



## *(Daily Procedures continued)*



- Ringworm: Seek medical care. If unable to cover site, exclude from school until receiving medical treatment and considered non-infectious by doctor.
- Scabies: Exclude from school until considered non-infectious by doctor.
- Scarlet Fever, Scarletina, Strep: May return to school no sooner than 24 hours after the start of medication or upon doctor's recommendation.
- Widespread Rash: Exclude from school pending diagnosis by doctor.

It is important to let the school nurse know if your child is not feeling well, is being treated for a medical condition or is taking any medication for illness. Having this information will enable the nurse to better assist your children while they are in school.

### Medication Administration

If any medication, including over-the-counter medications (i.e. Tylenol, antacids, etc.) must be administered at school, an Authorization for the Administration of Medication by School Personnel form has to be completed by the parent and health care provider. This form is on the Saint Mary School website and is supplied by the school nurse upon request.

### Specials and Enrichment

Preschool students at Saint Mary School have the benefit of participating in specials classes during the day as well as in after-school enrichment activities. PK-3 students will have weekly music and art classes, PK-4 students have music, art and PE, and TK has music, art, PE and library. There will also be after-school enrichment activities offered to preschool students throughout the school year.

### Dressing for the Playground

Physical activity is an important component for all children and especially for preschool students. Our Preschool Playground is used throughout the day as often as the weather permits. We believe outdoor time is essential for the social and physical well-being of the whole child. Preschool students go outside on a regular basis, weather permitting. Please be mindful that your child is dressed appropriately so that he/she can best enjoy the playground and be safe while doing so.

### Field Trips

From time to time, our preschool students will enjoy in-house field trips. Saint Mary School Preschool students do not participate in field trips off campus.





## *(Daily Procedures continued)*



### Change of Address

The Main Office must be informed immediately if there is a change of home address, email address, or telephone number for the purpose of mailing and/or emergency.

### Celebrations/Special Events

There are a variety of special events and celebrations that take place during the school year. Parents are encouraged to attend preschool events:

- Meet & Greet
- Back to School Night
- Special Person/Star of the Week (Pre K-4 & TK)
- Christmas celebration
- Mother's Day Tea (Pre-K3)
- St. Joseph's Day with Dad (Pre-K3)
- Moving Up Celebrations

Parents are also invited to attend school events of the year such as:

- Trunk or Treat
- Mother/Son Outing (PK-4 and up)
- Father/Daughter Dance (PK-4 and up)
- Golf Outing
- Gala

### Before and After Care

These programs will provide a structured, safe environment supervised by one or two staff members depending on the number of students. Students will have fun while encountering friends; both new and old. This program is offered for Pre-K-3 through 8th grade, which will foster the development of social skills where students will learn more about peer relationships with students of different ages. Students who participate in the Before and After Care programs must follow the program's rules and regulations. We reserve the right to remove a student from the program if we deem that his/her behavior is unacceptable. This program is only offered for Saint Mary School Students.

The Before Care session will be offered to Preschool students only and will be offered on school days Monday through Friday beginning at 7:10 am and ending when their scheduled preschool program begins. Aftercare sessions will run from 2:15 until 5:30pm, Monday through Friday. Due to teacher's schedules for Professional Development on early dismissal days, the After-School program will not be offered. If there is an early dismissal due to weather or any other emergency, the program is automatically canceled.





## *(Daily Procedures continued)*

### Before and Aftercare (cont)

#### Fees:

Before and Aftercare require a once-a-year registration and \$50 fee. Before Care will be charged a flat fee of \$15 per child if you child is dropped off prior to 8:00 am. If you drop off at or after 8:00 am the fee will be a flat \$8 provided the registration fee was paid. Aftercare is \$12.50 per hour. Students participating in after-school enrichment clubs may go to After Care when they are dismissed. The office will bill you monthly and prompt payment is expected. Delinquency will jeopardize attendance. In the event that you arrive after 5:30 pm, you will be charged \$20 for every ten minutes you are late by our clocks. The students should bring a "nut-free" snack with a reusable water bottle each day that they participate in the After-Care Club.

