

Saint James Academy Preschool

Parent Handbook

2025-2026

Philosophy

Saint James Academy (SJA) strives to prepare students to live in the world as responsible citizens and as faithful stewards of creation in an ever-changing environment. In our commitment to excellence and in support of the parents who are recognized as the primary educators of their children, a student-centered, Catholic-based curriculum is provided which values cultural and intellectual diversity. We believe that each child is a gift from God that is unique and precious. The focus of our preschool program is on building a sense of worth, self-esteem and community. Young children learn best by hands-on age appropriate activity that enhances and makes meaning of their world. The preschool learning environment allows children to make choices, explore, experiment and discover each day.

Goals

- Develop children's language and literacy skills for school readiness
- Provide children with the skills needed to be ready for kindergarten
- Provide parents with the information needed to build a strong foundation between home and school
- Recognize that children have different learning styles and prepare the environment and lessons to meet every child's needs
- Plan a program that is developmentally appropriate to stimulate and encourage children to learn because it is meaningful to their lives and fun! Such a program will meet the needs of the whole child to develop spiritually, physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally.
- Create a safe environment that is caring and loving and where children feel free to explore and discover
- Encourage children to explore the world around them, question, estimate, experiment and enjoy the learning process
- Allow children to learn through meaningful play
- Teachers will understand that children's developmental stages are different and prepare/present learning materials that are meaningful and provide maximum potential for learning

- Teachers will teach through example the concepts of respect, fair play, cooperation and cultural competence
- Environments are designed to promote independent, positive behavior and good self-worth

Catholic Education in the Diocese of San Diego

The Diocese of San Diego affirms the rights and responsibilities of parents as the primary educators of their children and recognizes the Catholic school as an effective means of assisting parents in their educational task. Central to the character of elementary and secondary schools in the Diocese is their commitment to teach Catholic doctrine, build a community of faith, and serve one another.

“The Catholic school has had a clear identity, not only as a presence of the Church in society, but also as a genuine and proper instrument of the Church. The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture, and life are brought into harmony.” (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988).

Parents, in mutual respect and shared commitment, realize their role in the education of their children and recognize, affirm, and support the mission of Catholic schools by entrusting their children to the elementary and secondary schools in the Diocese of San Diego. (Handbook for Catholic Schools).

History of Saint James Academy

Saint James Academy, founded in 1952 in Del Mar, was opened in a renovated public school building by three Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet. As the school population grew, a wing was added to the building in 1955. In 1972, the Academy relocated to its present site and became the first Catholic open-space school in the southwest.

In 1986, a Kindergarten class was opened in a portion of the former rectory. As part of the long-range building plans of the parish, other property improvements were made in 1993 and the Kindergarten was relocated to a portable unit. The remodeling and expansion of the building was completed in February, 2000.

The school’s mission is to serve the Saint James Catholic Community and the greater Church by providing a Catholic education to students in grades Kindergarten through Eighth. The current staff, which consists of sixteen full and part-time classroom and auxiliary teachers, nine full and part-time support staff, and one full-time principal, is dedicated to the school’s goal: “to further Catholic values and traditions in a strong academic environment, supported by a vibrant faith community.” The school’s tremendous success is further enhanced by the assistance of involved parents and a supportive pastor who clearly views the school as an integral part of the overall educational mission of the parish.

Today, in addition to Saint James Academy, the Education Center is utilized by many parish groups. The School of Religion provides religious education to over 500 parish children on the weekends through both English and Spanish classes. Various groups in the parish and the community at large meet in the classrooms of the Education Center throughout the week.

Licensing Information

Saint James Academy Preschool is provided a license from the Community Care Licensing Division from the state of California. Saint James adheres to the laws of Title 22 according to the state of California. The licensing department is located at: 7575 Metropolitan Drive, San Diego, CA 92108. Telephone: 619 767-2200 Fax: 619 767-2300.

San Diego Community Care Licensing Division from the State of California reserves the right to inspect the preschool at any given time and to privately speak with each student without parental consent.

