

# **Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center**



# **Parent Handbook**



Dear Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center Parents:

Welcome to Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center! Congratulations on choosing a faith-based childcare center for your child. We are very blessed to have you and your child enrolled at our Center this year. We look forward to working closely with you, as we realize parents are the primary educators of their young children. It is our hope that through open communication and ongoing dialogue between our Center, classroom teachers, and families, we can provide experiences that will nurture each child and foster his/her growth and love of learning.

Sacred Heart is a Catholic Early Childhood Center and is part of the Diocese of St. Petersburg Schools and Center. Our purpose is to provide quality Christian education and child care in an atmosphere that encourages social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth & development of the child as a whole. Sharing faith with our children and families is our reason for existence. It is our hope that families are encouraged and supported in your own ongoing faith journey, as you walk these steps with your young children.

Our Parent Handbook, along with additional communications from our Center, will give families an overview of our program and of our policies and procedures that are in place for the safety and well being of all. Parents are asked to carefully read, review and refer to the information enclosed during your time with us. We are here to support decisions related to your child and to assist families with transitions from home to here and program to program.

Parent involvement in our Center is appreciated, encouraged and welcomed. There are many ways parents can be a part of our ECC Program throughout the year. Volunteer opportunities are outlined in the enclosed Parent Handbook, as well as additional opportunities that will be offered throughout the year. Family involvement is a vital part of SHECC and you are encouraged to be part of your child's journey, in a way that will best allow your child to find comfort and security in his/her new environment.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these policies and/or your child's transition into our Center, please feel free to meet with me.

Sincerely,  
Lucinda O'Quinn, Director  
Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center



License Number: C06PA0062

## SACRED HEART EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Father Krzysztof Gazdowicz  
Ms. Lucinda O'Quinn  
Mrs. Tracey Roberts  
Mrs. Susie Roberts

Pastor  
Director  
Business Manager  
Office Manager

## SACRED HEART ECC ADVISORY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Father Krzysztof Gazdowicz  
Ms. Lucinda O'Quinn  
Mrs. Tracey Roberts  
Sister Roberts Bailey

Pastor  
Director  
Business Manager  
Prioress of the Benedictine  
Sisters at Holy Name Monastery  
Parishioner  
Grandparent  
Parishioner  
Parishioner  
Parishioner  
Grandparent  
Parishioner

\*\*Mr. Frank Gude  
Mrs. Debbie Gude  
Mrs. Laurie Wilson  
Mr. Tony Coleman  
Ms. Marie Nyquist  
\*\*Mrs. Linda Blommel  
Mrs. Margie Denney

\*\*Founding committee members

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**LICENSE NUMBER: C06PA0062**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center, a Catholic Community, provides a loving and accepting environment that fosters respect for all people by modeling Christian values as our children grow and learn. Children are our Ministry!

## **PHILOSOPHY**

It is the philosophy of SHECC that early childhood should be a time of fun, warmth, security, exploring, and discovery. Preschool children are creative and receptive; the staff strives to nurture and encourage these qualities in the children who attend.

## **STANDARDS**

SHECC, established in 1984, is a Catholic School/Center of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, and a Ministry of Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Our operation is governed by a volunteer Parish Council and Child Care Advisory & Finance Council. We are licensed and comply with this state's Department of Children and Families Services, Pasco County Health Department, Pasco County Fire Service, the Department of Environmental Regulations and Early Learning Coalition of Pasco Hernando.

## **TEACHERS**

All full time teachers at SHECC have completed their Florida Child Care Professional Credential Certificate through the Child Care Apprenticeship program. Many of our part-time teachers have also completed and/or are working towards this Certification. All staff of SHECC complete continuing education courses annually to meet the requirements of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Co., to enhance their professionalism. We encourage our Teachers/Staff to continue their education, and work with them so that they can complete their degrees.



Children are our Ministry

## **ADMISSION POLICIES**

The Catholic Schools/Centers of the Diocese of St. Petersburg restate their open admission policy, namely, that no person on the grounds of race, color, national or ethnic origin is discriminated against in admission or in receiving services in any school operated by them.

SHECC warmly welcomes new and returning families to our Center. Every opportunity is made to welcome visitors and enrolled families. Inquiring families may tour our facilities, meet our staff, ask questions, received brochures, and additional pertinent materials to assist with the transition from home to school. It is imperative that parents be forthcoming and share all educational evaluation information, disabling conditions, prior specialized placements & familial issues which may require special educational programming. Should a parent not share appropriate information about the child's needs, the school may recommend withdrawal or transfer to a more suitable educational environment. We are a private program, and being such may terminate service to a family if we feel we are unable to accommodate or meet the needs of the child/family.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS**

Children's records are open only to the Director, an authorized staff member of the Center, an authorized employee of the licensing agency, or the child's parent or legal guardian.

