

Preschool Parent Handbook

Updated October 23, 2020

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# Welcome

Dear Parents,

First and foremost, thank you for choosing St. Paul Lutheran Preschool to serve your family’s preschool needs. Starting preschool can be a very exciting time for both parents and their students, and St. Paul Preschool wants to be able to fulfill the needs of not only your growing child but also our families. St. Paul Lutheran Preschool is a non-profit organization that has been serving the Kodiak Community for over 30 years. Our program is licensed through the State of Alaska Child Care Licensing Program. With this license we uphold the standards set by the State of Alaska that include specific health and safety measures, along with regularly training Staff. Our goal is to continue to meet the needs of our community.

Our Mission at St. Paul Lutheran Preschool is to provide developmentally age appropriate activities that stimulate your child’s growing needs, these needs include cognitive, physical, social, emotional, language, and spiritual development. St. Paul Preschool’s teachers present ideas in a bias-free way fostering critical thinking. Our teachers allow students to make their own choices and develop through experience. We recognize that these experiences allow students opportunities for inquiry and exploration., also teachers recognize that students develop within different ranges, and we rejoice along with the students as they grow in pride over each new milestone.

The details of this handbook and registration packet contain vital information about St. Paul Preschool’s program. If you find that you need additional resources, please let us know. We would be happy to help you find online materials or connect you to local agencies who can assist you. Our Directors and Teachers sincerely hope your experience with St. Paul Lutheran Preschool will be positive experience for your family. Thank you again for giving us the opportunity to watch your child flourish at our school.

Respectfully,

Asia Torrejas

Director

# Part One: About the Center

## Welcome

St Paul Lutheran Preschool is equipped to educate students ages 2 to 8 years of age in a developmentally appropriate environment that is influenced by the State of Alaska Child Care Licensing Program standards, provided curriculum, detailed routine, and Christian values. St. Paul Lutheran Preschool Staff strives to hold a good relationship with the community, personnel, family, and most importantly the child. All decisions need to be made in an ethically sound state to meet the facility mission and goal.

Our staff approaches each child as an individual and recognizes that every child has their own strengths and weaknesses. Each Staff member must be aware of and responsive to each individual child. No two students are alike and we as teachers need to plan and provide appropriate activities that meet each child’s needs at their developmental and academic stage in their life.

## St. Paul Preschool Staff

Our Staff are required to meet the standards required by the State of Alaska Child Care Licensing Program, including a mandatory background check, and participate in workshops and other professional growth trainings to expand their knowledge in the classroom. St. Paul Preschool strives to recruit Teachers that are nurturing, energetic, and have knowledge in the early childhood education field.

### Preschool Organization – Chain of Leadership

At any time, if you have a concern, question, suggestion, or wish to discuss your feelings on a matter of importance you have a chain of people who can assist you.

1. Lead Classroom Teacher
2. Assistant Director
3. Director of the Preschool
4. Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran
5. Church Council

At St. Paul Lutheran Preschool, we strive to maintain an environment where everyone feels respected, appreciated, and comfortable. Feedback is important to us. This is how St. Paul Preschool continues to improve the program.

### Serious Concerns or Complaints

St. Paul Lutheran Preschool encourages families to come to the Directors with any concerns or complaints. Families can email, call, come into the office or use the suggestions box. Please refrain from discussing serious issues in front of the children in the classrooms. **Parents and Guardians need to remember that this is a place of learning. Any swearing or inappropriate behavior towards Staff or another child will result in automatic termination and possible notification of law enforcement.**

Any serious complaints that you feel need to be reported can be directed to:

* The Assistant Director and Director can be reached at 907-486-5317 or stpaul99615@gmail.com
* St. Paul Lutheran Pastor or Church Council 907-486-3632 or stpaulkodiak@gci.net
* State of Alaska Department of Health & Social Services/ Division of Public Assistance Licensing Specialist 1-888-268-4632

### Confidentiality

St. Paul Lutheran Preschool works towards open and healthy relationships with guardians, students, and personnel. This requires respect and privacy on our part as Directors, Teachers, and Co-Teachers. All incidents pertaining to St. Paul Preschool Families and personnel are confidential matters that are not to be divulged or disclosed to any person, firm, corporation, or entity apart from a competent court order and manners pertaining to mandatory reporting.

# Part Two: The Program

## Mission and Philosophy

At St. Paul Preschool we work hard to provide developmentally age appropriate activities that stimulate physical, cognitive, social, emotional, language, academic, and spiritual growth of all students and to enhance motor ability, problem solving, creative expression, independence and positive social interactions in a warm Christian environment. Everything about our program is designed to provide the best possible care for students. We base our program on the State of Alaska regulations, and are licensed thru the Child Care Program Office. In addition, our goal is to follow the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for guidance.

