



# ST. RITA PRESCHOOL

## Parent Handbook

2024-25

“Encourage one another and build one another up”



*This school is accredited by the Virginia Catholic Education Association whose accreditation process has been approved by the Virginia Council for Private Education as authorized by the Virginia State Board of Education.*

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## **I. PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION/MISSION STATEMENT**

### ***DIOCESAN PHILOSOPHY OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION***

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...  
Teaching them to carry out everything I have commanded you.*

*Matthew 28:19-20*

These words of Christ addressed to the apostles at the Ascension bestowed on the Church the office of teacher. Obedient to this divine challenge, the Church provides education permeated with the spirit of Christ and dedicated to promoting the full development of the human person.<sup>1</sup> The two-fold goal of Catholic schools is to provide an environment which will foster rich religious training as well as solid academic education in a Catholic, value-oriented manner.

<sup>1</sup> Declaration on Christian Education #3

### ***DIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT***

The Catholic schools in the Diocese of Arlington are an essential component in the educational ministry of the Church. Our schools are committed to providing an education rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ where Catholic doctrine and values and academic excellence prepare each student for a life of faith, service, and integrity.

### ***SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT/PHILOSOPHY***

#### Mission Statement

Saint Rita School believes that “the soul of education is the education of the soul” (Pope Pius XI). We are a small Catholic school in the classical tradition, dedicated to forming children intellectually and spiritually following the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. We treasure faith in Jesus Christ and are dedicated to serving His people.

#### Vision

In order to be an exemplary Catholic school, Saint Rita School will be:

- A place where students, teachers, staff and school families work together toward the ultimate goal of human existence - knowing, loving and serving God in this world, so as to live with Him forever in the next.
- A place where school parents actively participate in the education of their children, especially in their religious education.

- A place where catholic school families provide a model of home living by praying and attending Sunday Mass together, and by participating in the sacramental life of the Church.
- A place where students and families of all faith backgrounds are welcome to share the blessings of a Catholic school.
- 
- A place where teachers witness to the Faith by their words and deeds and through prayer and example promote the ongoing formation and spiritual growth of their students.
- A place where students grow in the love of learning.
- A place where students experience a challenging curriculum and are given the tools needed for academic success.
- A place where students are exposed to the great words of sacred and secular art, so as to appreciate the role of beauty in faith and education.
- A place where instruction in music, foreign language, technology and physical education provides a well-rounded educational experience.
- 
- A place where students are prepared for a life of sanctity and service in an ever-changing world.

### Philosophy

The Sisters of Saint Joseph opened Saint Rita School in 1952. Their mission is to: “live and work so that all people may be united with God and one another.” S.S.J. Constitution. The Saint Rita School philosophy is built on the charism of the Sisters of Saint Joseph: a mission of social outreach, academic excellence, and hospitality, which enhance our Catholic identity.

Saint Rita School provides an environment that allows our families and the entire community to become close to God. We encourage virtue, character, and habits of mind essential for growth. Our school community recognizes the face of Christ in every child, and celebrates their diversity. We embrace the mission to give our students the necessary foundation for success in this life and the next.

Our philosophy of learning calls us to be models of our Catholic Faith. We provide a traditional and challenging curriculum with differentiated instruction, fine arts, and technology. We impart a strong Catholic Faith in partnership with our students’ parents.

## ***THE CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD***

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is an approach to the religious formation of children that is based on the conviction that God and the Child are in relationship. Our role as adults is to protect and nurture this bond. In the Catechesis we present age-appropriate themes from the Bible and our liturgy with manipulative materials the children use to internalize and ponder the great mysteries of our faith.

Developed by Sofia Cavalletti, an Italian Hebrew scripture scholar, building on the work and methods of Maria Montessori, the Catechesis seeks to give children the guidance and vocabulary which enable them to become aware of their relationship with God and give expression to it. With the Catechesis we help each child to continue to fall in love with God while building community among peers.

### **Developmentally Structured**

Each level of the child's work explores the fundamental theme of covenant, God's call and our response, as reflected in the Bible and as lived in liturgy. At Level I the 3-6 year-olds have the capacity to receive and enjoy the most essential elements of our faith: the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, the announcement of God's love given for us in the person of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

All students at Saint Rita Catholic Preschool will be instructed in the Faith using the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in the specially prepared room for this instruction, the Good Shepherd Atrium.



## ***STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK***

Each school shall utilize the Office of Catholic Schools (OCS) template to develop and distribute a handbook for students and parents/guardians. All local policies and procedures must be in conformity with the Office of Catholic Schools' policies, guidelines and regulations.

A committee, representative of the total school community, shall be involved in the development and periodic revision of this handbook. The handbook shall be updated annually to reflect policy and procedural changes. Principals shall establish a process for review and revision of local school



policy to ensure changes reflect the input of key stakeholders. All parents, along with students in middle and high school, are required to provide a signature of receipt acknowledging they have read the rules and regulations outlined in the handbook, and they agree to abide by those rules (Appendix AG-3). An acknowledgment form will be provided to students upon receipt of the handbook. The form must be signed and returned by Friday of the first full week of school. Failure to have a signed form on file will not prevent the school from enforcing its policies and/or prevent a student from enrolling or continuing to be enrolled at the school.

Faculty and staff members shall be given access to all school handbooks.

In light of the unique situations which may arise in the educational process, and because it is impossible to foresee all school issues that arise, the faculty and administration reserve the right to address and to take appropriate action for any such situations not specifically referenced in this handbook. In addition, in view of the unique and essential religious mission of the school, it is expressly understood that the school may take action in cases where moral offenses occur which reflect adversely on the school, the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, or the Roman Catholic Church, or which interfere with the ability of the school to perform its religious mission or effectively maintain the intimate working relationship of the school and the Community of Faith.

This handbook may be modified by the school after reasonable notice to the parents/students of the effective date of any changes. Any section headings are for convenience of use and shall not affect the interpretation of any provisions. If the school should elect not to take action in a particular situation, this shall not be construed or interpreted as a waiver or preclude the school from acting in a subsequent situation of the same or similar kind.

Handbooks and all subsequent changes are subject to prior written approval by the Diocese. To the extent any local handbook or policy statement therein may be inconsistent with the policies, guidelines, or regulations of the Office of Catholic Schools, the Office of Catholic Schools' policies, guidelines, or regulations shall be of controlling force and effect.

## ***PARENTAL/GUARDIAN ROLE***

In this handbook, the term “parent” refers not only to a child’s natural or adopted parent, but to a student’s non-parent legal guardian or to any person or agency authorized to act in place of parents.

Since parents/guardians have given their children life, the Catholic Church recognizes parents as the primary and principal educators of their children. The Catholic parents’ promise at baptism to raise their children Catholic supports this premise. The Catholic school exists to assist parents in the Christian formation of their children. Since the school is a continuation of the education children are receiving at home, diocesan schools should demonstrate respect and support for the parents in their important and challenging task.

As foundation for a faith-community, parents are invited and encouraged to participate in the school's celebration of prayer and liturgy.

Parents are encouraged to participate in the programs which are developed for the education of their children. The wide spectrum of this involvement includes volunteer work, participation in parent-teacher conferences, attendance at meetings and seminars designed to help parents assist their children at home, and active involvement in the school's Parent-Teacher Organization.

Parents are expected to support the school's mission and commitment to Christian principles and support the school policies as outlined in school handbooks (i.e., annually sign the school's Handbook Agreement Form). One of the conditions for initial and continued enrollment at the school is receipt of this signed form indicating the parent's support of the school's philosophy, policies, and regulations.

If a parent repeatedly or seriously violates proper school protocol, displays inappropriate or disruptive conduct toward students, or displays disrespectful, disruptive or harassing behavior toward teachers or toward school, parish, or diocesan staff (in verbal, written, or digital form), the school may take corrective action. Such corrective action may include, at the discretion of the principal (and, for parish schools, the pastor of the parish) the following: imposition of particular rules or procedures the parent must follow in interacting with the school and its students and staff; restriction or termination of the parent's access to school or parish property; dismissal of the parent's child(ren).

The school may impose other appropriate corrective action, without prior recourse, based upon the nature of the parent's conduct and the surrounding circumstances.

## ***SEXUAL IDENTITY POLICY***

The Diocese of Arlington is committed to providing a safe environment that allows students to develop and prosper academically, physically and spiritually, consistent with Catholic teachings and principles affirming that the body reveals each person as male or female and that the harmonious integration of a person's sexual identity with his or her sex is an expression of the inner unity and reality of the human person made body and soul by God and in the image and likeness of God. In fulfillment of these religious truths, our Catholic educational environment shall reflect a relation to persons (including name and pronoun usage, uniforms, access to facilities and overnight accommodations, and eligibility for single-sex curricular and extracurricular activities) that is respectful of and consistent with each person's God-given sexual identity.

