



St. Mark
LUTHERAN
SCHOOL

**Early Childhood
Handbook**

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Addendum For 20-21 COVID-19 Circumstances.....23

Welcome to our St. Mark church and school family! We are glad to have you with us and hope you will soon feel comfortable and realize that you are a vital part of St. Mark Lutheran School.

St. Mark Lutheran Church Mission Statement

To introduce Houston families to life-changing love of Jesus.

St. Mark Lutheran School Mission Statement

To introduce Houston families to life-changing love of Jesus through Scholarship, Ministry, and Leadership.

Our Purpose

- To bring each child into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
- To assist families by providing a program of Christian education with faith development geared towards young children
- To develop the whole child by enriching their needs through guidance of qualified and caring teachers.
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General Goals of the Early Childhood Program at St. Mark

- To provide a Christian environment and a caring, nurturing staff to work with each child as a unique individual
- To provide experiences which allow each child to develop a loving relationship with Jesus Christ
- To assist children in the exploration of feelings, attitudes and behaviors thereby helping children develop an understanding of themselves and others
- To build confidence of each child by teaching new skills
- To prepare each child for the next level of learning

Spiritual Exposures

The overall goal is that young children will know Jesus as their Savior. Each classroom will have daily Bible stories which may include songs, puppets, crafts, object lessons, and finger plays. It is our desire to nurture the child with God's love.

Goals:

1. To develop a personal relationship with God.
2. To share God's love in relationships with others.
3. To appreciate God's wonder in our relationships with the world.

Enrollment

Non Discriminatory Policy

St. Mark Lutheran Early Childhood Program admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school administered programs.

St. Mark Early Childhood Program is a ministry of St. Mark Lutheran Church and School. We are licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and will meet or exceed the Minimum Standard Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers.

Children who are between 6 weeks and three years old are eligible to enroll.

Admission Order Priority

1. Members of St. Mark
2. Siblings of students already enrolled at St. Mark
3. Member of another LCMS Church
4. Others

Look at Them Learning!

Learning with Art Materials

As children work with art materials, they make many choices. They visually discriminate between colors as they draw and paint, between shapes as they make collages and work with construction paper cutouts, and between textures as they work with fabric scraps. This ability to visually discriminate is a skill children need in the early stages of reading in order to discriminate between forms. The children also exercise the small muscles in their hand and fingers as they work with crayons, scissors, paintbrushes and manipulatives. Art materials provide children with a safe way of expressing thoughts and feelings that they are not prepared to verbalize.

Learning with Manipulatives

The children will develop fine motor skills as they work with various manipulatives. These fine motor skills prepare children to hold and control pencils when later forming letters and words.

Learning through Block Play

The children gain skill in estimation as they consider how much space they will need for a block structure, how many blocks they will need to complete a block structure and how many blocks they will need in order to build a tower as tall as their neighbors. Children learn about balance and classifying as they group blocks according to size and shape.

Learning with Books

Children begin to understand that the symbols we recognize as letters have meaning, that sentences are read in a left-to-right pattern and that illustrations, as well as words, can be “read” for meaning. They also develop language skills as they talk about the contents of the books. They learn to use language to retell a story in sequence.

Learning with Puzzles

Children will begin to understand the relationship between part and whole.

Learning through Dramatic Play

Dramatic play offers children safe avenues to explore their fears, anger and anxieties. By pretending to be doctors, kings, ladies, etc. they are given the opportunity to work through many issues they confront in their own lives.

Learning through Outdoor Play and Gym Play

As children climb, run and slide, they are talking, using language to create rules and singing rhymes. They also learn to work at and resolve dilemmas such as who will have the next turn on the slide, trike or with a ball in the gym. Finally, the children will develop large muscles in the arms and legs through their play.

Learning through Group Time

Children learn to operate in a large group setting. The children learn to sit in a group and listen to the teacher and other children talk. Attention span increases, social skills develop (such as keeping hands to oneself) and the child's participation helps develop self-esteem and self-confidence.

Water Activities

Children enrolled at St. Mark participate in sprinkler and wading pool play in the summer months (June, July, and August). Infants, Tiny Tots, Waddlers, Toddlers, and those Two's children in diapers will need to wear or provide swim diapers. All children will need a bathing suit, towel to dry off on, and water or tennis shoes that they can get wet. Parents will be notified in advance of water play days.