Our teachers provide teacher guided, child-initiated activities that offer a wide range of opportunities for students to directly experience new ideas and construct their own learning experience. As education facilitators, we provide a safe, quality preschool while assisting students in meeting social, developmental, and academic milestones. The Teachers at St. Paul Preschool encourage students to learn through their choices and self-exploration.

## Preschool Goals:

St. Paul Preschool believes that Parents and Staff that work together can better provide an optimal learning environment for your child. We provide each child with an enjoyable and successful first school experience by:

* Introducing routines that students will be exposed to in school.
* Helping students learn through experience and discovery.
* Stimulating student’s natural creativity and imagination.
* Offering a wide variety of experiential play through sensory, kinesthetic, social emotional, and outdoor activities.
* Providing a warm atmosphere of acceptance and nurturing encouragement where students will feel happy and comfortable.
* Fostering independence through positive self- image for each child.
* Teaching students that they are individual and unique.
* Encouraging students to work and play in a social environment.

## Discipline Policy for Students

Discipline must be used in a consistent way. All discipline must be based on an understanding of individual needs and child development levels. Simple, understandable rules have been established so that expectations and limitations are clearly defined. Discipline will be constructive in nature, including diversion, separating the child from situations, praise of appropriate behavior, or gentle physical restraint such as holding only to prevent harm to self and others. We subscribe to the 3 R’s: Redirect, Remove, and Reflect. If the child persists in making inappropriate choices, then documentation of the behavior is required so the lead teacher, director, and the child’s parents can work collaboratively to establish a behavior plan that all have agreed upon.

### Addressing Challenging Behaviors

When a student presents developmental delay or disruptive behavioral obstacles, we have a specific protocol that is to be followed:

1. Identify the problem
2. Discuss these problems with the Director(s)
3. Document behavior
4. Private conference with family (plan of care and/or evaluation)

If the behavior continues, teachers and directors will regroup with the child’s family. If the family refuses to work with us, or the child’s behavior escalates to an unsafe level, the directors are at liberty to terminate care.

Families need to keep in mind that St. Paul Preschool is a facility that has no specific individual equipped with handling developmental needs or behavioral obstacles. Two resources that the facility works closely with are KANA’s Infant Learning Program and KIBSD Early Childhood Services. St. Paul Preschool is happy to assist you in contacting and working with these or other resources. If, however, any serious situations arise and a family refuses to work with us, we are at liberty to terminate care. See the section regarding dismissal in Part Three: Program Information for more details.

As preschool teachers our staff understand that growing students are always testing boundaries in and outside of the classroom. To decrease behavioral obstacles our Teachers set up rooms that have clear boundaries, consistent routines, but that are also flexible in offering students choices. When addressing challenging behaviors, the Teachers often separate the child from the problem and allow them time to calm down in an environment the teacher can control before addressing the behavior. When addressing the behavior, Teachers recognize that some students are less receptive than others about talking over the behavior and feelings behind it. Our Teachers strive to give students the words to help recognize their feeling along with adequate coping skills.

Incident reports are used to indicate that a student has used verbal or physical behavior in an inappropriate manner towards Staff or another student. If a child or member of staff is physically hurt or emotionally hurt while at the preschool, you will receive an Incident Report to sign and return.

**Students who receive three incident reports in one day for causing another harm will be sent home for the remainder of the day. If blood is drawn, or a serious injury occurs – students will be sent home immediately.** This is a safety protocol to ensure that Staff and students are in a safe environment**. Please note that all incident reports need to be signed and returned to Directors to file in child’s folder.** Parents are welcome to copies of the reports once they have been signed by all relevant parties.

# Part Three: Class Information

## Hours of Operation

School year hours are 7:30 AM – 5:00 PM and will begin September and end in May.

Summer hours are 7:30 AM – 5:30 PM and will begin in June and end in August.

**CLOSURE notices are sent via email and classroom newsletter.**

All families should be out of the facility before 5:00 in order for Staff to lock doors and continue to clean and close the facility. If families are present after 5:00, the Directors will be informed so that they may address it with the family.

### Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures

Parents/ Guardians should walk their child into the building and sign them into the designated binder at the doorway of their classroom. Please keep in mind that this is a State of Alaska Child Care Licensing Requirement. It is also required for families on subsidy. After sign-in, please assist your child with stowing their belongings neatly in their cubby.