Recognizing that each person is created in the image and likeness of God ensures that dignity is safeguarded, and safe environments are fostered. When parents send their children to Catholic schools and when persons choose careers in Catholic education, they should expect an environment consistent with the truth that God-created sexual identity speaks to His vision for each person's relationship to Him, oneself and others. Behavior and expressions of a person's

sexual identity within the school environment that are inconsistent with these principles and/or which cause disruption or confusion regarding Catholic teachings on human sexuality are prohibited. The full cooperation with this policy of school officials, faculty, parents and students is required and a condition precedent to the continued enrollment of each student and the continued employment of each employee, and the enforcement of this policy by the school is deemed a spiritual mandate.

## ***NON-DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE***

Catholic Schools, administered under the authority of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, comply with those constitutional and statutory provisions, as may be specifically applicable to the schools, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, marital status, disability, national origin, or citizenship in the administration of their educational, personnel, admissions, financial aid, athletic, and other school-administered programs.

This policy does not preclude the existence of single sex schools, nor does it conflict with the priority given to Catholics for admission as students. This policy also does not preclude the ability of the school to undertake and/or enforce appropriate actions with respect to students who advocate on school property or at school functions, any practices or doctrines which are inconsistent with the religious tenets of the Catholic faith.

## ***NON-CATHOLIC CHILDREN***

The presence of students from other faiths provides a wonderful diversity to the school. However, the presence of non-Catholic students in the school shall not alter the primacy of Catholic religious formation as an integral component of the school's educational program. As such:

- a. Non-Catholic students are expected to participate in the religious formation and education programs of the school.
- b. Non-Catholic students must participate in liturgies (except for reception of the Eucharist), retreats, other religious functions, and religion classes for credit.
- c. Non-Catholic students may be exempt from formal co-curricular or extra-curricular sacramental preparation programs but not from the catechesis held during the school day.
- d. All students are expected, for testing and discussion purposes, to be knowledgeable of the Catholic Church's positions on scripture, revelation, and moral practices. While Catholic teaching respects the various faith traditions of the students attending the Catholic school, parents/guardians must be aware that it is the Catholic position that will be taught.

## **II. CURRICULUM**

The curriculum is not just the goals of the program and the planned activities but also the daily schedule, the availability and use of materials, transitions between activities and the way in which routine tasks of living are implemented virtual or in person. Young children are expected to learn

through active and positive manipulation of the environment and concrete experiences that contribute to concept development.

Without limiting the rights of the school under section VIII of this handbook, modifications may be made in the environment and staffing patterns for children with special needs.

The daily schedule is intended to provide a balance of activities with attention to the following dimension of scheduling:

- a. Daily outdoor play, weather permitting.
- b. Alternating periods of quiet time and active play
- c. A balance of large muscle and small muscle activities is provided.
- d. Various small group or large group activities through most of the day
- e. A balance of child-initiated and staff-initiated activity is provided. The amount of time spent in staff-initiated, large group activity is limited.

Developmentally appropriate materials and equipment that project heterogeneous, racial, gender and age attributes are selected for use.

The school will use media, such as television, films, videotapes and computers, that have been previewed by adults prior to use. Another option for activity is always available. No child is required to view or interact with the program; and the staff discusses what is viewed with children to develop critical viewing skills. Technology is incorporated as an integral part of the day.

The goal of the school is to emphasize concrete experiential learning and to achieve the following goals:

- a. foster positive self-concept;
- b. foster spiritual development;
- c. encourage children to think, reason, question, and experiment;
- d. develop social skills;
- e. encourage language development;
- f. enhance physical development and skills;
- g. encourage and demonstrate sound health, safety, and nutritional practices;
- h. encourage creative expression and appreciation for the arts;
- i. respect cultural diversity.

Staff provides materials and time for activities, but children choose from among several activities that the teacher has planned, or the children initiate. Staff respects the child's right to choose not to participate at times.

Children are not always required to move from one activity to another as a group. Unregimented transitions are also used as a vehicle for learning.

Planned or routine activities may be changed according to the needs or interests of children, and/or to cope with changes in weather or other situations that affect routines without unduly alarming children.

Routine tasks such as toileting, eating, dressing, and sleeping are incorporated into the program as a means of furthering children's learning, self-help and social skills. Through complimentary actions at home, parents are expected to assist and cooperate with staff to make feeding and the development of other independent skills a positive experience for children. Provision is made for children who are early risers and for children who do not nap.

### ***SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS***

All school supplies and materials will be provided by the preschool. Each child is asked to retain at school an extra set of weather-appropriate clothing in a sealable plastic bag, as well as an extra pair of socks and underwear. All items should be labeled with the child's full name.

### ***ASSESSMENT***

The school's program is intended to assist staff and administrators in a systematic evaluation of the program, to diagnose children's strengths and weaknesses and to aid in the revision of the curriculum and planning of instruction.

### ***PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION***

Teachers are expected to be reasonably available to parents/guardians throughout the school year to keep the lines of communication open in the best interest of the students. Parent-teacher conferences can be scheduled throughout the school year if necessary. Parents should first privately contact a teacher with any concerns about a student or class concerns before seeking intervention by the school administration.

In the event a parent desires to discuss a problem with his/her child's teacher, the parent should make an appointment for a private meeting with the child's teacher. Teachers welcome the opportunity to discuss a matter of concern with parents before it becomes an actual problem. Any parent who wishes to speak with the principal may do so after an initial meeting with the classroom teacher. Similarly, parents should discuss matters of concern with the school principal, and pastor when necessary, before bringing them to the Office of Catholic Schools.

### ***SCHEDULING AND OTHER CONFERENCE INFORMATION***

Two parent-teacher conferences will be held – one in the Fall and one in the Spring. More may be scheduled at the request of either the parent or the teacher. Sign up sheets will be available prior to the conference days for parents wishing to discuss their child's progress. An alternate conference date can be coordinate with your child's teacher when necessary.

## ***PROGRESS REPORTS***

Evaluation of the child must be based on teacher judgment, observation, daily performance, class participation and effort.

## ***RETENTION/PROMOTION/PLACEMENT***

A major goal of the school is to assist children to complete each year satisfactorily. Retention is recommended only when it is deemed necessary and advantageous to the needs of the child.

- a. The final decision to promote or retain a child is based on the child's developmental performance and best interests, as determined by the principal/director.
- b. Parents will be kept informed about the inability of their child to progress satisfactorily.
- c. Children who would not benefit from being retained may be "placed" in the next level; however, the school may prepare and implement an Intervention Plan for the child as a condition of placement.

## **III. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

### ***ADMISSIONS***

#### **DIOCESAN INITIAL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Children who desire an educational experience founded on the Catholic philosophy of education and who fulfill the age, health and behavioral requirements are eligible for admission to the school.

The school sets registration procedures and admission policies. The availability of space and the order of preference for admission are determined by the school according to the following general criteria:

- a. Children from the parish
- b. Children from parishes without schools
- c. Children from parishes with schools (for sufficient reason)
- d. Children from non-Catholic families

If approved by the pastor, and where practicable, siblings may receive special consideration.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR PRESCHOOL ADMISSION**

There is no testing for preschool admission. However, readiness assessment may be utilized to determine the developmentally appropriate placement in the preschool program. The following list of documents/information is required:

- a. Presentation of an original birth certificate (schools are expected to keep a copy of the certificate on file)
- b. Baptismal certificate for Catholic students
- c. Proof of custody where applicable
- d. Progress reports (if available)
- e. Completed Diocesan Application Form (*Appendix J*)
- f. A non-refundable application fee
- g. A fully executed MCH 213G Commonwealth of Virginia School Entrance Form or other U.S. state equivalent, which stipulates the following must be submitted prior to the student beginning school:
  - i. Proof of exact dates of required immunization as required by the Code of Virginia. Immunization records are required to be signed and verified by a licensed healthcare provider.
  - ii. Physical examination covering all required aspects as mandated on the MCH 213G within 12 months prior to entering school for the first time. Equivalent school entrance physical forms from another state may be acceptable. (Note: A pre-school physical does not take the place of the required kindergarten entry physical even though it was completed within the 12 months prior to kindergarten entry. This is because some aspects required for kindergarten are not included in a pre-school physical – e.g., hearing and vision screening)
- h. Proof of satisfying tuition requirements at any former Diocesan school if previously enrolled in a Diocesan school.

## **GENERAL CONDITIONS OF ADMISSION**

A child is admitted to the school on the premise the child intends to learn the Catholic religion and be educated in a Catholic environment. In certain cases, a child may be admitted on a probationary basis subject to the child successfully completing one or more subsequent interim evaluations. A child with academic or other needs (i.e., behavioral), which cannot be reasonably addressed by the school may be denied admission. School application forms may request disability-related information. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not prohibit a school from asking questions about a student's disabilities provided that information does not discriminate (automatically prohibit a student from applying).