## **DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION**

SHECC is open Monday through Friday. We are open at 6:30 a.m. for families that must have early care and close at 5:30 p.m. The morning session ends at the end of the class lunch time. Please see your child's teacher for pick up time. Extended care (until 6:00 p.m.) may be pre-arranged on a weekly basis for an additional fee. After 6:00pm the late charge fee of \$10.00 per child, per 5 minutes applies.

Please make every effort to have your child in their classroom no later than 9:00 a.m. If you are not able to have your child in their classroom by 10:00 a.m., please wait until after classroom nap time to bring them. Arriving during activities may be disruptive to the other children.

Due to state regulations concerning class size and teacher ratio, missed days may not be made up on non-scheduled days.

## **EMERGENCY CARDS**

Please make sure your Emergency Cards are completely filled out (front and back) and keep all telephone numbers and emergency contacts up to date. In the event a child is sick, and we are unable to contact the parents, we will contact the person(s) listed as an emergency contact. In the event that we are unable to reach any contact person provided, or if no emergency contact numbers are provided, we will contact DCF. *Please notify the center immediately of any changes of address, phone numbers, places of employment, medical information, legal guardianship or any other pertinent information.*

## **HARASSMENT POLICY**

The Diocese of St. Petersburg requires that each parish, Catholic School or early childhood center establish and adopt a policy that prohibits any form of harassment by any individual. The Diocese of St. Petersburg strives for the establishment of a Christian, professional and supportive educational environment for all persons engaged in or involved with religious education programs, schools and early childhood centers, and parish youth ministry programs in non-employment situations. No parish, school, or early childhood center will be responsible for off campus harassment, unless it occurs at a parish, school, or early childhood center-sponsored event.

## **RECORDS**

Children must have the following forms on file before they may attend our Center. Forms are to be updated each year.

Complete Registration Packet

Record of current physical examination (date valid for 2 years) Form DH3040

Certificate of immunization (current & updated) Form DH680

Notarized copy of the Shared Parental responsibility of the Final Judgment of the Disillusion of Marriage (If Applicable)

Parents are asked to inform the office of any changes in phone numbers, addresses, email addresses, emergency information, health conditions, etc.

We will notify the child's parents when immunizations are to be updated; however, it is the parent's responsibility for getting the immunization forms updated before the expiration date. If forms are not updated before the expiration date, DCF will not allow the child to attend until all records are up to date.

## **IMMUNIZATION POLICY FOR STUDENTS WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG**

Catholic Schools within the Diocese of St. Petersburg require enrolling students to submit a Florida Department of Health Certificate of Immunization and provided for in Florida Statute 1003.00 as a condition precedent to acceptance. Catholic Schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg do not recognize a religious objection to this immunization. This policy is effective as of the 2011/2012 school year.

## **VPK REQUIREMENTS**

*These additional forms are required for the VPK Program:*

Certificate of Eligibility

SHECC VPK Agreement

Monthly Attendance Verification form (Signed each month)

## **ELC REQUIREMENTS**

*These additional forms are required for the ELC Program:*

ELC Child Care Certificate

## **PROGRAMS OFFERED**

### **INFANTS and TODDLERS**

Parents of infants and toddlers are responsible for bottles, food, disposable diapers, and one container of wipes a month. If your child needs powders, diaper creams and/or teething ointment, you must provide it and complete an "authorization for medication" form. Medication may not be put into bottles or kept in your child's diaper bag. Information such as type of formula and special dietary needs is important information. Please share this information with your baby's care giver. All bottles, food containers, and pacifiers must be labeled with first and last name.

### **PRESCHOOL I, II and III and VPK**

SHECC incorporates "The Creative Curriculum" which includes developmentally appropriate sharing and conversation time; stories, songs, and finger plays; creative art activities; food preparation; science and nature activities; exposure to shapes, colors, numbers, and literary enrichment; and celebration of birthdays and holidays. The Creative Curriculum program correlates with the Sunshine State Standards.

The program we use for Social/Emotional Development is Second Step. The curriculum is designed to increase social competency in children. Socially Competent children cooperate, show consideration for others, manage their feelings appropriately, and have success in solving problems.

