

St. Martin's Lutheran Preschool

Parent Handbook 2023–2024

606 W. 15th St
Austin, Texas 78701
Office Phone: 512.476.4037

School Hours: 7:15 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

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Welcome to St. Martin's Lutheran Preschool for the 2023-2024 school year! Saint Martin's Lutheran Preschool offers age appropriate curriculum and learning-center based classrooms in an interactive environment for exploring new horizons. The Preschool is a twelve-month program offered Monday through Friday to children ages 3 months through Pre-Kindergarten.

Saint Martin's Lutheran Preschool seeks to meet the needs of young children and their families by providing an educational program that addresses all areas of development—intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual. A highly qualified and experienced staff joins with parents to promote the healthy development of the whole child. Staff members devote hours of planning and preparing for teaching and nurturing the children in their care. **Our mission at St. Martin's Lutheran Preschool is to facilitate your child's awareness and understanding of the world around them and to foster a positive self-image and respect for others.**

GENERAL INFORMATION

Parental Notification: Parents will be notified in writing when there are any changes in Policy.

Saint Martin's School Board: The School Board meets quarterly, or as needed. The Board determines policies and procedures that are positive and productive for the Church and School. The Board is in charge of raising money for scholarships, assessing scholarship needs, approving the budget, and supporting the Director. The School Board has also delineated the qualifications by which teachers are hired.

School Calendar: A school calendar is provided at the beginning of the school year. Updates will be published in our monthly newsletter, monthly calendars, or by e-mail. We acknowledge that school closings may interfere with family schedules and we apologize in advance for any inconvenience that this may cause.

Professional Development: Saint Martin's recognizes the need to provide quality education and care for all children and teachers involved in our program. Each teacher is required to participate in 24 hours of professional development on an annual basis, including 1 hour on the prevention and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

The Daily Program and Teaching Strategies: The administrators, teachers, and parents of the Preschool share a common commitment to provide a top quality Early Childhood Program that reflects knowledge of and respect for the unique learning styles of young children.

The following ideas are intrinsic to the Saint Martin's program:

- Young children thrive in a warm and loving environment. The staff's commitment is to provide an environment where children may become comfortable, happy, relaxed, and involved in classroom activities.
- The daily schedule provides for a balance of individual/group activities, active/quiet play, large/small exercises, and indoor/outdoor learning experiences. Activities at each age-level are carefully planned to be developmentally appropriate.
- Young children expend vast amounts of energy, time, and effort exploring and making sense of their immediate environment. The staff supports and encourages this spontaneous learning by providing a meaningful classroom setting and by taking advantage of "teachable moments."
- The staff respects the concept that young children "learn by doing" and therefore provide hands-on

learning experiences. Many sensory experiences are also planned so that children will have opportunities to touch, hear, see, smell, and taste as their perceptual abilities are developing.

- Classrooms are busy, noisy, happy, creative places where play is valued as a vehicle for learning and advancement in all areas of development.
- Young children learn through self-initiated and staff-initiated activities. Learning centers are provided to give children opportunities to make choices, solve problems, and experiment with autonomy. "Circle Times" or "Together Times" are also an important part of each day. Here the children learn how to participate in a group setting while listening to stories, singing songs, or sharing ideas.
- Good health, cleanliness, and nutrition are emphasized.
- The teachers and staff strive to implement these and other good practices of Early Childhood Education in a positive atmosphere.

Christian Education: Christian Education is seen as a vital part of the daily program. Children will pray before meals, sing songs to God, celebrate major holidays of the Church year, and hear stories suitable for their age. Christian values will be honored in our curriculum and modeled in our behavior.

Our children will enjoy "Children's Chapel" once a week during the 9-month school year. The children will sing songs and hear stories from the Bible. Parents are always welcome to join the group.

Guidance and Discipline Policies: We are committed to helping children learn to express and manage their feelings, cooperate with other children, and negotiate their own conflicts.

We believe discipline must be:

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

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

1. Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
2. Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
3. Redirecting behavior using positive statements
4. Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and

development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

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

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

Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L, Discipline and Guidance

The goal of guidance at Saint Martin's is to teach the child acceptable behavior while helping him/her to become self-guided/self-disciplined. Early childhood is a time of both emotional and cognitive growth. During this time children are just beginning to learn how to resolve conflicts in their daily lives. In the younger end, many children do not have the verbal skills to resolve these conflicts and will resort to physical means to get their point across. This is considered developmentally appropriate and in these situations the teachers and parents must work together to teach/model correct behavior.

TUITION

Tuition: Tuition rates are established by the School Board and vary depending upon the child/teacher ratios required for each age-level. These rates may be adjusted on an annual basis as determined by the Board. Tuition is divided into equal monthly payments and will not be reduced due to student absences, vacations, weather-related closures or School holidays.

Prorated tuition for incoming students not attending a full month is calculated as follows: Monthly tuition divided by 20, multiplied by the number of days attending. **We do not prorate for the month once your child has started the program.**

Tuition Payment Policy:

Regular Payment Plan Schedule:

- Tuition is to be paid by the 15th of each month.
- Auto-pay will be pulled on the 15th of each month.
- Late fees will be assessed beginning on the 15th of the month if fees are not paid.
- The initial late fee will be \$20.

Split Payment Plan Schedule:

- 50% of tuition is paid by the 1st of each month.
- 50% of tuition is paid by the 15th of each month.
- Late fees will be assessed beginning on the 20th of the month if fees are not paid.
- The initial late fee will be \$20.
- Auto-pay is not an option for Split Payments.

