

Star of the Sea Early Learning Center - Handbook

INTRODUCTION

Star of the Sea Early Learning Center is the pre-primary division of Star of the Sea Schools. We are a private parochial school under the direction of the Catholic School Department.

The Center began in 1980 in the former convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame. The school came into being to meet the needs of the families and children of Star of the Sea Parish. The new Star of the Sea Early Learning Center campus was completed in December 2003 and we opened our doors at our new location in January 2004.

The Early Learning Center is licensed by the Department of Human Services. We are affiliated with the American Montessori Society and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The Center is also an intern site for the Chaminade Montessori Teacher Training Program and works in partnership with the University of Hawaii and its community colleges.

The Center accepts children ages two to six and is licensed for 250 students. Our commitment is to provide quality early childhood education within a Catholic Montessori environment.

This handbook is provided to all parents and children enrolled at the Center. This handbook stipulates school policies that determine the terms of the parent's contract with Star of the Sea Early Learning Center, and is further supplemented by the school policy forms included in your registration packet.

PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of Star of the Sea Schools is to educate the whole person, spiritually, intellectually and personally. The curriculum is designed to be sufficiently flexible and varied so as to provide the experience necessary to achieve these ends. The schools exist to supplement the work of the parent in Christian education and to foster in students a love of God and neighbor.

To attain these goals, our Center has set the following objectives:

1. To reach the greatest possible spiritual development, the environment for the young child will be prepared so that it provides an unfolding integrated approach to discovering God's love. Through these experiences the child may understand more fully the beliefs of the Catholic Church, develop a personal prayer life and participate in liturgy.
2. Through these early experiences, the Center seeks to help the child form a healthy spiritual base on which to form values consistent with our Catholic beliefs.
3. The physical growth of the child is fostered through activity programs that are developmentally appropriate for the young child and allow for the development of fitness and understanding of health as a sense of "well being."

SCHOOL YEAR AND HOURS OF OPERATION

Our hours of operation are:

Regular School Day: 8:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Extended Day Care: 2:45 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.

Attendance

The regular school day commences at 8:00 a.m. All students, with the exception of toddlers, should arrive at school no later than 8:00 a.m. Tardiness for all kindergarteners is recorded. Parents must notify the office for absenteeism, early and/or late pick-up, and other emergencies.

Entering School

The front entrance gate is opened each school morning at 7:30 a.m. and secured at 8:00 a.m. Parents must enter the school through the front office after 8:00 a.m.

The Center provides several options for parents to consider:

- A 9-month program which allows the child to participate from 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- A day care program which provides the opportunity for working parents to place their child in an all-day program from 7:00 a.m. to 5:45 p.m., including the months of June, July and the first two weeks of August.
- A summer program: 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. or 7:00 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.
- A highly recommended five week summer orientation session for all new students who have not previously attended a Montessori Center, or who demonstrated an area of need during the initial entrance observation/test session.

The holiday schedule and administrative mini-days are listed in your school calendar.

ADMISSION POLICY AND REQUIREMENTS

Admission

The school has a non-discriminatory admissions policy. Provisions for children with special needs are individually reviewed during an initial interview with the parents in order to determine whether or not the school is able to meet the special needs of the child. A special need is defined as a condition that exists which requires adjustments in the usual learning environment if the child is to develop to his or her potential. It is our preschool's policy to operate within our State and Federal Law to follow the ADA Law and accept children with special needs within reasonable boundaries by considering whether the acceptance would result in undue hardship to our school.

In determining acceptance, decisions of acceptance will be made after the child observation/test and parent interview, and after we receive all required application forms and supporting documentation from the applicant.

An observation session is required for all incoming students. Students applying to the kindergarten division will also participate in a writing exercise. Parents are asked to share their philosophy, commitment and support of our program through the parent interview questionnaire, and an in-person parent interview is also required.

Children in the Young Preschool, Preschool and Kindergarten programs must be toilet-trained prior to entrance.

Children in the Toddler division do not need to be completely toilet trained; training pants or pull-ups are required. Diapers are not allowed.

Financial Contract

A financial contract must be completed and returned to the finance office prior to enrollment.