Days and Hours of Operations

Saint James Academy Preschool is open Monday-Thursday from 8:00 a.m. - 2:45 p.m and Friday 8:00 a.m.- 1:15. Early dismissal, holidays and dates of closure will be announced.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of San Diego, mindful of their mission to be witnesses to the love of Christ for all, admit students of any race, color, national and/or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the schools. The Catholic Schools in the Diocese of San Diego do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national and/or ethnic origin, age, sex, or disability in the administration of educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. (California Catholic Conference, March 1994; revised January 1997)

Admission Policy for New Students

Since the schools of the Diocese are established and maintained by the Diocesan community as religious schools, preference in admission shall be given to practicing members of the Diocesan Catholic community. No person shall be admitted as a student in any Catholic school unless that person and his/her parents subscribe to the school's philosophy and agree to abide by the educational policies and regulations of the School and Diocese.

A student is admitted to the Academy with the understanding that he/she has a reasonable, well-founded hope of successfully completing the school's program.

Students must be 3 years of age before September 1st and fully potty-trained to be accepted into the preschool program. Saint James Academy Preschool defines a potty-trained child as one who can recognize when he/she needs to use the bathroom, is able to go into the bathroom on his/her

own and then follow the physical and hygienic steps. Teachers are able to help with occasional accidents.

Toileting Policy for Preschool Students

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students in our preschool are independent and confident in using the restroom while maintaining hygiene and safety standards.

1. Independence Expectation: All preschool students must be independent in using the bathroom. This includes being able to:

- Recognize the need to use the restroom.
- Enter the bathroom without assistance.
- Use the toilet properly.
- Wipe themselves thoroughly.
- Flush the toilet.
- Wash hands with soap and water.

2. Readiness Criteria:

- Before being enrolled, students should be ready for independent bathroom use. Pull ups and training underwear are not allowed.
- Readiness includes staying dry for extended periods, verbalizing the need to go to the bathroom, and being able to manage basic clothing.

3. Accidents:

- Occasional accidents may happen, and staff will handle these situations with care and compassion. Parents will be notified if accidents are frequent.
- Students are given a 30-day adjustment period at the start of the school year when there may be frequent accidents. If the student has more than 3 accidents after the 30-day period, the student will need to remain home until fully potty trained.
- A change of clothes should be provided by the family and kept at school to be used in case of an accident.

4. Support:

- Teachers will support students in building their bathroom skills, but students should be encouraged to complete all tasks independently.
- Staff will provide gentle reminders but will not be involved in physical assistance unless there is a special need.

*We provide constant reminders, we have step stools and small potty seats for helping children. Easy to pull on pants/shorts for children are helpful.

Application and Enrollment Forms

Applications and enrollment forms for new students are available on our preschool website. ALL preschool-specific enrollment forms must be turned in no later than August 1st in order to secure your child's space for the upcoming school year. We cannot guarantee day/time schedules if your forms are turned in after August 1st.

Continuous Enrollment for Current Families

In order to provide families with a seamless re-enrollment process, Saint James Academy has adopted continuous enrollment. Continuous enrollment is the policy whereby once a student enrolls in the Academy preschool, it is assumed the student will remain at the school through Pre-Kindergarten (unless the family notifies the school of withdrawal or the school determines it is not in the best interest of all involved for the student to return).

Early Spring, we will begin the enrollment process for the following school year. Our current families will have the opportunity to secure registration prior to new families. In order to secure a spot, parents will be asked to submit a signed Financial Contract (provided via email) along with a non-refundable \$470 per student annual registration fee. Families without past due FACTS balances may elect to spread the registration fee over four months (with final payment due in June of the current school year). The Academy Office Manager must be notified if you would like to take part in this payment program.

Arrival at School

The sign-in sheet provided in the classroom MUST be signed with your first and last name. As required by licensing, the person signing in the child must stay with the child until a staff member screens for early signs of illness and accepts the child for the day. Any medicine needed is to be given to the teacher and a medicine slip filled out and signed. If the child is to be picked up by someone not already on the authorized list, please add them to your list. This person will be required to show their picture ID before the school will release your child to them.

Lunch and Snack

Children are expected to bring a nutritious snack on a daily basis and lunch if they attend a full day of school. We do not permit canned drinks, soda or candy. Since the preschool does not have a supply of lunch food on hand, we cannot supply children lunch should they forget to bring their lunch. Parents will be contacted to bring lunch if a child is missing their lunch from home on a given day. In addition, parents are required to have a cold pack in the lunch bag that will keep food cold until noon. The preschool does not have the capability of storing lunch bags in the refrigerator.

