

Welcome To  
**KINDERGARTEN**



St. Helen Kindergarten Handbook

2023-2024

Dear Parents,

I would like to welcome you and your child to St. Helen's kindergarten program. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of your five- or six-year-old child. Each day we work together to create an environment that encourages your child to learn and grow. The kindergarten program aims to meet your child's intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual needs. As educators in a Catholic School and members of the Catholic Church, we are committed to instilling Christian values in each child.

Although our time with your child is great, I deeply understand that you are still the primary educator. I ask you to openly communicate with me on a regular basis regarding your child's needs and your concerns. Throughout the year, I will communicate with you through a weekly newsletter. The communication between home and school helps to make your child's experiences more positive and enriching. You may contact me teacher at school by leaving a phone message, by email or by sending a note to school. I will do our best to get back to you as soon as possible. Email is easiest but please do what works for you. I hope you will find the attached information helpful as you and your child prepare for the upcoming school year. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kelly Hoffman  
Kindergarten Teacher

## **Mission Statement**

To provide a nurturing environment in which children will grow intellectually, spiritually, physically and socially.

## **Philosophy**

St. Helen kindergarten is a child centered program designed to meet the needs of five and six year old children. The curriculum consists of a balanced literacy program, balanced math program, science and social studies supplemented through a weekly theme and learning through play. The approach to learning is hands on with significant learning time spent in small groups. The children are enriched and challenged in a safe and nurturing environment. As a unique creation of God each child will be applauded for their own talents.

## **Goals**

- 1) It is our goal to provide a rich program which is developmentally appropriate where a child can flourish and grow at their own pace. We recognize that each child will grow intellectually and emotionally in a safe and nurturing environment.
- 2) It is our goal to instill the value of life in each child and to celebrate each day as a gift from God. The child will appreciate that God is their loving friend.
- 3) It is our goal to provide an atmosphere where children will explore and take chances in their learning. This includes making mistakes and trying again.
- 4) It is our goal to provide a variety of experiences throughout the day for each child to become actively involved. These experiences will include indoor and outdoor play, individual and group activities, teacher directed and child initiated activities, and spiritual development.
- 5) It is our goal to teach each child to solve problems with a friend peacefully. We will also help children to learn responsibility for clean up and to instill good health habits.
- 6) It is our goal to help each child develop the virtue of kindness in their relationships with others. To develop an awareness of other's feelings and to develop a concern for others.

### **Adjusting to Kindergarten**

The transition to kindergarten can be a big step depending on your child's previous school experiences. For some of your children this may be the first time your child is in school for a full day. To help make the transition easy, we encourage you to talk about what to expect at school and assure your child that you will be dropping them off and picking them up each day.

I will do my best to make each day a fun learning experience for your child. I will communicate with you if your child seems to be having a hard transition to kindergarten. Please reach out with concerns.

### **Arrival and Departure**

Students are to arrive between 8am- 8:15am. If your child has a sibling, they can arrive earlier (between 7:45-8) with their sibling and come to the room. Kindergarten students can be dropped off at the main school doors.

For dismissal I will bring the children out at 2:40 to the front school doors. If you are sending a relative, nanny, friend etc you must notify the office or send me an email. Even if they are on the list please let me know. My number one priority is your child's well-being and this is so helpful to know that someone other than you will be picking up for the day.

Children staying for aftercare stay inside the classroom and have their afternoon snack with Mrs. Cozzo at dismissal time. It is very important that I have an updated aftercare schedule for those staying. Please email me.

### **Assessment and Conferences**

Each child is assessed both formally and informally throughout the year. A portfolio of work is made and kept for each child and will be given to you at the end of the year. This is a way of documenting your child's progress throughout the year. Children will also be assessed at report card time three times a year. Conferences will be held as well, and the date will be communicated as soon as we have it.

Your child will also begin to participate in the I-Ready program which is a computer-based assessment. They are assessed three times a year with I-Ready and you receive the report. This is a new program that was started a few years ago. It is just one piece of data and when reports are printed, I will share more thoughts and information regarding this.

### **Attire**

Kindergarten students are required to wear the school uniform. For complete uniform information please see the St. Helen Family Handbook. Students should at no time be wearing sweatpants, cargo pants or non-uniform pants. They also need to wear a uniform sweater or St. Helen gym sweatshirt if they are cold. Students should not be wearing everyday sweatshirts during the winter.

Kindergarten students go outside every day, weather permitting. During cold weather your child must have: **boots, a hat, a scarf, snow pants and mittens or gloves. Please**

**mark your child's name on all clothing including uniform sweaters.** A change of clothing is required for all children. This should include a shirt, pants/shorts, underwear, and socks. This should be brought to school in a large Ziploc bag labeled with their name. The extra set of clothing does not have to be a school uniform.

### **Bathroom Accident Information**

If your child has a bathroom accident at school, they will be required to change themselves. I will be in touch if there are any issues. I will make sure they have what they need to clean up but please make sure your child is independent in this area.