The key objectives of our religious education program, Bright Beginnings, are to help teachers lead young children through a variety of experiences and activities which will help them to: Develop positive self-concepts, Discover and appreciate God's wonderful world, Show Christian attitudes toward others, and Worship God in prayer and song. These objectives are also met by visits to church for song, bible story and prayer.

Our VPK program will almost follow the public school calendar. A calendar will be provided to each family. For those parents wishing to have full day care, we offer a wrap-around program to accommodate those needs. There is an additional fee for this service. If your child is enrolled in the full day wrap-around program and attends on a scheduled VPK holiday, the parent will be responsible for additional tuition.

VPK INFORMATION: The State of Florida will pay in full the tuition for your child to attend 540 hours per year, as long as your child does not exceed 20% in absences in any given month. Children that exceed 20% absence will become private pay.

### **PART TIME PROGRAM**

Children attending on a part time basis must attend on the same days each week unless a schedule change is approved through the office.

### **BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN**

Before and After School children may have a flex schedule. The schedule must be turned in to the Business Manager in writing in advance.

We must be notified of any schedule changes for children arriving on the afternoon school bus. A \$3.00 fee will apply each time your child is not on the bus and we have not been notified.



**PLEASE CALL IF YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE ON THE AFTERNOON SCHOOL BUS.**

## **SUMMER PROGRAM**

Our summer program is for children of elementary age that have completed kindergarten through the sixth grade. It begins the day after school finishes and ends the Friday before school starts.

T-shirts are available in Youth Small through adult sizes. The before and after school group/summer group will be expected to wear this shirt on field trips.

First priority for placement in the Fall will be given to children with continuous attendance throughout the summer. If your child does not attend through the summer, there will be no guarantee of space when school begins; however, we will make every effort to accommodate your needs.

## **DROP- IN CARE**

Drop in care may be provided for registered children only, and only if space is available. The daily rate applies to ANY child not registered for a scheduled day.

**Parents must call to confirm that space is available.**

## **FEES**

### **REGISTRATION FEE**

The Registration Fee is due annually on July 1<sup>st</sup> and is non-refundable. The current registration fee is \$75.00 per child or \$150.00 per family. ELC registration fee is \$35.00 per child or \$75.00 per family. Drop in registration fee is \$20.00 per child. The summer only registration fee is \$40.00 per summer, plus \$10.00 per t-shirt.

### **WEEKLY PAYMENTS**

Your payment is due each Monday for the week in advance. There is no grace period for weekly billing. Unpaid balances are subject to finance charges at a rate of 18% per annum.

### **MONTHLY PAYMENTS**

The monthly payment will be due the first of each month and no later than the seventh for the month in advance. If payment is not made by the seventh, you will be switched to weekly billing/payments. Unpaid balances are subject to finance charges at a rate of 18% per annum.

### **RETURNED CHECK**

If a tuition check is returned for non-sufficient funds, stop payment, or the like, a fee of \$30.00 will be charged, after which the Center can refuse any personal checks.

### **DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS**

If your tuition account is delinquent, your child may not attend until the account is current.



## **EXTENDED CARE**

Extended care is from 5:30 pm – 6:00 pm. For a fee of \$10.00 a week, per child, you can prearrange for your child/ren to attend. If extended care is not pre-arranged, a fee of \$3.00 per 5 minutes will apply. After 6:00, a fee of \$10.00 per 5 minutes will be charged. No discounts apply.

## **SCHOOL AGE**

A flex schedule is available for Before and After School Children. The written schedule must be turned in to the Business Manager in advance.

Middle school before and after care is available for those children that have attended our center throughout elementary school.

## **FAMILY & PARISH MEMBERS RATES**

Family rates apply when two or more non-subsidized children attend the same hours. The highest rate pays the regular rate. A 5% discount is given for the second highest rate, and 10% discount for the third highest rate.

Non-subsidized, registered and supporting members of Sacred Heart Catholic Church may receive an additional tuition credit of 5%. If you wish to receive this discount, please ask us for the parish membership verification form to be signed by the Pastor and the Director every June.

**Rates are calculated on an adult to child ratio, NOT necessarily the age of the child.**

Full tuition payments are due throughout the year, regardless of absences including, but not limited to vacation, illness, holidays, or weather closings.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **ARRIVING AND DEPARTING PROCEDURES**

For safety's sake, a parent or other authorized, responsible ADULT must bring the child to the classroom and SIGN THEIR CHILD IN including a full signature and the time of drop off/pick up. SHECC WILL NOT ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY CHILD NOT SIGNED IN.