Learning Goals and Objectives of Key Experiences:

Jesus Time is One in Christ for Infants through Two's. Each weekly Bible story is used to show each child the love of Jesus from the time they come to school in the morning until they go home.

Our Infants, Tiny Tots, Waddlers and Toddlers use Buttercups through Funshine Express. These monthly theme activity kits develop gross and fine motor skills, as well as provide sign language, music, vocabulary development, art, cognitive (such as colors and shapes, etc.), social, and sensory experiences.

Our Twos classes use Firefly through Funshine Express. The monthly activity kits create enthusiasm for learning and introduce school readiness skills. These skills provide opportunity for the children to explore shapes, colors and counting, alphabet and number recognition, Spanish, vocabulary development, art, social and sensory experiences.

Discipline Policy

A word concerning discipline: in accordance with our beliefs – God's love and forgiveness will be the motivating factor in our interactions. The safety of the child himself and playmates necessitate boundaries in which the child can feel secure. A certain amount of structure, not to inhibit creativity, but

to allow for a day that runs smoothly, will be taught the first several weeks until the children know what is expected at certain times. From experience, we have found that this allows a lot more time and freedom to pursue spontaneous experiences throughout the year.

Per the guidelines set by the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services in the Minimum Standards for Licensed Child-Care Centers, the following policies will be upheld.

Discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child;
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

Staff will use only positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
- Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

The staff of St. Mark will make every attempt to redirect negative behavior. If negative behavior persists, a conference will be scheduled with the parent, teacher and the Director. In some cases behavior may indicate developmental delays and could necessitate evaluation by a qualified specialist. This evaluation may be required for your child to continue in our

program. Any child who continually jeopardizes the safety of him or herself, other children, and/or staff will be asked to leave the program if corrective measures are not successful.

Children's Biting Guidelines

Biting is common in group settings of young children, though when it happens it's disturbing to parents and caregivers. Reasons for biting include the following possibilities:

- Children explore their environment orally
- Since children explore their world orally, they may sometimes defend themselves orally or show affection orally
- Teething children may bite because it feels good
- Children learn through imitation
- Children feel threatened or overwhelmed
- Children feel frustrated or angry and lack words to express themselves.

For the child who is bitten:

- Appropriate First Aid will be rendered by the teacher or other designated adult
- The Director will be notified
- An Illness/Incident Report will be filled out by the teacher and signed by the parent. The original will be placed in the child's file in the Director's office
- Depending upon the severity of the bite, the child's parents will be contacted

For the child who bites:

- An Illness/Incident Report will be filled out by the teacher and signed by the parent. The original will be placed in the child's file in the Director's office.
- If the biting persists and the Toddler staff is unable to effect any change in the behavior, the child's parents will be contacted and a plan will be developed in cooperation with the parents and Toddler staff.

The identity of both children will remain confidential.

Naptime & Safe Sleep

Per the guidelines set by the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services in the Minimum Standards for Licensed Child-Care Centers, the following policies will be upheld for naptime and safe sleep.

In our Infant and Tiny Tot classrooms:

- Always put infants to sleep on their backs unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional.
- Place infants on a firm mattress, with a tight fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full size cribs and for non-full size cribs.
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, the cribs will be bare except for a tight fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that will not be placed in a crib include: soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices. Also, infants will not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing.
- We will ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- If an infant needs extra warmth, we will use sleeping sacks as an alternative to blankets.
- We will place only one infant in a crib to sleep.
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep. But the pacifier must *not be attached* to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk.
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), we will move the infant to a crib immediately, unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional.
- Our child care program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas child care operations (this includes e-cigarettes and any type of vaporizers).
- We will actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound.
- If an infant is able to roll back and forth from front to back, we will place the infant on the infant's back for sleep and allow the infant to assume a preferred sleep position.
- Awake infants will have supervised "tummy time" several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally.
- We will not swaddle an infant for sleep or rest unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional.

In our Waddler, Toddler, and Two's classroom:

- We will ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.

- We will place only one child on a cot to sleep. If they are not walking, they will be placed in a crib.
- Your child may bring a cloth nap mat, crib sheet or blanket and a small pillow (optional). Please ensure that the napttime items will fit in your child's cubby.

Conflict Resolution & Grievances

Students, parents, teachers, and administrators at St. Mark are encouraged to work in partnership toward the common goal of excellence in Christian education. This requires a climate of respect, understanding, and tolerance. When questions or conflicts arise, they should be addressed courteously and directly with the individual involved. The Biblical directive for conflict resolution at St. Mark Lutheran School is found in Matthew 18:15-17.