### **Child Protection**

Please be aware that all staff members are required by law to report suspected incidents of child abuse. It is not the intent of the school to become involved in individual family matters; however, in some incidents when the physical and emotional safety of any child is suspect, we are bound by law to report the matter to DCFS. Details regarding any individual child's protection are a matter held in the strictest confidence by all adults involved.

### **Classroom Volunteering and donations**

We will be going on a couple of field trips this year and the need for volunteers will be communicated to you. If at any other times we need parent help I will reach out as well. In order to volunteer and chaperone the archdiocese background check must be complete. The office has all of the information regarding this.

From time to time we might need a few extras in kindergarten. I will communicate this to you. We appreciate your generosity but also understand if you cannot donate. Items we need will either be communicated in our newsletters or our Amazon wish list and from time to time through a sign-up genius sign up form (for classroom parties). Our classroom Amazon wish list is posted under the parent portal on the school website.

### **Discipline**

Children are guided and directed toward acceptable behavior. The most important goal of discipline is to help children gain self control and accept their behavior and its consequences. Teachers discipline children to help them learn the consequences of their actions. Children need to assume responsibility for their actions and develop an awareness of the rights of others. I will communicate what we do in kindergarten in the first newsletter, but we work to keep things positive whenever possible.

### **Emergency Information**

Each year parents are required to supply the school office with emergency contact information including insurance and doctor information. Please inform the school office if emergency contact names change throughout the year.

### **Accidents/Illnesses**

Please refer to the *St. Helen Family Handbook*, *St. Helen's Guidelines for Covid Procedures*, and the Archdiocese's Covid protocols for more information if your student shows symptoms related to Covid. **Per the Archdiocese, "individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 or any illness should stay home while sick."**

In the event that a child becomes ill or injured at school, the parent or a person designated by the parent will be asked to come to the school for the child. If a child has an accident or an incident at school, we will notify you by telephone and provide a written report of what happened. A student who has vomited at school or has a temperature must be sent home; the student may return to school after 24 hours if their fever or vomiting has subsided as no other symptoms are present.

Thank you for your patience as guidelines are continuously updated. Please be sure to refer to information regularly sent from the school office.

#### Communicable Disease Control

Rules and regulations regarding communicable disease control shall be enforced as required by the Illinois Department of Public Health. Parents should notify the school if their child has a communicable disease or health concern which would include chicken pox, strep throat, pink eye, and head lice.

#### **Snack & Lunch**

We will have snack time each morning, about 2 hours before lunch. Each child is responsible for bringing their own snack again this year. Our snack policy asks that you send something off the school list. A designated area for leaving their snack will be shown to your child on the first day. The snack should be separate from your child's lunch so they can locate it easily. Your child will also need a water bottle filled with water each day. We will work on new routines from day one ☺

**Please inform us of any special dietary needs prior to our first day. This includes any food allergies.**

Please keep in mind when packing lunches that lunches will not be able to be refrigerated or heated up. Each child should be able to open their own lunch as much as possible. Please practice opening these items with them and send food in easy to open containers.

## Approved Snack List

**Each child needs a water bottle that will come to school filled each day. We will send it home every day to be washed.**

Fresh Veggies / Fruit  
Unsweetened Cereal  
Mini Bagel  
Raisins  
Whole Grain Crackers (i.e. goldfish, Ritz, veggie straws)  
Graham Crackers  
Pretzels  
Granola Bars  
String Cheese  
No Sugar Jell-O or Pudding (please send a spoon)  
Applesauce pouches  
Yogurt

### **Rest time**

Each day the students will have rest time for around 40-45 minutes. We have found this resting period very beneficial to students. You may send a **SMALL** blanket and or pillow for your child to use on their cot. Blankets and pillows will be sent home to be washed every other week. Please do not send a full-size pillow or sleeping bag as we do not have enough room to store this for each child. Items that are too big will be sent back home. We ask that you also make sure your child's reusable bag is sent so we can use it each time we send blankets.

We don't allow stuffed animals in kindergarten during nap. It is a short rest time and we have found that the kids just play with them and distract the other kids. We will have some special stuffed animal days throughout the year, but stuffed animals should not be coming each day.

### **Physical/Immunization Requirements**

A complete physical exam by a licensed physician is required for all children entering kindergarten. A complete dental exam is also required of kindergarten students. It should be reported on forms prescribed by the Illinois Department of Public Health and dated no earlier than six months prior to enrollment. The physical report must include all required immunizations and be up to date. A T.B. test must be included in the exam.

### **Birthday / Party Invitations**

Each student will have a special day to celebrate their birthday. This day will be as close as possible to their actual birthday. Summer birthdays will celebrate their half birthday in December and January. I will do my best to make this day special for your child but must also maintain a classroom

routine. Cupcakes/cakes are not allowed. Instead of mystery readers that some classrooms do, in kindergarten we do birthday readers! On the day we celebrate you are invited to read a story to our class. I will reach out to you a couple of weeks before your child's special day with more information.

Birthday favors or goodie bags are allowed. Please no candy with nuts.

Sincerely,  
Ms. Hoffman