



2024-2025
Family Handbook

5150 North Valley View Road
Tucson, Arizona 85718
(520)577-0503

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This handbook is intended to familiarize families with the current St. Thomas Preschool & Kindergarten (STPK) policies and procedures. An electronic version (PDF) of this handbook can be found on our website and on the Bloomz app. The Director may, at any time, review and revise school policies as deemed appropriate.

Philosophy

STPK promotes lifelong learning founded in Catholic values through a safe, creative, and spiritual learning environment that nurtures the whole child at every stage of development.

We believe early education should be relevant, meaningful, and fun. Early learning is accomplished by providing a safe environment that inspires children's natural curiosity and encourages their exploration of their world through different types of play and structured activities.

Objectives

- To provide children with the experience of God's love every day through celebrations, prayers, bible stories, music, and a sense of community.
- To provide a diverse environment for children to practice the teachings of Jesus by accepting and celebrating differences with respect and compassion.
- To foster independence in children, encouraging them to try new experiences and support them in mastering developmental milestones.
- To encourage parental involvement in our school community through various activities, creating a positive learning experience for both at school and at home.

General Program Information

5150 N. Valley View Road

Tucson, AZ 85718

(520) 577-0503

(520) 577-0441 Fax

Director: Michelle Garmon, (520) 577-0503, sthomaspreschool@gmail.com

Licensing

Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) State Day Care Licensure Division

400 W. Congress, Suite #100

Tucson, Arizona 85701

Phone Number: (520) 628-6540

License Number: CDC-12595

All inspection reports are available for review in the school office. We are licensed for part-time, full-time, and school-age care (serving children aged 2-7).

STPK carries liability insurance in accordance with regulations of the State of Arizona.

Curriculum

Our foundation for the school's curriculum is taken from The Creative Curriculum and Allelu.

The Creative Curriculum is theory and research-based and focuses on interest areas (centers). Teachers will create lesson plans by using the Diocese of Tucson curriculum, Arizona Early Learning Standards, and Arizona Common Core Standards. Children will be introduced to the concept of classroom structure, an important skill that promotes school-readiness. We believe that children learn best when active and engaged. Play is the best way for children to learn and is how skills are practiced and developed. Children will be offered choices each day during center time that may include fine arts, dramatic play, blocks, literacy concepts, science experiments, math concepts, social studies, language arts, and outdoor play.

Allelu is a religion curriculum that is age appropriate. Religion will be conducted several times throughout the school day: learning circles (guided curriculum teaching), prayers, individual prayer intentions, songs, and Community Prayer. Community Prayer gatherings happen on Thursdays in the chapel. Families are always welcome and encouraged to attend and participate.

Assessment

Within the first 90 days of enrollment, families will be asked to screen their child using The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) tool. This screening will help us to identify areas of strength and need in your child's development. It will also be useful in making a referral to a professional if needed. The ASQ is not used to track children's growth over time; therefore, it will not be administered again unless there is a concern about a child's development.

Mandatory Parent/Teacher Conferences

Prior to the first day of school a pre-conference is scheduled to learn about your family and child.

Using the Early Childhood Standards tool all children are assessed in the fall and spring seasons. Parents are provided with copies of these assessments at their mandatory fall/spring conferences. Teacher-parent conferences provide an opportunity for the teacher to share what he or she has learned about your child and for you to share any ideas or goals for your child.

You may request a conference at any time throughout the school year. Please speak with your child's teacher to set up any conferences or meetings.

Classroom Placement

The teaching staff and director will meet to discuss classroom placement and arrangements for the upcoming school year in early July. All children are placed in a classroom for the whole school year when registered in August. Depending on your child's birthday or developmental level of your child, they may spend more than one year with a teacher(s) or in an age group. All classrooms have two or more

teachers. These two teachers are primarily responsible for their group of children throughout the school day.

Gross Motor Development / Physical Activity

STPK is committed to our children's health. We encourage all children to participate in a variety of physical activity opportunities throughout the school day that are age-appropriate, fun, useful, and develop various gross motor skills. In keeping with this philosophy, our program will follow the guidelines below:

- All children over the age of two are provided at least 30 minutes of physical activity as part of our morning program and an additional 30 minutes for children in our afternoon program. It will include teacher-led and free-play activities.
- Teachers will provide children with opportunities to play outside twice daily. Teacher-led activities will be divided into shorter segments, providing opportunities for children to practice fundamental skills.
- Teachers will encourage moderate and vigorous levels of physical activity.
- Every child can participate in outdoor physical activity for at least 20 minutes per day.
- Every child can participate in structured physical activity for at least 15 minutes in the morning and again in the afternoon.
- We encourage children to be active throughout the day and explore their environment by limiting sedentary activities to less than 30 minutes at a time (except during nap time).
- Screen time use is limited to educational and physical activities and up to three (3) hours per week.
- No screen time during meal or snack time is permitted.
- Physical activity is not used as a punishment, and it cannot be withheld from a child for behavioral reasons.

Children are provided with opportunities for physical play and gross motor activities at various times throughout the school day. Our outdoor environment is an extension of classroom learning, and children will be provided with opportunities for both unstructured and structured physical play and learning.