If the account is not paid in full by the end of the month, the student's enrollment may be discontinued. Payment in full on the overdue account will reinstate the student only if space is available. If the payment is not made in full, the account will be turned over to a collection agency for recovery of funds.

Checks may be deposited in the metal locked box located outside the Church Office
You may pay online through our [Brightwheel](#) Parent Portal.

30-Day Notice: A 30-Day Notice is required when you are leaving the school. Forms are located in the office. Failure to fill out the notice may result in additional tuition charges.

Late Pick-Up:

A late pick-up fee of \$25 will be charged for the first 10 minutes after the designated pick-up time. An additional fee of \$5 per minute will be charged for every minute beyond 6:10 PM. Fees will be added to the next invoice or billed separately.

Parents should notify the facility in advance of any anticipated late pick-ups. In the event of an unplanned late pick-up, parents must contact the facility immediately.

Staff will record the time of late pick-up in Brightwheel and calculate the corresponding fee. Payment is due upon receipt of the invoice.

Repeated late pick-ups may result in further action, including review of enrollment and possible termination of childcare services.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Enrollment Procedures: Saint Martin's Lutheran Preschool is open to all children regardless of race, ethnic origin, or religious preference. Parents of prospective students are encouraged to make an appointment to visit and observe the Preschool in session and to discuss any questions they might have with the Director.

To register a new or returning student into the program a completed Registration Form is required and the **non-refundable Annual Fee** must be paid at the time of registration.

*The children enrolled in our program must meet the applicable immunization requirements and vision/hearing screening requirements as outlined in: *Minimum Standards for Childcare - Sections 746.613–746.629.*

Parents are responsible for providing any updated information.

Placement: Children are placed in classes according to their age as of September 1 of the current school year. Children entering the 18mth program must be able to walk. Children entering the 3 yr old program must be potty trained.

Promotion Policy: It is the policy of the Preschool to promote children at the beginning of each school year.

CURRICULUM

St. Martin's Approach: The curriculum-based Preschool program is designed to address the cognitive, physical, social, and language development needs of the students.

The environment is child-centered and one in which children learn through experience and discovery.

Children, through a

child centered environment, learn:

- To use self-discipline
- To talk and listen effectively
- To solve problems and make decisions
- To accept responsibility for their behavior
- To share and work with others
- That they are important as individuals.

Curriculum

At St. Martin's each class follows the themes and curriculum provided by Experience Early Learning. Their curriculum system uniquely weaves 33 research-based skills into playful games and projects.

As children participate, they naturally grow in all areas of development, including social-emotional, physical, language and cognitive development.

Additional Curriculum Tools

- Three's: Handwriting Without Tears,
- Four's: A Beka Book

Specialty Areas (18 Month Olds and Two's):

Music, Chapel and

Art and Science

Specialty Areas (3's, and 4's):

Music, Chapel, P.E. with Coach Bob and

Art and Science

Class Schedule: The teacher will prepare a daily schedule indicating when each circle time, academics period, or required subject is taught. A copy is kept in the Preschool Office. Each parent should receive an initial copy and any revisions.

Homework: Preschool children will occasionally have "homework," such as bringing an item in or wearing a certain color. Parents are encouraged to read to their child daily. Parent support and involvement in their child's education is vital to the child's success.

Nap: Preschool children will have a required naptime after lunch. St. Martin's will not allow parents to opt their child out of nap.

Children need to bring the following nap items:

- *a small pillow
- *a crib-sized sheet
- *a lightweight cover

Please label all items and bring in a reusable grocery bag or tote. They will be sent home every Friday to be laundered.

STUDENT LIFE

Adjustments to School: Adjustment to school is smoothest when preceded by an informal visit to the school. Children entering later in the year should also have an opportunity to visit the class with a parent before being left for a full day.

Always tell your child good-bye, even when he/she may have become involved in an activity. If there is a separation problem, teacher and parent may cue each other as to when the parent may leave. Generally, once the parent has exited, a child is easier to calm and integrate

into the daily activities. **Please limit your drop-off to 5min.**

When a child is new, he/she may not readily participate in the class activities. Be aware of the activities on the weekly lesson plans posted outside each classroom so that you can ask relevant questions about your child's day.

Daily reports are sent via Brightwheel for 18mth olds and twos. Diapering times are posted in Brightwheel as well.

The Preschool always uses our school assistants as our substitute teachers.

Belongings from Home: Children are allowed and encouraged to bring items from home to be shared at "special times". Children are encouraged to bring items that they have made, found, or experienced.

Children may share books or CD's with classmates but we ask that you do not bring DVD's to share. All items from home must be labeled with the child's name. Items strictly prohibited include pretend weapons, make-up, candy, and gum. **Such items will be secured by the teacher and returned to the parent at the end of the day.**

Clothing: Please dress your child comfortably, in washable clothing suitable for active play and appropriate weather. Girls are required to wear shorts/tights under their dresses. Children wear smocks during painting and other messy activities, but accidents do occur. Please keep in mind that children do not need the pressure of worrying about getting "special" clothes dirty. Clothing should encourage self-help skills. Shoes should be well fitting and safe for playground activities--tennis shoes or shoes with rubber soles are best. No sandals, crocs or open-toed shoes. **Children wearing inappropriate shoes will not be allowed on the playscapes.**

A complete change of clothing (pants and shirt or dress, socks, and underwear) should be available in the child's "cubby" at all times. Please replace these items with clean ones as they are used, as seasons change, or as your children grow. Clearly label all items with the child's name.

