



2024-2025

Pre-Kindergarten Handbook

Mission Statement:

Our mission at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School

in Fort Myers, Florida, is to "Be like Christ"

in all that we think, do, and say, while experiencing the joy of learning.

Philosophy

The Pre-Kindergarten Program at St. Francis Xavier Catholic School follows the overall philosophy of positive, creative, Catholic education set forth by the Department of Education of the Diocese of Venice. St. Francis Xavier School is including the federally funded Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program within our established Pre-K program. In our program, the student is encouraged to grow spiritually, intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally.

Goals

Success is the primary goal for each child. Every person needs to feel that his/her efforts are worthwhile and valued by others. The teacher and assistant work together to support and encourage the child to develop skills and more importantly, to develop a sense of their worth as a child of God.

Educational Methodology

The state approved VPK program is based on developmentally appropriate practices which will lead the child to learning experiences in physical health, social and emotional development, language and communication, emergent literacy, mathematical and scientific thinking, social studies, and the arts, while integrating motor development.

World of Wonders by McGraw Hill is used to aid in curriculum development. Learning in a large group, small groups, and individual instruction establish a strong skill base and give the teacher ample time to work with each child. Learning centers geared to child-centered learning are part of the daily experience in VPK. Thematic planning enhances learning. The children utilize religion, field trips, journal writing, book making, socialization experiences, mathematics manipulatives, computer software, science experiences, social studies, and student sharing.

The most important aspect of our program is the development of appropriate and Christ-centered behavior. Each child progresses at his/her own pace with encouragement from everyone.

Evaluation and Assessments, Parent-Teacher Conferences and Communication

Please email your teacher at the beginning of school so the teacher can save your email addresses. This makes communication so much easier!

The children are assessed on an ongoing basis. Report cards are completed and sent home quarterly with all students; Star Early Literacy results will be sent home three times per school year with VPK students.

Unless otherwise stated, conferences are for adults only. We would request that your child not be present at parent-teacher conference time.

Classroom Procedures in a Positive Atmosphere

We expect students to be respectful of adults and peers; cooperate with others; be responsible for themselves and their work; and use Jesus' words with gentle hands.

The beginning of self-discipline is based on knowing the procedures and expectations for a given situation. We start out the year explaining that all procedures for grown-ups or children are based on a basic need to "stay safe."

1. We explain the procedures in Pre-K.
2. The class practices the procedures many times.
3. The adults offer praise and positive comments in recognition.

We do employ the practice of separating a child from his peers when we feel there is an immediate need for the safety of the individual, his peers, or the student is disruptive to others' learning. This time away from play is used to help a child think about the undesirable behavior and formulate a way to be successful in the classroom. Should a behavior appear to be repetitive, the teacher will contact the parent as soon as possible. Students respond well to a positive approach to discipline. Discipline is **not** punishment, but a way of becoming more like Christ.

We thank you for your support and the consistency of expectations from home to school. Research demonstrates that this consistency is essential for the development of self-discipline.

Together we work toward a less stressed learning environment. Allowing for the mistakes of others and our own mistakes is the beginning of real learning and humility. Humility helps you learn from mistakes rather than being ashamed of them. We strive to use a positive approach when anyone makes undesirable choices. This view lets us thrive as we learn from our mistakes and teaches us to focus on what we can do as we become what God wants us to be!

Health Status

We really appreciate how closely you monitor your child's health. Please read the St. Francis Xavier School Handbook very carefully so you will be familiar with all the policies relating to your child's health. Should your child throw up or have a fever, please keep your child home until **24 hours have elapsed after the last episode of vomiting and 24 hours of being fever free without medication in both cases.**

If your child requires medication during the school day, you must provide the clinic with the medication, in the prescription bottle, and a note from your child's physician. The clinic distributes all medication. Teachers and staff are not permitted by law to do so and this includes vitamins, throat lozenges and cough drops. Please notify the teacher and assistant about any change in your child's health status. We always have your child's best interests in mind as we communicate with each other.

The policy regarding illness or injury is very simple: if a hug, a Band-Aid or an ice cube does not solve the problem, you will be called.

Dress Code

Children dress in the school uniform of red or light blue polo shirt and navy elastic waist pull-on shorts or pants. No belted pants, please! If girls opt to wear a red or navy polo dress, navy bike shorts must be worn underneath. (See information about Zavada's Renegades Sportswear on the school website.) Appropriate athletic sneakers are to be worn daily. Athletic sneaker color should be dominantly **white, black, blue or grey**. No neon or extreme colors are

allowed to be persistent throughout the shoe. Light up shoes or shoes with wheels in them are not allowed. **Shoes must have Velcro straps.** Tie shoes are not permitted.

On Mission T-shirt days, students must wear school bottoms and school shoes. For special dress-out or dress-up days children may wear short or long sleeve shirts only. No inappropriate expressions may be on t-shirts. If jeans or shorts are worn they must come to the waist and the student must be able to manage opening and closing them. We always wear school shoes unless otherwise noted. Also, if girls choose to wear a dress or skirt on a special dress out day, please have them wear a modest pair of shorts under the dress/skirt.