### Parent Communication

The home-school partnership is critical to the success of each child. To that end, our preschool teachers will communicate regularly with families through newsletters, emails and other announcements. Formal conferences are held in November after the distribution of the first report cards, but our preschool teachers are committed to keeping the lines of communication open and would be happy to meet outside of formal conference time at a parent's request. Similarly, if a teacher has concerns about a child's progress or participation in the preschool program, she will contact the parents to schedule a meeting or conference to discuss those concerns. Final preschool report cards will be distributed in June. At that time students will also receive a portfolio of work that teachers compile throughout the year.

### Visitors

We welcome parents, guardians, and grandparents to our school. However, for the safety of all the children in our school, anyone entering the building must sign in at the Main Office and pick up a Visitor's Pass. They must also sign out when they leave the school building. Visitors may be asked to show identification in the form of a driver's license or other government-issued identification. Please contact the principal to set up an appropriate time for a visit. No person is allowed to publicly address students or staff unless permission has been given by the Principal. Suspicious-looking person/s sighted either in the school or on school grounds must be reported to the Main Office immediately. Please note that all parents/volunteers/adults in the building must use adult restrooms only so as to be in compliance with Safe Environments. Adults may not use student restrooms during school hours or school functions



## *(Daily Procedures continued)*



### Preschool Room Parents

We rely on volunteers to serve as room parents, and appreciate their support in helping teachers plan holiday parties and other events throughout the year. Room parents also serve as an important liaison with the Saint Mary School Home School Association, which operates much like a PTA.

### Security

Saint Mary School employs a full time security guard during school hours and for afterschool and evening activities where students are present. There is a video monitoring system. During the school day, classrooms are locked and a continual inspection of the building occurs. All egress doors are locked during the school day. To assure the security of the building and the safety of each child, Saint Mary School strongly enforces its policy of requiring all visitors, even parents, to report to the Main Office. To avoid interruption of the learning process, no one may enter a classroom without permission of the principal. In the event that the school suspects danger to a student or the school community, the school reserves the right to call the police.

### Child Abuse Laws

Under Connecticut State Law, school officials are legally obliged to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the proper agency. In so reporting, no allegation is made against a parent or caregiver. Rather, it is a judgment by the school that the child may be presenting signs of abuse or neglect.


If a teacher or the school nurse suspects abuse or neglect, he or she must immediately confer with the principal for further discussion and to determine which person on the school staff will report the alleged abuse to the proper agency.

### Confidentiality

There is a professional and moral ethic that requires all persons to safeguard all information of a privileged nature. It is imperative that such information be regarded as a sacred trust.

If there is evidence of knowledge that could impact the health or safety of any person, the teacher has the responsibility to share the information with the principal.

Under Section 423 of the Child Protective Services Act, school officials are required to report when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is an abused or maltreated child (see section on Child Abuse).




## *(Daily Procedures continued)*

### Confidentiality(cont).

The rules that govern privileged information apply, as well, to any personal or academic information that is discovered through daily classroom instruction or other social interaction with students, parents or peers. Always the sense of the sacred should prevail.

### Crisis Plan

Should a crisis require evacuation from the Saint Mary School building, students will be brought to a safe place. Parents will be notified of evacuations via their cell phone, e-mail, and/or home phone, and given the location for student pick-up.

### Fire Drills / Lockdown Drills

Fire drills and lockdown drills at regular intervals are required by the law and are an important safety precaution. It is essential that everyone react appropriately, promptly, and follow the practice plans as quickly as possible. Students are not permitted to talk during drills. Teachers will direct the students.

### Virtus Training

The Diocese has mandated that all volunteers receive a copy of Policies and Procedures Relating to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons or by Lay Employees or Volunteers, and sign and return the receipt included at the end of the packet. In addition, as of the fall of 2004, all parents who volunteer in the school must submit to a background check, and attend the Virtus Training Program, as mandated by the Diocese of Bridgeport. 22 Virtus is a mandatory 3-hour training program required for every person age 18 and over who works or volunteers within the Diocese of Bridgeport. This training teaches adults how to identify early warning signs of child sexual abuse and how to prevent it. Log on to [www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org) to register. As of spring 2015, all volunteers whose Virtus certification is five years old or older, must be recertified. Recertification is all done on line.