Children in diapers should bring a pack of disposable diapers. Those children potty training should bring plenty of training pants and extra clothing.

Potty Training: Saint Martin's teachers will support and encourage families during the potty training process; however, it is not the teacher's responsibility alone to teach this essential life skill—it can only be achieved

through a partnership with the parent. **We do not potty train in the Toddler Class.**

See our **Potty Training Handbook** for more information.

Importance of Physical Activity: Active play is an essential component of a young child's development. Children learn through play, developing gross motor, socioemotional, and cognitive skills. Regular physical activity can help children and adolescents improve cardiorespiratory fitness, build strong bones and muscles, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing health conditions.

Outdoor Participation: Outdoor play is an integral part of the child's day. All children will participate in both inside and outside activities. Administration will determine outdoor activities based on several factors: temperature, wind chill, heat index, and age of the children. In the event of a heat index over 90 degrees or temperatures colder than 40 degrees the classes will utilize the indoor gymnasium for active play opportunities. A written medical excuse from the child's physician must be provided if the child's active play must be restricted.

Playground Rules:

- State Standards mandate that children be supervised at all times by an adult while on the playground.
- Children must wear closed-toed shoes on the playground.
- Signed permission slips are required to apply sunscreen and insect repellent that is supplied by the parent.

Attendance: Between 9am and lunchtime are when children are most responsive. Punctual arrival allows the program to meet the children's educational needs most effectively.

Children may not be dropped off during nap time.

Arrival and Departure: Because of our concern for the physical and emotional well being of your children, we have established the following rules:

- Please remember to slow down and be cautious when driving through the parking lot. The speed limit is 5mph. The fire lane needs to remain open at all times, including inclement weather.
- For the safety of Saint Martin's children and staff, **all students, parents, and staff must enter through the 16th Street door.** This door has a keypad for access by key fob for parents and church members. Please do not allow strangers to enter the building with you, either

have the person press the buzzer to talk to staff or walk the person to the school or church office—please do not leave anyone alone to wander the halls. Help keep our campus secure and safe by ALWAYS closing any gate or door that leads to the exterior of the School campus.

- **Parents should closely accompany children from the minute they exit their car until they reach the entrance to the School. Please do not allow them to exit the car and run freely through the parking lot into the building. Please do not allow your children to run in the School hallways.**
- No child may be left unattended in a car for any length of time on Saint Martin’s property.
- Children must be escorted into their classrooms and left with their teachers. Licensing requires that the parent sign their child in and out each day.
- Please sign your child in/out for the day via the Brightwheel kiosk near the office or in your child’s classroom.
- Children will only be released to the person(s) listed on the Release Form. Please come to the Preschool Office if any addition or deletion needs to be made.
- **End of Day Pick-Up.** All classes will combine to a single room in within Age group for the last 30 minutes of the day. See class schedule for specifics.
- Once you check your child out for the day, we ask that you leave the building. Children may not play in the classrooms as they have been sanitized and made ready for the next day.
- The 16th Street door will remain locked until 7:15 each morning—early arrivals will need to remain outside the building until the door is unlocked.

Please alert your child’s teacher to any change in your child’s schedule and any unusual event or situation that might affect his/her day at school. We ask that you notify the Preschool if your child will not be attending due to vacation or illness.

Please keep in mind the Preschool does not pro-rate fees due to illness, vacation, or closings.

Lunches/Snacks: A hot lunch and two snacks are provided daily for all students. Students may bring sack lunches if they do not wish to eat on a particular day but there is no refund for not using this service. Milk is provided free of charge for all students.

Saint Martin’s is a Nut--Free environment.
Due to the severity of nut allergies absolutely no nut products are allowed.

Morning snacks will be provided between 8:30 and 10:00—this is NOT breakfast, but a snack. Any child not present during this time period will miss the morning snack. If arriving after the snack time, you may bring food from the outside and sit in the cafeteria while your child eats. NO outside food may be served in the classroom.

Afternoon snacks are based on health requirements for young children and all ingredients are checked to prevent any child with allergies from being excluded from the snack.

Parents are NOT allowed to bring in snacks for their child unless it has been approved by the School Office.

Parties: All class parties are to take place at the afternoon snack time. Date and time for the party will be determined by the School. Parents of children with food allergies should provide an alternative snack.

Birthdays: A birthday is an important event in the life of a child and a classroom community. The teachers will be happy to help you celebrate this special day. Parents who wish to bring refreshments should make arrangements in advance with the teacher. All birthday parties will be celebrated at the afternoon snack time. Please **no party favors.**

Invitations to birthday parties held away from campus may be distributed at School as long as **all** children in the class are included.

Shared Email Contacts

Parent email may be shared with other families in my child’s class, for the purpose of birthday invites or class communication.

If you do not wish to share your email, please notify the school office.

School Pictures: School pictures will be taken during the fall and spring semesters of the regular school year. The pictures will be taken during the regular school day. You are under no obligation to purchase the pictures.

Photography/Video: Saint Martin’s reserves the right to photograph/video all students for use in the classrooms, hallways, newsletters intended for School members/or Church, and classroom art projects. Photos will be uploaded to a private Google Drive for parent viewing.

If you do not wish your child to be included in the above, please see the school office.