Please make every effort to have your child in their classroom no later than 9:00 a.m. If you are not able to have your child in their classroom by 10:00 a.m., please wait to bring him/her until after classroom nap time.

A child will only be released to the parent or guardian, unless we are given permission to release the child to a person cited on the "child's identification record" form. If a person is not listed on the child identification record form, a written note must be given to the teacher. Please remind the party picking up your child to bring with them photo identification (i.e., drivers license).

The Adult that picks up the child must acknowledge this by signing the "sign out sheet" in the classroom and must provide a valid photo id. All individuals with the responsibility of picking up and/or dropping off a child must present themselves in a mature, non-threatening manner. Appropriate dress and language are a must. Profanity on clothing or spoken verbally will not be tolerated.

If your child is having difficulty leaving you, give him a kiss and a hug and tell him you will be back soon to pick him up. Prolonged good-byes make it difficult for everyone. The teacher will be sure that your child feels comfortable. Call us later if you are concerned about your child's adjustment and we'll let you know how things are going.

### **ITEMS FROM HOME**

Items which are appropriate to the monthly theme are always welcomed, as are books and CD's your child may wish to share with their class. Money, gum, candy, soda and/or toys are discouraged in the classroom. SHECC will not be held responsible for lost items. Car seats may be left at the center; however Sacred Heart will not be responsible for any damage or loss.

### **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

It is the philosophy of SHECC to train the child in self-discipline by taking a positive approach. Children will be encouraged by the teacher to behave appropriately through the use of clear limits about acceptable social behavior and positive reinforcement techniques such as verbal praise and redirection.

For the safety of all the children, a child may be removed from the group to a quiet area to calm down if he/she becomes aggressive or disobedient. If a behavior problem persists, the parents will be notified and expected to work together with the teacher. It may be suggested that the child be involved in a behavior modification program, with the parent having the option of being involved in the process as well. Situations may arise where we ask for your approval to have an outside observation and assessment done.

Research suggest that biting may be a normal developmental phase for infants and toddlers. Parents of a child who is biting will be asked to meet with staff to discuss a plan to deter this behavior. Parents will be required to immediately pick up any child that bites more than one time in a day.

Parents and children are expected to abide by the policies of the center. The purposes of these policies are to protect the rights of the children, parents and the staff of our center. The safety of the children in our care is our first priority. Parents may be asked to remove a child from the program if:

- The child poses a threat to self, staff or other children in the program.
- The child behaves in a manner that is difficult to manage in a large group.
- The Director judges that the child can no longer function effectively in the program and/or the program cannot meet the child's needs.
- Habitual biting.

### **DRESS**

All children (yes, even babies) will play outdoors everyday (weather permitting), as we believe the playground is an extension of the classroom. Accordingly, please dress your child in play clothes and tennis shoes. Daily activities include active and messy play, and the children should feel comfortable enough to enjoy themselves without worrying about their clothes. All children will need to have on hand a change of clothing for emergencies. The child's name should be placed on all clothing and other belongings (diaper bags, lunch boxes, back packs, etc.) to help ensure the return of possessions and clothes.

## **EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING**

SHECC usually follows the public and Catholic School's emergency closing procedures. If school is closed or dismissed early because of weather conditions, SHECC may close at the same time. Listen to the local radio or television station for early closing information. We will advise by instant alert. Please make sure all of your information is up to date.

## **HEALTH INFORMATION**

For the safety and health of your child, children who are ill may not be brought to the Center. The Florida Department of Health requires that any child who is suspected of having a communicable disease or who develops a fever or other symptoms which include, *but are not limited to, any of the following*: Diarrhea, Rash, Pink Eye or Skin Infection shall be removed from the facility immediately. This prevents the other children from exposure. If you are unable to pick-up your child with-in the hour, we must have an alternative contact number.

Such children shall not return to the child care facility until the signs and symptoms are no longer present for a minimum of 24 hours, (or longer if the doctor advises

If a child is sent home with lice, they cannot return to SHECC until they are properly treated and ALL the nits have been removed.

## **MEDICATION POLICY**

Administering medication is a **very serious responsibility** and best left to the parents at home. **Whenever possible, please ask your physician to prescribe medication that can be administered before they arrive and after they leave our center**

ALL medication must be consistently administered by a designated staff member. ONLY current prescription medication will be administered. It must be in the original container with the name of the physician, child's name and medication directions written on the label. An "authorization for medication" form signed by the parent must accompany each prescribed medication.

Medication along with the Authorization for Medication form should be given to your child's teacher or taken to the front office. Medication should be picked up in the front office at the end of the day. No medication (including Tylenol, etc.) may be left in diaper bags, back packs, lunch boxes, etc. If your child is prone to allergic reactions, please provide the necessary medication and authorization form.