## **CLASS PLACEMENT**

The principal/director and faculty reserve the right to place a child in a class to ensure the best interests of the child.

## ***ATTENDANCE***

### **ABSENCE/TARDINESS/LEAVING SCHOOL**

Regular attendance in the program is strongly encouraged for setting the groundwork for a successful school experience. Neither the school, the Diocese, the Office of Catholic Schools, nor any of its employees/staff are responsible for ensuring actual attendance; this is the responsibility of the child's parent(s)/guardian(s).

Except in cases of emergency as determined by the principal/preschool director and/or a staff member (as applicable or necessary), a child may only be released from school to another authorized adult with the prior written or verbal authorization of the child's parent. The adult will be required to produce identification before the child is released.

### **ATTENDANCE/REPORTING PROCEDURES**

#### **ABSENCE**

Parents of preschool children who will not be in school are to call the preschool office before 9:00 am and notify the preschool.

#### **TARDINESS**

A student who is tardy should report to the principal/preschool director's office or attendance office. A student who arrives late with an excused reason (i.e. director's note) is counted tardy.

Frequent cases of tardiness should be brought to the attention of the principal/preschool director so that the parent may be contacted.

For security reasons, the Preschool doors are locked each morning once classes begin.

#### **MEDICAL EXCUSES**

Students who are absent more than three days for illness should submit a doctor's certificate detailing the nature of the illness and any restrictions placed on the child's activities.

#### **ANTICIPATED ABSENCE**

Parents should be aware of the impact of any unnecessary absences and plan for family vacations using the school calendar.

#### **RELEASE OF CHILDREN**

Parents must sign their children in/out when arriving late or being released outside of regular



school hours.

Students will only be released to those adults listed on the emergency form completed in the beginning of the school year. If a student is to be released early from school, a note is to be sent to the teacher advising of this fact, giving time and who will be picking up the student. Any change in the authorized adults who may pick up a child must be given to the preschool office in writing.

### ***TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER SCHOOL***

The school must be notified in writing by the parent(s) of a student regarding a decision to transfer a student to another school, including the last day the student will attend classes at school. All school-owned materials such as textbooks and library books must be returned to school and all fees paid before leaving. Student records will be sent to the new school upon a “Release of Student Records Form” from the new school. All fees and tuition **MUST BE PAID** prior to the release of the student’s records.

### ***ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL***

**CARDS** (Careful And Rapid Dismissal System) offers a structure that facilitates a smooth and efficient traffic flow that is safe for all Saint Rita Catholic Preschool students at dismissal. Thank you for your continued patience, flexibility and attention to this process, as we work together to safely dismiss your preschoolers each day.

The **CARDS** plan provides a Rider Number for every student and family enrolled in the preschool. Even those families who never intend to pick up their student(s) by car will receive a number. Assigning a number to every student and family will allow us to utilize the same **CARDS** system to release all students directly to their families in a safe, rapid and orderly way in the event of an emergency, as well.

#### **About the Rider Numbers:**

**Every student will receive a Rider Number card to attach to their backpack. Parents/guardians will receive a Rider Number card that matches their child’s number.** These numbers are based on their age group. Angels (1-19), Lambs (20-40) and Shepherds (50-70). Siblings who have the same primary address will have the same Rider Number.

**Families will receive four Rider Number cards for car display.** This way, parents/guardians will have cards for family cars, plus extra cards to give to others who pick up your student(s), or to trade with other families in your carpool. Families who carpool should display the numbers of all students they pick-up. Extra number cards are available upon request from the Preschool Office.

## **Daily Pickup Procedures:**

**Drivers prominently display their Rider Number card(s) when picking up students.** Place your card on the dash or the underside of the sun visor, so dismissal staff can read the Rider Number as soon as you enter the pick-up line in the preschool driveway. Staff will then call inside for your student(s).

- All car riders will be dismissed directly from their classrooms when their Rider Number is one of the vehicles in the driveway pick-up area.
- Drivers will *remain in their cars* as their students enter the cars on the passenger side. Staff will assist students as needed. Please use the two designated pickup lanes.
- We strongly encourage parents to plan ahead and enter the car line from the driveway. Cars will form two priority lines for prompt dismissal. If the driveway is full, please wait or circle the campus.
- Please do not block the driveway or intersection. Make sure to hug the curb so traffic can legally pass if you are waiting to enter the car line.
- Once your preschooler is safely inside your vehicle, you will be directed toward the Mount Vernon Avenue exit. Your prompt attention and departure will allow waiting cars to enter.

## **Walkers/On-foot Pickup:**

Walkers/on-foot pickups will be dismissed from their classrooms to the front doors of the preschool. Students will be monitored by school staff as they exit the building and school property. Parents/students walking should be mindful of the cars entering from Russell Road. Parents wanting to meet their walker should wait in the designated sidewalk area in front of the preschool.

Students whose parents choose to park off campus will be considered walkers. Parents should NOT park in front of the Church on Russell Road because it would disrupt the flow of traffic entering the preschool driveway. The safest way to pick up your child is through the car line.

## **Daily Arrival Procedures:**

- Students may be **dropped off at school beginning at 8:00 am through 8:15 am.** Supervision is the responsibility of the parent prior to 8:00 am, as staff members are not on duty until 8:00 am.

- Please use the Preschool Drop-off Lane on the **left side of the entry** driveway, pulling all the way up to the first available space. All cars should unload students once “landed” to the Drop Off Staff who will walk them safely to the front entrance.
- If you must park, please park along the orange cones in the alley, and walk your child into the front of the building using the coned-off walkway. Parents who park, may enter the building with their child.
- Please do not block or enter the right side of the entry driveway in any way, as this is the designated K8 Drop-off Lane for K8 parents entering the back entrance of the K8 building. *Parents with K8/preschool siblings should enter the left-side preschool driveway first to drop their preschooler, and proceed to K8 drop area second. If you choose to drop your K8 student first, please enter the right side and circle back around for your preschooler. Preschoolers cannot be dropped on the right side of the entry driveway.*
- You can help the line move quickly and efficiently if your child is ready (with book bag and other supplies) to exit the vehicle when entering the driveway. Students should exit from the driver’s side only with the help of Drop-off Staff.
- Students will be walked directly to their classrooms after drop-off. Preschool instruction begins promptly at 8:15. Students arriving after 8:15 are tardy.

### **Additional Information:**

**It is essential that your child knows how he or she is getting home at the end of the day BEFORE coming to school.** If there is an unforeseen circumstance or emergency situation that requires a change of plans, please call the Preschool Office by 11:00 am.

**Parents who need to visit with a teacher should plan ahead and make an appointment for before drop-off or after dismissal.**

**Please obey all traffic regulations, signage, and school personnel so we can insure a safe arrival and dismissal for all students.**

### ***LUNCH/MILK PROGRAM***

Rules for acceptance and participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Child Nutrition Programs are the same for all students without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any USDA related activity should write to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC, 20250.

Saint Rita Catholic Preschool students do not participate in U.S.D.A. lunch programs.

## **IV. GENERAL SCHOOL POLICIES**

### ***ADMINISTRATIVE***

#### **CHILD CUSTODY AND GUARDIANSHIP**

At the time of school entry or at any other time where a change in custody status/arrangements occurs, it is the responsibility of the parent(s) to provide the principal/administration with a true and correct copy of the legal document for any student for which there is a legal custody agreement or for any student not residing with his/her parent.

School communication with the appropriate guardian is essential. Accordingly:

- a. Custodial parents should identify, in writing, other adults who may have access to information regarding their child.
- b. Non-custodial parents may receive information (when requested) regarding the child unless specific documentation to the contrary is provided in the legal custody agreement.

#### **ACCESS TO RECORDS**

Parents/Guardians have a right (unless prohibited by the courts in a custody agreement) to the timely inspection, during school hours, of the educational records (cumulative and confidential) of their child. The school shall respond to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records.

If the education records of a student contain information on more than one student, the parents' access is limited to the specific information about their child only.

Student records shall be open to authorized school personnel only (principal, assistant principal, and those to whom they extend access within a given year).

The school administration may elect to provide, at cost, photocopies of a student's educational records to parents, but documentation is to be stamped "unofficial."

#### **CONFIDENTIAL ACADEMIC RECORDS**

Parents/guardians are obligated to share educational/psychological testing results and any resulting plan with the school. If a student has a documented disability, a copy of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Individualized Services Plan (ISP), 504 plan, and/or Student Assistance Plan (SAP) should be maintained in the student's confidential file. The refusal to provide such information is grounds for terminating enrollment in the school.

Confidential records for dis-enrolled students are merged with the students' cumulative files.

## **RETENTION OF RECORDS**

Permanent record card (to include transcripts, attendance record, and standardized test results) is to be retained indefinitely.