Please refer to the section entitled "Financial Arrangements."

Registration Requirements

During the spring semester of the school year, currently enrolled students are required to re-enroll for the next school year. As acceptance for the upcoming school year is not automatic, the school reserves the right to accept, waitlist, or defer acceptance of re-registrants at the discretion of the Admission Committee. Such decisions are based on parental cooperation, student behavior and the school's ability to meet the needs of the child. Children who are eligible based on entry-age requirements and who successfully complete the ELC program are recommended for placement at Star of the Sea Elementary School.

At the time of ELC registration, the student shall:

1. Provide Birth Certificate copy. Copy shall remain on file.
2. Provide Catholic Baptismal Certificate copy. Copy shall remain on file.
3. Provide a completed Health Examination Record or Form 14 (updated T.B. screening required). A dental card is also recommended.
4. Provide a Teacher Reference Report from previous preschool(s) attended (forms are available at the time of application).
5. A complete Student History form.
6. A complete Parent Interview Questionnaire.
7. Sign up for an observation and/or testing session.
8. Sign up for a Parent Interview.

Orientation

Before the school year begins, parents are required to attend a mandatory parent orientation meeting.

Contract

A tuition contract and financial agreements are included with your registration packet. Special payment arrangements need to be made with our Business Office. Once agreed to, any request for change thereafter must be made in writing to the Finance Office. A financial contract must be completed and returned to the Finance Office prior to enrollment.

Financial Assistance

Limited financial assistance is available. Applications are available at our office. Currently enrolled students are given first preference.

Late Fees

A late charge shall be assessed for children who are not picked up on time. Charges are computed after a 15-minute grace period. The late penalty is \$15.00 per every 15 minutes or fraction thereof, after the grace period. Parents are expected to pick up their children on time.

Payments, Refunds and Schedule Changes

Schedule changes or withdrawal requests shall be made in writing and addressed to the Principal at least two weeks prior to the date of change or withdrawal. Tuition refunds or adjustments shall be made by the quarter (see yearly school calendar). Once the quarter begins, there will be a charge for the quarter. Once the last quarter begins, there will be no adjustments. All requests for tuition refund or adjustments must be made in writing and addressed to the Principal.

No adjustments, refunds or rebates are made for absent or elected vacation times, or if the child is accepted at another during the school year.

All fees and tuition deposits are non-refundable.

Checks that are returned shall be handled as follows:

1. First returned item: \$25.00
2. Second returned item: payment in cash or by cashier's check may be required. All checks shall be made payable to the Star of the Sea Early Learning Center.

ITEMS YOU ARE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE

Toddler Division (2 years old)

- 1 Small blanket, i.e. crib size quilt or lightweight blanket, **labeled**. No large blankets, oversized pads or large pillows that do not fit in cubicles.
- 1 Complete change of clothing in a small paper bag. Please label all items. Please, no plastic bags as they are a hazard.
- 4-6 Pairs of training pants. Name please.
- 2 Boxes of tissue.

Young Preschool, Preschool and Kindergarten (3-6 years old)

- 1 Small blanket, i.e. crib size quilt or lightweight blanket, **labeled**. No large blankets, oversized pads or large pillows that do not fit in cubicles.
- 1 Complete change of clothing in a small paper bag. Please label all items. Please, no plastic bags as they are a hazard.
- 1 Box of tissue.

Blankets must be taken home and washed at the end of each week.

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS

Uniforms are not required at the Toddler level. However, changes of clothing are a must.

Uniforms are required for the Young Preschool, Preschool and Kindergarten divisions, and we require a change of clothing be kept in your child's cubby. Covered shoes must be worn and are required (no open toes or strap-backed shoes). Boys' hair must not extend below the shirt collar (conventional haircuts only).

Uniforms may be purchased at:

Potpourri School Uniforms
727 Waiakamilo Road
Honolulu, Hawaii
Ph: (808) 847-5541

Aloha attire is allowed on the last Friday of each month. Party attire is allowed for special occasions. The school will not assume responsibility for lost items. Please do not send toys, jewelry or other expensive items to school with your child, as they may become lost.