Medications: Should your child require medication during a school day, the parent must sign the Medication Form from the office and complete the information required. All medication must be in the original container and clearly labeled with the child's name. **Please bring a dispensing spoon, cup, or dropper to administer the medication.** All medications and forms need to be dropped off at the Preschool Office and will then be distributed by school staff to the child's teacher for administering the medicine. **The staff member administering the medication will record the time and amount administered.** All over the counter medication that states, "consult a physician" for the child's age range must be accompanied by a physician's prescription.

If your child has had fever during the night, please do not medicate them and send them to school. By the time the medication wears off and the fever returns, you have exposed the class and the teacher. Please take responsibility for your child when they are ill.

Sunscreen, Insect Repellent, Diaper Cream, Lip Balm, or Over-the-Counter Ointments: Parents may provide the school with sunscreen, insect repellent, diaper cream, or over the counter ointments such as bite cream, skin cream, or chap stick to be used on their child during the school year by filling out the form below.

These topical ointments must be clearly labeled with your child's name and will be kept in the classroom.

- Nothing can be applied without a current expiration date.
- No aerosols.
- No ointments that specifically state an age range that your child is not included in may be applied.

Over the counter ointments include:

- SUNSCREEN
- INSECT REPELLANT
- DIAPER CREAM
- LIP BALM
- ANTI-ITCH CREAM
- OVER-THE-COUNTER OINTMENTS/CREAMS

Parents will supply the above item(s) to SMLS and agree to have it applied to child when necessary. Parents will supply new creams if/when their date expires and at the beginning of each new school year.

Water Activities: During the 9-month school session, children do not participate in water activities other than water tables in the classroom. During the 3-month summer session children will participate in splash days

once a week. No wading pools are used at Saint Martin's Preschool.

Animals: All animals placed in classrooms as pets, must follow the *Minimum Standards and Guidelines of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services - Sections 746.3901, 746.3903, and 746.3905.*

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Chapel: Children at Saint Martin's enjoy weekly Chapel time with songs and stories from the Bible. Our general message is "God is love".

Music: Saint Martin's children enjoy music on a daily basis. Each classroom has a radio/CD player that the teachers use to enhance their daily teaching practices. The children have music twice a week with the Music teacher from Sept. to May. Students and teachers sing, play simple instruments, and experiment with creative movements.

Physical Education: Once a week, during the 9-month school year, Coach Bob will provide the Four-year-old and Three-year-old classes a structured program in the gym. The program is specially designed for Preschool aged children.

Extra-Curricular Activities: This year our afternoon vendors will be:

- Kinderdance - dance and movement.
- Soccer Shots - indoor soccer lessons
- Coach Bob's Little Sport Sports Camp - during the 3 summer months

Enrollment in these outside agencies is separate and not included in the monthly tuition. Ask for more information and enrollment forms in the office.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Role of Parents: Quality Early Childhood Education occurs when parents, teachers, administrators, and the Congregation work together as a team. Your suggestions, comments, and goals are important. Parents are welcome to visit the office and discuss any questions or concerns with the Director.

Communicating with Teachers: If you need to contact a teacher, please call the School Office. Teachers are not allowed to answer texts, emails, or phone calls from

parents on their private cell phones during the school work day. Unauthorized use of a cell phone during work hours can result in dismissal.

Communication and Notification: The school uses email, monthly digital newsletters, parent bulletin boards and other postings to notify parents of upcoming events and closings.

Other Opportunities for Parents:

- Parents may serve as Room Volunteers to help organize special events during the school year. Room Volunteers also assist the teachers with planning parties, and arranging other enrichment activities.
- Parents are invited to share hobbies, careers, cultural celebrations, or other interests with the children. Arrange the day and time with your child's teacher.
- Parents may also volunteer to help with event set up and operation.

Evaluations: All age groups will receive monthly evaluation reports from September to May.

Parent- Teacher Conferences: Scheduled conferences will be held for the four year old classes in the spring. In addition to these scheduled conferences, you are encouraged to make an appointment with your child's teacher or the School Director any time you have a question, concern, or idea to share.

Spring Conferences- Four-year olds

- Parents and teachers will discuss the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of the child as seen over the course of the school year.
- Parents and teachers will discuss the plans for the upcoming year so that the child will have a smooth transition to Kindergarten. The Director or Assistant Director may be called in for consultation when necessary.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Visitor Procedures: To ensure the safety of the children, ALL visitors to the school, including Parents and volunteers, are to sign in at the Preschool Office. At the end of the visit, visitors must sign out before leaving. Parents are welcome to visit at any time during the hours of operation to observe their child, the center or program activities. All visitors and parents should limit their visits to 30 minutes.

Pick-Up Authorization and Emergency Contacts:

Children are allowed to leave only with persons on the Pick-up Authorization List. The parent/guardian must make arrangements with the office for additional persons to take the child. Verbal permission is not acceptable. The parent must add the person to the list or send a written request specifying dates and times. Everyone picking up must provide a picture ID to be photocopied.

Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services and Saint Martin's Lutheran Preschool Policy require the name, phone number, address, and relationship to the child. A child may be released only to persons authorized by the parent. If you wish for your child to be released to anyone other than the parents, please notify the office.

They must be at least 18 years of age.