The following student records are to be retained for 25 years:

- a. IEP/ISP or 504 Plan
- b. Student Assistance Plan
- c. Eligibility Minutes
- d. Student Support Team Minutes

The following student records are to be retained for 7 years, or when the students reaches the age of 25, whichever is greater:

- a. Application
- b. Counselor Notes
- c. Discipline Notes
- d. Court Documents
- e. Psychological Reports

## **SCHOOL VISITORS**

All persons other than school staff and currently registered students must first report to the school office immediately upon entering school grounds, sign-in, and wear an identification tag when visiting the school.

## **SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS**

All materials prepared by parents/guardians for release to the parish or school community must be approved by the principal or his/her designee.

## **PRINCIPAL/PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR'S COMMUNICATION**

The school website [www.saintrita-school.org](http://www.saintrita-school.org) is updated regularly and can be used for parents to check on upcoming events. This Preschool Parent Handbook is also available online at the website.

## **TAKE-HOME COMMUNICATION**

All materials prepared by parents for release to the parish or school community must be approved by the principal/Preschool director or his/her designee.

Each family receives a weekly “update” packet via email which includes a letter from the principal, updates from the Parent Teacher Organization and other useful information and event details.

The school maintains a website which covers school history, handbook, calendar and other useful information. The website may be accessed at [www.saintrita-school.org](http://www.saintrita-school.org). In addition, the principal may be reached via email at [principal@saintrita-school.org](mailto:principal@saintrita-school.org). The Preschool Director can be reached at [preschooldirector@saintrita-school.org](mailto:preschooldirector@saintrita-school.org)

All members of the school faculty and staff have email addresses, which will be published to parents on the school website. Every effort will be made to answer all email and phone calls from parents within 24 hours of receipt when received during the school week and on Monday if received over the weekend.

## **TELEPHONE USE**

All phone calls to the preschool should be made through the main school office at 703-548-1888 ex. 16. The preschool office has an extension from the school phone system and messages will be relayed immediately to the preschool teachers.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER/SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

If, during the course of the year, the school uses inclement weather/emergency days, it may be necessary to modify the published school calendar. If school closes unexpectedly for a single day, there will be no academic requirements for that day.

Saint Rita School makes independent decisions to delay, close, or dismiss early due to inclement weather or other emergencies. Saint Rita School administrators take the forecasts, local conditions, and decisions of local public school districts and neighboring Catholic schools into account when making these decisions. The school community will be notified via email and School Messenger. When possible, we will communicate the evening before when we’ve made a decision to close or delay opening. When we need to make a same-day decision about school closures or delays, we will inform you by approximately 5:30 AM.

## **PHOTOS AND OTHER MEDIA**

Parents/guardians may opt their children out of participating in videotaping, audio recording, school pictures, other photography, or participation involving the Internet. When a parent decides to exercise this right, the school is required to use the Waiver/Right to Object Form (*Appendix N*). All student or parental publications are subject to review and approval by the school administration prior to publication.

## **MEDIA CENTER**

All materials chosen for the media center must be appropriate for students, not only in age level and reading ability, but also for their capacity to foster our students' moral development. All materials shall conform with diocesan policies and guidelines regarding Catholic education.

Parents, guardians, or teachers who object to print or multi-media materials used in the classroom must complete an Objection to Content Form (*Appendix K*) after they have read the book or viewed the media and then submit it to the school principal. Those objecting to materials obtained in the school media center should complete Objection to Content Form for Library Materials (*Appendix K-1*). A review committee (to include an Office of Catholic Schools member) will subsequently discuss the objection and decide the disposition of the challenged material. The parent or teacher initiating the review should be personally notified of the results of the review. The Superintendent of Schools has the final say in any subsequent question of this review.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Class visits to places of cultural or educational significance enhance the lessons of the classroom. Field trips, virtual or in person, are planned by teachers and approved by the school administration in order to achieve educational objectives. Financial considerations may bear on the feasibility and frequency of field trips.

Field trips are considered an extension of the school day and the code of conduct will apply.

A permission form signed by a student's parent(s)/guardian(s) must be obtained prior to a student participating in each activity (*Appendix R*, available in PowerSchool).

In the event private automobiles/vehicles of students, parents, or other authorized adults of at least 21 years of age are to be utilized to transport students on field trips, the drivers and/or the vehicle owners must have a valid driver's license and sufficient liability, medical, and uninsured motorist insurance coverage as defined by the Diocesan Risk Manager. Evidence to this effect must be presented to the principal/administration for review and approval prior to the use of such vehicles. Appendix R-1 must be used for this purpose. The principal/administration shall have the right to prohibit, for any reason, a proposed driver from transporting students on a field trip.

Youth weighing less than 100 pounds may not be seated in the front seat. Virginia's child safety laws require that children under eight years old are secured in a child safety seat or booster seat, regardless of height or weight. Children between eight and 12 should remain in a booster seat until they can fit in a seat belt.

Cell calls and texting are not permitted while driving.

Parents/guardians are to be furnished with detailed written information about the field trip and must be given the opportunity to "opt out" their children from the field trip.

Teachers and other school employees should not drive students in their personal vehicles.

It should be understood, in rare instances, world conditions and specifically threats of terrorism against Americans may necessitate the cancellation of school-sponsored trips.

School-sponsored ski trips are not permitted.

Alcohol shall NEVER be served to minors, regardless of cultural norms and/or parent permission while on a field trip.

All medications given on field trips must comply with medication administration policies. For a student with prescription medication and/or medically necessary health related procedures or treatments, a trained individual needs to be present on the field trip such as” a school nurse, parent/guardian, or designated family member to ensure care in the case of an emergency. If a trained individual of the school is unable to chaperone the student on a field trip, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide a trained individual to accompany the student.

Saint Rita Catholic Preschool students do not participate in Field Trips off campus.

#### **OVERNIGHT TRIPS**

Overnight trips are not permitted for preschool children.

### ***PARENT ORGANIZATIONS***

Parent-Teacher Organizations (and like-named entities) support the critical relationship between schools and parents, the primary educators of their children. These organizations support the principal to advance the school’s mission.

Every school should have an effective Parent-Teacher Organization. It can help mobilize the parent community regarding legislative proposals impacting Catholic education. The work of PTOs and like organizations shall be guided by the PTO Handbook and the direction of the pastor and principal.

All parent organization activities and all materials prepared by parents for release to the Parish or school community must be submitted to the principal or designee for approval prior to implementation and/or distribution.

All PTO monies must be deposited in the parish or school account as designated by the pastor. In consultation with the principal, the PTO officers should prepare a budget and submit it to the pastor and principal for approval.

PTOs shall have by-laws which establish, among other things, term limits for officers as well as the organization of committees. Persons nominated to serve as a PTO board member must receive the approval of the pastor and principal.



## ***FUNDRAISING***

Any program of generating additional revenue should have the approval of school leadership (pastor, principal, head of school). These activities should be organized and executed so that the school program is not interrupted.

Students may participate in, and cooperate with, worthy collections and fundraising projects conducted by a school or parish, provided such activities have been approved by the school leadership (pastor, principal, head of school).

## ***TRANSPORTATION/PARKING***

Saint Rita Catholic Preschool does not provide transportation for preschoolers. Limited parking is available on campus for both parents and staff.

<h2><b>V. FINANCES</b></h2>
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## ***SCHOOL TUITION POLICIES***

A family's tuition obligation continues even if the school shifts to a virtual model. The education of each student continues with teachers planning and delivering lessons and assessing student progress. Report cards will be distributed at the end of each grading period. If a parent/guardian cannot make the regular tuition payment, the principal should be notified as soon as possible to create a payment plan.

# TUITION AND OTHER FEE SCHEDULES

## Tuition Rates 2024-25

Preschool Class	Tuition	Snack/materials fee per student
2 day Angels	\$5,030	\$150
3 day Angels	\$6,965	\$200
3 day Lambs	\$6,965	\$200
5 day Shepherds	\$8,895	\$250

*We offer a \$500 family discount if you have two or more children enrolled in Preschool.*

### ADDITIONAL FEES:

*In addition to initial non-refundable application fee*

- **Registration/Re-registration Fee:** \$100 per student, non-refundable and charged via FACTS to new students upon acceptance and to returning students on January 16, 2024.
- **Tuition Deposit (for new families):** \$300 per student, non-refundable and charged via FACTS upon acceptance. This will be credited toward the total tuition due for 2024-2025 when regular payments begin in June.
- **K-8 Book/Materials Fees & Preschool Snack/Materials Fees:** Non-refundable and processed via FACTS on February 16, 2024. See amounts in chart above.

## VI. CHILD RESPONSIBILITIES & BEHAVIOR

### DISCIPLINE

Because it is impossible to foresee all problems which arise, this handbook empowers the faculty and administration to take disciplinary action for any behavior (within or outside of the school community) which violates the spirit, philosophy, and code of conduct of the school, even though not specified.

In justice to the other students, circumstances may dictate that a student be removed temporarily or permanently from the particular school setting.