CURRICULUM

Star of the Sea Early Learning Center is a Montessori Early Learning Center. The philosophical approach and organizational framework shall be consistent with the requirements of the Montessori Method. The program provides for activity-centered learning and integration with the areas of:

1. Religion - Christian-value orientation permeates the entire day and prayers are part of the daily schedule.
2. Language Arts - skills in the language area and extensions throughout all areas of the environment.
3. Math – skills in the math are extended into science and cultural studies.
4. Fine Arts • Art • Music • Dance • Literature
5. Cultural and Science Studies – cosmic and environmental
6. Practical Life and Sensorial – sensory-motor integration
7. Technology – computers and software programs

For a more detailed reference, please refer to the curriculum guides that are available for review (upon request).

Classroom Assignment

Students are assigned to a class and teacher with the start of each new school year. These assignments may be subject to change during the first two weeks of the school year, and will become static thereafter for the duration of the school year and for the time that your child remains in the division. If a change in teacher or class is recommended, the recommendation will be discussed with parents before decisions are made. Teacher assignment requests will be considered and are not guaranteed.

LIBRARY, AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIAL, VIDEOS

The Elementary School library is available to kindergarten students attending the Center. A rotating schedule provides our children with an opportunity to visit the library and borrow books. Audio-Visual materials are utilized to both supplement and complement our curriculum areas and are selected for their educational, cultural and social significance. Videos are shown on Fridays or other special occasions at the discretion of the teacher.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline is viewed in terms of preventative measures. Techniques of distraction are redirection may solve the problem. "Time-out," as described by Dr. R. Dreikurs in his book Children the Challenge, is utilized. However, consistent destructive or disruptive behavior which cannot be resolved through mutual cooperation between parents, child and school shall result in a recommendation for withdrawal. Persistent problems are brought to the attention of the child's parents so that a plan may be implemented to resolve the problem. All students are observed by our staff psychologist as part of the ongoing services we offer.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Each child is required to have a physical examination prior to their entrance into school and yearly thereafter. The physical and immunization record as well as T.B screening results must be recorded on the Form 14 provided by your physician. This record remains in the school file at all times. All recommendations regarding special care should be noted by your physician.

Dietary restrictions should be noted by your physician including exclusion of milk from the diet.

If you child has a fever or contagious illness or disease, he or she should be sent to school; sick children are not permitted in school. We shall assume that a child is ill if:

1. He or she has an elevation of temperature.
2. He or she has vomiting or diarrhea, with or without fever.
3. He or she cries and complains of pain (earache, headache, toothache, stomachache, etc.), with or without fever.

Upon returning to school, a child with a contagious illness or disease must have a doctor's note certifying that he or she is able to return. A child with a fever or diarrhea must be free of symptoms for 24 hours prior to returning to school.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

In case of an accident or emergency, it shall be our policy to contact the child's mother first and then the father, unless otherwise specified. If we are unable to locate a parent, the physician who is noted on the emergency card will be called and his advice followed.

In the absence of the above, or if the child needs immediate medical attention, we will call for an ambulance and the child will be taken to the nearest medical facility (Kapiolani Medical Center), or to a hospital designated by the emergency medical care team. The school is not responsible for medical expenses incurred in emergency treatment. All students are required to have medical coverage upon and for the duration of their enrollment.

Medication will be administered ONLY with the following:

1. Medication must be prescribed by the physician. Over the counter medication must be in the original container.
2. Label must have specific child's name on it. The date of administration must occur before the expiration date of the medication.
3. Name of the medication and directions must be clear.
4. Parent shall bring the medication to school and sign for the medication on the forms provided.

We shall not be responsible for treatments such as soaks, eyewashes or dressing changes.

Nutrition

Nutrition meals and snacks are provided by the school. Please do not send in food as outside food is not allowed. A doctor's certificate and/or approval by the Principal is required for any home lunch request. Birthdays are celebrated monthly with a snack provided by our kitchen.