Matters of Concern: At our preschool, we understand that parents may have concerns or grievances regarding their child's experience at our facility. To ensure that any grievances are handled fairly and efficiently, we have developed the following policy:

- **Grievance Procedure-** Parents are encouraged to address any concerns or grievances with their child's teacher or the director of the preschool as soon as possible. The preschool staff will do their best to resolve any issues quickly and to the satisfaction of all parties involved.
- **Complaints in Writing-** If the issue cannot be resolved informally, the parent may submit a written complaint to the preschool director. The written complaint should clearly describe the nature of the grievance, including the date(s) and details of the incident(s), and the steps taken to address the issue thus far.
- **Investigation-** Upon receipt of the written complaint, the preschool director will investigate the matter and meet with all parties involved to gather all the necessary information to resolve the issue.
- **Response-** Within ten business days of receipt of the written complaint, the preschool director will provide the parent with a written response outlining the findings of the investigation and any actions that have been taken or will be taken to resolve the issue.
- **Escalation-** If the parent is not satisfied with the response from the preschool director, the parent may escalate the matter to the Senior Pastor.
- **Confidentiality-** All grievances will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to protect the

privacy of all parties involved. The preschool staff will not discuss the grievance with anyone outside of those directly involved in the investigation.

- **Non-retaliation-** The preschool prohibits any retaliation against a parent who files a grievance or complaint.

We believe that this policy will help us to address any concerns or grievances in a timely and efficient manner, while also ensuring that all parties are treated fairly and with respect.

Custody Cases: St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool shall protect the safety and right of the child according to the court order. The school will not assume any legal responsibility or liability if such a document is not on file. Parents in these circumstances are advised to notify the Preschool Office.

Teacher Immunization Policy: St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool does not require any specific vaccines in order to be employed at our preschool. Specific immunizations needed as an adult vary on such factors including age, overall health as well as persons you are in close contact with.

- We strongly encourage but do not require our staff to be vaccinated for:
 - Influenza (Flu)
 - Hepatitis A
 - Pertussis
 - COVID-19
- Employees are required to follow hand washing procedures listed under section 746.3415 and 746.3419 for adults and sections 746.3417 for children in their care.
- Employees are required to wear gloves during diapering and for handling of all other body fluids.

Licensing: St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool is licensed by the state of Texas. A copy of the Center’s most recent Licensing inspection is posted on the parent board outside the Preschool Office. A copy of Minimum Standards is available for you to review in the Office and online at <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/> For other information call the childcare information hotline at (800)862-5252 or our local Licensing office at (512)908-9585.

Gang-Free Zone: Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

Breastfeeding: Parents who are breastfeeding may use the Church Nursery (room 207.) Parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child while in care.

Pest Control: As part of our commitment to provide your child with a safe, pest-free learning environment, St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool may periodically apply pesticides to help manage insects, weeds or pathogens. Pesticide applications are part of our integrated pest management (IPM) program, which relies largely on non-chemical forms of pest control. Pesticide applications on St. Martin’s property are made only by trained and licensed technicians. Should you have any questions about the preschool’s pest management program or wish to be notified in advance of pesticide applications, you may contact the school office at (512) 476-4037.

Child Abuse Prevention: We are invested in keeping children safe. If you suspect your child has been abused or neglected, report the situation immediately. Call the Abuse/Neglect Hotline at (800) 252-5400 or make a report through the DFPS's secure website: www.txabusehotline.org. St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool is obligated to report any evidence of child abuse or neglect, our staff receives annual training in the identification and prevention of child abuse.

Weather Related School Closing: In the event of hazardous weather conditions or other emergencies and subsequent school closings, the director will send an email to all families notifying the parents and staff if the school will close or delay the start of the day.

- St. Martin’s will open at 10am in the event of a delayed start
 - All teachers should arrive by 9:45 on delayed start days.

If adverse weather conditions necessitate closing the school once classes have commenced, an email will be sent out updating families of any changes all parents will be notified by email and phone call that children are to be picked up immediately.

Parking Lot Safety Precautions: Normal traffic guidelines apply, but there are additional traffic rules which must be observed if we are to keep all of the children safe.

- The speed limit in the parking lot is **5 MPH**.
- Do not double-park. Park only in designated spaces.
- The “**red zone**” is reserved for emergency vehicles **AT ALL TIMES**.
- Never leave children in the car unattended.
- No cell phone use while driving in the parking lot
- Be aware of “entrance” and “exit” signs

Emergency Preparedness Plan:

In Case of Fire: Staff will escort students outside via a predetermined route as posted in each classroom. All classes will meet on the 16th St. sidewalk and await further instruction.

In Case of Severe Weather: Staff will escort students to a predetermined room in the basement as posted in each classroom. Once sheltered, classes will await further instruction.

School Evacuation: Saint Martin’s has a reciprocal agreement with First United Methodist Church. In the event of the need to evacuate our building, the school staff will exit our building as they would during a fire drill, lead the children south on Rio Grande to 12th Street, turn left and continue to the corner of 12th and Lavaca where the church is located. Upon arrival staff will contact parents to inform them of the evacuation and of our location.

In Case of Lockdown: “Lock Down” will be announced. Staff will escort children to nearest room and lock door. Staff will cover door window with paper. Once in place staff will keep children calm and quiet until given further instruction.

**** Infants will evacuate in a designated evacuation crib, 18mos and 2s classes will walk using a rope, 3s and 4s will walk two by two****

Medical Emergencies: In the case of illness or injury during school hours, the following procedures will be followed:

- Staff will attempt to contact one or both parents.
- If parents cannot be reached, designated persons in the child’s file will be contacted.

When a child needs immediate medical attention and a parent cannot be reached, a staff member will contact the child’s doctor and upon their recommendation will take the child to the doctor’s office or the nearest emergency room. All expenses incurred are the responsibility of the parent.

In the event my child needs medical treatment and I cannot be reached or emergency treatment is needed, Saint Martin’s Lutheran School staff will secure medical treatment for my child.