Child Guidance - Discipline

Children are small, tough, exasperating, interesting, and loveable. To be "good" with children, we watch each face and listen to each voice. We observe what each child is like, how each is feeling, how each child plays and moves around. We get to know the weaknesses and strengths of each child and of the group. This is how good discipline begins.

The word "discipline" is derived from the word "disciple," someone who follows the teachings of another. Discipline means learning. It does not mean punishment, tears, or humiliation. It means a

chance to learn how to live in a social world. Discipline isn't something adults impose on children it's something they practice together with them.

We believe that discipline is a positive ongoing process that teaches children how to relate to others effectively. In our effort to work with the children in the pursuit of discipline, STPK uses strategies from Conscious Discipline; teachers/staff are trained and practice these skills to support children in the classroom. Children are encouraged to solve problems that may arise throughout the day. We encourage the use of self-control, redirection, problem-solving, cooperation, and observing the emotions of peers and self. These methods are utilized to teach children how to be responsible and accountable for their own behavior. Occasionally, a child may be redirected to another area of the classroom to help him or her to make a better choice. To build self-esteem, we will explain to the child that the behavior, not the child, is unacceptable.

Excessive occurrences or degrees of inappropriate behavior are reported to the parents. At this time, a parent conference will be scheduled with the teachers and Director, and a behavior modification plan will be set up.

Teachers may utilize a variety of discipline techniques to meet the needs of different situations:

- Let children make some decisions and choices – one good way to teach responsibility is to give the child as much responsibility as possible.
- Give reasons for rules – understanding the reasons for rules makes it easier to remember and follow them.
- Be consistent in our language and behavioral response to children – consistent behavior by adults facilitates development of inner control through modeling.
- Remove children from situations they can't handle – if a child is too young to understand, or there is no way to change the cause, it may be possible to change the situation.
- Redirect children's behavior – often there is a way to let children do something in a better place or safer way.
- Let children learn the consequences of their actions – experience is the best teacher.

Teachers WILL NOT humiliate or demean a child in any form, verbally or physically. Such actions will cause for immediate dismissal. No punitive action toward children will be tolerated including slapping, hitting, and/or spanking. The return of negative behavior, such as biting back, is also not acceptable. Children do not like those moments when they are out of control. They need adults, at those times, to firmly, with gentleness, exert control. Returning negative behavior deepens frustration. Firmly holding and gently verbalizing, calms, and fosters control.

Safety and Emergency Plans of Action

In accordance with the requirements of the Diocese of Tucson, STPK has established a Crisis Response Plan and a corresponding manual that includes procedures, contacts, and child information deemed necessary to utilize in case of any emergency. The staff is frequently trained in these procedures. The

entire school participates in emergency drills, including fire drills, lockdown drills, and evacuation drills. The drills are reviewed by the staff to improve the response time and protocol during any emergency continually. If any parent or visitor is present during a drill, they are expected to comply with the emergency procedure protocol under the direction of the staff.

- Children will never be left alone or unsupervised.
- There will be at least two (2) staff members present during the operation hours.
- Each employee is certified in CPR and Pediatric First Aid bi-yearly.
- Fire evacuation and severe weather plans will be posted in each area used by the children.
- Fire drills will be held once a month and at varying times. A record of drills is kept in the office.
- Lock-down drills will be held periodically.
- In an emergency when evacuation is necessary, the children of STPK will be taken to O'Leary Hall on the north side of the Parish complex by walking.
- Parents will then be called and informed of when to pick up their children.

Safe Conditions Policies

The following steps will be taken to ensure that children are safe while at STPK. Children will be actively supervised with the required number of qualified adults (adults who have completed a comprehensive criminal history check, drug screen and negative TB test and have completed all required training). STPK will not care for children in areas that are being remodeled, repaired, or painted. The director is responsible for maintaining all interior and exterior surfaces, including walls, floors, ceilings, equipment, toys and furnishings, in a safe condition, free of sharp points or jagged edges, splinters, protruding nails or wires, loose parts, rusty parts, or materials containing poisonous substances.

The STPK will take the following steps to maintain the facility:

- Clean the facility daily.
- Keep the facility in a sanitary condition always.
- Sanitize toys, furniture, and other equipment used by children, daily, weekly and when they become soiled or contaminated.
- Wash all soiled items prior to sanitization.

Transportation Safety Policy

STPK (pre-kindergarten aged) may participate in field trips throughout the school year. Parents will be needed for chaperoning, driving, and maintaining children teacher ratios to a manageable level. Chaperones must have Diocesan clearance, defensive driver training, and a Field Trip Driver Agreement on file.

STPK will only allow transportation of a child if we have an AZDHS Permission to Participate **and** parent permission letter both signed by a parent or guardian on file.

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish has insurance that covers transportation of children for our center.

Gate Codes and Campus Security

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish campus has 20+ security cameras for the safety of all parishioners, families, children, and staff. Each parent or legal guardian will be given a gate code to use at pickup and drop off. This gate code is used to open the main campus gate. It is imperative that parents **DO NOT** share their school gate codes. If someone who is not the child's parent or legal guardian picks them up, we ask all families to comply with the following set of rules, if these rules are not abided by the child WILL NOT be released.

- Inform the school of the pickup arrangements, who the person picking up the child will be and at what time they will be picking them up via Bloomz message to the teachers and office.
- Must present a valid form of identification and be 18 years or older.
- Ring the doorbell to be allowed in by the office staff.