Allergies

Allergies to food, including milk restrictions, shall be noted in writing by the parent and signed by or accompanied by a signed note from the physician. Allergies shall be noted on the child's emergency record and on the Student History form. The school will try to accommodate the special dietary needs of children with allergies, religious restrictions, etc. If the school is unable to meet these needs, parents may be requested to provide a home lunch for their child.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Arrival and Dismissal of Children

The parent shall be responsible for signing the child in and out. If someone other than the parent picks up the child, their name, address, phone number and relationship to the child shall be noted on the emergency record. Children will not be released to any person whose name is not on the emergency card or without parental consent. Identification may be required of authorized persons for pick-up if he or she is not recognized by ELC staff.

Children shall be received no earlier than 7:00 a.m. Dismissal time is 2:30 p.m.

While entering and exiting through our entrance doors, parents are reminded to use their security access code and to ensure the door closes after them. Please keep all doors closed. Although staff personnel are assigned to assist in the dismissal process, there is always a possibility that a child may see his or her parent and try to run out to greet them.

If you need to collect your child early, please notify our office. If your child is going to be absent or will be late, please notify our office by 8:00 a.m. at (808) 734-3840.

Broadcast Communication System

Star of the Sea Early Learning Center uses the **Connect-ED®** service, which allows us to send personalized voice messages to your family's home, work or cell phones, and also by e-mail. We can communicate with parents and staff regarding school events, emergency situations and other relevant school-related issues, updates or activities.

Conferences

Conferences are arranged so that our teachers can share their observations and recommendations with you. Your conference is a time when we hope that you will share your insights about your child.

If you need to speak to the teacher at any time, please arrange for a time other than arrival or dismissal, as your child's teacher has assignments that are related to childcare at this time. However, if an emergency arises, please contact our office.

Confidentiality

We are committed to maintaining the confidentiality of your child's personal information and will not release any of your child's personal information to any third party without the prior written consent of the child's authorized caregiver. Access by employees to confidential information will otherwise be limited to those who have a business need for the access and who have entered into confidentiality agreements with us.

Emergency Contact Information

Parents must immediately notify the ELC office if there are any changes in telephone, address and other important information such that the student's emergency contact forms can be updated.

Excursions

Parental permission for participation is required in writing. Parents sign an inclusive excursion permission form at the beginning of the year and are required to sign a form for each event. Children under three may not go on excursions.

Fundraising

The Early Learning Center participates in yearly fundraising projects. Parental support and commitment to these fundraising events are expected. Parents of the Early Learning Center are members of the Parent Teacher Guild (PTG) and pay a membership fee.

Grievance Procedure

Although rarely necessary, the grievance procedure is an important part of our communication system. Any concerns should first, always be raised with the individual. If you have a concern or a suggestion regarding school administration or policy, please contact the Principal, Lisa Foster. If you have a concern or a suggestion in regard to the curriculum or management of the classroom, you should contact your child's teacher. You may request a special conference with your child's teacher and/or an individual meeting. If direct contact proves unsatisfactory, please bring your concern, suggestions, or ideas, in writing, to the Vice Principal. Once you have met with the Vice Principal, and if your meeting proves unsatisfactory, please bring your concern, suggestions, or ideas, in writing, to the Principal. Having met with the Principal, if you require additional assistance, please arrange a meeting with the Pastor of Star of the Sea Church.

Insurance Coverage

The Early Learning Center is insured by the Catholic Mutual Relief Society of America which includes liability insurance coverage.

Parking

Parking is permitted in the church parking lot and the first floor of the parking structure. Please do not park in the drop-off area in front of the Parish Center and Early Learning Center (red zone). Please do not park in the Fire Lane at the back of the Early Learning Center. Two designated stalls in front of the Parish Center are reserved for disabled parking. All parents and visitors are urged to use caution when entering and leaving parking stalls.

Physician Consultant

As part of the services we offer, we have a medical physician available who serves as a consultant to the school.

Psychologist Consultant

As part of the services we offer, we have a medical physician available who serves as a consultant to the school.

Release and Disclosure of Information

Both parents have access to their child's records unless a court order prohibits the release of information. Information is released only with parental consent in writing. Release of information forms are available at the ELC office.

Transportation

Transportation is not provided to or from school. A bus service is utilized for excursions. This fee is built into your child's tuition.