PARENTS ARE ALWAYS CONTACTED FIRST IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

Allergy Awareness: If your child has been diagnosed with a food allergy, additional medical paperwork is required. Please contact the Preschool Office to obtain the required

forms. Parents should also verbally discuss their child’s allergies with the teachers in the class and the cafeteria manager.

Special Problems: If your child has any special problems such as existing illnesses, previous serious illnesses, injuries and hospitalizations during the past 12 months, or any medication prescribed for long-term continuous use, please contact the Preschool Office to provide additional details. Child daycare operations are public accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title III. If you believe that such an operation may be practicing discrimination in violation of Title III, you may call the ADA Information Line at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Family Dismissal Policy: St. Martin’s Preschool has the right to dismiss any family that we feel is a compromise to the well being of the school.

- In the event a parent/school relationship conflict arises, the director and family will meet to resolve the issue.
- If the issue continues, and the well being of the school is at risk of being compromised, members of the school board and director may ask the family to find childcare elsewhere.

Biting Policy: Biting is often a misread and misunderstood action. Biting is a behavior that is often linked to a child’s developmental age. Biting has been described as a form of sensory exploration and communication. The act of biting is most often experienced in the Toddlers and Twos’ stages of development.

Biting Policy for Ages 18mth and Two

- 1st bite- Anonymous incident reports to both families.
- 2nd bite- Incident reports and Teacher/Director decide on a plan of redirection.
- 3rd bite- Parent conference with Teacher and Director
- Failure to work with the school on changes could result in dismissal.

Biting Policy for Ages Three, Four, and Five

- 1st bite- Anonymous incident reports to both families.
- 2nd bite- Parent/Teacher/Director meeting to discuss the behavior.
- 3rd bite—Child will be sent home for the remainder of the day.
- 4th bite—conference with parents that may result in dismissal from the school.

Illness Policy: **A child who is ill belongs at home.** The child must be free of fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before they can return to school.

In order to protect the health of all children attending Saint Martin's, we have the right to refuse a child who we think is not well enough to participate or might be contagious to other children and staff members.

Please notify the school at once if your child has a communicable disease or has been exposed to one. If a child has a contagious disease a plan of action is posted on the door and a letter is sent home.

As stated in Minimum Standards and Guidelines of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services – Section 746.3601:

An ill child must not be admitted for care if one or more of the following exists:

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child-care center activities including outdoor play;
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than the caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care;
3. The child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that you can include the child in the child-care center's activities:
 - a. Oral temperature of 101 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
 - b. Rectal temperature of 102 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
 - c. Armpit temperature of 100 degrees or greater; accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness; or
 - d. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill; or
4. A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious

Evaluating Children for Disability Policy:

St. Martin's Lutheran Preschool is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment for all children in our care. We believe in fostering an atmosphere where each child's unique abilities and needs are acknowledged and supported. However, we do not perform formal evaluations for disabilities within the preschool setting. It is the responsibility of parents or legal guardians to seek evaluations and diagnoses from licensed medical professionals if they suspect their child has a disability.

Infants (3-17 months)

CLASSROOM GOALS

Ratios: Low child-to-adult ratios and small group sizes help ensure that your child gets enough one-on-one attention from an adult who is available to take care of each child's unique needs. St. Martin's believes this way responsive caregiving is extremely important to your child's social and emotional development, physical well-being, and overall learning.

- **Cottontail Class:** You can expect 8 children aged 3 months to crawling with 3 full time caregivers.
- **Fawn & Fox Class:** You can expect 10 children crawling to 17 months with 3 full time caregivers.

These classes are a transitional class, see mealtime notes on page 14.

There will be frequent additional support staff that assists in all classes that you and your child will be familiar with.

Lesson Plan & Schedules: Your baby's progress and development depend on his/her parents and teacher working together. This can be accomplished through an age-appropriate lesson plan, which serves as a guide for you to utilize to help your baby's development. At the start of every month, you will receive a lesson plan of activities for the class.

We will spend some time getting to know your baby before we develop their personalized daily schedule. This will modify as your child grows, we will partner with the parent to create a cohesive schedule for school that benefits the child at home too.

Pictures:

Our goal is to take as many pictures of your baby as we can! You can expect two photos a day, one morning, one afternoon, sent via Brightwheel. We will also have a class Google Drive where we will bulk upload pictures of activities. This is locked down for classroom parents only.

Staff Qualifications:

All staff will complete 24 clock hours of training annually. Topics will include prevention, recognition, and reporting of child maltreatment, child growth and development, guidance and discipline, age-appropriate curriculum, teacher-child interaction, Recognizing and preventing shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma, understanding and using safe sleep practices and

preventing sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and Understanding early childhood brain development, etc.

DRESSING PROCEDURE

When dressing your baby, please consider how easy it is to diaper your baby in the outfits they wear. Clothing must be easily removed or have buttons to access diaper easily.

Important things to note:

You will send additional spare clothes at the beginning of each week. To maintain the correct size of clothes for your baby, we will be send home any spare clothes every Friday.