Pick-up Procedures

The sign-in sheet provided in the classroom MUST be signed with the first and last name of the person picking up the child and the time the child is picked up. Your child will only be released to the adults listed on your authorization for pick up form. Please list all family members, including husband and wife, who are allowed to pick up the child. No one under the age of eighteen will be permitted to take your child from the program. Upon the teacher's discretion, a picture I.D. will be required. We will follow instructions on any valid court order, restraining order, etc. to the best of our ability.

Immunization and Health Screening Requirements

Title 22 of California law requires health screening procedures for all children entering school for the first time. A CHDP, California Health and Disability Prevention, physical appraisal is required before entry to preschool. This includes updated immunizations and a copy of the yellow California Immunization Card must be on file in the school office or the child shall not be admitted to school without compliance. If the child's immunizations were documented by another state it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to have a licensed California physician document these onto the yellow California Immunization Card.

Medications

Medications are not furnished to students by the school. School personnel cannot dispense medications of any kind without written permission from the parent/guardian stating the student's name, name of the medication, and dosage and time to be dispensed. An LIC 9221 Medication Authorization form stating the dates that the unexpired medicine is to be dispensed must be handed directly to the director, dated and signed by the parent. All medications, both over the counter and prescription, must be clearly labeled and in the original container.

Saint James Academy's procedures for dispensing medications are as follows:

- All medications must be labeled with child's name/name of medication and dosage/ dosing instructions
- All medications (over the counter, temporary, or long-term, including cough drops) must be handed to the Director

- No medications may ever be left with the teacher, nor may they be left with the student
- Do NOT put medication in your child's lunch for him/her to take at lunch time
- Students must take medication in the presence of a teacher who can verify that the student has the proper medication. Please make sure the correct dosage is in writing on the LIC 9221 form which must accompany the medication

Morning Arrival and Sick Policy

Before bringing your child to school, please conduct a health check to be sure that he/she is healthy, well rested and ready to learn. If your child arrives and appears ill in the eyes of our staff, you will be asked to pick up your child from the facility. We rely on you to use your best judgment and keep your child home if you have any reason to believe she/he is not feeling well. This is for the protection of all the children and staff members. Please call or notify us before school to let us know if you are keeping your child at home.

A child who has been prescribed antibiotics may return to school 24 hours after his/her first dose of medication.

If your child has or had the following symptoms: 1) fever of 99 degrees or above. 2) diarrhea, 3) vomiting, 4) rash or any unexplained spots 5) nasal discharge, 6) discharging eyes or ear, 7) ear aches or sore throat/swollen glands 8) excessive cough, your child must stay home until they have been symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. If you bring your child to school with any of the aforementioned symptoms, you will be called to pick your child up.

If your child contracts a contagious disease such as: 1) Strep Throat, 2) Chicken Pox, 3) Flu, 4) Conjunctivitis (pink eye), 5) Impetigo, 6) Lice, 7) Pinworms or 8) Ringworm 9) Whooping Cough 10) Measles Mumps you MUST call the school and bring a note from the doctor that states your child can return to school.

Rashes, Impetigo, Conjunctivitis Policy

If a child has an unexplained rash or symptoms including red or swollen eye, parents will be called to remove the student from school immediately.

In case of bacterial infection, the child may return to school after documentation that a course of antibiotic treatment has been administered and the eye is clear of pink.

In the case of impetigo or other infectious rashes, the child may return to school after treatment has begun and, in the case of impetigo, the area infected by impetigo remains covered if the rash is still present.

Pediculosis Policy

Though this happens infrequently, this policy is established to control and contain the occasional head lice infestation. If a child is discovered to have head lice, that child will be sent home that day and readmitted to school only with a note to the teacher affirming the child has been treated with a lice killing product and all visible nits have been removed and after a check by school personnel refuels no nits or eggs remain on the child's head. The cooperation of parents is essential to control head lice infestation. It is imperative that parents notify the school immediately if their child has head lice. Director will check hair before the child may return.

