



ST. PAUL METHODIST SCHOOL
4901 Gulf Breeze, FL 32563
(850) 932-0692 Office
(850) 932-2953 Fax
stpaulmethodist.org

Parent Handbook
2023-2024

MISSION STATEMENT

As a Christian School We Believe:

Each child is the most precious gift from God. Each parent should feel secure in our provision for the finest education and care. Care and attention is our expression of Christian beliefs. "And whoever welcomes a child in my name welcomes me." Matthew 18:5

- The Bible as the infallible Word of God and that Bible truths will be taught through Bible stories and the actions of Christian teachers. Psalm 119:160
- Traditional Christian values will be taught as instituted by God as stated in Genesis 2:24.
- The curriculum will meet the needs of each unique child while providing for developmental stages and the curriculum will focus on all areas of development: spiritual, physical, cognitive, and social/emotional. Service to God must be recognized.
- Christian lessons and activities will be joyful and delightful. Psalm 100:1-2

ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. Paul United Methodist Church is to share the good news of Jesus Christ through Worship, Outreach, Fellowship and Discipleship.

Early Childhood Education in our Christian School

Young children learn from interaction with people through play and daily experiences in the home and places they visit. Our Christian school presents wonderful opportunities for experiencing God's love and acceptance through interaction with caring staff members and other children.

Activities, lessons, and play experiences that are developmentally appropriate encourage children to explore, develop reason, and enrich physical skills in order that they may gain knowledge using their senses and abilities.

Language development during the school years is vital to readiness for later school experiences. Providing rich exposure to language, speaking, stories, songs, books, puppets, listening activities, and a myriad of other experiences increases children's readiness for future learning.

Our Programs

At St. Paul Methodist School, we are dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ and his admonition, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14. Our educational program includes experiences described above as well as concern for each child to experience God's love.

Two-Year-Old Enrichment Program

This special program has been especially developed for our two-year-olds who turn two by **September 1st**.

The purpose of this program is three-fold:

- Socialization (interaction with others)
- Developmental Needs (toilet training, sharing)
- Parent Relief

While your child is in our care, he or she will learn how to share, be part of a group, and play side-by-side. This class offers activities including stories, art, music, finger play, outdoor time and free play at centers. It is structured, but flexible to include change or adaption, as needed.

Additionally, this class is geared to meeting the developmental needs of children age two. Remember that playing, exploring, and being curious is typical of this age development. Learning to be away from mom for a few hours is also a big step toward independence.

If you are in the process of toilet training, discuss this with your child's teacher so that she may reinforce this at school. Please label any diapers and wipes with your child's name.

Three-Year-Old Program

The program for children who have turned three by **September 1st** of the school year focuses on foundations of faith and well rounded development. Such development improves the children's life skills and adjustments. As with all ages of children in school, the curriculum and planning include the four developmental areas: spiritual, social/emotional, physical, and intellectual/academic. Because children's development and aptitude vary widely, teachers are accepting of individual differences and motivate by encouragement. Guidance is given as situations demand so that your children learn Christian principles and good citizenship.

Curriculum for spiritual development includes: familiarity of Bible verses related to the letters of the alphabet, Bible accounts of people of faith from both the Old and New Testaments, prayer through storytelling techniques, storybooks, creative dramatics, songs and music, videos, food experiences, and other means, as appropriate. School-wide chapel times welcome children into church through exposure and enjoyment.

Social/emotional developmental experiences include interactive play and cooperative opportunities, practice with speaking and listening skills, verbal expression for emotions, and creative activities through music and art. Holiday activities are an enjoyable way to participate in a sense of community and Christian heritage. Values presented in life situations and in stories instill awareness of personal interaction in the school and family settings.

Physical development of centers add greatly to coordination and motor control through much free play and planned activities that include balance, rhythm, climbing, catching, throwing, and running. Healthy eating, cleanliness, and school safety are also discussed and encouraged.

Intellectual and academic development begins with language and concept growth. Teachers provide a rich variety of concrete activities. Helping the children talk about their experiences builds vocabulary, language abilities, and better understanding of the world around them. Teachers use stories, nursery rhymes, and class activities to develop attention span, thinking, and following directions skills. Children are acquainted with the alphabet and numbers zero thru ten. Math and science concepts that fit into class units are explored.

St. Paul Methodist School teachers demonstrate love and dedication in planning and implementing a well rounded curriculum that enables the three-year-old children to grow in faith and to become stronger, more confident, and more skillful. This preparation leads to greater success in later school experiences.

Four/Five-Year-Old VPK Program

The program for children who have turned four by **September 1st** of the school year focuses on faith building instruction and kindergarten preparedness. As with all ages of children in school, the curriculum and planning include the four developmental areas: spiritual, social/emotional, physical, and intellectual/academic. Because children's development and aptitude vary widely, teachers are accepting of individual differences and motivate by encouragement. Guidance is given as situations demand so that children learn Christian principles and good citizenship.

Planning for spiritual development includes: learning to pray, memory verses related to the letters of the alphabet, Bible accounts of people of faith from both the Old and New Testaments, storytelling techniques, storybooks, creative dramatics, songs and music, videos, food experiences, and other means as appropriate. School-wide chapel times welcome children into church exposure and enjoyment.

Social/emotional developmental experiences include interactive play and cooperative opportunities, practice with speaking and listening skills, verbal expression for emotions, and creative activities through music and art. Holidays are an enjoyable way to participate in a sense of community and Christian heritage. Values presented in life situations and in stories instill awareness of personal interaction into the school and family settings.

Developing physically involves planned opportunities and free play for gross and fine motor control, coordination, balance, and rhythm. Healthy eating, cleanliness, and school safety are discussed and encouraged.

Intellectual and academic development begins with language and concept growth. Children who experience a rich variety of concrete activities build understanding of the world around them. Through curriculum choices, teachers work toward lengthening children's attention span, improving thinking skills, following directions, phonemic awareness, alphabet and recognition of numbers zero to twenty as well as building math and science concepts.

The intent of providing Christian school experiences in the four/five-year-old program is to begin to develop a strong foundation of faith for life and a well-rounded background of concepts and skills that will be needed for success in kindergarten. St. Paul Methodist School teachers demonstrate love and dedication in planning and implementing a well rounded curriculum to successfully accomplish our school philosophy of education and statement of faith.

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Attendance Policy

The VPK program allows you to send your child to school and help prepare him/her for kindergarten, without the pressure of childcare costs. We, as educators, partner with the parent to be sure that our goal is met in VPK: To prepare your children for Kindergarten in a Christian, loving, joyful, developmentally appropriate environment. Our teachers are well-trained, enthusiastic leaders who do an awesome job implementing our curriculum, but they cannot do it alone! Parents can help us meet our goal by adhering to attendance policies:

ATTEND REGULARLY— Your child will not benefit from our program if he/she is not here! Please keep absence to a minimum. Try to schedule vacations around our school calendar. Absences from the program interfere with our efforts to have adequate time to prepare the students for Kindergarten. Our VPK Attendance policy is as follows:

1. Each absence must be documented with a parent note, including the dates of absence, and parent signature. This note must accompany the child to school upon his/her return.
 - a. The first three absences each month do not affect the child's enrollment.
 - b. Absences beyond 3 days each month are only for illness or family emergency.
 - c. Absences beyond 3 days each month which DO NOT fall into the excused category are classified as **vacation days (10 vacation days allowed per year)**.
2. Please be aware: **VPK STUDENT ABSENCES CREATE A GAP IN SCHOOL FUNDING. PLEASE BE MINDFUL OF THE NEED FOR CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE.**
3. Each parent must sign their "Parental Choice Certificate" at the end of each month.

Classes Offered

Two year old classes - 2 days (Tues/Thurs), 3 days(Mon/ Wed/ Fri) or 5 days (Monday- Friday)
Up to ratios of 1:11(teacher to student) with a maximum of twelve children per room.

Three year old classes - 2 days (Tues/Thurs), 3 days (Mon/Wed/Fri) or 5 days (Mon-Fri)
Up to ratios of 1:15 (teacher to student) with a maximum of 10 children per room.

Four/Five (VPK) classes - 4days (Mon-Thurs)
Four/Five (VPK +) class - Fridays
Up to ratios of 1:20 (teacher to student)

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)

All children who are four years old by **September 1st** of the current school year may participate in the Florida VPK Program. Hours are 8:30- 12:30 Monday through Thursday (August – May). VPK students must present St. Paul Methodist School with a state “voucher” before beginning this program.

Tuition Rates

Two & Three Year Olds

School Time Only (8:30AM -12:30PM)

2 days per week--\$325 per month

3 days per week--\$375 per month

5 days per week--\$450 per month

Four/Five Years Olds

School Time Only (8:30AM - 12:30PM)

4 days per week - no cost (Voluntary Pre-K)

VPK+ (Friday Only) - \$125 per month + the \$100 registration fee

*Non VPK Qualifying Students – 5 days per week - \$450 per month + the \$100 registration fee

Preschool (Supply Fee)

A yearly supply fee of \$60 will be billed at the beginning of the school year (Septembers’ invoice). This fee will help pay for supplies and activities for the school year. *This fee does not apply to the VPK 4 day program.*

Preschool Extended Care Rates

Extended care is available to children who are **completely potty trained**. Space is limited. Times available are:

Morning Care—7:30 AM to 8:25 PM \$8 per hour

Afternoon Care—12:30PM-1:30 PM \$8 per hour

If the child is picked up between 1:30-1:45pm, there will be a \$20.00 fee added to the \$8 aftercare 1 hour fee. If the child is picked up after 1:45pm there will be the \$8 aftercare 1 hour fee plus the \$20.00 fee from 1:30-1:45pm and then it will be a \$5.00 fee per minute starting at 1:46pm.

If late pickups occur more than once, the parent will lose privilege of extended care services

Registration & Enrollment

An annual, non-refundable registration fee of \$100 is due at time of enrollment. Children currently enrolled in the program will have the opportunity to register for the next school term in February/March.

Withdrawals & Terminations

If you wish to withdraw your child from preschool, two weeks written notice is required. The Preschool Board reserves the right to terminate a child’s enrollment depending on the circumstances, notice may or may not be given to the parents. The registration fee and any tuition paid to either point will not be refunded.

Pre-Kindergarten Students

VPK-ONLY - By law, children who attend VPK programs (with the State Voucher) may not be charged ANY fees for the 540 hours the program is in session Monday-Thursday.

Tuition

Our very reasonable tuition schedule is made possible by full enrollment, operating efficiency, and predictable monthly income. You can help us maintain this favorable tuition structure by observing a few important requirements:

1. VPK + Day (Friday) - VPK student who attend on Friday must pay the **non-refundable** registration fee.
2. At the time of registration, the school will collect a non-refundable registration fee.
3. Each month's **tuition is due on the first day of the month** and is **past due on the 6th** of the month. A \$25.00 late fee will be applied to your account at that time if payment has not been received. If the 5th falls on a weekend, the following Monday will be the cut-off day for payment. If you expect to be out of town and not returning until after the 5th of the month please mail your payment in time to be received by the 5th to avoid a late fee. **If a tuition account is 30 days past due, the child will not be allowed to attend class until the balance is current and the next month's tuition is paid in full.** The following payment options are available:
 - A. A box on the wall near the water fountains is available for you to drop your payment. If paying by cash please see the Office Staff for a receipt before putting your payment in the box.
 - B. You can mail your payment to: St Paul Methodist School, 4901 Gulf Breeze Parkway, Gulf Breeze, Florida 32563.
 - C. Invoicing will be sent out through Brightwheel and payments can be made online through this system.
4. Make checks payable to: St Paul Methodist School and in the memo, note your child's name and for what service (tuition, extended care, etc.) will be provided.
5. A child's absence from school does not reduce tuition agreements. As you can appreciate, our expenses continue just the same.
6. Similarly, tuition is not reduced for those months containing holidays. The overall tuition schedule has taken days out of school into account. Tuition is truly an annual amount that is divided into equal monthly payments for our families convenience.
7. **Extended care, both A.M. and P.M.,** is pay as you use the service, or you may pay in advance.
8. All returned checks will be assessed a \$25.00 return-check fee. Any family with two returned checks in a school year must pay all remaining payments with cash or money order.
9. Tuition is paid for the 10 months the student attends school. There is not a price discount if the students are not in session the entire month.

Admission Procedures

To enroll your child, complete the necessary enrollment forms and **return them with the registration fee**. Your child's position is assured only upon receipt of the registration fee and Enrollment Agreement. Health forms must be received within 30 days of your child's first day of school. Listed below are the required documents which each child **MUST** have in their file:

1. Florida Certificate of Immunization (HRS #680) – "Blue card". No copies. **We must have the current original forms.**
2. Student Health Examination signed and dated by physician. No copies. **We must have the current original forms.**
3. Enrollment Agreement that includes Emergency Contacts, In-School Picture/ Video Permission Form, Email Permission Form
4. Emergency Treatment Release Form
5. Permission for Food-related Activities & Special Occasion food consumption
6. (2) Quick Reference Index Cards
7. Medicine Permission Form, if applicable.
8. Custody papers, if applicable.

Custody of Children

Children will be released to either parent unless legal papers or a restraining order is presented. A copy will remain in your child's records. Please refrain from having disputes in the School about custody matters.

School Hours

Our current school hours are from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM (preschool, VPK). Children may be dropped-off no earlier than 8:25AM (if your child is dropped-off prior to this time, you will be assessed a \$8 extended care fee) and any child remaining after 12:40 PM (preschool, VPK and K-4) will incur a \$8.00 late fee.

Pickup / Drop-off Procedures & Safety Regulations

It is against Florida Law to leave your vehicle running and/or other children unattended in the car while you drop-off or pickup your child. Please park in designated parking areas only.

Only those listed on your child's Enrollment Form/Information Card will be allowed to pick up your child. You may add or delete any name(s) by making changes at any time to your original forms in the school office. If someone, other than those listed, is picking-up your child please send a note. **ALL PEOPLE PICKING UP YOUR CHILD FOR THE FIRST TIME WILL BE REQUIRED TO SHOW PROOF OF IDENTIFICATION WITH A PHOTO ID BEFORE THE CHILD IS RELEASED TO THEM.** These persons must park in the front (North) parking lot, come in, and sign your child out and not use the pickup line. School doors will be locked every morning at 8:45AM for the safety of the children. Parents may still gain access to the school building by simply knocking on the door and/or window or ringing the door bell. No child will be transported in school employee's personal vehicles, except at the discretion and prearrangement of the Director.

Drop-off Procedure: Parents must park in designated parking spaces, ensure your child is not running in the parking lot, and walk your child to the main doors of the school (regardless of the student's age). Please leave as soon as possible to allow your child time to adjust. If your child is crying, this usually stops shortly after you leave. We will contact you if we feel you need to return. Remember, children adjust

better than adults do to separation.

Pickup Procedure (Preschool and VPK):

Walk up to pick-up your child and bring your pick up sign with you.

Pickup Procedures during Inclement Weather: Students will not be released at dismissal if there is lightning in the area, or we are under a tornado warning.

Health Concerns

A child who is sick should not be brought to school. A child who has had vomiting, diarrhea, and/or a fever within the past 24-hours **MUST** stay home. If you are in doubt as to whether to send your child to school, chances are the child should stay home. The following are Department of Children and Families guidelines for sending a child home.

- One abnormally loose stool within a 48-hour period.
- A low-grade temperature of 100 degrees or higher.
- An undetermined rash.
- Strep
- Pink eye (conjunctivitis).
- Complaints of an upset stomach or vomiting within a 48-hour period.
- Any suspected communicable disease.
- Green runny noses are often a sign of infection.
- Lice - must have written release from doctor or have an on-site inspection by the director before re-admittance.

Please see that your child gets plenty of rest and eats a healthy breakfast before coming to school. Fatigue and/or hunger can cause your child's day to be a difficult one.

Let us know if your child has been given any medication before arriving at school. Some side-effects to medication may affect your child's behavior and prior knowledge will help us to understand your child better.

We may administer medication at the discretion of the Director, and if the proper Medication Release Form is completed and signed. This applies to chronic illnesses only (Asthma, Epipen). The medication must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name, doctor's name, and a dosage schedule. Also, please supply a measuring spoon/cup, if needed. St. Paul Methodist School does not administer non-prescription medication at any time.

Injury Policies

Routine First Aid, such as scrapes, cuts, bruises, etc. will be administered to the children at the school. Any care given to the children and/or incidents with other children are indicated on our Accident/Incident Report Forms. Names of children involved are withheld due to privacy concerns.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a serious accident (other than routine First Aid such as scrapes, cuts, bruises, etc.) that indicates a need for immediate emergency medical attention, every effort will be made to locate the parent/guardian. EMS will be called to evaluate the child and transport them to the nearest hospital if they feel it is necessary. All medical cost will be at the expense of the parents.

Fire Drills

Monthly fire drills are performed, which introduce children to the fire alarm and exits, which are clearly

marked. We will also have an annual visit from the Fire Department, usually in October, Fire Safety Month.

Tornadoes

In the event of a tornado, all children will be conducted to the center hallway. All doors will be closed and children will be kept safely away from all windows.

Weather Related Emergencies

The school will follow the Santa Rosa School policy for closure of schools in the event of an emergency situation and/or adverse weather conditions, such as hurricanes, tropical storms, etc. You (or your alternate pickup contact) will be notified if this should happen during the school day. St. Paul Preschool will take into consideration what the Santa Rosa County School Board decides regarding school closures. Every weather occurrence school closure will be decided by St. Paul Preschool Director. In the event of school closings due to inclement weather, tuition amounts will not be adjusted or the school year extended until after one week of closures. If we are required to close for more than one week, the Preschool Advisory Board will decide to either give tuition breaks for days beyond the initial closed week, or to extend the school year to make up for those days. We will inform parents of these decisions in a timely manner.

Lock Down

If the school experiences a Lock Down emergency, the front doors will not be opened for any reason. Children and staff will not be dismissed and will remain in their classrooms in a secure area until the Sherriff or other authorized personnel have given the school the "all clear". The school will be put into a Lock Down when there is a threat to the students and staff from an outside source, i.e. questionable individual on the premises or in the immediate area.

School Dress Code

Weather permitting, we play outside every day, so please dress your child appropriately (e.g., warm clothing/jacket/coat during cold weather). All clothing should be marked with your child's name. **Flip-flops, sandals and Crocs are not acceptable.** Rubber soled shoes and socks are required for safety. For freedom of play, little girls do better in jeans or shorts rather than tights and dresses. However, if girls wear dresses, we ask that they wear shorts underneath. Each child should bring an extra change of clothes from home (labeled). To ensure the safety of the children in our care, children dressed inappropriately will have to sit out of playground time with an adult.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

St. Paul Methodist School has an "open door" policy. You are always welcome to visit at any time. However, since the teacher's first responsibility is to all the children, it is not possible to have conferences while classes are in session. Conferences may be arranged at non-school hours and in advance.

Conferences with the teacher may be scheduled at any time after school hours, however:

1. Two-year-old classes do not have annually scheduled conferences. Any concerns you have about your two-year-old must be addressed with the teacher at a mutually arranged time.
2. Three-year-old classes do not have any scheduled conferences, but you may ask for a conference at any time.
3. Four-year-old classes have two scheduled conferences per year. One is to address individual concerns regarding your child and the other is a kindergarten readiness conference for parents and children to help strengthen weaknesses during the summer.

Calendars of Events

Throughout the year we have various programs and activities. We welcome all families to enjoy these happy times. Notes of school activities go home on a regular basis. If you have filled out and returned a signed email permission form, you will also receive emails with important updates and upcoming events. Teachers keep in touch with parents on a regular basis. Ask your child's teacher about their policy on keeping in touch with you. The teachers post individual class schedules in their classrooms. **PLEASE READ YOUR NEWSLETTERS & CHECK YOUR CHILD'S FOLDER/ BACKPACK DAILY** for important information.

Birthdays and Holidays

Children are allowed to bring special treats from home (must be store bought) to share with the class on birthdays, which will be eaten after lunch. Check with your child's class for any allergies. No favors or gifts please. Make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance. Summer birthdays are celebrated at the end of year parties. If your child is having a party outside of school, you may send invitations to school provided the whole class is invited, otherwise you should mail them.

For special parties and holidays, your teacher will have a sign-up sheet or send notes home for requested party items.

Chapel

We provide a schoolwide chapel service two days a week, times and dates to be decided each year and may change without notice. All classes participate with singing, prayers, and our bible story lesson. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend.

Meals

Please take note of your child's food allergies and those of their classmates when providing snack and lunch, especially concerning peanut butter and peanut products.

Each child needs to bring a **nutritious snack and lunch** including a water bottle. **ONLY WATER IS ALLOWED!** The water bottle labeled with your child's first and last name should be provided every day. Please send nutritious food that your child is accustomed to eating. Fruits and vegetables are great food items to send in. We do not have refrigeration available in the classrooms. If necessary, a zip-lock bag with a small amount of ice is usually enough to keep most items cool. Due to health regulations, we are unable to heat your child's food. **NO CANDY!!!**

Extremely large amounts of food can be intimidating to a child, especially if your rule is for them to eat all their food. Remember a snack has already been eaten prior to lunch time. Pack a smaller lunch and you can adjust as needed. We try to have extra food on-hand, should the need arise.

Discipline

One of the most important things a child learns is how to live with himself and others by developing self-control and responsibility for his/her actions. We will make every attempt to help your child recognize what different choices are available and what consequences to expect. We prefer a positive approach to managing a child's behavior. We focus on desirable behavior and praise children for it. When undesirable behavior occurs, we use such methods as: time-outs, verbal reminders of acceptable behaviors, redirection of behavior and notes to parents for a coordinated effort to change conduct.

St. Paul Methodist School does not use corporal punishment. Severe, consistent behaviors which threaten the safety/well-being of anyone in the classroom will not be tolerated. If a child's behavior is unable to be re-directed after several attempts, he/she will be removed from the classroom. Parents will

be called to take the child home. If we as a school and the parent are unable to cooperatively handle the situation to a positive outcome it may result in suspension or expulsion from our program at the discretion of the school Board. Decisions will be based on state standards and individual assessment. Corporal or any type of physical punishment is not permitted. This includes hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures that produce physical pain. Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities is not permitted. Abusive, profane or derogatory language, including yelling and belittling, is not permitted. Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, is not permitted.

Miscellaneous

No toys, gum, or candy may be brought to school. No pacifiers! Children may bring labeled security items which may make adjustment to school easier, e.g., a stuffed animal, small blanket, etc.

Show & Tell

No toys or items of a violent nature, especially guns, swords, lasers, tanks, Power Rangers, Ninja Turtles, Pokemon, etc. are to be brought for Show and Tell. Items to be brought in should be based on the curriculum and the letter of the alphabet for that week. Teachers will schedule their own Show & Tell each week. Items should include family photos, books, and/or items of an educational nature.

Parental Concerns/Volunteers

We welcome parental involvement and/or suggestions in our program. Your time and/or comments are a blessing to the betterment of our school. A successful program means parents and school are working together. Volunteers must complete an application with references and wear volunteer badges while in the school.

We welcome an open dialogue with our parents. If you have ideas or suggestions that you think will make our program more effective, please feel free to speak with the Director.

If you have any questions and/or concerns, please speak with your child's teacher, when appropriate, or with the Director. The School Board is also available to assist you and is available through the Director.