Classroom rules are designed to protect persons and property and to promote pro-social behaviors, such as sharing and taking turns. If problems arise, the children in question will be reminded of

acceptable behaviors and redirected to more positive activities.

### **USE OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

In cases where a child is continually disruptive of others or in the case of a single serious disciplinary infraction, the teacher will apprise the principal/director of the situation. They will assist in the development of a course of action to be taken to correct the situation.

Children who lack self-discipline or who violate the rights of others can expect disciplinary action. Each offense will be dealt with on an individual basis according to the age of the child, the nature of the infraction and the severity of the case. Repeated infractions can result in more serious consequences, up to and including suspension and/or expulsion, but there is no requirement for progressive discipline.

### **SPECIFIC DISCIPLINARY POLICIES**

Preschool teachers will send home for signature a list of classroom expectations and rules. Discipline plans will be age-appropriate and outlined by the teacher along with the classroom rules. The principal will be notified of all disciplinary actions taken with a student and will consult with that student and or his/her parents as she deems necessary.

Any form of physical violence will be dealt with appropriately. Biting and spitting are considered serious infractions and parents of children who bite or spit will be called and the child sent home.

### **SUSPENSION**

Suspension may be imposed as determined by the principal/administration. Once the principal/administration suspends a student, parents/guardians may be required to sign a behavioral contract in which they signify their understanding of the problem and agree to work with the school in correcting the situation.

The failure of the parents to execute the above referenced agreement shall preclude the student from returning to the regular instructional program. This policy applies to in-house and out-of-school suspensions.

### **EXPULSION**

Expulsion may be resorted to when one or all of the following are present:

- a. a serious infraction of school rules occurs;
- b. the student has demonstrated continuing disregard of school rules for which other means of discipline have proven ineffectual;
- c. the student's continued presence in the school is considered by school officials to be a serious hindrance to the safety or welfare of the school community;
- d. a parent/guardian repeatedly or seriously violates proper school protocol, displays

inappropriate or disruptive conduct toward students or displays disrespectful, disruptive, or harassing behavior toward teachers, school, parish, or diocesan staff.

If the principal/administration believes it necessary to expel a student, the principal/administration will notify the student and the student's parents about the student's action and provide them with an opportunity to respond in accordance with the school's disciplinary hearing process before making any final decision on the matter.

A parent/guardian whose child is expelled may appeal this decision in writing to the Superintendent of Schools within 5 working days from the time of written notification.

During the pendency of any appeal, the expelled student shall be removed from the school community in compliance with the expulsion notice unless otherwise directed at the discretion of the principal/administration.

Students who have been expelled from any Diocesan school may not apply for admission to that school or another Diocesan school for a minimum of one (1) year from the date of expulsion.

## ***REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES***

Privacy of individual students must be balanced against the need to protect the health, welfare, and safety of other members of the school community.

### **STUDENTS AND STUDENT PROPERTY SEARCHES**

The principal/administration or his/her designee has the right to protect the health, welfare, and safety of school patrons against drugs, weapons, unauthorized publications, and other contraband materials. Search of a student's person and/or personal property on school property or at school activities may be conducted by the school principal/administration or other designated officials. It is only necessary that a search be reasonable and related to the school rights in these regards. The failure of a student to voluntarily submit to a search shall be presumptive evidence of the existence of contraband and grounds for appropriate disciplinary action.

## ***CARE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY***

Children are to care for school property in a respectful manner. Children who deface or damage school property or the property of others will make financial restitution. If library books are not returned, students will be assessed an amount equal to the value of the book or its replacement, whichever is greater, as determined by the principal/administration.

## ***DRESS CODE***

The dress code provides a standard for our children that fosters an environment conducive to learning and respectful behavior.

Final decisions regarding the school uniform rest with the principal/director.

### **DRESS CODE REQUIREMENTS & OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION**

The dress code provides a standard for our children that fosters an environment conducive to learning and respectful behavior.

## ***PLAYGROUND REGULATIONS***

Saint Rita Catholic Preschool is blessed to have an enclosed playground for the use of the preschool only. Children will have time scheduled on the playground each day and will follow basic safety rules as directed by their teacher and aide. No child will be allowed to intimidate any other child by words or actions on the playground and any child who is physically aggressive with another child will be removed from the playground activities. All playground equipment is to be treated with respect.

## ***LUNCHROOM REGULATIONS***

Given the risk of potential harm, students' access and use of microwave ovens is prohibited in grades preschool through grade 5. Student meals provided by parents/guardians must not be heated in microwave ovens by school personnel and/or school volunteers.

Saint Rita Preschool does not serve lunch during school hours and so does not have any lunchroom regulations.

Saint Rita Preschool does offer an extended day program called "Lunch Bunch." Lunch Bunch is an extension of the normal preschool day that allows the children an opportunity for socialization and fun! Registered children bring their own lunch box to school and meet after regular dismissal. They enjoy lunch, indoor-outdoor games and stories with their friends. Lunch Bunch is dismissed at 1:30pm.

Lunch Bunch has two sessions. Session One: September through December. Session Two: January through May. Registration information provided upon acceptance.

\*Preschoolers - with the help of their teacher - will place his/her labeled lunch box/bag in the preschool kitchen. Please pack a drink, as milk is not provided.

\*Your child will be in the care of two teachers — one Lunch Bunch Coordinator and one Lunch Bunch Aide.

\*Lunch Bunchers are dismissed to their parents at 1:30pm per our dismissal policy.

\*Should you be delayed or late for Lunch Bunch pickup, please call the Preschool Office before 1:30pm (703-548-1888 ex 16). A late fee will be charged to your FACTS, if a call is not made.

## ***SHOW & TELL***

Children are allowed to bring toys from home for the purpose of Show and Tell only. Weapons (whether real or toys) of any kind are not appropriate Show and Tell items and shall not be brought to school for any reason. If weapons of any kind are brought to school, the child shall be subject to immediate disciplinary action which may include, but not be limited to, expulsion

# **VII. HEALTH, SAFETY, & WELFARE**

## ***STUDENT HEALTH, SAFETY, & WELFARE***

Parents/guardians have the primary responsibility for the health and well-being of their children. School health services supplement, rather than substitute, for parental care and concern for the health of the students.

### **PREVENTION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND/OR CHILD ABUSE**

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington Policy on the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and/or Child Abuse generally applies to all clergy, all employees and all volunteers.

It is the policy of the Diocese that sexual misconduct and/or child abuse while performing any work or activity under the auspices of the Diocese is contrary to Christian principles and outside the scope of any authority, duties, and/or employment of any clergy, employee, or volunteer.

Virginia law imposes upon school personnel the legal responsibility of reporting to the local child protective services agency any incident of suspected child abuse or neglect.

School personnel who suspect the abuse or neglect of a student must report the matter directly to Child Protective Services and to the school principal (who in turn will call the Vicar General). The school principal should complete Attachment B found in Appendix G, which must be sent to the Vicar General. The school principal must inform the superintendent as well.

In accordance with the *Code of Virginia*, (Section 63.2–118, “Any person required to make a report or conduct an investigation or family assessment, pursuant to this chapter may talk to any child suspected of being abused or neglected or to any of his siblings without consent of and outside the presence of his parent/guardian, legal custodian, or other person standing in *loco parentis* or school personnel.”

## **WELLNESS POLICY**

The Diocese of Arlington Office of Catholic Schools Wellness Policy meets minimum federal standards and establishes goals for physical education, nutrition, and healthy environments in schools. All schools must develop, and continue to evaluate, local school wellness policies. The local policies create a framework for increased student activity, staff wellness, safe and healthy environments, and the elimination of foods of minimal nutritional value during the school day. All schools have wellness committees to implement, sustain, and evaluate the local wellness program.

## **ACCIDENTS AND FIRST AID**

The parents/guardians of an injured student will be notified of the accident/injury by the principal/administration or the principal/administration's designee as soon as reasonably possible, taking into consideration such factors as the apparent severity of the accident/injury and the priority of providing assistance to the student.

If an incident results in a medical condition or injury which can be reasonably known to the appropriate supervisory faculty/staff member and/or the principal, the school and/or its staff are authorized to render reasonable basic first aid if such direct medical assistance would, in the opinion of the school, serve to minimize the severity of the injured person's condition. As an example, staff should initially resort to using only ice, band aids, soap and water when treating cuts and/or scrapes to avoid any possible known or unknown allergic reactions to salves or creams. In addition, staff may secure a professional diagnosis and/or treatment if such action, in the opinion of the school, appears to be reasonably warranted. The school and school officials shall be expressly held harmless from any liability costs or expenses associated with the professional diagnosis and/or any treatment or first aid provided (including but not limited to the cost of transportation), such costs or expenses being the responsibility of the injured party or, if a student, the student's parents.