Visitors/Observers

Visitors and observers are welcome. Observations are by appointment (after the third week of school). All visitors (parents or otherwise) shall check in with our office and review and agree to the observation guide before entering the classroom.

SCHOOL EMERGENCY/EVACUATION PLAN

As Prepared by Lisa A. Foster, Principal

It is very important that parents, guardians, faculty, staff and students be aware of major hazards the school might face, and also familiar with the procedures that will be followed should we be affected. This information is being provided not to unduly alarm you, but to inform you that we are making necessary preparation for the safety and welfare of your children. Preparedness brochures that explain emergency procedures are available from the Oahu Civil Defense Agency. Please call the agency at (808) 523-4121 for more information.

All emergency actions that need to be taken are directed by the Principal. In the event the Principal is not present, the Assistant Principal will direct all emergency actions.

Procedures for School Emergency/Evacuation Plans

1. Fire

- a. The signal for a fire drill or actual fire is the fire bell. Fire drills are conducted every month. Students will quickly leave their classrooms in an orderly fashion (without running and under the supervision of staff) and proceed to the church grounds.
- b. All staff and students will exit the building according to evacuation plans posted on campus. Staff members have been assigned to "sweep" all bathrooms, classrooms, hallways and lanais to make sure that all students have exited the building safely. The secretary is responsible for collecting all attendance sheets and the emergency card file prior to exiting the building.
- c. In the event of an actual fire, our evacuation procedures and destination will be the same as for the fire drill, and staff will assist. Anyone unable to walk will be assisted by staff (children unable to walk will be carried).
- d. Should our facility be damaged by fire to the extent that we are unable to occupy it, we will take all students to the Star of the Sea Elementary School cafeteria and you will be called to collect your children.
- e. Smoke and fire detectors, as well as extinguishers, are located in the kitchen, classrooms/hallways and lanai areas of the center.

2. Tsunami Warning

The Early Learning Center is not located in a tsunami inundation zone, so we do not have to evacuate. In the event of a tsunami warning, the following procedures are in effect:

- a. If a **tsunami warning** (defined: waves have been confirmed and all coastal areas must be evacuated) is issued while school is in session, our staff will remain with the children until pick-up can be safely accomplished. It is recommended that you not leave work or rush to the school if a watch or warning is announced. Delaying unnecessary travel will assist in minimizing traffic gridlock on the streets. After the "All Clear" signal is announced, the ELC will call parents to pick up their child at the earliest time possible.
- b. If a warning is issued before our school begins, the school will be closed. A good "rule of thumb" for determining if the school is open or closed is: if it is announced over the radio or television that public schools are closing for some disaster-related event, we will also, in all likelihood, be closing.

3. Hurricane/Tropical Storm

Hurricanes and tropical storms are intense weather systems, usually generated over warm Pacific waters that are capable of producing damaging surf, destructive winds and heavy flooding. In the event of a hurricane and/or tropical storm watch or warning, the following procedures are in effect:

- a. **Watches** are issued by the National Weather Service about 36 hours or less prior to the arrival of a hazardous storm. **Warnings** are issued when the storm effects could hit Oahu in 24 hours or less.

- b. If a watch is issued, administration will monitor the storm and make a decision to close before the issuance of a warning. We will try to time the closure of the school with the end of a normal working day.
- c. The hurricane or tropical storm public evaluation shelter closest to our school is Wilson School. It is unlikely that movement to the shelter is necessary, unless our facility is deemed unsafe.

4. **Flooding**

Our school is not located in an identified flood zone. However, during extremely heavy periods of rain, or under tropical storm or hurricane conditions, flooding in our area is possible. In the event that we are advised to evacuate, or should water begin to rise around our building, we plan to gather our survival kit and immediately move to the second floor of our building.

5. **Earthquake**

Should an earthquake of significant magnitude occur on Oahu, considerable disruption to road networks can be anticipated. Please be assured that your child will be under the care and supervision of staff until he or she is picked up.