LIST OF ITEMS NEEDED:

For Cottontail and Fawn Class:

- 4+ premade, labeled bottles (no glass) - Infant Class
- 2 small healthy snacks —Young Toddler Class
- Burp cloths
- Sleep sack or Merlin suit (no swaddles allowed)
- 2+ Bibs (sent home daily)
- 2-3 Pacifiers (if used)
- Hanging noise machines, cordless and rechargeable (if used)

For All Classes:

- **Diapers**
- **Wipes**
- **Diaper cream (if prescription, doctor's note required)**
- **Fitted crib sheet (sent home weekly)**
- **3 sets of extra clothes**
- **Jacket/Sweater**
- **2 Sippy cups (by 7 months) *no 360 cups please!**

****PLEASE REMEMBER TO MARK YOUR CHILD'S NAME ON ALL ITEMS****

MEDICATION PROCEDURES & POLICY

Any medications, such as prescription diaper cream, Tylenol and Ibuprofen must be signed in through the front office and accompanied by a doctor's note. Any over-the-counter medication that states "Under 24 months, please see a Doctor" we are unable to administer the medication without a signed doctor's note.

We recommend keeping a doctor's note on file at all times.

DROP OFF & PICK UP POLCY

- Any parent or caregiver should remove their shoes to enter the classroom. The infant room is a shoe-free zone! Booties or shoe covers will be provided by SMLS.
- A child is not to be handed off while remaining in care seat. A child may only be dropped off in teachers arms, highchair, bouncer.
- If sleeping, a child should be immediately placed into their assigned crib.
- Informed handoffs at drop off and pick up are required.
- —See note on Brightwheel morning message policy below
- Please limit drop offs & pick ups to 5 minutes or less. Should you need to communicate with your child's teacher for longer, please see the office to schedule a meeting where the teacher is not supervising children.

Car Seats:

Parents/guardians are responsible for buckling and unbuckling your baby's car seat.

INFORMED COMMUNICATION POLICY FOR COTTONTAIL CLASS

The main method of communication will be Brightwheel messages.

Your required morning message must include:

- Time the diaper was last changed
- Time your baby had the last bottle
- Time when your baby woke up
- How often your baby is feeding (ex: every 2.5-3 hours)

You can also add any information you feel is necessary, such as:

- He/she did not sleep well
- If he/she needs diaper cream every time they're changed
- Leaving early for a medical appointment, etc.

With Brightwheel, you will receive a report of your child's day. You have the option to choose an instant live report or receive a full report at the end of the day.

Important things to consider and keep in mind:

- Parents are always welcome to visit their infant.
- All urgent communication should go through the front office.
- Teachers will limit communications to only hours of operation. Parents can send updates anytime but please expect them to be addressed during school hours only.

DIAPERING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

- Teachers will check each child's diaper every two hours.
- Teachers will promptly change soiled or wet diapers or clothing.
- Teachers will thoroughly cleanse the child with disposable wipes and ensure that the children are dry before placing a new diaper on the child.
- Teachers will not apply powders, creams, ointments, or lotions unless you obtain the parent's written permission via the St. Martin's Lutheran Preschool Parent Handbook.
- The parent is responsible for supplying all diapering items and ensure their child maintains a supply at all times.
- Please label powders, creams, ointments, or lotions with the individual child's name.
- Teachers will wash their hands and each child's hands after changing each diaper.

BOTTLE/FOOD POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Feeding time should be a social occasion, an excellent time to build a close relationship with an infant. Primary caregivers will sit at eye level, make eye contact, and communicate with the baby while feeding. Whenever possible, the same caregiver should feed an infant for most of that infant's feedings.

Every child under 12 months **MUST** have a current Feeding Guide and Schedule on file. This document is to be updated monthly until the child is 12 months. The classroom teacher will ensure each child's schedule remains updated.

Bottles:

- Parents will provide at least 4 premade breastmilk or formula bottles per day.
- Each bottle should have:
 - Child's First and Last Name
 - Date
 - Contents
- No glass bottles will be allowed in the classroom, this is a safety precaution.
- Bottles will be kept in the refrigerator, we suggest having a back up formula container or breastmilk stored in the freezer.
- Parents will decide if the bottle is given cold, warm or room temperature
- Bottles served warm will be heated in a bottle warmer, not microwave

- The teacher will test milk temp on wrists before feeding
- After one hour of the baby touching a bottle we MUST dispose of contents. Milk can never be reheated
- Food, medications and other additives cannot be added to bottles
- Bottles will be rinsed after use and all bottles, including unused, will be sent home daily.
- Burp cloths will be used for all feedings
- A bottle will never be propped up:
 - If the child is unable to hold bottle, the teacher will hold the bottle during feeding
 - If the child is able to hold their bottle, they will be placed in an infant seat or highchair only for feeding. The child will be closely supervised while feeding.

****Note about finger food: Remember that finger food must be properly cooked, safely cut, and “SOFT ENOUGH” to chew easily. Please only send food items that your baby has already tried at home. We want to avoid the possibility of a baby having an allergic reaction to new food or choking at school if it is their first time trying the food****

Nut butter is NOT ALLOWED at St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool. Please consider alternatives like sunflower butter instead.

Food Service for Children in Fawn and Fox Class

St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool will provide a modified food menu for the Fawn and Fox Class.

- Every child in The Fawn and The Fox Class will be provided a school meal like the rest of the preschool classes. There will be an extra assurance of food size and softness. All food will be served in the classroom.
- All children will be provided whole milk during lunch time.
- Please coordinate with your classroom teacher if your child drinks a milk alternative.
- Supplementary food items from home are allowed in the Fawn and Fox classes. These foods are to be given during scheduled mealtimes.
- **Parents should be aware of the variety of foods provided by school for children 12 months and older to ensure their child has already eaten them. If your child has not had a food before, please notify the teacher to be aware of potential allergic reactions or bring an alternate meal for the day.**

Solid and Prepared Food:

- If factory sealed, each container (no glass) will need first and last name.
- If homecooked, each container (no glass) will need first and last name and date of packaging.
- If appropriate, St. Martin’s Lutheran Preschool will refrigerate the food. Unopened commercially-prepared solid foods can be stored on the counter or in a cabinet.
- However, once a jar has been opened, or if a parent/guardian prepares food for his or her child, store the food in the refrigerator. Refrigerated food should be covered and labeled,.
- St. Martin’s will send home any opened, used food after 24 hours.