## **AIR QUALITY AND PREVENTION OF HEAT/COLD RELATED ILLNESS**

When students and activities require time outside, schools will monitor weather related to the 'feels like' temperature. To prevent heat and/or cold related illness, outside activities may be restricted based upon a heat index or wind chill factor, which registers in the caution level. Schools will consult local weather reports and Appendix F-15 for guidance in outdoor activities. Schools that do not have air-conditioned classrooms are permitted to provide early dismissals in accordance with Appendix F-15.

## **ILLNESS**

Each school will provide a health office or comfortable space, apart from the student population, where children who become ill or injured can be cared for following *Virginia School Health Guidelines*.

Children with fevers, contagious, or infectious diseases will be sent home promptly and excluded from school while in that condition, per Virginia Department of Health regulations. Once the student is confirmed to be free of communicable illness by a healthcare provider or is fever free/symptom free for 24 hours without taking anti-fever medications, the student may return to school, after school, and extracurricular activities.

When a student is requesting a waiver from participating in Physical Education classes and/or recess, parents are required to submit a written statement from their child's physician which states any activity restrictions with regard to participation in Physical Education classes and/or recess. The statement is expected to include a specific time frame for the activity restrictions.

### **MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION OVERVIEW**

All school clinic, administrators, and staff are required to administer medication within the framework of the procedures outlined in diocesan policy and summarized here.

All prescription and over the counter (OTC) medications may be administered during the school day under the following conditions:

- a. When the need for administration of medicines during school hours has been confirmed by the school nurse/health assistant (or the school administration);
- b. After the first dose of any medication has been given at home;
- c. When the parent/guardian provides and transports the medication to and from school and the medication is given directly to the school nurse/health assistant or a senior member of the school administration;
- d. When there is a licensed health care provider's written order signed by the parent/guardian requesting the school administer the medication or to permit the student to self-administer the medication;
- e. When the medication is brought to the school in its original container stating the name of the student, the dosage and method of administration prescribed by a licensed health-care provider. It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to notify the school of any changes to the original prescription. The new prescription must also be brought to the school in the original container as stated above;
- f. When the appropriate medication authorization form (*Appendix F-6*) has been completed, signed by the parent/guardian and accompanies the medication;
- g. For any medication, parents must document the number of tablets or dosages to be secured for administration by authorized school personnel. If tablets are to be divided, the parent or guardian is responsible for dividing the tablets in order to achieve their child's proper dosage.
- h. Herbal and homeopathic medications will not be given in Diocesan schools without written authorization by a LHCP that shall include desired and adverse effects. Protein supplements will not be administered unless directly requested by a physician with a health treatment plan.



Under no circumstances are medications to be shared with other students.

Picc Lines, Heparin/Saline Locks, and Central Venous Lines may be present in students with specialized health care needs. Dressing changes, heparin flushes, and other medication administration via these lines are to be done at home, not at school.

When the medication is epinephrine, trained school employees are permitted to administer Epi-pen injections when:

- a. the parents advise the staff most directly involved with the student of the situations when an Epi-pen may need to be administered (e.g., symptoms indicating that a person is suffering from severe allergic reaction, basic procedures for administering the Epi-pen with a suitable demonstration);
- b. parents of students requiring such injections provide a licensed health-care provider letter attesting to the life-threatening allergy;
- c. parents agree to execute the release of liability/hold harmless agreement regarding the use of the Epi-pen.

All diocesan schools will maintain non-student-specific school stock epinephrine. This school stock epinephrine can be used in an allergy-naïve student when anaphylaxis is suspected. Employees at the school will be informed of the location where the medication will be stored, and they will be appropriately educated on its use.

All diocesan schools will maintain naloxone, an opioid antagonist, to be available for use if opioid overdose is suspected in any individual on school campus. Any student receiving naloxone will be transported via EMS to the local emergency room and cleared to return to school. All staff will be trained in how to recognize opioid overdose and administer naloxone.

A student is NOT permitted to self-medicate. The school does not assume responsibility for medications taken independently by the student. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis for students who demonstrate the capability to carry and self-administer emergency lifesaving medications (e.g. inhaler, Epi-pen).

All OTC and prescription medications are to be kept locked in the clinic/school office and be administered by the school nurse, clinic aide, principal or trained designee. No student is to carry/possess medications without appropriate medical authorization. No medication will be administered unless the school has received a signed copy of the Medication Authorization Form (*Appendix F-6*). OTC medications do not require a health care provider's signature unless the medication is required for four (4) or more consecutive days.

It shall be the student's responsibility to come to the clinic/school office at the appropriate time for medication unless a health care provider or parent/guardian indicates in writing that the student cannot do this.

Within one week after expiration of the effective date on the order, or on the last day of school,

the parent/guardian must personally collect any unused portion of the medication. Medications not claimed within that period will be destroyed.

### **LIFE THREATENING ALLERGY**

Schools will utilize current resources and reputable materials such as: Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE) and the CDC’s Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to develop allergen management communications for student handbooks, classrooms, and parental publications.

All schools must provide an annual in-service educating school faculty and staff about the policy. Training will include minimizing the risk of exposure to life threatening allergens in the school setting as well as anaphylaxis recognition, medical management, and incident reporting.

Schools will utilize the policy to develop allergen management communications for student handbooks, classrooms, and parental publications. Schools will select and train staff to be utilized as anaphylaxis response teams responsible for managing an allergic crisis.

Parents/guardians of students with a life-threatening allergy must inform the principal and school health personnel of any allergies and provide schools with fully executed diocesan documents. Parents/guardians are expected to supply schools with any emergency medications as prescribed and may additionally provide the student with “safe” foods for classroom celebrations involving food. Schools will utilize diocesan documents to formulate an emergency care plan for the student and will share this care plan with those involved with the student including, but not limited to: teacher(s), food service, bus drivers, and janitorial staff.

### **TELEHEALTH**

Medical appointments made via telehealth cannot be facilitated in the school building. If a student has been scheduled for a telehealth visit for medical reasons, the parent/guardian will need to check his/her student out of the school building and complete the appointment in the privacy of their vehicle or at home.

If a school is able to adequately support virtual regularly scheduled therapy sessions in the building (e.g., occupational or speech therapy) for students with a documented diagnosis, they can do so on a case-by-case basis after evaluating the specific circumstances.

### **SPECIALIZED STUDENT CARE NEEDS**

The parent/guardian of any student on a continuing regimen for a non-episodic condition shall inform the school principal/administration and identify, in writing, the student’s supervising health care provider. If necessary, and with parental written consent, there may be occasions when the school needs to communicate with the health care provider regarding possible effects on the student’s healthcare management, special emergency procedures, or behavior at school.

## **TOILETING/INCONTINENCE**

Although the vast majority of school staff would assist in an emergency situation, as no child should be left in wet or soiled clothing, it is important to note that there is no expectation that routine and predictable incidents are to be dealt with by school staff.

Parents/guardians will always be contacted in incidents of soiling. The exception to this policy is the student with a prescribed health-related treatment or procedure plan obtained in writing from a LHCP, with proper authorizations in writing by the parent or guardian.

For preschool students, it is recognized that continence training is an area of development which is reached at different ages for all children and that every child has individual needs which are respected. The preschool director will determine age-appropriate protocols for the student population.

## **USE OF CRUTCHES**

An order from a licensed healthcare provider is required to use crutches at school. If a student arrives at school on crutches without a licensed health-care provider order, the parent will be called to take the student home.

# ***CONTROL OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES***

## **DISEASE**

Parents/guardians must notify the school within 24 hours if their child or any member of the immediate household has developed a communicable disease. Parents must notify the school immediately if the disease is life threatening. Parents must pick up their sick or injured child in a timely manner when contacted. If the parent cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called to pick up the child.