When picking up your child please make sure that the teacher is aware that they are going home, get all daily belongings from their cubby, and make certain you sign them out. Those who are not familiar to Staff will be required to show their ID’s and will only be allowed to pick up if they are on the authorized pick up list or if a parent has provided a written permission form to Directors. Please remember that these requirements are put into place for the safety all of the children.

## Classrooms Offered

#### Toddler Time (24+ months)

This room focuses on providing a structured and safe environment for new twos. The teacher's work with these students on communications either with sign language or promoting the use of speech. Students will also partake in sensory and fine motor play to help developmental growth; social emotional skills are being introduced in this room. Students **DO NOT** need to be potty trained for this class.

#### Busy Bee (2 ½ - 3 ½ years old)

This room is a steppingstone class that assists students with potty training and developmental growth specifically in the social emotional area. Students in this classroom are constantly exploring the outside and participating in gross motor activities, along with learning how to self-care, and hold positive peer relationships.

#### Little Bears (3 ½ - 4 ½ years old)

This classroom is introducing academics but still focuses heavily on prompting healthy peer interactions while having fun. Students will participate in having jobs such as being a teacher’s helper and focusing on cleaning up after themselves to prompt independence that also reflects all projects.

#### Happy Hoppers (4 1/2 - 5 ½ years old)

The focus of this room is to prepare students for kindergarten by introducing letters, words, and numbers for students to comprehend letter and number recognition. These skills will benefit the upcoming expectation of reading and math. Students will also be exposed to problems within the classroom and will be encouraged to problem solve independently and with peers to prompt teamwork.

#### Afternoon Adventures (5 – 8 years old)

This after school program focuses on providing students with a relaxing, structured, hands-on environment. Students will partake in daily gross motor play, S.T.E.A.M activities, and homework/literacy assignments.

## Classroom Structure

### Curriculum

St. Paul Lutheran Preschool will be following the Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum in each classroom. The Afternoon Adventures room will be following S.T.E.A.M [Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math] based activities that promote experimentation and creativity. All of our students will also be given opportunities for gross motor play and exploration outside to help meet each student’s physical and social needs. **Outdoor activity is a significant part of our day, please make sure students are coming with appropriate gear and extra clothes.** This includes rain PROOF pants, boots, gloves, and coats, as well as hats, for spring and fall, and snow gear in the winter.

Exploration play will take place in the learning centers, this is where students will be offered developmental experiences to exercise imagination along with positive peer interactions. Learning centers will include: Construction/Blocks, Art/Language, Music/Dramatic, Sensory, Science/Nature, Library, and Math/Manipulatives. All centers will be transitioned according to the curriculum**.**

Each curriculum is molded for each classroom and student. St. Paul Preschool understands each student has different developmental needs. It is St. Paul Preschool’s goal to offer a safe, nurturing environment that supports the whole child’s needs.For example, before and after each meal/ snack students partake in cleaning up after themselves. They also sing or say a prayer before each meal.

### Example Schedule

Below is an **example** schedule to give families a better idea of what students participate in daily. Times periods vary for each class.

8:00 – 9:00 Exploration Play

9:00 – 9:30 Interactive Circle Time

9:30 – 9:45 Gross Motor (can be taken outside)

9:45 – 10:05 Morning Activity

10:05 – 10:15 Clean up

10:15 – 10:25 Bathroom Break

10:25 – 10:40 Snack

10:40 – 10:50 Clean up

10:50 – 11:10 Interactive Story Time

11:10 – 11:45 Outside Recess

11:45 – 12:15 Lunch

12:15 – 12:30 Bathroom Breaks

12:30 – 1:45 Nap

1:45 -1:55 Bathroom Break

1:55 – 2:45 Outside Recess

2:45 – 2:55 Bathroom Break

2:55 – 3:20 Snack

3:20 – 3:30 Clean up

3:30 – 3:45 Homework

3:45 – 4:15 Gross Motor (outside or gym)

4:15 – 4:45 S.T.E.A.M Activity

4:45 – 5:30 Exploration Play

### Naptime

Nap time is an option that is made available for all students who are enrolled in the full-time program. All students are encouraged to use the potty beforehand or receive a diaper change. Nap is held in individual classrooms, except the elementary room, and is scheduled in stages:

11:45 Toddler Time

12:00 Busy Bee

12:15 Little Bears

12:30 Happy Hoppers

All nappers are woken by 2:15. Diaper changes and bathroom visits immediately follow. By 2:30 mats are cleaned and sanitized, then stored in designated area. All personal nap gear goes in cubbies and is sent home on Fridays to be washed. If a child soils themselves during nap, that gear/clothes is bagged and sent home on that day. **Please replace with clean clothes as soon as possible.** Non-nappers will be given quiet activities to do on their mats. This allows them some quiet down time before the afternoon lessons.