Sun block and chap stick are considered medication. If you wish for your child to have sun block and/or chap stick applied during the summer months, please provide their teacher with a completed Authorization for Medication form, as well as the product to be applied. Parents should apply the product in the morning and the teachers will re-apply the product in the afternoon before outdoor play times.

## **SNACKS/LUNCH**

We strive to serve snacks that enhance your child's meals. We ask all parents to provide one snack per month for their child's class. Please avoid candy, Hawaiian punch, cool aid, etc. (except on special occasions). In addition, some of these classes provide a cooking experience/food preparation activity. Items for these activities are also requested. Please remember: In the event a

child at our Center is allergic to peanuts, we will become a peanut free environment. One staff has a severe allergy to watermelon. If you send this for snack, please inform our staff immediately so this teacher does not go into that classroom.

Suggestions are:

Graham crackers, Fresh fruit, Saltines, Celery, Bread or toast, Animal crackers, Muffins, Cheerios, Cheese Crackers, Raw vegetables, Raisins (age 3 & up), Apple sauce (any fruit), Cheese, etc...

Breakfast is an important meal, so please provide this for your child at home. We do not have facilities or available staff to serve breakfast. Please **DO NOT** send breakfast food with your child in the morning. We will provide a morning & afternoon snack as well as a beverage (milk, juice or water) with their lunch, morning snack and afternoon snack.

All children will need to bring a lunch if staying all day. Please have all lunches ready to eat. We can not leave the other children to heat or prepare lunch for any child. The small thermos containers work well for hot or cold foods.

### **WAITING LIST POLICY**

In order to be placed on our waiting list, a completed registration form and registration fee must be received (\$75.00 per child or \$150.00 per family). This will be applicable until a space is available for your child. No verbal requests will be accepted for placement on the waiting list.

### **WITHDRAWAL**

If a child is withdrawn from SHECC, a *minimum of two weeks* written notice is required so that the vacancy can be filled by another child. All tuition fees are due up to that date.

### **BE AN INVOLVED PARENT**

#### **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

This booklet has been supplied in an effort to answer many of your questions. Please contact your child's regular teacher or the director if you have questions or concerns.

Parents are informed of the activities of SHECC through newsletters, notices and signs posted throughout the Center. From time to time we will be offering informative programs for parents and children, programs put on by the children, family picnics, special luncheons and a covered dish dinner. It is requested that parents make a special effort to attend as many of these functions as possible. Your attendance gives your child the extra support they need. During December, we have our parents Appreciation Night and provide free child care during one evening so parents can shop for Christmas, or just relax.

Please do not ask teachers to talk with you during class time. They will be happy to schedule a conference to discuss any concerns regarding your child. Close cooperation and understanding between parents and our staff is essential to providing a safe and wholesome experience for all of our children. We have an open door policy. Parents are encouraged to visit SHECC at any time or have lunch with the child.

### **FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES**

Our fund raising activities help provide a necessary source of extra funds for the center. Events that are held annually are: A Spring and Fall photo session; a Fall book fair; a brochure (gift wrap, candy) fund raiser, a basket fund raiser, Kumquat festival, and three fish frys. Others may be scheduled throughout the year.

Many of these not only raise funds for the child care center, they allow us to reach out into our parish community and the surrounding community. Developing a spirit of community is a very important aspect of fund raising. Your support is very important to us.

### **CLASSROOM PARENT**

Each class will have one volunteer parent that will share news and solicit parental help for fund raisers, family events, parent information nights, and other important events. Through their involvement, these parents help SHECC be the best early childhood program. Please join us.

### **SPECIAL ACTIVITIES**

A very important part of SHECC's curriculum is exposing the children to many and varied experiences within the community; therefore a number of special activities are built into the preschool year. Parents will be informed of special activities in advance through newsletters, flyers and/or permission form sent home for each activity. We encourage parents to join us for our special activities. If you do not want your child to attend a special activity, you may need to make other arrangements for the care of your child for this day.

## CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

If a child lives with criticism,  
He learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,  
He learns to fight.

If a child lives with encouragement,  
He learns confidence.

If a child lives with ridicule,  
He learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame,  
He learns guilt.

If a child lives with tolerance,  
He learns to be patient.

If a child lives with praise,  
He learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,  
He learns justice.

If a child lives with security,  
He learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval,  
He learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance  
and friendship,  
He learns to find love in the world.