The protection and welfare of each individual student is of great importance in the schools of the Diocese of Arlington. In an effort to enhance the protection of students:

- a. No daycare/preschool, elementary, middle, or secondary school student may attend class without documentary proof of adequate immunization in accordance with Virginia Department of Health's school entry requirements (or modified schedule as approved by licensed health care provider) on the Virginia School Entrance Health Form MCH-213G (*Appendix F-2*).
  - i. A certificate of immunization is not required for any student for whom the school has written certification from a licensed doctor of medicine or osteopathy, licensed nurse practitioner, or the local health department, that one of more of the required immunizations may be detrimental to the student's health. The certification must indicate the specific nature and

probable duration of the medical condition or circumstance that contraindicates immunization. The Virginia School Entrance Health Form (MCH-213G) provides a space for such a certification to be made

- ii. On a basic level, for the good of society, the Catholic church generally encourages the use of immunizations. The Church teaches that questions of immunization are ‘left to a matter of conscience’ and parents have the right to decide about the health of their children in this matter. Parents or guardians who object to the administration of immunizing agents for their child on the grounds that this conflicts with their religious tenets or practices must produce a notarized Certificate of Religious Exemption form (Appendix F-18), which will be retained in the student health record. Schools may request a statement from their parish priest or affiliate, describing such objection to specific immunizing agents. If an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable illness occurs, the student who is not immunized against that disease, will be excluded from school for an undetermined period of time as per the instructions of the State Health Commissioner and the public health department.
- b. Students who have traveled or resided in a foreign country for three months or more, where tuberculosis is common, are required to provide documentation, prior to school entry, of a negative tuberculosis skin test or chest x-ray result. All diocesan schools are responsible for compliance with local health department regulations pertaining to tuberculosis screening and treatment.
- c. Students with fevers and/or contagious or infectious diseases will be sent home promptly and will be excluded from school while in that condition, according to the Virginia Department of Health regulations. Once the student is confirmed to be free of communicable illness by a health care provider or is fever free/symptom free for 24 hours without taking anti-fever medications, the student may return to school.
- d. School health personnel will follow the Virginia Department of Health Communicable Disease Chart, found in the *Virginia School Health Guidelines*, when referring suspected cases of communicable disease to the local health department for excluding or readmitting a student.
- e. The Diocese of Arlington has comprehensive guidelines for school/parish-based influenza vaccination clinics. The liability associated with the vaccination of children is great. The Diocese of Arlington does not promote school-based vaccination clinics for children during school hours, and in the absence of the parent, with the exception of a state or federal emergency. Any school wishing to offer an onsite school immunization program must comply with all aspects of the Memorandum of Agreement Vendors wishing to serve as vaccinators must be fully vetted by the Office of Risk Management prior to the signing of any contract for services.

## **LICE**

All students identified as having an active case of lice will be excluded from school until they receive treatment. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide appropriate and adequate treatment for the student and home environment as recommended by their health care professional. Readmission to school is determined by the school nurse/administration based upon re-inspection and the effectiveness of treatment. Follow up treatment is expected and verified by the school nurse/administration. Classroom contacts may be inspected.

## ***BLOODBORNE DISEASE***

The Christian community is called to respond to the sick in our midst with compassion and justice. The diocese recognizes its obligation to protect the rights of individual students infected with Hepatitis and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and to provide a safe environment for students, staff members, and the public. Students who are infected with bloodborne Hepatitis, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), or HIV-related conditions must be provided the opportunity to receive a Catholic school education.

Since it is known that bloodborne Hepatitis and HIV are not transmitted through casual contact, any student who is infected will continue education in a regular classroom assignment unless his or her health status requires otherwise. It is the intent of the Diocese of Arlington Office of Catholic Schools to follow the recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Virginia Department of Health, which state that most bloodborne Hepatitis and HIV-infected children be allowed to attend school in an unrestricted setting, and that decisions regarding school attendance be based on the medical condition of each child and the expected type of interaction with others in that setting.

Persons involved in the implementation and monitoring of this policy shall maintain confidentiality of records in compliance with federal and state law and diocesan policy. All diocesan schools shall also maintain a program of information and training for school staff members to ensure a consistent and accurate understanding regarding prevention of exposure to bloodborne pathogens. This includes training related to the proper application of universal/standard precautions.

## ***Fire/Emergency Drills***

Fire drills, with the complete evacuation of the school building, will be held as required by state preschool regulations. Records of these fire drills will be kept in the school office. St. Rita School is inspected by the Fire Marshall for the City of Alexandria at least once a year and records of these inspections are also on file in the school office. A permit issued by the Fire Department is displayed in the Parish Center building. All regulations and policies established by the Alexandria City Fire Department are followed by St. Rita School.

St. Rita School has an emergency preparedness policy in place, in coordination with the City of Alexandria emergency services, in the event of a major disaster or weather emergency.

## ***HARASSMENT***

Harassment can take place in person or in writing and can be physical, verbal, or electronic. Regardless of its form, the Diocese of Arlington prohibits it.

This policy applies to the school site itself, to all school-sponsored and affiliated activities and events, whether in school or out of school, including but not limited to special events, field/service trips, retreats and/or other overnight trips, sporting events and practices, to all forms of transportation used by school personnel and students to come and go to the school and school-affiliated activities, and to all forms/use of technology.

Furthermore, since student behavior, whether inside or outside of school, reflects on our schools and can have a significant impact on life at school, there are times when it is appropriate and important for school administration to respond to incidents that occur outside of school and beyond school hours. Therefore, the schools reserve the right to discipline those in the community who engage in harassment of other school community members at any location and at any time if such harassment takes the form of obscene, libelous, slanderous language or incites violence, invades the rights of others, or contributes to a substantial disruption of the school community. Therefore, if such harassment originates outside of school and it comes to the attention of school staff, appropriate action will be taken to maintain a safe and respectful work and academic environment. As the primary educators of their children, parents have the responsibility to handle harassment issues not involving the school and that are occurring outside of school.

Bullying, harassment, intimidation, or retaliation against anyone who has reported these behaviors is prohibited. Students engaging in these behaviors are subject to disciplinary and/or legal action. Students, parents, employees, and service providers are responsible for reporting incidents of bullying, harassment, intimidation, or retaliation on campus. School principals will ensure that all illegal behaviors are reported to the appropriate local authorities and the Superintendent of Catholic Schools immediately.

## ***SEXUAL HARASSMENT - STUDENTS***

Sexuality affects all aspects of the person, including in a general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others. Until sexuality can be expressed through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, chastity is the successful integration of sexuality within the person. Chastity is expressed notably in friendship with one's neighbor when the equal personal dignity of man and woman is recognized. Offenses against chastity, which include lust and the more serious acts of pornography and immoral sexual conduct, are violations of our Catholic faith and morals.

The Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Arlington will respond appropriately to allegations of sexual harassment or sexual abuse in its schools. See Part 3, Section 2, Chapter 2, Article 6 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (¶¶ 2331-2400)

No student is to sexually harass or sexually abuse another member of the school community. All

reports of harassment or abuse will be thoroughly, and appropriately investigated and disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate, up to and including expulsion. Instances of sexual abuse will result in suspension at a minimum. If it appears that a violation of criminal law may have occurred, the matter will be reported to law enforcement authorities.

“Sexual harassment” is defined as any unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome physical contact of a sexual nature, or unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. "Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" includes, but is not limited to, the deliberate making of unsolicited gestures or comments, or the deliberate display of sexually graphic materials which are not necessary for school purposes, either in person or via any media source.

## ***BULLYING***

Bullying is defined as any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the person being bullied; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between aggressor or aggressors and person being bullied; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. Bullying includes cyber bullying. Bullying does not include inappropriate developmental teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a. Physical intimidation or assault
- b. Extortion
- c. Oral or written threats, including text messaging
- d. Malicious teasing
- e. Putdowns
- f. Name calling
- g. Threatening looks
- h. Gestures or acts of aggression (overt and covert)
- i. Cruel rumors & false accusations
- j. Social isolation
- k. Cyberbullying

Bullying is prohibited. School personnel will not tolerate any bullying on diocesan school grounds or at any school-sponsored activity (on or off school grounds). In addition, the Office of Catholic Schools expects students and parents who become aware of an act of bullying or cyberbullying to report it to appropriate school personnel (e.g. principal, teacher, school counselor). The Office of Catholic Schools expects staff members who become aware of an incident of bullying or cyberbullying to take appropriate steps to intervene unless intervention would be a threat to staff members' safety. If a staff member believes that his/her intervention has not resolved the matter,

or if the bullying persists, he/she shall report the bullying to the school principal for further investigation.

In cases of reported bullying, the principal or designee shall interview all students involved (i.e. the alleged aggressor(s) and the alleged target(s)) and investigate, as appropriate. This investigation may include interviews with students, parents/guardians, and school staff; review of school records; and identification of parent and family issues. Any student who retaliates against another for reporting bullying will be subject to appropriate consequences.

Consequences for students who bully others shall depend on the results of the investigation and may include:

- a. Counseling
- b. Parent conference
- c. Detention
- d. Suspension and/or expulsion

Depending on the severity of the incident(s), the principal may also report incidents of bullying to law enforcement.

## ***HAZING***

Hazing is defined as the imposition of strenuous, often humiliating, tasks as part of a program of rigorous physical training and initiation.

Hazing is prohibited. School personnel will not tolerate any hazing on diocesan school grounds, in virtual school, or at any school-sponsored activity (on or off school grounds). In addition, the Office of Catholic Schools expects students and parents who become aware of an act of hazing to report it to appropriate school personnel (e.g. principal, teacher, school counselor). The Office of Catholic Schools expects staff members who become aware of an incidence of hazing to report the hazing to school administration for further investigation.

In cases of reported hazing, the principal or designee shall interview all students involved (i.e., the alleged aggressor(s) and the alleged target(s)) and investigate, as appropriate. This investigation may include interviews with students, parents/guardians, and school staff; review of school records; and identification of parent and family issues. Any student who retaliates against another for reporting hazing will be subject to appropriate consequences.