Finger Foods:

Around the time your baby reaches 8-12 months, your baby will be eating finger foods! Here is a list of some finger food that we suggest (feel free to send food that he/she likes and that he/she eats at home):

- Bread
- Scrambled eggs
- Soft fruit (Banana, mango, peaches, papaya, cantaloupe, etc.)
- Avocado
- Pasta
- Potatoes/Sweet Potato
- Boiled carrots
- Tofu
- Broccoli
- Cheese
- Beans
- Peas
- Chicken
- Fish or meat

CLEANING AND SANITIZING POLICY

Each day our staff will:

- Wipe and spray down toys at the end of each day.
- Clean and sanitize crib mats, linens, and other equipment at the end of each week.
- Clean and sanitize food prep equipment, sinks, and countertops daily.
- Immediately, clean and sanitize crib mats, linens, and other equipment if soiled.
- All toys that are mouthed during the course of the day should be set aside in an inaccessible container before another child plays with the toys. Mouthed toys will be thoroughly washed at the end of each day.

Our professional custodial crew will:

- Mop floors and vacuum all rugs and soft surfaces nightly
- Disinfect doorknobs, cabinets, and light switches nightly

EQUIPMENT USE TIME POLICY

A baby will spend no more than 30 minutes in a bouncer before moving to another location.

An infant may remain in the crib for up to 30 minutes after awakening, as long as the infant is content and responsive.

Transition Policy:

Throughout your child's time in the infant room, we will help your baby reach each developmental milestone such as:

- Sitting
- Rolling over
- Crawling
- Grasping toys
- Socializing
- Hold bottle (around 6 months)
- Using a sippy cup (around 7-9 months)
- Feeding themselves around (8-10 months)
- Taking one nap at school (by 11 months)
- Falling asleep by themselves (or with minimal help)

When will my child move up to the next class?

When a child reaches the crawling developmental milestone, they will be moved to the Young Toddler Classroom. This transition will be handled by the front office.

OTHER LICENSING POLICIES

Some licensing regulations that are helpful to know for our children's safety are:

- No teething necklaces allowed (no amber necklaces either)
- No jewelry on, babies unless doctors note provided
- No lovies, pillows, or toys in the cribs
- No pacifier clips
- No swaddles, at any age allowed
- No naps lasting more than 3 hours allowed.

However, please let us know if you would like your baby to sleep a certain number of hours under 3 hours.

INDOOR & OUTDOOR PHYSICAL & DEVELOPMENTAL PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Infant children in care, are given multiple opportunities daily to explore and participate in activities that are

unrestricted and out of their play yard. Each child will receive:

- Opportunities for physical activity with tummy time, reaching, grasping, pulling up, creeping crawling, and walking.
- Opportunities for visual stimulation with soft books, washable toys, unbreakable mirrors, and brightly colored floor blankets with mobiles.
- Opportunities for auditory stimulation with age-appropriate equipment or activities with verbal communication, soothing music, and musical or sounding toys.
- Opportunities for sensory stimulation with soft fabrics, textured toys, washable toys, and toy animals.
- Opportunities for small-muscle development with busy blocks, rattles, teething toys, shaking, or squeezing toys, or cloth toys.
- Opportunities for large-muscle development with floor blankets, tummy time, crib, and play gyms. Whichever developmental stage your child happens to be in at the time.
- Infants and toddlers will also learn through play by utilizing flash cards, books, numbers, shapes, colors, the alphabet, stacking blocks, puppets, other age-appropriate toys, listening to music and much more.
- Outdoor activities are weather permitting, and we play outside two times a day with individual mesh gyms, tummy time, outdoor bouncers and playing with age-appropriate toys.

SAFE SLEEP POLICY

All staff and substitute staff at St. Martin's Lutheran Preschool will follow these safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS):

- Always put infants to sleep on their backs unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation, signed by the infant's health care professional
- Place infants on a firm mattress, with a tight-fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full-size cribs and for non-full-size cribs.
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs should be bare except for a tight-fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector.
- Items that should not be placed in a crib include soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or

comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices. Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing.

- Do not use sleep positioning devices, such as wedges or infant positioners. The AAP has found no evidence that these devices are safe. Their use may increase the risk of suffocation.
- Ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- If an infant needs extra warmth, use sleep clothing such as sleep sacks or Merlin suit as an alternative to blankets
- Place only one infant in a crib to sleep
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep. But the pacifier must not be attached to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), move the infant to a crib immediately, unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation, signed by the infant's health-care professional.
- Our child care program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas child care operations (this includes e-cigarettes and any type of vaporizers)
- Actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound
- If an infant is able to roll back and forth from front to back, place the infant on the infant's back for sleep and allow the infant to assume a preferred sleep position. Infants able to roll will have a note attached to their assigned crib stating this development.
- Awake infants will have supervised "tummy time" several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally
- Do not swaddle an infant for sleep or rest unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation, signed by the infant's health care professional.

Notes: