

Saint Lawrence Catholic Preschool
"Where Lifetime Learning Begins"

Family Handbook
2026-2027 School Year



319 Grayson Highway
770-962-1676
jlemieux@saintlaw.org

St. Lawrence Preschool Family Handbook

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Dear Parents,

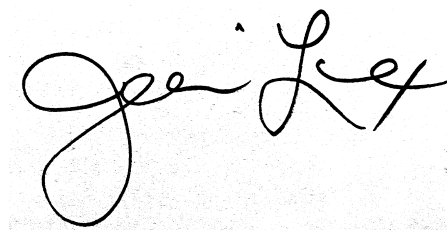
Welcome to St. Lawrence Catholic Preschool. We are pleased to have your family at our preschool. We are very excited about our program, our staff and our wonderful church community. This handbook is meant to acquaint you with our preschool policies and procedures.

You have entrusted your child to our care during these upcoming months, and we consider this a responsibility and a privilege. We plan to help your child grow and develop spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially. We strive to provide a warm, loving environment where your child can continue to discover God's world.

The preschool program falls under the direction and guidance of the pastor of St. Lawrence Catholic Church. Our professional staff is responsible for planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate lesson plan based upon your child's academic and social/emotional growth. To accomplish this, we make use of a play-based curriculum designed to teach how children learn best – through play! Our Catholic Faith and traditions are an important part of what we do. They are experienced by the children on a regular basis in everyday situations at school.

The staff of St. Lawrence Preschool is dedicated and talented. I am pleased to have the opportunity to direct this quality program that we continue to build. I am looking forward to getting to know both you and your child. Please contact me with any questions or concerns you may have regarding our program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Lemieux". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a stylized end.

Jessica Lemieux
Preschool Director

Dear St. Lawrence Preschool families;

We are very excited to welcome you to another academic year. We are grateful to Almighty God for the opportunity to serve you and your families on this important stage in the lives of your children. We are very aware of how special this stage of their growth and formation is and we relish the opportunity to share that with you. We are grateful for the new ones who are venturing away from mom and dad for the first time; we are excited to experience this transition with them. For those returning, we thank you for trusting our program and for entrusting your children once more to us. Our preschool program continues to be committed to excellence and a high level of productivity.

Our preschool too has undergone some transitions, no less of which is the hiring of a new Preschool Director, Jessica Lemieux. Jessica and her family have been members of Saint Lawrence for some time, and we are grateful that she accepted the position to lead our preschool. I can't thank Wendy Guillory, our former Preschool Director, enough for her steady and compassionate leadership. Wendy served our preschool with dedication and poise, and under her leadership, we experienced tremendous growth. On behalf of our preschool family, I wish her well in her new endeavors.

We are blessed with a very dedicated staff. We thank them for their selfless dedication. We do recognize that they accept this role as a vocation and ministry to Christ and the Church. We thank them for maintaining such high standards and for serving our preschool families with humility and consistency. We pray God's blessings upon all their efforts.

I hope that this school year brings us many blessings and exciting ventures. I assure each of you of my fervent prayers for you and your families. May God's blessings and bounty accompany you this year and beyond! Always feel free to let us know what we can do to enhance your child's experience here in our St. Lawrence Preschool. Please, know that our office staff in conjunction with the preschool staff is here always to serve you!

Sincerely yours in Christ, I remain

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Fr. Henry Atem', written in a cursive style.

Fr. Henry Atem
Pastor

OUR SCHOOL AND STAFF

ST. LAWRENCE PRESCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of St. Lawrence Catholic Preschool is to cultivate genuine, joyous, and trusting relationships so that children can become enthusiastic lifelong learners as well as kind and thoughtful people. We use a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum to build on children's natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning in order to provide an engaging, fun-filled program that meets the needs of the whole child. Quite simply, we want children to love coming to preschool.

ST. LAWRENCE PRESCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

We believe that children are unique and develop at their own pace. Our developmentally appropriate program is designed to build on the child's learning and experiences at home as well as to expose them to learning in group situations. Through our play-based curriculum, we encourage school readiness and life-long learning.

It may look like play, but we are learning to:

- work and play together
- respect the rights of others
- express ourselves creatively
- develop self-control
- grow from dependence to independence
- listen to directions and follow them
- develop good work habits
- clean up after work time
- participate in group activities
- enjoy using a variety of materials and medium/media
- share toys, equipment and experiences
- develop an interest in the world around us
- improve motor coordination
- develop new interests and extend old ones
- learn about God's love for us
- be happy

EXEMPTION FROM LICENSURE

St Lawrence Preschool operates under the supervision of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, Office of Catholic Schools. The Office of Catholic Schools ensures that this program follows the prescribed guidelines for parish early childhood programs and the preschool receives two Quality Assurance visits each year.

OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The hours of operation for St. Lawrence Preschool office are: 9 am to 2 pm, Monday-Friday during the school year. Summer hours vary.

- Direct Line to St. Lawrence Preschool is 770-962-1676. Messages left after 2:00 p.m. will not be checked until the following school day.
- The preschool director can be reached by email at jlemieux@saintlaw.org
- Information about St. Lawrence Preschool is also located on the church's website www.saintlaw.org/preschool
- The main number for the church is 770-963-8992

FEES AND SERVICES

OUR CURRICULUM

At St. Lawrence Preschool, we proudly implement a play-based curriculum designed to support the whole child. Our teachers thoughtfully create engaging learning environments where children naturally explore early academic concepts through hands-on experiences, free-choice learning centers, games, and purposeful invitations to play.

Student progress is carefully observed and documented through participation in meaningful activities and teacher assessments, rather than worksheets or rote drills. Our experienced educators recognize that play is essential to early childhood development. Young children are naturally curious, and they learn best through active, self-directed exploration.

Through both independent and collaborative play, children develop important physical, social-emotional, and creative skills. Play also plays a vital role in cognitive growth, supporting early development in science, mathematics, language, and literacy.

Each day includes dedicated time for free play, allowing children to choose from a variety of thoughtfully prepared activities with minimal teacher direction. This encourages independence, decision-making, and creativity. In addition, children participate in large group experiences such as music, movement, storytelling, discussions, and brief mini-lessons. Small group activities provide opportunities for more individualized instruction and deeper engagement.

Outdoor play is an essential part of our daily routine, supporting both physical development and a connection to the natural world.

Most importantly, our program nurtures each child's spiritual growth. Throughout the day, children are guided in age-appropriate and joyful ways to know and experience God's love. They learn that they are cared for, valued, and supported by the adults in their lives. Prayer, Bible stories, and lessons on the fruits of the Holy Spirit are woven naturally into our daily activities.

OUR DAILY PRESCHOOL ROUTINE

Consistent routines are an important part of a successful preschool experience. At our program, children thrive when they know what to expect each day, so we follow a predictable daily schedule that promotes a sense of security and confidence. At the same time, our schedule remains flexible to allow for meaningful "teachable moments" as they arise.

Arrival

Children are welcomed directly into their classrooms each morning, where teachers are present to greet them and support a smooth transition from home to school. This time is an important part of the learning day, as children practice independence by caring for their belongings and settling into classroom routines. A variety of engaging learning centers—such as puzzles, books, play dough, blocks, manipulatives, art, and dramatic play—are available for children to explore and choose from.

Group Time (Circle Time)

Children participate in one or two group times each day. During these gatherings, teachers introduce

curriculum concepts, practice new skills, read stories, and engage children in songs, fingerplays, and discussions. Additional group experiences may include special visitors, “mystery readers,” and occasional snack or cooking activities.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor time is a valuable part of each day. Children engage in well-supervised, typically unstructured play where they develop social skills such as sharing, turn-taking, and following safety guidelines while using playground equipment. In cases of inclement weather—such as rain, wet playground conditions, or extreme temperatures (below freezing or above 90°F)—alternative indoor activities are provided. When appropriate, brief outdoor time may still be incorporated with proper precautions, such as warm clothing in colder weather or hydration during warmer days.

Clean-Up Time

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their environment by participating in daily clean-up routines. This process helps them transition between activities while building organizational and cooperation skills. Classroom materials are clearly labeled with pictures and shapes, allowing children to practice matching, sorting, and early math concepts as they return items to their proper places.

Lunch Time

Families are asked to provide a healthy lunch for their child each day they attend preschool. Please note that classrooms may be designated as nut-free if a child has a severe allergy; families will be notified if this applies. We appreciate your support in helping us maintain a safe and inclusive environment for all children.

Food Safety Reminder

For younger children, certain foods may pose a choking risk if not properly prepared. To help ensure safety, please cut foods into small, manageable pieces when appropriate. Common choking hazards include whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, chunks of meat or cheese, spoonfuls of peanut butter, raw carrots, hot dogs, and hard or sticky candies.

REGISTRATION AND ENROLLMENT

Our preschool program serves children who are 2 to 4 years of age by September 1 of the current school year. We also offer a Young Five-Year-Old class for children who are, or will turn, five years old by December 1.

Registration for the upcoming school year begins in late January or early February. Class placement is determined based on each child’s age as of September 1.

A non-refundable registration fee of \$180 is required at the time of enrollment. This fee secures your child’s placement once it has been offered.

TUITION

Tuition at St. Lawrence Preschool is determined based on the annual cost of operating our program and the number of days per week each class meets. Monthly tuition rates are as follows:

- 4 days per week: \$310
- 5 days per week: \$340

Tuition payments are made online through the My Procare Parent Portal, where families can also access account statements and payment history. For your convenience, payments may also be submitted in the form of cash or check to the preschool office.

Tuition remains consistent throughout the school year and is not adjusted for holidays, inclement weather closures, or student absences, including family travel. Annual tuition is calculated based on the total number of school days and divided into equal monthly payments from August through April.

Please note that families enrolling after September 1 will be responsible for a full tuition payment for the month of May.

ACTIVITY FEE

An annual activity fee of \$80 per child is due by August 21. For families with multiple children enrolled in the program, the fee is \$80 for the first child and \$40 for each additional child.

This fee helps support the cost of school-wide events and special activities offered to our preschool families throughout the year.

LATE PAYMENT FEE

Tuition is due on or before the first day of each month. (The August payment is an exception and is due by August 20.)

A late fee of \$25 will be applied if tuition is not received by the 5th of the month. An additional \$50 late fee will be added if payment is not received by the 10th. If tuition remains unpaid after the 15th, families will be notified by the Preschool Director that their child may be suspended and could be at risk of disenrollment until the account is brought current.

We understand that unexpected financial situations may arise. Families experiencing hardship are encouraged to contact the Preschool Director to discuss possible payment arrangements.

RETURNED CHECK FEE and DECLINED CREDIT CARD FEE

If a check is returned by the bank for any reason, a \$25.00 fee will be charged. If a credit or debit card payment is declined, a \$15.00 fee will be charged.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

Dismissal for all classes is at 1:30 p.m. Parents who pick up their child at 1:40 p.m. or later without prior arrangement will be charged a late fee of \$5.00 per child, plus an additional \$1.00 per minute thereafter.

Late fees are applied at the discretion of the Director, and emergency situations will always be taken into consideration. If you anticipate being delayed, please contact the preschool office by phone as soon as possible. Please note that email is not an appropriate method for communicating late pick-ups, as it may not be received in time.

Consistent late pick-up may result in dismissal from the program at the discretion of the Director.

Please also note that preschool staff participate in monthly professional development meetings, typically held on the next-to-last Tuesday of each month. On these days, dismissal will be at 12:30 p.m. Families will be notified in advance through the monthly calendar. Late pick-up fees apply on these early dismissal days as well.

CALENDAR

St. Lawrence Preschool generally follows the calendar established by Gwinnett County Public Schools. However, there are some exceptions, including certain religious holidays, GCPS early release days, and GCPS digital learning days/teacher workdays.

Families are provided with both annual and monthly calendars well in advance to ensure clear communication and awareness of all scheduled closures and adjusted days.

In addition, St. Lawrence Preschool holds a required monthly professional development meeting. On these days, preschool students will have an early dismissal. These early release days will always be clearly indicated on the monthly calendar provided to families.

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE

Attendance in preschool is not required in the same manner as in public or private elementary schools, and families are not penalized for absences. However, we do encourage regular attendance, as it helps children build positive school habits and supports consistency in their learning and social development.

ABSENCES

Annual tuition is calculated to reflect the full school year and is divided into equal monthly payments. This schedule already takes into account school holidays, teacher workdays, and weather-related closures.

For this reason, tuition is not prorated for these days or for absences due to illness, family travel, or other personal circumstances. We are unable to offer make-up days for missed attendance.

If your child is absent due to illness, we ask that you notify the preschool office as soon as possible and share relevant information regarding the nature of the illness. This helps us maintain a healthy environment for all students and staff.

WITHDRAWAL

When withdrawing a child from St. Lawrence Preschool, families are required to provide 30 days' written notice. This advance notice allows us adequate time to offer the available space to another family.

This policy is standard within early childhood programs and is consistently enforced. If 30 days' notice is not provided, tuition will continue to be charged through the 30-day notice period.

Please note that all tuition payments are non-refundable.

EARLY ARRIVAL

Our school day begins at 9:30 a.m. with morning car line drop-off. For safety and supervision reasons, children may not be dropped off before this time. Prior to 9:30, teachers are preparing classrooms and instructional materials and are not available to provide supervision.

LATE ARRIVAL

Arriving on time is an important part of your child's preschool experience. When children arrive late, they may miss key morning routines and learning activities, and late arrivals can also disrupt the classroom environment. We kindly ask that families make every effort to arrive on time and utilize the morning carline.

If you arrive after carline has ended, please park in the back parking lot and walk your child to the main preschool entrance. Ring the doorbell to notify the preschool office of your arrival, and a staff member will come to assist you and receive your child.

EARLY PICKUP

If you need to pick up your child before the end of the school day, please make arrangements in advance whenever possible. Early pick-ups should be scheduled prior to 1:10 p.m. To help ensure a smooth transition, please send a note to your child's teacher or email the preschool office with the name of the person picking up your child and the expected pick-up time.

When arriving for an early pick-up, please park in the back parking lot and walk to the main preschool entrance. Ring the doorbell to notify the preschool office of your arrival. A photo ID will be required if staff do not recognize you or your designated pick-up person.

For regular arrival and dismissal procedures, please refer to the General Carpool Instructions on page 19.

COMMUNICATION AND CORRESPONDENCE

In general, all emails and phone calls should be directed through the preschool office. For the safety and privacy of all families, teachers do not share personal email addresses or phone numbers with parents.

Electronic Communication:

- Weekly newsletters will be emailed by teachers through the preschool office. Paper copies are available upon request.
- Occasionally, school-wide announcements will be sent via email from the Director. Paper copies are also available upon request.
- Any general questions or concerns may be directed to the Preschool Director by phone or email.
- If you have concerns regarding your child's development or classroom experience, please contact the preschool office to schedule a conference with the appropriate staff member.
- New for the 2026-27 school year, parents, teachers and administrators will be able to communicate through the texting feature on the Procure app. More information about this will be available at Parent Orientation

Written Communication (Folders):

- Please check your child's folder daily for important notes and communications from the teacher.
- Any messages for teachers or the office should be placed in your child's folder for prompt delivery.

SOCIAL MEDIA

St. Lawrence Preschool follows the guidelines established by the Archdiocese of Atlanta regarding the responsible use of all forms of social media, including email, Facebook, Twitter, and websites.

We ask families to be mindful and respectful when sharing photos or information online. Please avoid posting images of preschool children other than your own on personal social media accounts.

For complete details, families are encouraged to review the Archdiocese of Atlanta Social Media Policy at www.archatl.com.

GREEN CLEANING PRACTICES

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the American Academy of Pediatrics, certain chemicals commonly used in cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting products may impact human health, particularly the health of young children.

In response, St. Lawrence Preschool is committed to using cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting products that are safer and less hazardous in order to help protect both children and staff. Whenever possible, we select products that are third-party certified to help minimize exposure to potentially harmful chemicals found in conventional cleaning supplies.

A list of approved products will be provided to families during orientation.

CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

We ask that each child bring a backpack that is large enough to comfortably hold a pocket folder and a lunch box.

At times, teachers may request additional items such as tissues or baby wipes to support classroom needs. Families will be notified directly by their child's classroom teacher if any of these items are needed.

DIAPERS AND POTTY TRAINING

St. Lawrence Preschool does not require children in the two-year-old or three-year-old classes to be potty trained. If your child is not yet potty trained, families will need to provide diapers and wipes each day.

Due to limited storage space, we are unable to store large quantities of diapers at school. We appreciate your understanding in sending only what is needed for daily use.

When your child begins working on potty training at home, please notify your child's teacher so we can partner with you in supporting this milestone. We also ask that you send a change of clothes in case of accidents.

Children in the four-year-old Pre-K program are expected to be fully potty trained with only occasional accidents.

PRESCHOOL ATTIRE

Because preschool is a place for active exploration and hands-on learning, we ask that children be dressed in clothing that is appropriate and comfortable for school.

- Children should wear play clothes that allow for freedom of movement and can withstand spills, splashes, and outdoor play.
- Clothing should be simple enough for children to manage independently when using the restroom, with minimal assistance.
- Belts are not permitted, as they can make restroom use more difficult and may lead to accidents.

- Clothing with easy fasteners helps children build independence and confidence in self-care skills.

Because gross motor (large muscle) development is an important part of the preschool day, all students must wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes. Tennis shoes with socks are strongly recommended, as they provide proper support and protection for both indoor and outdoor activities. Shoes should fit securely and not slip off during running or active play. Boots, flip-flops, and shoes without a back are not permitted.

Each child is also required to keep a complete change of clothes in their backpack at all times. These items should be placed in a large, clearly labeled zip-top bag and include socks and underwear. If your child uses these extra clothes, please replace them the next school day.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

One of the most meaningful ways to be involved in your child's preschool experience is to take time each day to listen as your child shares about their day. Displaying their artwork and inviting them to talk about it helps reinforce their learning and builds confidence. Encouraging your child to participate in simple prayers at mealtimes is another wonderful way to extend their preschool experience into the home. When school and family life are connected, your child's learning becomes even more meaningful.

Parents are always welcome to visit and observe classroom activities. To ensure a smooth and supportive learning environment, we ask that visits be scheduled in advance through the preschool office so that a convenient time can be arranged with your child's teacher. Maintaining classroom routine is important for the benefit of all children.

We deeply value and encourage parent involvement in our preschool community. Families who are interested in volunteering will find several opportunities to participate in meaningful ways, including:

- **Parent Ambassador Committee** – Assists during preschool events by welcoming families and providing guidance. Responsibilities may include greeting new families at Parent Orientation, assisting with check-in at events such as the annual Art Show, and other hospitality support roles.
- **Teacher Appreciation Committee** – Coordinates quarterly expressions of appreciation for preschool staff, such as meals and special recognition efforts.
- **Additional Opportunities** – Individual teachers may also share classroom-specific volunteer needs throughout the year.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

Weather permitting, children in our preschool program go outside each day as part of our regular curriculum. Outdoor play is an important component of early childhood development, and all children are expected to participate.

If you feel your child should not participate in outdoor activities on a given day, we kindly ask that you keep your child at home. We are not able to provide indoor supervision for individual children while the class is outside.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

In the event that a teacher is unable to be at school, a qualified substitute teacher will be called to provide classroom coverage. All substitute teachers are employees of the Archdiocese of Atlanta and St. Lawrence Catholic Church and are fully screened and background-checked in accordance with Archdiocesan requirements.

TOYS FROM HOME

Children should not bring personal toys to school. Children's books or items pertaining to the curriculum are always welcome.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are a special and exciting time for young children, and we are happy to celebrate them at school. Families are welcome to send a simple birthday treat to be shared as a snack with the class. Please contact your child's teacher in advance to make arrangements for the celebration.

Parents are welcome to attend their child's classroom birthday celebration if they choose. For consistency and to maintain a focused learning environment, we are unable to accommodate additional guests or hired entertainers.

We also ask that families do not send goodie bags or party favors home with students. For safety reasons, balloons are not permitted, as they may pose a choking hazard in the preschool setting.

If invitations for home birthday parties are sent to school, they may only be distributed if every child in the class is included.

CATHOLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

St. Lawrence Preschool staff are happy to complete recommendation forms as part of the application process for Catholic or other private schools. Please allow up to 10 days for the completion of these forms.

Please note that enrollment at St. Lawrence Preschool does not guarantee admission to any Catholic or private school.

CONFERENCES AND ASSESSMENTS

Each child in our program will receive a written progress report weekly for the first six weeks of school. These reports focus on your child's adjustment to the classroom environment and may include areas such as following classroom expectations, learning daily routines, and caring for classroom materials.

After this initial period, ongoing assessment is provided based on age level and developmental expectations:

- **Two-Year-Old Class:** Monthly progress reports beginning in October, highlighting growth toward early learning standards.

- **Three-Year-Old Class:** Assessment reports provided three times per year (late October, January, and April).
- **Four-Year-Old and Young Fives Classes:** Assessment reports provided in late October and late March.

Parent-teacher conferences may be requested at any time throughout the school year. In addition, conferences for four- and five-year-old students will be held in March to discuss kindergarten readiness.

For the privacy of all children and families, conferences may not be recorded, photographed, or shared on social media.

POSITIVE GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Clear, consistent, fair, and age-appropriate behavior expectations are established in all classrooms. These guidelines are designed to ensure the safety of every child, prevent injuries, and promote respect for others and for shared classroom materials.

Our staff use positive guidance strategies to support children's development of appropriate behavior. This includes anticipating potential challenges, redirecting children to more appropriate activities, and modeling effective problem-solving skills. Teachers also acknowledge children's feelings and frustrations in a respectful manner and help guide them in resolving conflicts constructively. Mistakes are viewed as natural learning opportunities, and children are gently reminded of classroom expectations as needed.

If ongoing behavioral concerns arise, teachers will communicate with families to schedule a meeting and work collaboratively toward supportive solutions.

The Preschool Director reserves the right to disenroll any child if severe or persistent behavioral concerns arise, or if it is determined that the program is not able to meet the child's needs in a safe and appropriate manner.