Any person on campus who is not a staff member, substitute teacher, subcontracted staff, or volunteer and is not the parent, guardian, or custodian of an enrolled child on campus will be approached and asked what their purpose is.

All children must be signed in and out each school day via the ProCare Software system which is used for attendance tracking and billing. Any individual picking up your child on a regular basis must be registered in the ProCare system.

Child Abuse Protection

In accordance with Arizona State Law, all staff at STPK are MANDATORY REPORTERS and must report suspicion of any form of child abuse. This includes sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect. STPK does not condone, hide, or tolerate any type of child abuse. Our foremost responsibility is to ensure the safety of your child. Sexual misconduct includes a broad range of acts and behaviors that are defined in Section IV of the Diocese of Tucson Guidelines for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct. To protect children, adolescents, and adults from sexual misconduct, the Parish has adopted the Guidelines for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct, and the Summary Statement of the guidelines as promulgated by the Diocese of Tucson, and the Diocese of Tucson Code of Conduct, both of which must be read and adhered to by all employees.

Parent/Guardian Communication

Communication with parents is a crucial part of our program. The teachers, staff, and director will communicate with parents in many different manners: conversations when your child is dropped off and picked up, parent meetings, telephone contact, communication via Bloomz, hard copy notes, parent boards, calendars, and formal conferences. At any time, you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact the Director or teacher. All parent comments and suggestions are valued. Written communication can be translated to a family's home language if needed. Please speak with the Director to arrange.

- Family conferences will take place for all children 3 times per year. Topics discussed will include interests, development, strengths, and areas of individual need.
- Written communication may also be in Bloomz, so please make sure to check it daily.
- Parents may also receive and/or send communication to the director and staff through the communication application Bloomz, which is a free download to a computer and/or phone.
- Special conferences may be requested by the director or child's parents as needed.
- To further foster whole family relationships, parents or guardians of children enrolled at STPK are welcome to visit at any time, by scheduling a time that works best for both the teachers and them.

All information regarding your child, including your child's records, is confidential. This includes all medical information, developmental screenings, and assessment tools. The only people permitted to see your child's records are you, the STPK staff, and state licensing specialists. The information is protected in a locked cabinet when not in use. STPK will ask you to sign a permission slip to release any confidential information to other persons, area schools, or professional organizations.

Tobacco, Alcohol, Firearms and Drugs

STPK prohibits the use of tobacco, alcohol, firearms, and drugs on the premises while children are in our care.

Admission/Enrollment/Termination Policies

Eligibility for Enrollment/Registration

Registration requires the completion of the following paperwork:

- Registration Form
- Complete ADHS Emergency Card with 2 separate Emergency Contacts
- Copy of Immunization Record showing all current vaccinations and/or ADHS Religious Beliefs exempt forms.
- Tuition Express payment options
- Registration Fee (non-refundable)
 - \$325 (for Preschool and Toddler) per child
 - \$350 (Pre-Kindergarten) per child
- Snack Fee of \$250 per academic year
- HUGS Parent Commitment (30 volunteer hours or buy out fee \$550)
- Raise Right Gift Card Fundraising (or buy out fee \$260)
- Additional forms as necessary (Copy of the birth certificate, physical, medical consent, etc.)

When your family is provided with a registration form for enrollment in STPK, you are asked to select the days of the week that your child or children will attend our program. Once registered days are selected

by the family or provided by the school, families may not switch days unless they have approval from the Director. Tuition rates are based on the program and days of attendance.

Drop-in care for registered children may be available when space permits. If you would like your child to attend on an unscheduled day, please contact your child's teacher via Bloomz and include the Director to request availability and approval. The daily drop-in rate is \$30.00. This fee does not include extended care hours. Your school account the drop-in rate will be reflected in your next statement.

Caring for Children with Special Needs

Childcare programs must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. We are committed to meeting the needs of all children, regardless of special health care needs or disabilities.

- Children with special needs will be accepted into our daycare under the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- All families will be treated with dignity and respect for their individual needs and/or differences.
- STPK will be responsible for ensuring that confidentiality about special needs is maintained for all families in the program.
- STPK will ensure all health forms and other important information about the child's individualized needs will be completed by the health care provider and/or other providers.
- Children with special needs will be educated in the least restrictive environment possible. To accomplish this, STP may work in coordination with other agencies and/or health care providers as needed. No contact with outside organizations will be made without written parental consent. Inclusion of staff on IEP (Individualized Education Program) and IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) meetings is desired to ensure the childcare program provides the most supportive and least restrictive environment.
- It is important that parents keep STP apprised of any changes or needs that their child may have regarding their special need.

Waiting List

In cases when enrollment space is unavailable, children will be placed on a waiting list. Enrollment will then take place as space becomes available. Priority will be given to families with currently enrolled children and registered parishioners. If you wish your child to be placed on the waitlist, a waitlist form must be completed, and a \$30.00 waitlist fee must be paid.

Child File

Keep all the information (addresses, phone numbers, work phone numbers, immunizations, emergency phone numbers, etc.) current. If information is requested for the child's file, and is not received, care may be discontinued.

Disenrollment and Withdrawal

STPK reserves the right to terminate childcare for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- Failure to pay invoices as they are due for a maximum of two months

- Failure to complete required forms, as required
- Lack of parental cooperation
- Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property by a child and/or parent that is not corrected by an improvement plan set by the director and the parents.
- Lack of compliance with handbook regulations
- False information given by parent either verbally or in writing
- Disciplinary reasons as outlined previously

STPK also understands that life circumstances may arise that would require families to remove a child from our care. In that instance, we request the following:

- Two weeks advance written notice stating when care will be ending
 - If not given, then the entire next month's tuition will be due
- Payment for the last month of care
 - If care is ended in the middle of a month, payment is due for the whole month

If any family disregards STPK policies or procedures, they may be disenrolled from the school. If your child is absent for one month and tuition has not been paid, your child's enrollment in the program will be terminated. If you wish to have your child reinstated, payment of the registration fee will be required. If your family requests a temporary withdrawal or suspension from the program, they must follow the policy above.

Operational Policies

Hours of Operation

School hours are from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The School Office will be open from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday throughout the school year. Summer hours may vary.

The school day begins promptly at 8:50 am. The first 20 minutes of the school days are filled with educational opportunities.

Tardiness is stressful for your child and disruptive to other children. Children who arrive in class late are often disoriented. Transitions into their school day usually take about fifteen minutes. Children who are late miss circle time or class activities that help them grow and bond with their classmates.

Arriving late gives a child the message that it's okay to be late for school.

If you have an emergency delay and you will be late picking up your child, please call the school before closing time or send the teachers and/or Director a Bloomz message. You must designate two different contact numbers on your blue emergency card for reasons like this and/or if others should not be able to reach you.

Pick up varies by age group. The toddler and pre-school program ends at 12:00 p.m. The pre-kindergarten program ends at 2:00 pm. Anytime the child is left in our care after the program ends is when the extended care rates apply. Extended care is held before school from 7:30 a.m. to 8:50 a.m. As well as after school, for toddlers and pre-school from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and for pre-kindergarten from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

If you are later than 5:00 p.m. (or 12:00 p.m. on early release days), the following fees will apply:

- 5 minutes: \$15.00
- 6-15 minutes late \$30.00
- 16-25 minutes late: \$45.00
- ** Each additional 10 minutes \$15.00 **

Extended care hours used will be billed at the rate of \$6.00 per hour and are pro-rated. Each child, each school day receives a 10-minute grace period window on extended care billing. This window can be reflected at the sign in time or the sign out time. (Example: If a toddler child is clocked in at 8:50 a.m. and clocked out at 12:50 p.m., extended care billing would be a total of 40 minutes because the 10-minute grace period is forfeited.)

Extended care is billed at the end of each week. Family accounts will reflect charged amounts weekly. Extended care balances are due at the end of each month and will be reflected on family month tuition reminder bill.

** At the end of each month, the director will email each family a monthly statement, including all fees from the prior month.

STPK does not provide transportation. Parents/guardians are responsible for dropping off and picking up their children.

The school follows an academic school calendar and will be closed for monthly half days, holy day observations, and vacation days. A yearly calendar will be available outlining these specific days.

If your child is absent on a day when he/she is scheduled to attend, please notify the school via phone (520) 577-0503 or send a Bloomz message to the teacher and office.

If your child is absent due to illness, the school needs to know the nature of the illness to record with ADHS. The School Office opens by 8:30 am, but a message can be left prior to school hours on the answering machine or on Bloomz.

Please do not bring your child in on days that they are not scheduled. There will be a drop-in charge for additional or alternate days.

In the event of family vacation, prolonged illness, or other extended absences, space in class for your child can be reserved only if tuition is paid continuously.

Emergency Policies

Bad Weather

STPK will make every effort to be open in bad weather. We will close when Pima County declares a Level 2 Orange “Watch” or when it is otherwise deemed necessary (i.e. extremely low student numbers, power outage, and/or for the safety of staff and families). A decision to close is a difficult one to make and there are occasions when the facility will be open during a Level 2 Orange “Watch” if the director feels the roads are safe enough for travel. Parents will be notified through Bloomz.

The STPK program may be forced to close temporarily due to a public health emergency or a public pandemic. This may happen because we are forced to shut down by a government agency or because we believe it is in the best interest of our families, teachers, or staff to do so.

If this happens, families will have the following expectations regarding tuition: pay tuition in full during the closure. Our program will commit to providing an educational curriculum to families during the closure.

Reporting Children’s Absences

STPK staff plan the day based upon the number of children expected. We ask that parents notify the teachers and staff via Bloomz as early as possible if their child is going to be absent, late, or if they plan to pick up their child unusually early.

Payment and Fee Schedule

Tuition is billed based on the choice made on the registration form. The choices are either annually, quarterly, or monthly. Monthly tuition is billed at the start of each month, beginning in August, going through May.

The tuition payment for August is non-refundable.

Payments do not change in months when there are school holidays, vacations, or in-services. A late charge of \$25.00 will be added to the tuition for the current month unless paid by the first five working days of the month.

Failure to pay tuition in a timely manner will result in dis-enrollment. You will be given one written warning for this action. Please communicate with the director about any concerns or late payments to avoid late fees.

All families have the following options for paying tuition:

- Tuition Express: Direct Debit and ACH transactions
- Tuition Express: Credit card processing will be assessed as a 4% PER TRANSACTION fee
- Cash or personal check payments are also available upon request

This information is provided to all families at registration.