## Class Ratio

St. Paul Preschool follows ratios set by the State of Alaska Child Care Licensing Program, they are as follows (teacher to student): Two’s (1:6), Three/Four (1:10), 5 – 8 (1:14). The maximum number of students in the facility is 42.

## School day cleaning

Staff members need to maintain a clean environment during school hours. This includes picking up after activities, keeping belongings in their place, and general care for the equipment. Including students in the cleaning routines to incorporate responsibility with baby wipes, soap and paper towels, or small brooms is encouraged. **Students are not allowed to handle or be exposed to hazardous chemicals.**

### Outside Play

Weather permitting, all students, including our 2-year-olds, will participate in outdoor activities. Students are encouraged to adventure around for gross motor play and social interaction. Students can climb on structures, swing on bellies and bottoms, play interactive games, and dig in the gravel.

The preschool does not participate in field trips due to a lack of transportation, however personnel do take students on walks around the facilities and the church’s property unless a parent has prohibited this in their child’s paperwork.

### Communication

St. Paul Preschool welcomes and encourages open communication with all our families. Our Teachers find it important that families are aware of what their students are doing on a daily basis. Check out each classroom’s communication board and school newsletters for any up and coming events. Ask your teacher if they have a classroom Facebook page.

**St. Paul Preschool has an open-door policy, so please feel comfortable to visit us at any time.** Please feel welcome to come to our Teachers and Directors with any questions or concerns, we are happy to address any concerns you may have.

## Enrollment Requirements

### Starting at St. Paul Preschool

Entering any new program can be a challenging adjustment for both families and their students. St. Paul Preschool recommends family come into the facility before the student’s start date, to allow students to become familiar with the environment and Teachers. When it is time for you to leave your child, St. Paul Preschool recommends saying your goodbyes and reminding your child you will be back to pick them up. From there our Teachers will ensure that your child is being emotionally taken care of by holding your child and using comforting words to calm them. St. Paul Preschool understands that these moments are emotionally hard for both child and parent, but we are here to help transition and care for them. Please feel free to call and check up on your child. Our number at St. Paul Preschool is 486-5317.

### Registration

Families new to the program as well as those currently with St. Paul Preschool are required to complete a new registration packet for the school year program – and again for the summer program. Our recommendation is to turn in each registration packet immediately, spots are limited in each program. When turning in packets please make sure that packets are completed fully. They should have the immunizations or notarized immunization exemption form and emergency card attached. Packets that are not completed will not be accepted.

### Emergency Cards and Immunizations

Those enrolled in the program will have to update emergency cards every August, December, and May. This is a standard that is set by the State of Alaska Child Care Licensing Program. Families that choose not to update the cards can be dismissed from the program. Also, immunizations records need to be updated at the same time. St. Paul Preschool will be running checks of our files regularly. If you are behind, St. Paul Preschool will inform you. Families that do not update these records in a timely manner will be suspended from the program. Immunization exemption forms expire every July and must be notarized.

### Tuition and Fees

St. Paul Preschool sends out invoices the 15th of the month prior to enrollment and the invoice is due on the 1st of the month of enrollment. If the invoice is not paid by the 5th a $50 late fee will be assessed. During the school year, families will be charged a monthly tuition regardless of whether their child is present or not. This charge is to hold your spot. If you receive any childcare subsidy assistance, please remember that you are still responsible for all invoices.

Families that are struggling financially please come see the Director for options.

Families not enrolled in full time care will be charged accordingly when dropping off earlier or picking up later than scheduled. These fees will be calculated at the end of the month and families have 30-days to pay before a late payment fee is added.

**Late pick-up fees will be added when students are still in the facility at 5:00 PM. A $50 charge will automatically be added. After 5:00 PM families will be charged an additional $10 for each minute. Families that repeatedly pick up students late will be disenrolled from St. Paul Lutheran Preschool.**

If you decide to un-enroll your child from St. Paul Preschool – please keep in mind we require a **2-week notice**. Families that do not provide a 2-week notice will be charged a $100 fee and the remainder of their monthly fee will not be prorated. If you then decide to re-enroll, your child will not be able to return to school until the bill is paid in full.

Families need to recognize that they are responsible for paying bills in full even after they have left the program. Families that decide to leave a balance at St. Paul Preschool unpaid will be given a 30-day notice to pay the bill in full before St. Paul Preschool proceeds with Alaska Small Claims Court.