Illness/Injury

Should a student be injured or become ill, the parents will be contacted. No student will be permitted to go home before this contact is made through the school office. Every family will maintain updated emergency information in the school office indicating names and telephone numbers of LOCAL persons to contact in the event of illness/injury or other emergency.

Absence Due to Illness

Parents must email their child's teacher to report an absence before the start of the missed school day. Communicable diseases must be reported immediately to the school. Illness and medical appointments are recognized as excused absences.

Appointments/Leaving Campus

Children must be signed in every morning and signed out when they leave the school. Only adults listed on your family emergency form are authorized to pick up students. Students are not allowed to leave the school grounds at any time during the school day without being signed out by their parents or guardian. If it is necessary for your child to be picked up during school hours by someone other than the parent or guardian, you must notify your child's teacher stating the date and time this will take place, the reason, and the name of the adult picking up your student. The school assumes no liability if the students leave the grounds in violation of the above policy.

Birthdays

Please arrange with your child's teacher if you wish to share his/her birthday celebration with classmates. Children from other classes are not allowed to be taken out of their class to share the celebration, including brothers, sisters or cousins. Non-edible treats may be shared for your child's celebration.

Child Abuse Reporting Obligations

In accord with Diocesan policy and California law, school staff is obligated under penalty of fine and jail term to report the reasonable suspicion of physical abuse, emotional abuse, emotional deprivation, physical neglect, inadequate supervision, or sexual abuse and exploitation. In this very

serious and legally narrow area, the school will not contact parents in advance of making a report to legal authorities which would be the procedure followed in most other legal matters. The clear intent of the law, based on the seriousness of the crimes listed above, is to make such reports in the best interests of the affected child. Once reasonable suspicion is established, the staff does not have any legal alternative except to make the report to the proper authorities for their investigation and review.

Uniforms

PRESCHOOL: Girls: Choice of plaid jumper, polo dress or navy shorts with navy or white logo polo shirt Boys: Navy short with navy or white logo polo shirt Both PRESCHOOL boys and girls have the option of wearing the gray PE shirt with navy elastic waist shorts or the SJA sweatpants. Shoes must be flat, non-platform, closed-toe and closed-heel with no flashing and no wheels. Make sure to label your child's uniform items with his/her name. All uniform clothing must be purchased through Lands' End or through the SJA Uniform Recycling Program.

LAND'S END SCHOOL UNIFORMS

www.landsend.com School Code: 900161563

24/7 Customer Service 1-800-469-2222

Communicating with your Child's Teachers

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your child's teacher directly to set up a conference. Teachers are not available for lengthy discussions while children are under their direct supervision. Teachers may be contacted via their email address (found in the school directory) or on the teacher's website. The teacher will make every effort to contact the parent within one school day to discuss the issue. Parents at Saint James are encouraged to share with their child's teacher any information that may affect the student's academic performance or emotional well-being.

Communication - Weekly Newsletter

Every week, a newsletter from our Principal along with various information fliers will be emailed to you. We ask that you take a moment and read through all of this information as the information may impact you or your child as early as the next day. You will also receive a weekly memo from the Preschool Director every Sunday. This will include preschool specific information.

Diocesan Discipline Policy

Discipline in the Catholic school is an aspect of moral guidance, not a form of punishment. We do not use corporal punishment. The purpose of discipline is:

- To provide a classroom situation conducive to learning
- To educate students to appreciate the importance of developing personal responsibility and self-control
- To help build sense of community

We respect our children's and teachers' ability to solve many of their classroom problems together with time and opportunity. Our teachers are trained to help children express themselves and communicate their needs in appropriate words and actions. When working with children we believe that they should be redirected in positive language when necessary and given the opportunity to grow socially and emotionally. Teachers will discuss the issue with the children and acceptable behaviors. However, we will not tolerate aggressive or dangerous behavior that could hurt other children or the teachers. A parent will be contacted immediately if this occurs. If disruptive behaviors continue after the parent has been contacted, a formal parent/teacher conference will be scheduled. Strategies to assist the child with their behavior will be discussed and referred to meet with the principal. If Saint James Academy Preschool cannot meet the needs of a child due to behavioral issues the child may be dismissed from the program.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

Each month, students and staff practice fire drills and/or emergency evacuation procedures. In the event of an earthquake or other emergency while school is in session, parents are requested to follow the procedures listed below:

- DO remain calm and know your child is being well cared for
- DO NOT phone the school. Lines must be kept free for emergencies
- DO come to school to pick up your child or send one of the authorized adults to come to pick up your child. The authorized adult has been specified by you on your emergency form that you filled out at the beginning of the school year

Students and teachers will assemble on the school grounds. All students will remain at school regardless of the time, until a parent or authorized adult comes for them, or until further direction is given by authorities to the school personnel.