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

It is clear from Scripture that a parent is to discuss concerns regarding a teacher's decisions or actions directly with the teacher. Other people should not be involved and the parent should avoid making negative comments to the student. The following steps should be followed for any grievance or matter of concern at St. Mark Lutheran School:

- parent and teacher conference
- parent and Director conference
- appeal to the Board of Day School Ministries

Questions and Concerns

Parents may email, call or meet face-to-face with the director to discuss any questions or concerns about any of St. Mark's policies or procedures. Feedback is always welcome and appreciated.

Hours of Operation

The St. Mark Lutheran Early Childhood Program hours are from 8 am to 3 pm or an extended day from 7 am to 6 pm. Children will be signed in and out through our app HiMama.

Part time classes are available on a 2 day option on Tuesdays and Thursdays or a 3 day option on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Parents who have their child in the part time program must adhere to the same days agreed upon at registration. **There are no make-up days for absences, illness or holidays.**

St. Mark Lutheran Early Childhood Program is open from 7 am to 6 pm. Please make every effort to be on time to pick up your child. A late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged for every minute you are late past the child's **scheduled** pick up time. Any late fees will be documented and added to your monthly statement. If you have an emergency and will be late, please call the school office at 713-468-2623.

To assist the flow of the day for our classrooms, we are requesting that all children arrive before 10 am each day. This will ensure that the children will be able to assimilate into the classroom, have lunch, take a nap and be prepared for the afternoon's activities.

Campus Visitors

Signing In and Out

Any time a visitor comes to campus they are asked to check in with their photo ID at the Welcome Desk and get a visitor badge. When leaving, please check out as well. This is another step to ensure the safety of our campus for everyone involved. Any time a parent comes to campus, they are asked to show their Cougar Cub badge for the current school year at the Welcome Desk. If you don't have your badge, you'll need to check in as a visitor.

Children will only be released to their parents and those adults listed on their emergency information form on file. People who do not pick up your child on a normal basis and are on the emergency information form for release should be prepared to show their driver's license or picture ID. Parents may also give written permission to the classroom teacher or Director if someone not on their emergency information form will be picking up.

Custodial Parents

Custodial parents are welcome to visit the school at any time. If you would like to schedule a conference, please contact your child's teacher or the director. Many of our parents also perform a variety of volunteer duties that enhance our overall day school ministry. For the safety and protection of everyone on the St. Mark campus, parents and other visitors are asked to sign in at the welcome center.

Non-Custodial Parents

A non-custodial parent will be permitted to participate in routine school activities involving parents, unless restricted by court order.

The non-custodial parent is the parent who has neither the right to designate the child's residence nor the right to receive child support under the divorce decree or court order. St. Mark reserves the right to make the decision as to who is non-custodial for purposes of this policy.

The non-custodial parent may not visit the student on campus during the school day nor may the student be released to the non-custodial parent without written permission from the custodial parent. A certified copy of the court order restricting the rights of the non-custodial parent must be provided to the school office if the custodial parent wishes to prohibit the distribution of information to or restrict school visitations by the non-custodial parent. A student may, however, be released to the non-custodial parent if the decree specifies that visits begin at the time school is released, but only on days of possession.

Miscellaneous

Gang-Free Zone

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty under state law.

Contact Information for Texas Department of Family and Protective Services – Child Care Licensing

TDFPS – dfps.state.tx.us

Licensing – 713-287-3238

1330 E. 40th St., Houston, Texas 77022

Child Abuse Hotline – 1-800-252-5400

Minimum Standards and Most Recent Licensing Report

Parents can review a copy of the Minimum Standards for Licensed Child Care Centers and a copy of our most recent Licensing inspection report. These items are available any time and are posted in the hallway by the Motor Lab.

Communication

You will receive an email through HiMama each evening providing you with the day's activities. At the end of the week, *The Cougar* will be emailed to you with any additional school news. Please be sure we have your current email address on file.

Holidays

The Early Childhood Program will generally be closed the following holidays:

Four Days Prior to the beginning of the new school year

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Holiday

Christmas Holiday

New Year's Eve
Early Childhood Conference
Good Friday & Easter Monday
Memorial Day
Independence Day

The dates for these holidays will vary. Please check the current calendar for the days we will be closed each school year. Parents will be notified in advance of these dates. There is no reduction in tuition or make-up days for holidays or in-service closings.