Medical Policies

Immunizations and Physical Exam

- Every child must be current on immunizations or ADHS religious exemption form and verification of a physical exam (well child check-up) at the time of their registration.
- Without this documentation, your child may not attend.
- If your child receives new immunizations and/or has an updated physical, please update the record on file in the office.
- Immunization exemptions for medical or religious reasons must have proper documentation on file to be approved by state consultants.

Medication

Medications, both prescription and over the counter, are rarely given at school; the only exceptions involve special or serious problems where it is deemed necessary by the physician that the medication be given during school hours. The parent is urged, with the help of your child's physician, to work out a schedule of giving medication at home, outside school hours whenever possible.

IF MEDICATION IS TO BE ADMINISTERED AT SCHOOL, ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS MUST BE MET:

1. A signed request from a licensed physician/dentist specifying the condition for which the medication is to be given, the name, dosage, route, side effect, and specific instructions for emergency treatment must be on file at school. School staff is not authorized to determine when an "as needed" medication is to be given.
2. Specific instructions must be provided.
3. A signed request from the parent/guardian must be on file at school.
4. Medication must be in your child's original, labeled pharmacy container written in English.
5. All liquid medication must be accompanied by an appropriate measuring device.
6. A separate form is required for each medication.

Medications must be stored in a locked box (refrigerated medications) or in a high cabinet (non-refrigerated medications) while in use at STP. The Medication Authorization Form must always remain with the medication. Unused medications must be immediately returned to the family and will not be stored at STP.

Communicable Diseases

- Staff members are trained in the signs and symptoms of illnesses and in proper hand washing procedures to prevent the spread of communicable disease.

STPK reserves the right to temporarily deny any child admittance to school for reasons of obvious illness or to request early departure should symptoms become apparent during the day. Any child who seems unable to participate in our program for any reason will be sent home. This is to ensure the continued good health of everyone at the school. We realize that most of you are working parents, and we do try to accommodate you as much as possible. However, it is vital to maintain a strict wellness policy for the health and well-being of the children in our care and our staff. We ask parents to assist by keeping sick children at home. We do take into consideration your physician's recommendations; nevertheless, it is up to our discretion when your child may return to school.

When a child may not attend school:

Fever: Children will be sent home if their temperature is 100.4 or higher and must stay home the next day for observation. Children must be free of fever for at least 72 hours without using fever reducing medication. The same policy applies if your child develops a fever at home. They must be fever free for at least 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.

Rash: Any rash other than a common diaper rash or skin irritation will require that child to be sent home for an evaluation and diagnosis from their doctor in writing of exactly what it is. They may return to school based on that written doctor's evaluation, and clearance that it is not contagious.

Conjunctivitis (pink eye): Children will be sent home if there appears to be an unusual amount of discharge from or irritation to their eye(s) and must stay home the next day for observation. Before returning to school, they will need an evaluation and diagnosis from their doctor in writing exactly what it is.

If the diagnosis is BACTERIAL CONJUNCTIVITIS, child must have received at least 24 hours of treatment.

If the diagnosis is VIRAL CONJUNCTIVITIS, your child may return AS LONG AS THERE IS NO DISCHARGE.

If in fact they do not have "pink eye" we need a doctor's note with a diagnosis and a clearance that it is not contagious.

Thick White, Green or Yellow Discharge: Children will be sent home if they appear to have any thick white, green, or yellow discharge. This is often indicative of an infection, and they must stay home the next day for observation. Before returning to school, they will need a written evaluation and diagnosis from their doctor and at least 24 hours of treatment. If in fact they do not have an infection, we need a doctor's note with a diagnosis of exactly what it is with a clearance that it is nothing contagious. The

Department of Health and most doctors are of the opinion that once on antibiotics for 24 hours, the discharge is no longer contagious even though it may persist for up to two weeks.

Diarrhea: Children will be sent home if they have two or more loose bowel movements in one day and must stay home the next day for observation. Before returning to school (after the day of observation), children must be free from diarrhea for 24 hours with at least 1 regular bowel movement. If your child has one or more loose bowel movements on their first day back, they will be sent home again.

Vomiting: Children will be sent home if they vomit and must stay home the next day for observation. Before returning to school (after the day of observation), children must be symptom-free with no vomiting for at least 24 hours.

Persistent Hacking Cough: Children will be sent home if they have a persistent hacking cough and must stay home the next day for observation. Before returning to school, they will need a written evaluation and diagnosis from their doctor and at least 24 hours of treatment. If in fact they do not require any treatment, we need a doctor's note with a diagnosis of exactly what it is with a clearance that it is not contagious.

Lice: Head lice does not infest classrooms or homes. They are blood-feeding insects; they do not survive for very long (24-48 hrs) when separated from the warm human body environment. Children with head lice will be sent home from school immediately. Parents will be notified, and the child must have a lice treatment prior to returning to the school. Parents are required to have direct conversations with the Director regarding the situation; this will ensure privacy of the child. The school will take precautions to stop the spread of head lice if it arises (deep cleaning, washing dress-up clothing, sanitizing, etc.).

Common Cold: Children with a common cold will be assessed individually.

Factors to consider include your child's developmental level, which is congruent with our ability to limit the spread of germs.

The younger your child, the more difficult it is to keep the spread of germs down. For example: hand to face contact, mouthing of toys, uncontrolled nasal discharge, uncovered sneezing and coughing etc.

A child who becomes ill while at STPK must be removed from the classroom to limit exposure of other children to communicable diseases. An ill child will be sent to the office to wait for his or her parents to arrive.

STPK reserves the right to make the final determination of exclusion due to illness. Any exceptions to our illness policy will require a written note from a licensed healthcare professional stating that the child is not contagious.

Accidents

- Parents/guardians will be notified of accidents as soon as possible.

- The staff member who has observed the accident will fill out the accident report. A copy will be kept for the files and a copy given to the parents/guardians.
- In non-life-threatening instances, the staff will provide on-site first aid.
- If the child requires medical attention, the parent will be called, informed of the injury, and asked to pick up the child.
- Parents are asked to report any instances of the child being treated by a physician, clinic or hospital. Any injury treated at a medical facility must be reported to Arizona. Parents will receive a copy of the accident report that is mailed to the state.
- If the injury requires immediate medical attention, 911 will be called.

Documentation of Incidents

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The younger your child, the more difficult it is to keep the spread of germs down. For example: hand to face contact, mouthing of toys, uncontrolled nasal discharge, uncovered sneezing and coughing etc.

A child who becomes ill while at STP must be removed from the classroom to limit exposure of other children to communicable diseases. An ill child will be sent to the office to wait for his or her parent to arrive.

STPK reserves the right to make the final determination of exclusion due to illness. Any exceptions to our illness policy will require a written note from a licensed healthcare professional stating that the child is not contagious.

Documentation of Special Health Care Needs

An Emergency Care Plan will be on file for any child or staff member with special health care needs (seizures, diabetes, asthma, etc.). A copy of the Emergency Care Plan must be kept in the classroom emergency binder. All staff working in the classroom must familiarize themselves with this plan, should an emergency arise. If necessary, staff will receive training regarding a child's or staff member's specific healthcare needs.

These should be listed on the second page of ADHS Emergency Form.

Parental Responsibilities

Meals and Snacks

Parents are responsible for paying an annual fee for snacks along with the tuition for August t Our school will use a cycle menu of three weeks or longer. Menu items will include food from a variety of cultures and daily snacks from 2 food groups, served with water or milk (skim or 1%).

Children are asked to bring a re-usable water bottle for thirst. Water will be used as the first choice for thirst and will be offered throughout the day. Fruit juice will not be served at snack times or throughout the school day.

Lunch is every day around 12:00 p.m. in your child's classroom. If your child is staying for lunch, please provide healthy lunch items stored in a lunch box with an icepack inside the child's school tote.

The teaching staff may not heat up lunch food items.

Please label your child's lunch box. Children will place lunch boxes back into their school bags. They will be asked to put all uneaten food back into their lunch boxes, which will allow you to see what your child has eaten for lunch.

If your child does not have lunch, you will be contacted to bring one as soon as possible. If the school provides lunch, a \$10.00 fee will be charged to your account.

Mealtime

- Teachers will participate, sit, and interact with children at mealtimes.
- Encouraging words are used and negative facial expressions, body language or verbal cues are avoided regarding the food being served.
- Teachers will talk to the children about the food and encourage children to discuss the food texture, taste, color, shape, size, quantity, number, etc.
- Teachers will not use food as a reward or punishment
- Teachers will be prepared for spills and accidents (keeping extra utensils, paper towels and soapy water nearby).

We are committed to creating a pleasant mealtime for all children and teachers. Mealtimes provide opportunities for teachers and children to support social skills, interactions with peers, good eating habits, and conversations.

Food and Other Allergies

If a child enrolls with a diagnosed nut allergy at any time, the nut allergy policy will change and become effective immediately.

Please be sure to clearly communicate any other food or substance allergy in your child's Emergency Contact form so that a substitution or accommodation can be made. In addition, each child with a food allergy must have a Food Allergy Action Plan, Asthma Action Plan, and/or Allergy Action Plan completed prior to the child's first day of school. Allergy Action Plan documents are available in the office. The document must be completed by your child's physician and reviewed with the office staff.

Birthdays and Special Events

STPK acknowledges that children's birthdays should be recognized with their classmates. Here is what you can expect from the program and guidelines of what families can provide to celebrate this special day.

- The office will provide each child with an assigned date on or near your child's birthday. The date selected is based on the closest to the actual birthday, other children in a classroom with the same birthday: families should plan to celebrate their child at school on this date.
- Families may bring mini muffins, fruit, ice cream, frozen fruit bars, cake, or cupcakes to share with the other children and teachers in the classroom. Due to food allergies, these treats must be store-bought. Birthday plates, napkins, tablecloths, and candles can be provided.
- NO goodies bags, balloons, or take homes for children.
- The child may free dress on their birthday and receive a birthday mail and sticker from the office. If a change of date is needed this is arranged with the Director.
Communicate with your child's teachers about the time of celebration (each teacher celebrates at different times)
- STPK asks that you do NOT place birthday invitations in cubbies or hand them out at school unless the entire class is invited. We are happy to provide you with a school directory so Invitations can be mailed or emailed to families, and families can also be invited directly via Bloomz.