Parents will present themselves at the Control Center. Parents will be asked for each child's name and grade. Parents, or other adults authorized by the parent, must sign a release for each child.

Emergency Text Message System

In case of an emergency all families will be contacted through an emergency text message. St. James Academy will use the cell numbers provided on your child's application and/or Emergency Notification Form via FACTS Family Portal.

Napping

Naps are taken each day by full-day children usually from the hours of 1:15-2:30 p.m. Parents provide a small sheet (crib size to fit our mats) and small blanket to cover the child. The need for the sheet underneath each child is a state requirement. If a child does not have a fitted crib sheet, he/she is not allowed to sleep directly on the cot. Since the preschool does not provide bedding for children, the parent will be called to either bring the proper bedding so the child can take a nap, or the parent will need to pick the child up. There will be no exception to this important rule and State of California requirement.

Parent Involvement

Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. It is the role of the school to support and complement this parental function. Saint James Academy is a cooperative endeavor in which every family in the school has a vital role to play.

The school's primary expectation of the parents is two-fold: to support SJA philosophy and to consistently support the religious formation that the school seeks to develop in the children.

Parents can do this by:

- Talking to their children about God and their own faith
- Praying together
- Celebrating Mass on Sundays and special days
- Being informed about the religious concepts the children are learning
- Continually developing and modeling faith-filled lives

The school has additional practical expectations of the parents. Tuition fees cover only the basic cost of education at Saint James Academy. In order to provide a comprehensive program with enrichment opportunities and ongoing improvement, considerable additional funds are needed. The Parent Council conducts fundraising activities each year. Proceeds from these activities help provide capital improvements and program enhancements. All efforts and support of parents are very much needed and appreciated.

Classroom Volunteering

If you would like to volunteer in the preschool classroom, you must have the following items cleared:

- Diocesan CMG Safe Environment Training
- Live Scan through the Diocese of San Diego (\$19, at family's cost)

- Negative TB test within the past four (4) years
- Proof of MMR & Pertussis vaccination
- Signed Volunteer in Good Health form

Siblings are NOT permitted during in-class volunteering. You must request permission from the teacher and/or Director prior to volunteering in the preschool classroom.

Pets

No pets are permitted inside the preschool classroom. Permission to bring a leashed or caged pet into the classroom for an educational learning experience must be obtained from the Director prior to the pet's visit.

Smoke-Free Environment

Schools are smoke-free environments. (Assembly Bill #13 County Health Department- Commissions on Tobacco). The San Diego Schools strictly enforce smoke-free environments in their schools. (Legal Office for the County Office of Education.

Method of Payment

All families are expected to make tuition and incidental payments (extended care, sports, etc.) through the FACTS* tuition management system according to one of the following payment preferences. Each family's preferred manner of payment must be submitted each year at the time of student registration. Payment preferences include:

1. Full Payment - under this plan, the entire amount of tuition is paid via FACTS before July 5. Those choosing this plan will be assessed a \$25.00 annual processing fee which will automatically be added to your tuition agreement in FACTS.
2. Semi-Annual Payments - under this plan, the entire amount of tuition is paid via FACTS in two equal installments due by July 5th and December 5th. Those choosing this plan will be assessed a \$25.00 annual processing fee which will automatically be added to your tuition agreement in FACTS.
3. Monthly Payments - under this plan, the entire amount of tuition is apportioned over 11 monthly payments (July - May) through FACTS. Those choosing this plan will authorize automatic payments to FACTS on the 5th of each month. Families who choose this option will pay a \$55 annual processing fee which will automatically be added to your tuition agreement in FACTS.

*FACTS tuition plans are payable using a checking or savings account or credit card (extra fees apply).