Clothing

Please dress your child for active (sometimes dirty) play. While normal precautions will be taken, accidents can happen. Your child should come to school in comfortable washable play clothes. For girls that are wearing dresses please have them wear shorts or bloomers for modesty and to cover their diapers so that outside materials do not stick to the diaper and cause discomfort. Shoes such as flip-flops, crocs, sandals and boots are not a safe option for active children at school. We have found that tennis shoes are the safest for the children.

On nice winter days we will go outside, so please send your child to school in coat, hat, gloves & mittens. Our room and gym are adequately heated, but long sleeves shirts in the winter are a good idea. **Please put your child's name on all coats, sweaters, hats, etc.**

Lost and Found

Unidentified found articles will be placed in the school lost and found area. Valuable items such as money, jewelry, wallets, and purses should be turned in to the school office for safekeeping until they are claimed. Students are asked to avoid bringing money or very valuable items to school to avoid the possibility of loss.

Toys

Parents are asked to help insure that toys are not brought to school. Many toys have small parts that could be a choking hazard to our younger students. If your child brings one of these items to school, they will be placed in the child's backpack to be brought home at the end of the day.

Inclement Weather

School closings due to bad weather or other emergency conditions are announced on local television and radio stations. St. Mark Lutheran School will notify the media in such an event. Parents should check for school closing broadcasts in cases of severe weather or other emergencies. **Typically, St. Mark closes when Spring Branch Independent School District is closed.**

Food and Nutrition

A morning and afternoon snack will be provided daily. A variety of nutritious foods are served to ensure the children are receiving their daily nutrition quota. If your child has a food allergy, please provide an alternative snack for them during snack time. A snack calendar will be sent to each family at the beginning of each month.

Parents have the option of bringing their child's lunch or ordering from our cafeteria. When packing your child's lunch, the Early Childhood Program is not responsible for its nutritional value or for meeting the child's daily food needs. Please try to avoid or limit foods high in sugar content. In order to prevent choking, hotdogs should be cut lengthwise and grapes or small tomatoes must be cut in half. When in doubt please cut or dice any food that may pose a choking hazard. **Lunchtime is a busy time. We do not have enough hands to cut up each child's lunch.**

Microwaves are available in the classroom to heat up lunches. Cold foods should be packed with an ice pack as **we do not have refrigerators available to store children's lunches.** Children are encouraged, but never forced, to eat their food.

Children who are attending the extended day program, 7 am to 6 pm, may bring breakfast to eat in the morning. If you arrive after 7:45 am, please make sure your child has eaten breakfast before they arrive.

Parents must provide written feeding instructions for infants not yet ready for table food. These written instructions ensure that all caregivers, including substitutes, have clear instructions for feeding your child. Parents must review and update these instructions every 30 days.

Cafeteria Services

St. Mark Lutheran School offers a well-balanced, hot lunch to students beginning at 18 months old during the regular school year. Menus are planned with children in mind, yet are designed to be nutritionally sound. Students may buy a hot lunch or bring a lunch from home.

St. Mark maintains a cafeteria account for each student using the "Café Prepay" system. **Lunches may be purchased with cash, checks, or online at gostmark.org/cafepay.**

Deposit lunch checks or cash (please place cash in an envelope and write your child's name, grade and dollar amount on the front of the envelope) in the silver box near the school office. This system is not integrated with tuition billing, so please do not combine your payments. Put the student's

name and grade on lunch deposits, and list the amount you want to allocate to each child. Minimum deposits should cover two weeks of hot lunch.

When a student's account balance reaches \$0, they will be given a grace period before they will not be able to receive hot lunch. If the account balance is not replenished we will provide them with a cheese or peanut butter and jelly sandwich with a milk until their account is active again.

Reduced cost and free lunches are available to eligible families by a confidential application. See the business office for the forms.

Class Parties and Birthdays

St. Mark students celebrate several special occasions during the year with class parties. Teachers may also allow a parent to bring a class treat for a child's birthday. Parents are asked to please refrain from having flowers, balloons, etc. delivered to students at school. If parents choose to have an item delivered to school for their child, it will be held in the school office until the end of the school day. If bringing a treat, please make arrangements with the teacher to schedule a time for bringing the treat. Invitations to out-of-school birthday celebrations and parties should be mailed, unless the entire class is invited. This simple courtesy will prevent many hurt feelings.

Any parent who brings in food for a birthday, Valentines' party, etc. should be made aware of the following rules, if the food is to be served during the hours of 10:30 am to 1:30 pm:

- 1. Cakes, cupcakes, cookies etc. must be store-bought, not homemade.**
- 2. Pizza parties (or any other meals) served during this time are not allowed.**

As noted above, treats, desserts, snacks, and meals served before 10:30 am or after 1:30 pm are not subject to the regulations.

Breastfeeding

We understand that breastfeeding supports optimal health and development for our infants. We provide a comfortable place that enables a mother to sit and breastfeed her child. In addition, you have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for your child while your child is in our care.

Health & Safety Rules

Illness or Accidents

St. Mark Lutheran School does not have the facilities or personnel to offer medical care beyond routine first aid treatment. If a student is injured or becomes ill at school, the school nurse or office personnel will comfort the child and contact a parent or guardian to pick him up from the sick bay. *It is expected that the parent will do this within an hour of being contacted.*

Parents are responsible to ensure that each child has a current emergency response form on file with the school office with all parent contact numbers and several alternative numbers. In the unlikely event of a medical emergency, an ambulance may be called before the parent is notified. Our primary concern is for the health and safety of the child.

At the request of the school nurse, parents will be called to pick up a child if any of the following are observed:

1. fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
2. vomiting or diarrhea
3. excessive coughing
4. a significant rash
5. ongoing complaints of pain
6. any injury that appears serious
7. head lice or scabies
8. recurring or heavy yellow or green nasal discharge
9. pink eye

Our school is also required by the law to uphold the following recommendations and guidelines provided by the Texas State Department of Health. Both staff and parents must comply for the health of all of our children.

1. Chicken Pox: Physician's permit required to re-enter school. The last crop of lesions must be scabbed over, and the child must be examined by the school nurse.
2. Diarrhea: After the second incident within 2 hours, child must be picked up and remain at home until they are symptom-free without medication for 24 hours.
3. Diphtheria: Physician's permit required to re-enter school.
4. Hand, Foot and Mouth: Your child will be allowed to re-enter school when fever free for 24 hours and the rash has subsided.
5. Hepatitis: Physician's permit required to re-enter school. By law, parents of classroom contacts must be notified by a school official.

6. Impetigo: Physician's permit required to re-enter school. All lesions must be healed, and child must be examined by a school nurse prior to returning to school.
7. Measles: Physician's permit required to re-enter school. Child must be free from rash, and child must be examined by a school nurse prior to returning to school.
8. Mononucleosis: Physician's permit required to re-enter school.
9. Mumps: Physician's permit required to re-enter school.
10. Pink Eye: May return to school after using physician prescribed eye drops/ointment for 24 hours. If it is viral in nature, child may not return until being evaluated by a school nurse, and it may be as long as 14 days.
11. Pediculosis (Lice): Children will be allowed to return to school once the prescribed treatment has been administered, and the child is checked by the school nurse before re-entering class.
12. Ringworm of scalp and skin: Child may return to school with a permit from the physician, provided prescribed treatment has been initiated, and the area is covered.
13. Streptococcal Infection: Also referred to as Strep throat, Scarletina, or Scarlet fever. Child may return to school with a physician's permit, AFTER having been free from symptoms (fever, sore throat, and rash) and on antibiotic therapy for 24 hours.
14. Tuberculosis: Child must have a physician's permit and must be taking the prescribed medication.
15. Vomiting: At first incident, child must be picked up and remain at home until they are symptom-free without medication for 24 hours.
16. Whooping Cough: Physician's permit required to re-enter school.

Children with contagious diseases must remain at home until a doctor releases them to return to school. Children with fever should be kept at home until they are fever-free **without medication** for 24 hours. When your child has a fever, keep him home for 24 hours after the fever has broken. For example, if the fever breaks in the afternoon on Monday, do not send your child to school until Wednesday. The temperature should remain below 99.0 for 24 hours. Parents are asked to use common sense and consideration when deciding whether a child is well enough to attend school. Although it may be inconvenient to keep a sick child home, the well-being of the child, his classmates, and his teachers must take first priority.

Medication Policy

Many medications are sent to school for the nurse or, in her absence, a designated staff member, to give to students. Teachers do not dispense medication. For the safety of our students, the school staff will follow strict policies and procedures for administration of medication. No medication is supplied by the school. Medication purchased in a foreign country will not be given. All prescription and non-prescription medication must be kept in the nurse's office and must be registered with the nurse when a student arrives at school. A medication permission slip (either over the counter or prescription) must be completed by the parent and turned in along with the medication before it can be dispensed. These forms are available at Back to School Night, in the school office, **and on the school's website**. (Please feel free to make copies.) Please note that prescription medications also require the authorized signature of the prescribing physician.

Prescription Medication:

Prescription medication may only be administered when a signed Prescription Medication Form with complete dosage instructions has been received from the prescribing physician or dentist licensed to practice in the United States. Prescription medication must be provided by the parent/guardian in the original container appropriately labeled with the name of the student, name of the medication, and complete dosage instructions. In cases of repeated daily doses, parents are responsible for providing a one week supply, picking up the empty container at the end of the week, and returning the container with the following weeks dosage to the nurse's office. *Note: Medications prescribed by a doctor that are given three times daily, you are encouraged to give one before school, one after school, and one at bedtime, unless otherwise advised by your physician.*

Non-prescription Medication:

Non-prescription medication may be administered when a signed Over-the-Counter Medication Form with dosage instructions written specifically for your child has been received from a parent/guardian. All over-the-counter medications must be FDA-approved and must be in the original container. Only the dosage indicated on the container will be given. If there is not an age-appropriate dosage on the container, then you must have a physician complete a Prescription Medication Form with dosage instructions in order for the medication to be given.

These procedures have been implemented with the safety and protection of the students in mind. Parents are encouraged to work with the school nursing staff to minimize any inconvenience.

Medical Records and Health Requirements

State law mandates that immunization and health records be maintained on each child enrolled in school. Parents must complete a confidential Health History Information Form for each child enrolled at St. Mark.

This information is confidential. Parents must notify the school office of any changes in a child's health status, new medications, emergency phone numbers or addresses, or physician and insurance information.

Parents must supply a complete immunization health record from a licensed physician. Immunizations must be current according to the Texas Department of Health requirements. You can view these requirements on the website at dshs.state.tx.us. Staff is recommended but not required to abide by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

To claim exclusion for reasons of conscience including a religious belief, a signed affidavit must be obtained from the Texas department of Health, Immunization Division in Austin and presented to the School Nurse's Office. The affidavit will be valid for a two-year period.

To claim an exclusion for medical reasons the student must present a statement signed by the child's physician (MD or DO), duly registered and licensed to practice medicine in the United States who has examined the child, in which it is stated that, in the physician's opinion, the vaccine required is medically contraindicated or poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the child. Unless it is written in the statement that a life-long condition exists, the exemption statement is valid for only one year from the date signed by the physician.

St. Mark Lutheran Early Childhood Program CANNOT accept any child who shows signs of illness. We have a responsibility to the well children who will be attending classes that day.

Being sick isn't fun for anyone. While it can be inconvenient to have to keep your child out of school when they are sick, please be considerate of the other students and teachers. Should your child have anything that is contagious, please notify the school office as soon as possible so appropriate notices can be sent home.

Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

The laws of the State of Texas mandate that any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect observed by medical or school personnel be reported to Child Protective Services. Suspicion may be aroused by the observation or assessment of a child's behavior, conversation, physical appearance, or emotional condition. In such instances, a timely report must be made, and an independent CPS investigation will be conducted. St. Mark Lutheran School is required *by law* to comply with these procedures.

If any school family needs assistance with parenting issues or any other difficult personal situation, the school principal or any of the church pastors may be contacted for a confidential discussion or referral. The support of families and care for our children is everyone's job at St. Mark.

Emergency Drills

St. Mark follows local city ordinances concerning emergency drills and evacuation procedures. Fire, tornado, disaster, and lock-down drills are conducted on a regularly scheduled basis.

Parental Role

You are the most important people in your child's life. Your support and encouragement of school and church activities are vital to develop good attitudes in your children.

Your child will bring home work they have completed at school. Find an "important" place for your child to display his/her projects. Your children have worked hard during the week and are proud of their accomplishments.

From time to time, the teacher may need special help in some projects. One way you can be of assistance is with holiday parties. Donations of household items may also be requested.

We are fortunate to have caring and supportive parents at St. Mark. We appreciate the many ways you help make your child's year a success.

Financial Responsibilities

Policies Regarding Financial Responsibility

*"The master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them."
Matthew 25:19*

It is understood that, while St. Mark Lutheran School is in ministry to children and their families, operating expenses must be met. St. Mark expects parents to partner with the school in achieving the mission and goals of the school, it is therefore expected that families will treat their financial obligations to the school, including its music conservatory and after-school programs, seriously. Families who fall behind in their financial obligations are asked to contact the Business Office as soon as a problem arises. Parents are urged to work in a partnership of mutual respect and understanding with the school administration to ensure that their financial obligations are met in a timely manner.

Registration

1. Families with account balances greater than 30 days in arrears will not be permitted to register for the subsequent year until the balances are settled.

2. Families who have registered for the subsequent year, but whose account balances fall greater than 30 days in arrears at the end of the third or fourth quarter will have registration revoked. Registration papers will be returned and the registration fee will be applied to the delinquent account.

Tuition Management System

St. Mark utilizes an online tuition management system through TADS. All families are required to sign up for this online billing system. Once registered, all families will receive an email with the TADS setup instructions. Families will be assessed a \$45 annual fee.

Lunch account payment should not be included with tuition payment.

Overdue Accounts

Payments are due by the 25th of each month, with a 5 day grace period allowed. At this time, a \$29 late fee will be assessed by TADS on all overdue balances. For all amounts over 5 days past due, TADS shall send an email reminder of the amount past due. For all amounts over 30 days past due, St. Mark shall send a formal collection letter. For all amounts over 45 days past due, St. Mark shall send a notification of collection action and possible revocation of credit privileges if payment is not received before the specified deadline.

Revocation of credit privileges may include one or more of the following:

1. Requirement to pay tuition in advance;
2. Requirement to pay tuition in cash or by money order;
3. Requirement to establish an automatic bank draft or automatic merchant card transaction; or
4. Termination of the student contract and expulsion of the student.

Failure to resolve overdue accounts may result in one or more of the following:

1. Denial of registration for the coming year;
2. Full legal and credit remedies including, but not limited to, transfer of accounts to attorneys or collection agencies.

Returned Checks

A charge of \$29 will be assessed on returned payments. Returned checks are not re-deposited.

ADDENDUM FOR 20-21 COVID-19 CIRCUMSTANCES

NOTE: The Addendum will serve as the current handbook policies in the following areas for the 20-21 school year until otherwise noted by the School Administration Team.

Health and Safety

The St. Mark Administration Team places the utmost importance on student and staff health and safety. Our decisions have utilized the research and recommendations of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Harris County Health Department and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). We are committed to offering instruction and learning on campus, and in this section you will see how we're keeping our community safe right now during camp and early childhood as well as in August for all our students and staff.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All staff will wear masks/face covering and/or face shields while on campus throughout the day. Parents will also need to wear a mask/face covering and/or face shield during car drop off and pick up.

Temperature Checks and COVID-19 Questions

The morning drop off process will involve asking required COVID questions to the adult as well as taking every student and staff member's temperature prior to entry. A student or staff member with a fever may not stay on campus. The morning drop off and afternoon pick up processes are explained later in this letter. COVID-19 Questions:

1. Have you had a temperature of 100.4 or above?
2. Have you had any respiratory illness/symptoms?
3. In the last 14 days have you or anyone in your family had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 or been under investigation?
4. In the last 14 days have you or anyone in your family traveled internationally or to any hot spot areas in the United States?

Handwashing and Cleaning Procedures

Regular handwashing times will happen throughout the day. Restrooms, playground equipment, lunch tables and classroom furniture will be disinfected throughout the day. In addition to classroom furniture being disinfected throughout the day, every Friday evening we will also have all of the classrooms fogged with ProKure V (an EPA-registered, liquid disinfectant/virucide formulated for hospital use) as a precautionary measure.

Lunch and Recess

Lunch

St. Mark will continue to offer meals through our kitchen staff. Students in Toddlers (18 months) through Twos will eat lunch in their classrooms but still have the option to purchase a lunch. Lunches ordered through the kitchen will be delivered in closed containers to the classrooms at the class' appointed lunch time. The kitchen staff will be wearing masks and/or face shields and gloves in the food preparation and distribution.

Recess

St. Mark recognizes the importance of recess time. Physical activity is essential for social, emotional and physical growth and offers students a "brain break" during their day. Here is a description of how recess will look at St. Mark this year:

Infant - Twos recess: Classes will not combine on the playground. Each class will have a designated time outside and playground equipment will be sprayed with liquid disinfectant after each class.

Motor Lab: Classes will not combine in the Motor Lab. Each class will have a designated time and the equipment used will be sprayed with liquid disinfectant after each class.

COVID-19 Procedures

To ensure a safe environment, every member of the St. Mark family is asked to monitor his/her health and be alert to the following symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Known direct close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19
- Headache
- New loss of smell or taste
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting

All staff and students are expected to stay home if they exhibit any of these symptoms.

Communication

Our communication and procedures when notified of a confirmed positive case in staff and students are:

1. Move the directly affected group to a separate unused classroom.
2. St. Mark notifies health officials, including Child Care Licensing, Harris County Health Department and the City of Houston Health Department.
3. St. Mark communicates to those classrooms directly exposed to the confirmed positive case.

Quarantine and Return to Campus

A. A student or staff member confirmed/presumed positive cannot return on campus until completion of each of the following:

- 10 day quarantine from time of test
- at least 3 days or more without a fever
- improvement in respiratory symptoms
- one negative test to return or physician's note

Note: The rest of the class is not required to quarantine unless there is evidence of classroom spread. St. Mark Administration will work with individual families through virtual classroom learning should they choose to self-quarantine at any time throughout the school year.

B. If a student or staff member has been in direct close contact* with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, they should follow these steps:

- notify the school nurse
- should not return to school until the end of the 14 day self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure OR until they obtain a negative test result/physician's note clearing the individual for return based on a COVID-19 free diagnosis (test/diagnosis should be made no sooner than 72 hours after direct close contact exposure)

** Direct Close Contact is defined as "within 6ft. & no masks & interacting (laughing, talking, coughing, etc.) & indoors or poorly ventilated area & for longer than 15 minutes - in the 2 days prior to the person being tested or starting symptoms. **

Communication is critical and potentially life-saving during this global pandemic. You must communicate immediately if you have any suspicion of exposure or experience any symptoms of COVID-19 so that St. Mark can effectively notify our community. You can report to: cv19@gostmark.org or cv19@stmarkhouston.org

On Campus Access

In an abundance of caution, the St. Mark campus will be closed to non-essential: visitors, parents, volunteers and activities involving external groups or organizations. Essential meetings will be conducted through virtual appointments or limited face-to-face visits.

Drop Off Procedures

All infant - 8th grade students' drop off location will be at the northeast Hillendahl pond lot (not the church entrance) from 7:00 - 9:00 am. Students will be temperature checked and parents will be asked the previously mentioned COVID-19 screening questions while in the vehicle. Please do not unbuckle your child from their car seat until their temperature has been taken.

If dropping off between 9:00 am - 2:30 pm, please park at the Pech Road school entrance and walk inside the vestibule. Students will be temperature checked and parents will be asked the previously mentioned COVID-19 screening questions while in the vestibule. A staff member will then escort your child to his/her classroom. Please practice proper social distancing in and around the vestibule.

Pick Up Procedures

If picking up between 9:00 am - 2:30 pm, please park at the Pech Road school entrance and walk inside the vestibule. Notify our front desk staff that you are signing out your child(ren) and they will be brought to you. Please practice proper social distancing in and around the vestibule.

Early Childhood and Extended care pickup after 2:30pm will use the Hillendahl Church Entrance. Drivers will pull into designated spots and St. Mark Staff will facilitate bringing children to the vehicle. When your child(ren) are at your vehicle, please get out of the car to buckle them into their car seats.

Elected Virtual Learning

Our world is truly in a unique time, and St. Mark recognizes that families may not be comfortable or able to send their children to school on campus during the COVID-19 pandemic. St. Mark is thankful for your partnership and desires to provide a challenging, quality education for students whether they are on campus or electing to learn virtually.

Each learning environment - on-campus and elected virtual learning - offers different experiences for students to grow spiritually, academically, emotionally and socially. Parents play a key role as facilitator in the elected virtual learning environment. The amount of parental involvement varies based on age and needs of the child.

Elected virtual learning is designed for families who feel uncomfortable sending their child(ren) to school right now or who need to be off campus due to quarantine or long-term illness. It is not intended for students who will be absent a day here or there during the school year.

The goal for elected virtual learning is to allow children at home to engage in activities that are similar with their classmates on campus. Our Early Childhood teachers will provide weekly packets for parents to pick up on Monday mornings as well as a weekly video that will be emailed to you to discuss the theme and activities for the week.

Exceptions or Modifications of School Handbook Policies

In regard to any of the student handbook policies, the school administration reserves the right to make the final decision and will always do its best to make decisions on the basis of what is best for the entire student body.