Sun Safety

Please apply sunscreen to your child prior to sending him or her to school. If you would like us to reapply sunscreen throughout the day, please bring a labeled bottle of screen with your child's first and last name. It must be stored with the office staff, and a parent must sign a permission slip to apply.

Children are encouraged to bring a hat with a brim that they can keep at school, labeled with his or her first and last name. Sunglasses that provide UV protection are welcome but must be shatter proof.

Insect Repellant

If you would like the staff to apply insect repellent throughout the day, please bring a labeled bottle with your child's first and last name. It must be stored with the teachers, and parents must sign a permission slip to apply.

Pesticide Application

St. Thomas the Apostle is exterminated monthly or as needed. Notification of application will occur within 48 hours before application. The following information will be posted:

- Brand, concentration, rate of application, and any restrictions
- Date and time of application
- Pesticides safety data sheet
- Name and phone number of the exterminating business
- Name of licensed applicator

Naps/Rest Period

A rest or nap is required by state regulations for all children staying for more than 8 hours.

Our program also requires toddler aged children to rest or nap. Nap time is from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Children not staying for nap need to be picked up promptly at 12:30 p.m. After this time, it is disruptive to the children's nap time transition. Teachers and staff have the right to ask families to return at 2:00 p.m. at the end of nap time.

Nap time is required for toddlers and for any preschool child staying until 4 p.m.

Some children are developmentally past the need for a nap. After 30 minutes of quiet rest time, children are allowed to get up and participate in quiet activities.

Each child who takes a nap will need to bring: a small pillow, a small blanket, and a fitted crib size sheet that will fit in the labeled STPK bag that will be provided by the school. A child may bring a stuffed animal or soft toy that he or she normally takes to bed.

Please bring these items marked with the child's name, even if your child stays only occasionally for the afternoon. The bedding needs to be taken home at the end of each week to be washed and returned to school on Monday.

Dress Code

School Uniforms

Children are required to wear an STPK shirt. This uniform shirt must be worn to school every day unless special dress days are scheduled. Order windows will be available for parents to purchase several times throughout the school year.

If your child arrives at school without a uniform shirt, a parent will be called to bring one and/or we will provide your child a used uniform shirt and \$10.00 charge to your account for the shirt.

Families are responsible for the fees and cleaning of the uniform shirts.

Uniform shirts may be recycled and will be re-sold for a small fee. Please bring your used shirts to the office and ask about our current stock of recycled shirts.

Children can wear any bottoms they wish (shorts, pants, skirts). If girls wear skirts, they must wear bike shorts or bloomers underneath. Children love to run, jump, climb, and turn upside down. In addition, they are involved in painting, digging, water play, and sand daily.

Uniform shirts are only to be purchased through our vendor, seeing as our logo is copyrighted and may not be used without our authorization.

We have smocks available, but children are not required to wear them. Even though we use washable and fabric-friendly products, your child's clothes may be soiled or even stained. When the weather turns cool, warm clothing is also needed, especially for early morning temperatures on the playground.

Shoes

Shoes must be worn at all times. Tennis shoes are best, but a strap sandal or buckle shoe with a rubber or composite sole that grips is acceptable. Crocs are acceptable and encouraged. We ask that your child not wear party shoes or flip-flops. Shoes with slippery soles are not permitted.

Your child's activities could be limited if improper shoes are worn. If we observe that your child's shoes limit their play, we will ask that your child not wear the shoe to school.

Toys & Electronic Devices

- STP is well stocked with a variety of toys and materials for the children to play with.
- Personal toys are often the cause of arguments among children.
- No toys shall be brought to STP from home except when permission is given from their teacher (i.e. show and tell) or as a security item for napping.
- If your child brings a toy, they will be asked to put it in their backpack until time for show and tell or the end of the day.
- Electronic devices (phones, gaming systems, tablets, laptops) are not allowed.

Lost and Found

- Items often get misplaced or put in the wrong backpack. Please put your child's name on items that the child may remove (coats, sweatshirts, gloves, hats, etc.).
- Check with your child's teacher if an item comes up missing.
- STP is not responsible for items that the child has misplaced.
- A plastic "lost and found" bin is in the office where parents can go and check for missing items as well.

Items that are not claimed will be donated at the end of each semester.

Toddler Policies

Diapering: Please provide commercially available disposable diapers/pull ups, wipes, and ointment, if your child requires it. Diapers are checked often throughout the day, at least every two hours and after naptime. When children are placed on the changing station, a staff member's hand will be on them at all times. The changing area is cleaned and sanitized after each child's diaper is changed. Teachers and staff will wash their hands after each diaper change, as do the children (it's a good habit to begin!). Please ask if you have any questions. We ask that your child not arrive at school in a soiled diaper and that you check before entering the classroom.

Potty Training: The toddler teachers are happy to help with your child's transition from diapers to the potty. If we see your child become interested in potty training during their school experience, we will highly recommend that we begin the process.

We have implemented a policy for this transition; due to the amount of time it takes to clean up from a potty accident, that children must continue to wear pull-ups or diapers to school until they have used the potty successfully (pee and poop) for one full week at home and at school (excluding nighttime). We are happy to take your child to the bathroom every two hours, and we will remind him or her to go throughout the day.