Consequences for students who engage in hazing shall depend on the results of the investigation and may include:

- a. Counseling
- b. A parent conference
- c. Detention



- d. Suspension and/or expulsion

Depending on the severity of the incident(s), the principal may also report incidents of hazing to law enforcement.

## ***RACISM***

Racism is defined as prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- a. Discrimination
- b. Victimization
- c. Oral or written threats, including text messaging
- d. Malicious Teasing
- e. Putdowns
- f. Name calling
- g. Threatening looks
- h. Gestures or acts of aggression (Overt and Covert)
- i. Cruel rumors and false accusations
- j. Social Isolation
- k. Cyber-racism (racism that takes place using digital devices)

Racism is prohibited. School personnel will not tolerate any racism on Diocesan school grounds or at any school-sponsored activity (on or off school grounds). In addition, the Office of Catholic Schools expects students and parents who become aware of an act of racism to report it to appropriate school personnel (e.g. principal, teacher, school counselor). The Office of Catholic Schools expects staff members who become aware of any racism incident to take appropriate steps to intervene unless intervention would be a threat to staff members' safety. Every instance of suspected racism should be brought immediately to the attention of school leadership.

In cases of reported racism, the principal or designee shall interview all students involved (i.e., the alleged aggressor(s) and the alleged target(s)) and investigate, as appropriate. This investigation may include interviews with students, parents, and school staff; review of school records; and identification of parent and family issues. Any student who retaliates against another for reporting racist behavior will be subject to appropriate consequences.

Consequences for students engaged in racist behavior shall depend on the results of the

investigation and may include:

- a. Counseling
- b. A parent conference
- c. Detention
- d. Suspension and/or expulsion

Depending on the severity of the incident(s), the principal may also report incidents of racism to law enforcement.

## ***ASBESTOS MANDATORY YEARLY NOTIFICATION***

### **ASBESTOS NOTIFICATION**

In 1986, Congress passed the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) which requires schools to be inspected to identify any asbestos containing building materials.

The law further requires an asbestos management plan to be in place. You are welcome to review a copy of the asbestos management plan at the school during regular business hours.

## ***VIDEO SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS***

School leadership at each individual school must install video surveillance cameras in order to maintain a safe and secure environment.

- a. Video surveillance cameras may be placed in public locations deemed appropriate. Such locations may include, without limitation, school entrances/exits, lobby areas, hallways, classrooms, cafeterias, athletic areas, gathering spaces, and outdoor grounds, as well as school buses.
- b. Restrooms, changing rooms, private offices, nurse's offices, and locker rooms are excluded from security camera use.
- c. It is recognized that it will not be possible to monitor all building areas, rooms, and grounds, or to monitor any location at all times.

To the extent video images may be deemed appropriate to create student records or personnel records, the school shall comply with any applicable state and federal laws related to record maintenance, retention, and disclosure.

Video images obtained by the school shall be viewed by authorized school and diocesan personnel as necessary. The school and the diocese may rely on the images obtained by the video surveillance cameras in connection with the enforcement of diocesan or school policies, regulations, codes of

conduct, building rules, and other applicable laws or rules, including, but not limited to, use of such images in student disciplinary proceedings and matters referred to local law enforcement agencies in accordance with applicable law. Video images may become part of a student's educational record in accordance with applicable law.

All video recordings shall be stored in a secure place. Recordings will be saved for no less than 60 days and may be retained longer if deemed appropriate. All video recordings are the sole property of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington. Release of such videos will be made only with the permission of the diocesan Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee.

## **VIII. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

The Office of Catholic Schools recognizes the beauty and potential inherent within each child. In an effort to foster continued growth, the school embraces the opportunity to provide assistance and services for children with disabilities according to the resources available within/to the school. Parents are considered an integral part of the process.

In order to accommodate a child who has been evaluated for special learning needs, parents are obligated to share educational/psychological testing results and any resulting plan with the school. The refusal to provide such information is a condition for negating enrollment in the school. A child may be admitted on a probationary basis with dates and criteria of evaluation clearly established in writing.

If a child has a documented disability, a copy of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Individualized Services Plan (ISP), 504 plan, and/or Student Assistance Plan (SAP) should be maintained in the child's confidential file. Children who have a documented disability, but do not qualify for services through the local public school, may be eligible for accommodations through a Student Assistance Plan written at the Catholic school.

When a student qualifies for special education services through the public school and will not receive services, an Individualized Catholic Education Plan can be written following the information in the Guidelines for Serving Students with Disabilities.

Failure of the parent to sign the Student Assistance Plan or Individualized Catholic Education Plan does not prevent the implementation of the plan.

Children with disabilities are expected to follow the school's policies and honor code.

## **IX. PROGRAM INFORMATION**

### ***LICENSING INFORMATION***

The Commonwealth of Virginia helps assure parents that child day programs that assume responsibility for the supervision, protection, and well-being of a child for any part of a 24-hour day are safe. The Code of Virginia, Section 63.2-1716, allows child day centers operated by religious institutions the opportunity to file for an exemption from licensure by meeting documentation and other requirements specified within the religious exemption law.

### ***RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION***

In compliance with the Code of Virginia, Section 63.2-1716, ALL Diocese of Arlington Preschools and are religiously exempt from licensure and are classified as a "religiously exempt child day center." If you would like additional information about the licensing of child day programs or would like to register a complaint, please call the Office of Child Care Licensing

toll-free at 833-778-0204.

## ***CRISIS MANAGEMENT/EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN***

A Crisis Management/Emergency Preparedness Plan has been developed and approved. All employees have been trained accordingly.

## ***OVER-THE-COUNTER SKIN PRODUCTS***

All non-prescription drugs and over-the-counter skin products shall be used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Non-prescription drugs and over-the-counter skin products shall not be kept or used beyond the expiration date of the product.

For all over-the-counter skin products:

- a. written parent authorization noting any known adverse reactions shall be obtained;
- b. shall be in the original container labeled with the child's name;
- c. does not need to be kept locked, but shall be inaccessible to children under five years of age;
- d. any center-kept sunscreen shall be hypo-allergenic and have a minimum SPF of 15;
- e. children nine years of age and older may administer their own sunscreen, if supervised.

When insect repellent is used, a record shall be kept that includes the child's name, date of use, frequency of application, and any adverse reaction. Manufacturer's instructions for age, duration, and dosage shall be followed.

## ***INSURANCE***

The program is covered by public liability insurance through the Diocese of Arlington and the Catholic Mutual Relief Society of America. Student insurance must be provided by the family through their own policy or purchased through an independent school insurance provider.

### ***Tax Information***

Because the Internal Revenue Service requires identification of care givers in order to claim a credit for child and dependent care expenses, the school will complete and return to the parent any W-10 that is sent in, provided Part II is already completed by the parent.

## ***PARENTAL/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT***

In compliance with state regulations for state licensed programs, a custodial parent shall be

admitted to any child day program. Such right of admission shall apply only while the child is in the child day program (63.2-1813 of Code of Virginia).

## X. APPENDICES

### Diocesan Forms

- Permission for Emergency Care Form (Appendix F-1)
- Confidential Student Health History Update (Appendix F-1A)
- Virginia School Entrance Health Form (Appendix F-2)
- Virginia School Entrance Health Form Instructions (Appendix F-2A)
- Asthma Action Plan with Indemnification (Appendix F-3)
- Nebulizer Treatment Log and Procedure (Appendix F-3A)
- Anaphylaxis Action Plan with Indemnification (Appendix F-4)
- Diabetes Quick Reference and Indemnification (Appendix F-5)
- Virginia Diabetes Medical Management Plan (Appendix F-5A)
- Diocese Medication Authorization Form (Appendix F-6)
- Student Injury Accident Report (Appendix F-7)
- Wind Chill Factors/Heat Stress Index (Appendix 15)
- Certificate of Religious Exemption (Appendix F-18)
- Seizure Action Plan (Appendix F-20)
- Photo, Press, Audio, and Electronic Media Release for Minors (Appendix N)
- Parent Permission for School Sponsored Trip Participation.English (Appendix R)
- Permiso De Los Padres Para Excursiones Patrocinados Por La Esquela.Spanish (Appendix R-A)
- Use of Personal Vehicle (Appendix R-1)
- Preschool Handbook Agreement Form (Appendix AG-3)

Signature Page

# Preschool Handbook Agreement Form

## PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have received a current copy of the Parent/Student Handbook. In doing so, I have explained the content of this document to my child(ren). I acknowledge and agree to the policies obtained therein, and will require my child(ren) to comply with the policies which apply to students.

I also realize during my child's enrollment at the school I will be informed from time to time, formally or informally, of various changes to school and/or Diocesan policies. I understand the school and/or Diocese reserves the right to change policies at any time with or without advance notice. I further understand it is required for me to sign this form in order to continue my child's enrollment at the school.

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(Parent's Signature)

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(Printed Name)

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(Date)