In preparation for an earthquake event, we will periodically conduct drills in conjunction with the sounding of the Civil Defense sirens. If indoors, children and staff will take cover under tables, desks and supported doorways. If outdoors, children and staff will move toward the large field area, away from electrical lines, tall trees and buildings.

- a. If the facility is sound, we will remain in place and listed on our battery-operated portable radio for Civil Defense instructions. We have necessary preparations for us to survive in place for up to 72 hours without outside assistance.
- b. If the facility is damaged or could sustain damage as the result of an aftershock, we will gather ourselves and our survival kit and attempt to move to Wilson Elementary School or an open area in the neighborhood. We will sustain ourselves the best way we can until assistance can be provided by civil authorities.

Summary

In summary, Star of the Sea Early Learning Center administration, faculty and staff will do everything possible to ensure your children's safety in the event one of these hazards were to threaten or affect us.

- a. In an emergency, it is a general "rule of thumb" that we will close if the public schools are closing. The school will remain open until all children have been safely picked up by parents or their designee.
- b. In an emergency, staff will call parents to pick up their children at the earliest time possible after an "All Clear" warning.
- c. It is important that each family establishes their own emergency family plans for tsunami, hurricane, flooding and earthquake. These plans should identify the preparatory actions needed for each hazard. Plans should also include where shelters are located, method of travel, what you plan to do if the family is separated, what type of survival supplies are needed, etc. Such information can be obtained from the Oahu Civil Defense Agency at (808) 523-4121.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM POLICY

Concerning Child Abuse (Safe Environment Program)

The "Policy on Allegations and Incidents of Sexual Misconduct" promulgated by the Diocese of Honolulu is incorporated in this handbook by this reference. A copy of the policy is contained in the handbook, "To Offer Healing, To Restore Trust," first published January 8, 2004. The handbook is available from the Star of the Sea Early Learning Center and online at www.hi-care.org.

The Church endorses the mandatory reporting provision of H.R.S. Chapter 350 concerning child abuse. All Staff Members and Teachers/Catechists are required to sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understood the ethical and personal conduct policies of the Diocese Honolulu.

Consistent with diocesan policy, Star of the Sea Early Learning Center, will conduct Safe Environment training as part of the kindergarten religious education curriculum. Prior to the presentation of the curriculum, parents will be provided with an opportunity to review the safe environment training materials.

WELLNESS POLICY

This policy supports the mission of Star of the Sea Early Learning Center, a Hawaii Catholic School. The school community recognizes that a poor diet, combined with the lack of physical activity has a negative impact on student's health and their ability to learn, both short-term and long range.

The National Catholic Education Association statement on Accountability and Assessment in Catholic Education states that: "We hold a sacred trust to educate and form the whole person—mind, body, and spirit." As Catholic educators, we believe in providing consistent school activities and an environment in which students can learn to make lifestyle choices that promote their healthy futures.

The Wellness Policy of Star of the Sea Early Learning Center is to:

1. Provide a positive environment and appropriate knowledge of healthy food choices and the benefits of daily physical activity that:
 - Ensures that students have access to healthy food choices and safe physical activities at school and at school functions;
 - Provides a pleasant eating environment and secure playground for students and staff;
 - Allows sufficient time for students to eat lunch and to engage in social activities for physical fitness prior to consuming meals;
 - Enables students through a comprehensive health and physical education curricula to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to make healthy food and physical activity choices for a lifetime.

2. Reduce student access to foods of minimal nutritional value through a five year plan that focuses on and:
 - Ensures the integrity of the school lunch program by discouraging food and beverage sales that are in conflict with the lunch program;
 - Encourages teachers, students and parents to make healthy, nutritious food choices when food is used as part of a class or student incentive program, curricular lesson or fundraiser;
 - Practices selective pricing that favors sales of healthy foods over unhealthy food choices.
 - Food and beverages sold or served at school will meet or exceed the nutrition recommendations of the United States Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

3. Provide opportunities for school community involvement in the development, review, assessment and implementation of Star of the Sea Learning Center Wellness Policy, and to ensure that this policy is being met. A school committee shall utilize the School Health Index and/or other sources of evaluation to identify priority areas, monitor improvements, and report findings to the school principal or his/her designee annually.