### Withdrawals / Transfers

Notice of withdrawal of a student should be made by the parent in writing to the Principal in advance of the withdrawal date. Once the school year begins, we require a 30-day notice period if you plan on withdrawing your child(ren). All notices must be sent in writing. Following that notice period, you will be reimbursed for any remaining tuition, less fees. Any student who is withdrawn from school and wishes to return during the same school year must pay the re-enrollment fee of \$100 if a spot is available. If you wish to return in a subsequent school year, you must follow the application process.

### School's Right to Amend

Saint Mary School reserves the right to amend this handbook. Notice of amendments will be sent as necessary through email communication. This handbook is also available on the Saint Mary School Parent Portal home page.



# DISCIPLINE POLICY



The goal of discipline is to help the child develop the inner controls so that he or she may move toward appropriate social behavior. The teachers and staff will help resolve conflicts by:

- Setting Clear Limits
- Promoting Positive Guidance
- Redirecting children when it becomes necessary

Teachers will encourage children to talk out their differences. This allows children's feelings and ideas to be acknowledged and will help them to find solutions to their disagreements.

If a child is overly aggressive or is repeatedly destructive to the classroom materials or to other children or their work, that child may be asked to make an activity choice in another area of the classroom if talking things through has not resulted in better self-control.

Staff will continuously supervise children during disciplinary actions.

Staff shall not abuse, be neglectful or use corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment under any circumstances. No child shall be physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety and health of the child or another child or adult. If the child is restrained for any reason, the parents will be notified.

In the event a child's behavior or actions cause bodily harm that requires medical attention to other students or staff, the child will be dismissed from the program and the parents of the child will be obligated to pay the tuition as outlined in the enrollment contract.

In the event a child's behavior or actions result in damage to classroom materials, the parents of the child will be responsible for replacing the damaged materials at their expense.



# POTTY POLICY

Children enrolled in Pre-K3, Pre-K4, and TK at Saint Mary School must be potty trained before attending school. Children must be wearing underwear and very rarely having accidents.

**\*Please note that wearing pull-ups is not considered being potty trained\***

## Why do children have to be potty trained before they begin preschool?

There are strict standards for changing and disposing of wet or soiled diapers. The classrooms are not equipped for diaper changing. When an adult is busy changing a child's soiled clothing, it is taking time away from learning for all students. It removes one adult from the direct supervision of and interaction with the rest of the class and places the class out of the ratio mandated by the State of Connecticut.

We understand that even potty trained children will occasionally have toilet accidents. By definition, "accidents" are unusual incidents and should happen infrequently. In these instances, the child will need to change their clothes.

A potty trained child is a child can do the following:

- Communicate to the teachers that he/she needs to go to the restroom before they need to go
- Alert him/herself to stop what he/she is doing to go and use the bathroom
- Pull down his/her own clothes and get them back up without assistance
- Wipe him/herself after using the toilet (with bowel movements as well as urine)
- Get on/off the toilet by him/herself
- Wash hands independently
- Postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom or if we are away from the classroom

We will ask your child and offer the opportunity to use the bathroom multiple times throughout the day. The opportunity to use the bathroom is included in any transitions away from the classroom.

Please send a complete change of clothes (shirts, underwear, pants, and socks) that is appropriate for the season. These will remain in the classroom throughout the year. Parents will be notified if a child has a toileting accident. We understand that each child arrives at this milestone differently, therefore we will allow 2 weeks from the first day of school for your child to demonstrate accomplishment of this goal. However, if the situation is not manageable within the classroom environment, we will discuss the issue with the parents and reserve the right to suspend attendance of the child at such time.





# PARENT SIGNOFF



Our family has read and discussed the 2023 - 2024 Saint Mary  
Preschool Handbook, and we agree to be in full compliance with the  
outlined policies and procedures.

**Parent's name (print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

I have read, understand, and agree to the Saint Mary School's Discipline  
Policy to be used for discipline issues.

**Parent's name (print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

I have read, understand, and agree to the Saint Mary Potty Policy.

**Parent's name (print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return signed in your child's blue folder on September 5,  
2023.**

**Student name:** \_\_\_\_\_