We want to do everything we possibly can to assist in this process. This is an exciting time for you and your children because they are becoming more independent and learning how to make their own way in the big world. We understand that accidents happen and are to be expected. For the first month of wearing underwear, please send pull-ups and wipes to school for your child because we may need to use them if they have two consecutive accidents in a day.

We ask that families provide pull-ups that have Velcro sides (Huggies, NOT Pampers). Please keep three full changes of clothes in your child's school bag during this period. If you are experiencing any potty-training issues, please hang in there. All children need to be completely potty trained before transitioning to their new classroom.

Feeding: Toddlers will be drinking from small cups, using forks and spoons, and practicing hand washing and manners. We ask that sippy cups remain at home.

Bottles/Sippy Cups: Bottles and sippy cups are not allowed on campus and will not be given to your child during the school day.

Water Bottles: We ask that each toddler bring a reusable water bottle to school every day. The school has water fountains and self-serve water containers, but these are not always easy for little hands to manipulate. A reusable water bottle will ensure your child gets enough water throughout their school

day. Please take the water bottle home at the end of each day and return to school each day with the bottle cleaned and refilled.

**** Please do not fill your child's water bottle with milk or juice, ONLY WATER. ****

Pacifiers: We understand that every child is different. If your child is still using a pacifier, we will help with your child's transition. We will allow pacifiers ONLY during nap time. It must be left your child's cubby. We will keep you updated on the progress, and hopefully together we can help make this transition as smooth as possible.

Biting: One of our primary goals is to provide a safe and loving environment for all children. When a biting incident occurs, there are many upset feelings. When it does occur we take it very seriously and try to find the reason why the child is biting and try to extinguish the behavior as quickly as possible. Assisting in developing positive social skills and providing appropriate use of language is important when navigating social experiences. That being said, biting is not uncommon. It causes more upset feelings than any other behavior in group settings with young children. Parents of the child who was bitten, parents of the child biting, and their teachers all want the behavior to end as quickly as possible. As we know, young children anywhere from 1-3 years of age learn through oral manipulation, which sometimes involves people.

Parental Responsibilities

Parents are invited to participate in our program as they are able. Please plan to attend all of the planned activities throughout the school year. These gatherings are not mandatory, but they are wonderful opportunities to meet your child's friends and their families.

- All parents will be treated with respect, and concerns/issues will be discussed confidentially.
- Individual family culture will be respected. You are invited to share your family cultural traditions with the school community.
- Parent volunteers (HUGS) are essential to our program's success. Families are required to volunteer 30 hours per school year or pay the opt-out fee of \$550. Many opportunities are available for you to select from. (See HUGS handbook)
- Parents are responsible for reading information about the school and our programs, checking the parent boards daily, and using Bloomz communication and other forms of communication.
- Share information about your child with staff members.
- Pay tuition fees using tuition processing options.
- Call or Bloomz message the school and/or teacher when their child will be absent.
- Parents and extended families are invited to visit the school at any time. Communicate with Director and/or teacher with any special requests.
- Sign their child in and out each school day in the ProCare system.
- Attend Teacher Parent Conferences to understand child's development and progress (pre-conference in August or prior to start date, fall conference in October, spring conference in March).

- Update all emergency contact information and immunization records in a timely manner.

Staff Responsibilities

The staff at STPK will offer a safe, relaxed, and casual setting for your child's learning experiences.

- Follow the standards represented in the policies of this handbook.
- Follow the Diocese of Tucson curriculum, Arizona Infant Toddler Standards, and Arizona Early Learning Standards.
- Listen to any questions, comments, or concerns that you may have, and set up confidential meetings upon request. Meetings can be scheduled with teachers privately through Bloomz.
- Share information with families about difficulties and successes.
- Inform you of any illness or accident.
- Provide weekly updates, announcements, and calendars to inform you of classroom themes and events.
- Provide families with ongoing developmental assessment progress.
- Provide families three opportunities throughout the school year for teacher/parents conferences to discuss your child's development (pre-conference in August or prior to start date, fall conference in October, spring conference in March)
- Staff participates in a minimum of 20 hours of continuing education for professional Development.

Teacher / Staff Professionalism

STPK takes great pride in our staff and teacher's professional conduct. We recognize and support the school unique Catholic Mission by speaking, acting, and instructing in a way that is consistent with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Staff and teachers follow conduct in faith and academic excellence; they are background checked using the Diocese of Tucson Call to Protect" and the State of Arizona Department of Health Services requirements.

St. Thomas the Apostle does not support or sanction the practice of families engaging the services of any St. Thomas the Apostle employees or extended family members for babysitting, house sitting, pet sitting, etc. If this situation arises, St. Thomas the Apostle does not, in any way, warranty or guarantee the suitability of the Teacher/Staff for this purpose. The Teacher/Staff member is considered an employee of the family and not an employee of St. Thomas the Apostle. Teachers/Staff are subject to termination if they do not follow the policies of professionalism and the child may be disenrolled.

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish Involvement

On occasion, you will receive information about parish in your child's Bloomz profile. This will keep you informed of the parish's activities. Please accept our warm welcome to attend any service or program. The parish also has pastoral staff to serve you. Everyone is welcome.

As part of the ministry of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, community prayer in the chapel is conducted for children in our program. The Allelu Program is also used in conjuncture with other methods to provide a well-rounded foundation for our children.