### Dismissal

The reasons St. Paul Lutheran Preschool is at liberty to dismiss families from the program include but are not limited to the following:

* Nonpayment of tuition and fees;
* Failure to update necessary paperwork, this includes signing your child in at drop-off and out at pick-up;
* Challenging or aggressive behaviors by a student;
* Disruptive and inappropriate behavior demonstrated by a parent or guardian.

St. Paul Preschool will allow families an opportunity to correct actions before dismissal from the program. If families do not take advantage of this opportunity the consequence will be dismissal from St. Paul Preschool. **Also note that necessary paperwork is required by the State of Alaska: Emergency Cards need to be updated every August, December, and May. Immunizations need to always be current if parents or guardians fail to bring them in their child will be dismissed. Religious immunization exemption forms need to be updated before July.** Families that have been dismissed from the program will not be able to re-enroll into further programs offered at St. Paul Lutheran Preschool.

## Daily Needs and Belongings

### Personal Items

Students need to be sent to school with necessary LABELED items. If parents/ guardians do not send these St. Paul Lutheran Preschool will have to call you to bring items that may include:

* Outdoor gear (RAIN & SNOW)
* Extra clothes (2 complete changes, extra underwear if potty training)
* Nap gear (if needed)
* Diapers/Wipes (if needed)
* Snack and Lunch (sweets, cookies, cakes etc. will be left in student’s bag)

Families need to make sure that all nap gear, back packs, and lunch boxes go home before the weekend to be cleaned. Likewise, dirty/ wet clothing in cubbies should be taken home daily and need to be replaced as soon as possible. Art and food left in the cubbies Friday evening will be thrown away to maintain clean cubbies.

St. Paul Preschool **does not allow** students to bring personal items from home such as toys, jewelry, games, pacifiers, or sweets. These items take away from the classroom. There will be days set by the teachers allowing personal items to be brought in as a learning or social opportunity. Personal items brought in will be taken away and given back to parents. This does not include, of course, nap gear such as a pillow, blanket, and stuffie/ lovie.

### Illness

Please do not bring a sick child to school. **Vomiting, diarrhea, fever above 99.5, undiagnosed rash, flu symptoms, coughing, sneezing, and colored discharge from just about any orifice all indicate illness.** Unless your child has a medical diagnosis from a doctor of seasonal allergies please keep them home if they have any symptoms. They will be happier in your care and it is safer for the other children and the staff as well.

A student who becomes ill during the day will be removed from the classroom and their parent/ guardian called for pick-up. **A student who have been sent home/ or stayed home ill is not allowed to return to school until 24 hours free of symptoms or they have a doctor’s note stating they are free of contagion.**

See the Parent Covid Contract for additional restrictions relevant specifically to Covid.

#### Administering Medications

Families that have properly filled out medication authorization forms, with directions from the authorizing doctor, are permitted to keep medication locked in the office. This applies to both prescription medication and over the counter remedies, including Tylenol, Advil, cough drops, homeopathic remedies and so forth.

**St. Paul Preschool requires parents or guardians to fill out a medical authorization form. All medicines will be documented and administered according to the directions on the bottle/ prescription. Please note that we will not administer anything that is not recommended for your child’s age.**

Medication can be administered only by the Director and Assistant Director. If a student has an asthma inhaler or epi pen the Teacher on duty will also have permission to administer the medication and it will be kept with the classroom Teacher. This will need to be documented on their medication authorization form.

## Parent Involvement

St. Paul Preschool strives to have open communication with all our families. Our Teachers find it important that families be aware of what their students are doing on a daily basis. Teachers communicate through private Facebook pages, parent boards (located in rooms), monthly newsletters and end of semester milestone updates. If you have any questions, please reach out and they will happily answer any further questions or concerns you have about your child or the classroom.

Since St. Paul Preschool is a non-profit facility volunteer time is encouraged, there will be multiple opportunities for families to assist the preschool during the school year. This may include fundraising events, school improvement, classroom assistance, or donations. If families are unable to volunteer hours during a semester the facility will charge families a $50 fee per child, this fee will go straight to the classroom to help with any needed materials.

Involvement requirements are based upon how many days your child attends preschool. Your classroom teachers have documentation slips. If you are donating materials or supplies in place of hours, receipts are needed to ensure families meet the $50 fee. A school supply list can be found in your classroom’s individual newsletter asking for specific needs your child’s teacher may have.

Hours required by parents are as listed below:

* 2-day program = 4 hours per semester
* 3-day program = 6 hours per semester
* 4-day program = 8 hours per semester
* 5-day program = 10 hours per semester

We look forward to working with you and your child. Welcome to St. Paul Preschool!!