BULLYING

Bullying is defined as repeated, aggressive behavior intended to make another child feel inferior. Any incidents of bullying will be dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner. Bullying at parish preschools will not be tolerated.

DISENROLLMENT

Although rare, there may be situations in which it becomes clear that a child's needs cannot be effectively met within our program. Such circumstances may include behavioral concerns that result in harm to other children—whether intentional or unintentional—or a lack of response to ongoing communication and support efforts from staff and administration.

A decision to disenroll a child is made only after all reasonable options and supports have been explored by preschool staff and church administration. The Director carefully considers each situation, taking into account both the individual child's needs and the well-being of the entire classroom community.

Parents are an essential part of this process and will be involved in ongoing communication and discussion. However, final decisions regarding disenrollment remain at the discretion of the Preschool Director and church administration.

GENERAL CARLINE INSTRUCTIONS

Our carline system is the safest and most efficient way for children to enter and exit the building. We ask all families to carefully follow these procedures to help us maintain a safe and orderly process for everyone. Please be patient, especially during the first few weeks of school, as children learn the routine. Our goal is to ensure a smooth and efficient system for all families.

- For the safety of children and staff, **cell phone use is not permitted while the carline is moving.**
- Please make every effort to arrive on time for both drop-off and pick-up.
- During morning arrival, please remain in your vehicle and form a line beginning at the main preschool entrance and extending toward the back parking lot near the rectory. Directional signs will be posted during the first days of school. Please move forward only when the line ahead of you moves, and do not pass or change positions within the line.
- A staff member will assist your child out of the vehicle and escort them into the building.
- If your child becomes upset at drop-off, please know that in most cases children settle quickly once they enter the classroom. If you would like an update after drop-off, you are welcome to call the office after carline has concluded.

During afternoon dismissal:

- Please remain in your vehicle and form a line beginning at the main preschool entrance, following staff direction as needed.
- Our carline is designed to maximize flow and minimize congestion in the parking lot and surrounding areas.
- You will be provided with a car tag displaying your assigned family number. Please ensure this tag is clearly visible in your front windshield.
- A staff member will bring your child to your vehicle and assist them in getting in safely. Please remain in your car at all times during this process.

For safety reasons, all children must be properly secured in a car seat according to Georgia law. After loading your child, we ask that you pull forward to a designated parking space or covered area to secure your child in their car seat. Preschool staff are not permitted to buckle children into car seats.

For more information on Georgia car seat laws, please visit: <https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/child-passenger-safety/>

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

ARCHDIOCESAN SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING

All staff members, substitute teachers and volunteers are required to complete this training, known as VIRTUS. Information will be provided to parents who wish to register for this class.

CHILD ABUSE

All Preschool staff must comply with Georgia law requiring schools and individuals to report all suspected cases of child abuse / neglect / deprivation to the Department of Family and Child Services, our Pastor and the Director of Parish Early Childhood Programs at the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

VISITORS/ GUESTS/ SECURITY

Our preschool entrances remain locked while children are in the building. Visitors/parents/guests to the preschool must use the front entrance. There is a doorbell to alert preschool office of your arrival. All visitors will be required to sign in the Visitors' Log.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Children will only be released to parents or to individuals listed on the Emergency Contact List. If your child will be picked up by someone who is not listed, we must receive a signed and dated note from a parent authorizing the release.

If a last-minute change in pick-up arrangements is necessary, please contact the preschool office by phone. Email is not considered a reliable method for communicating same-day dismissal changes.

For safety purposes, staff will request photo identification from any individual who is not immediately recognized at pick-up.

If your child regularly carools with another family, please notify the Director's office in writing and ensure those individuals are included on your child's Emergency Contact List. Additional carpool tags will be provided upon request.

CUSTODIAL RIGHTS

We may not deny a parent access to his or her child without legal documentation. Therefore, any legal document which restricts a parent's access to a child must be presented and on file with the preschool.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that all emergency contact information remains current and to notify the Preschool Director of any updates. We strongly recommend listing multiple emergency contacts to ensure we are able to reach someone promptly if needed.

While your child is in our care, please ensure that your cell phone ringer is turned on and the volume is set appropriately. This allows us to contact you quickly in the event your child becomes ill or is injured during the preschool day.

If we are unable to reach a parent or any listed emergency contact and we determine that immediate medical attention is necessary, we will contact emergency services (911). Any associated costs will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

MEDICATION

Preschool staff are only permitted to administer medication in cases of life-threatening conditions, such as severe allergic reactions or asthma. In these instances, appropriate medical documentation and required authorization forms must be completed by parents and kept current. Copies of all necessary records will be maintained in both the Preschool Office and the classroom.

If your child is taking any medication at home that may affect behavior, such as decongestants, laxatives, or breathing treatments, please notify your child's teacher so we can best support your child during the school day.

IMMUNIZATIONS

All children attending Catholic parish preschools must meet Georgia state standards for immunization. The Office of Catholic Schools requires Georgia Immunization Form 3231 to be current and on file before children enter the preschool program.

- **Religious Exemption**

Catholic doctrine does not support an exemption from immunization based upon a matter of conscience/religious exemption. For this reason, religious exemptions are not accepted in parish preschool programs.

- **Medical Exemption**

Medical exemption is applicable when a child has a long-term condition that contraindicates immunization. Parents requesting exemption from immunization must provide a detailed explanation of the child's condition as documented by his pediatrician. The Archdiocese of Atlanta reserves the right to obtain a second opinion. The medical exemption must be renewed annually.

- **Epidemic, Outbreak, Exposure**

In the event of a contagious disease epidemic, outbreak or exposure, children with medical exemptions will be required to remain at home until their health and safety is no longer at risk.

WEATHER

In the event of inclement weather, the Preschool Director will communicate any decisions regarding delayed openings or closures as soon as they are made. Because these decisions are often weather-dependent and may occur at the last minute, it is important for families to stay attentive to communications.

Notifications will be shared with parents via email and/or text message. Please ensure your contact information is kept current so you receive timely updates.

While we often consider Gwinnett County Public Schools' decisions during inclement weather, St. Lawrence Preschool does not automatically follow the public school system's schedule, particularly when digital learning days or other non-closure days are implemented.

OTHER SAFETY AND EMERGENCY CONCERNS

Attendance is taken daily and reported to the Preschool Office. For the safety of all children, teachers conduct regular headcounts throughout the day, as well as after any transition between activities or locations.

Safety preparedness is an important part of our program. Fire drills are conducted monthly, severe weather drills are conducted quarterly, and lockdown drills are conducted twice per year.

In the event of a necessary evacuation of the preschool or church building, teachers will escort their classes to the designated safe location at The Praise Community Church parking lot next door to St. Lawrence. Parents will be notified using the emergency contact information provided on file. Children will only be released to a parent or an authorized adult listed on their emergency contact form.

GENERAL HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

Children who exhibit signs of illness, including fever, sore throat, acute cold or cough, diarrhea, or vomiting, should not attend preschool. A child must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication before returning to school.

If an antibiotic has been prescribed for an illness, the child must have received at least two doses before returning to class.

We ask families to be considerate of others in our school community by keeping children at home until they are fully well. The Director reserves the right to send home any child who appears ill during the school day.

If your child is diagnosed with a communicable illness—such as COVID-19, hand, foot, and mouth disease, chickenpox, conjunctivitis (pink eye), or influenza—please notify the Preschool Director as soon as possible so that appropriate guidance and procedures can be followed.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY

The primary responsibility for the prevention and control of infectious diseases lies with individuals, families, and public health authorities. Schools are not responsible for providing expert infectious disease advice or treatment for students; this is the role of medical practitioners and health authorities.

Attendance at any school may be denied to any student reasonably suspected of or diagnosed with a contagious or infectious disease that could make the child's attendance harmful to the welfare of all other students, faculty, and staff.

Schools reserve the right to require a statement from the student's primary care physician authorizing the student's return to school. Schools will respect all students' privacy. Parents of other children attending the school may be notified that their child has been exposed to a communicable or infectious disease in a manner that avoids identifying the student with the disease to the maximum extent appropriate in each particular circumstance. **Please note that specific to Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease, children may return to school when they are blister-free.**

During periods of infectious disease, some operational procedures and events may be added, modified and/or cancelled including but not limited to:

- ☐ Prevention techniques – hand washing education, coughing and sneezing education; hand sanitizers in classrooms; sanitizing wipes in classrooms for computers, desks, common areas, etc.; tissues in all rooms; sanitation procedures; and if appropriate, the mandated use of facial masks along with social distancing.
- ☐ Preparedness – Schools will comply with CDC, State Department of Health guidelines, and directives from the Office of Catholic Schools.
- ☐ Response – Schools will follow the Office of Catholic Schools policy for school closures (Policy 5285) and directives from State and Local (County and Municipal) jurisdictions. The Office of Catholic Schools will provide a written Reopening of Schools Plan specific to the infectious or communicable disease present.
- ☐ Recovery – Schools will publish a return to school procedure in accordance with directives from the Office of Catholic Schools which aligns to the Reopening of Schools Plan approved by the Superintendent of Schools.

BITING POLICY

Biting is a developmentally typical behavior in early childhood, most commonly seen between 9 and 30 months of age. As children grow, most develop more effective communication skills and alternative ways to express their needs. Child development experts note that biting often occurs due to limited language skills, frustration, overstimulation, or discomfort associated with teething.

While biting is considered developmentally appropriate in toddler-aged children, it is still a behavior that can cause injury and distress for children, families, and staff. Our goal is to ensure a safe environment for all children while helping them develop more appropriate ways to communicate and manage emotions.

To address and reduce biting behavior, the following strategies are used:

- If teething is identified as a contributing factor, appropriate teething materials and soothing strategies will be provided to support the child.
- If a biting incident occurs, the teacher will respond immediately. The child who bit will be told in a calm but firm manner, “Ouch, that hurt.” The teacher will then provide care and comfort to the child who was bitten. This may include cleaning the area with soap and water, applying a cold compress, and administering a Band-Aid if needed. The child who bit may be guided in practicing “gentle touch” and redirected to appropriate teething or sensory items.
- If biting is related to frustration or communication challenges, teachers will redirect the child to appropriate tools for expression and actively encourage the use of language to communicate needs and feelings.
- Parents of both the child who bit and the child who was bitten will be notified in writing. To protect family privacy, names will not be shared between families.
- If a child bites repeatedly, staff will implement additional observation and documentation to identify patterns and contributing factors. This may include tracking time, activity, and context of incidents. Increased supervision or “shadowing” may be used during higher-risk times, and classroom structure may be adjusted to reduce overstimulation when appropriate.
- Parent conferences may be scheduled to discuss behavior patterns at home and school and to explore additional strategies or outside support resources if needed.

If biting behavior persists and is determined to significantly impact the safety or functioning of the classroom, or if the child’s needs exceed what the program can reasonably support, the preschool may determine that the child is unable to remain enrolled.

INCIDENTS / ACCIDENTS / EMERGENCIES

Parents will be notified in writing of any minor injury or incident that causes a child discomfort. A copy of the incident report will be maintained in the child’s file.

In the event of a more serious injury, parents will be contacted immediately. If outside medical treatment is required, a written report will be submitted to the St. Lawrence Business Manager and the Director of Parish Early Childhood Programs for the Archdiocese of Atlanta. A copy will also be placed in the child’s file.

In the case of a life-threatening emergency, emergency services (911) will be called immediately. Parents will then be notified and informed of the hospital to which the child has been transported. A written report will be filed with St. Lawrence administration, the Director of Parish Early Childhood Programs, and included in the child’s permanent file. Any resulting costs will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

ALLERGIES AND LIFE-THREATENING MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Neither St. Lawrence Preschool nor the church facility can be considered completely allergen-free. We are unable to guarantee that individuals, personal belongings, or surfaces will be free from potential cross-contamination.

To support the safety of all children, the following procedures are in place:

- If your child has a severe medical condition or significant allergy, families are required to schedule a conference with preschool staff prior to the first day of school to review the child's needs and care plan.
- Prior to the start of school, families must complete an Allergy/Medical Action Plan detailing the child's condition and treatment instructions, signed by the child's physician. An Authorization to Administer Medication form, also signed by the physician, must be kept on file.
- If your child requires an EpiPen or similar emergency medication, two (2) devices must be provided to the school.
- For any food allergy, families may be asked to provide a supply of "safe foods" or approved treats to be used when classroom snacks or celebrations occur.
- Families will be notified at the beginning of the school year if a food allergy is present in the classroom and what precautions are required. An Allergy Alert notice will also be posted on the classroom door.
- If a child in a classroom has a food allergy requiring the use of an EpiPen, that classroom will be designated allergen-free for the identified allergen.
- All medications must be current. Expired medications must be replaced promptly by the parent or guardian.
- Any required medical devices or medications must be provided to staff as directed (either brought daily or stored at school, as appropriate for the child's care plan).
- If a previously documented allergy has resolved following medical evaluation or treatment, a written statement from the child's physician must be submitted to the Preschool Office confirming this update.

St. Lawrence Preschool reserves the right to amend this handbook at any time. Families will be notified of any updates or changes via email.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact the preschool office. We appreciate your partnership and the trust you place in us as we care for and educate your children.

Thank you for sharing your little ones with us. We look forward to a wonderful school year!