Girls and boys may wear a watch. Girls may wear stud-type or very small hoop pierced earrings. If the jewelry creates a distraction in class, the teacher or assistant will ask the child to remove it for the day. Nail polish, make up, and tattoos are **not** allowed.

Please keep an extra set of clothes at school. We suggest that they mimic the school uniform as much as possible to avoid embarrassment. The assistant will notify you if your child's clothing needs supplementation.

Drop-off Times

School hours are 8:00 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. every day. VPK children may be walked to the Early Education Center gate with a parent.

All students enter through Heitman Street. The first bell rings at 7:30 a.m. and the children will go to their respective classes. Students should be in the classrooms by 7:55 each morning. Parents of part-time students will receive specific instructions about drop-off and dismissal procedures from your teacher.

Dismissal Time

We dismiss our children at 2:50 p.m. each afternoon. They will be escorted to one of the following places for dismissal: Heitman Street, Cottage Street or After School Care. **Please note that we dismiss one hour early every Wednesday.**

Heitman St. Dismissal - The children dismiss from the Parish Hall. Please follow the carline routes and procedures as they appear on the "School Hours & Maps" page of the school website.

Cottage St. Dismissal - Children who belong to the 7th & 8th carpools will be walked out and monitored by an assistant.

After Care - Children assigned to After Care are walked to the pick-up point and then released to the After Care personnel.

Changes in Dismissal - If your child needs to go to After Care and does not normally do so, please send a note or email. We absolutely cannot change a dismissal instruction without written, preferably signed authorization. You may call the school office if an emergency occurs and they will do their best to get a message to us. We can then accommodate your wishes.

Snack, Lunch, Birthdays

Please provide a healthy snack and water bottle for your child daily. Please put the healthy snack in a sandwich size Ziploc bag with your child's name, so it can be easily located by your child. Please put your child's name on the water bottle as well.

Please pack a healthy lunch in a standard lunch box (no coolers) with a drink or water bottle. We expect children to eat their "good for you" food first. No candy is allowed.

If you wish to distribute party invitations in class, there must be an invitation for each child.

Volunteers

For our children's safety, all prospective Diocesan employees and volunteers must first obtain the required background clearances:

1. Digital fingerprinting. Please see the school receptionist or visit the school's website for more information: www.stfrancisfortmyers.org.

2. Attend one Safe Environment Training (SET) session. These trainings are held throughout the Diocese of Venice and the schedule is posted on the diocesan website: www.dioceseofvenice.org. We look forward to welcoming our parent volunteers to school!

PreK4 Behavioral Expectations

From their first day of school at St. Francis, appropriate classroom expectations and rules provide young children the structure and guidance they need. Behavioral expectations carry with them an importance beyond the classroom. When students learn to behave responsibly, their self-esteem rises and their motivation to achieve increases. The following rules are observable and apply throughout the day. At St. Francis Xavier School, it is expected that students will:

1. Demonstrate speech and actions that are respectful of adults and other students
2. Respect and care for school property, including cleaning up classroom and playground materials
3. Listen to and follow directions as well as all classroom and playground procedures
4. Stay on task and use classroom and playground materials appropriately
5. Keep hands, feet, and objects to themselves and demonstrate safe behavior
6. Respect students' right to learn by speaking and moving quietly/politely throughout the school
7. Use proper manners at all times, especially during snack or lunch
8. Follow bathroom rules

It is extremely important that home and schoolwork together to help children learn, so communication between parents and teachers is vital. Communication about children's behavior in school may be sent via email or in person with accompanying conference notes.

Bathroom Procedures

All St. Francis Xavier Catholic School students must be bathroom trained and no longer using diapers or pull-ups prior to attending school. All students must be able to tell an adult when they need to use the bathroom and can use the bathroom without adult assistance. It is understood your child may, on a rare occasion, have a bathroom accident while attending school. The following procedures will be followed in the event of an accident.

- PreK3 and PreK4 students should be provided with a change of clothes to include underwear and socks for your child to be kept at school.

- If a child has a bathroom accident at school the parents will be notified by the teacher, teacher's assistant or clinic staff and may be asked to come assist or take the child home for the remainder of the day. School staff are not permitted to assist in bathroom accident clean up due to health and safety concerns.

- If a child has four bathroom accidents within one school year the school may suspend the student's enrollment status and require the child to receive a medical evaluation to determine if there are any other contributing factors. The school may also require a letter from a Health Professional recommending the student be re-admitted prior to returning to school.

Two Sculptors

I dreamed I saw a studio
And watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher; the tools he used
Were books, music, and art.
The other, a parent who worked with a guiding hand,
And a gentle, loving heart.

Day after day, the teacher toiled with a touch
That was careful, deft, and sure,
While the parent labored by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when at last their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought.
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.

And each agreed they would have failed
If either had worked alone.
For behind the parent stood the school
And behind the teacher, the home.

-Anonymous