

# Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center



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## PARENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024 School Year





Dear Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center Parents:

Congratulations on choosing a Catholic 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 their growth and love of learning.

Sacred Heart is a Catholic Early Childhood Center and is the first Early Childhood Center officially accredited by the Florida Catholic Conference. Our purpose is to provide quality Catholic Christian education and childcare in an atmosphere that encourages respect, social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth & development of the child as a whole. Sharing our Catholic faith with our children and families in the community is our reason for existence. It is our hope that families are encouraged and supported in their own ongoing faith journey as they walk these steps with their young children.

We invite and welcome all our families to attend Sunday Masses at Sacred Heart Parish Church. You may find the church Mass schedule on our website at [www.sacredheartecc.com](http://www.sacredheartecc.com). Religious education classes are available for children 5 years old and up. RCIA is available for all adults who wish to join the Catholic Church or are interested in deepening their understanding of the faith.

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center is APPLE Accredited. APPLE (Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment) Accreditation is a national early learning program accreditation that recognizes early learning centers for operating high quality programs. Research shows a direct link between a high-quality early learning experience and a child's future success. APPLE sets the standards that accelerate an early learning center's drive to achieve that level of care and education outcomes.

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center is a Gold Seal Provider. In 1996, the Florida Legislature established the Gold Seal Quality Care Program to recognize childcare facilities and family day care homes that have gone above the required minimum licensing standards to become accredited by recognized agencies whose standards reflect quality in the level of care and supervision provided to 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 Community 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 their 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  
May 1, 2023  
License Number: C06PA0062



## SACRED HEART EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

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

Pastor  
Director  
Business Manager  
Office Manager

## SACRED HEART ECC ADVISORY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

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

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

\*\*Mr. Frank Gude  
Mrs. Debbie Gude  
Mrs. Laurie Wilson  
Mr. Tony Coleman  
\*\*Mrs. Linda Blommel  
Mrs. Margie Denney  
Mr. Larry Plunkett

\*\*Founding committee members

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**LICENSE NUMBER: C06PA0062**



## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center, a Catholic community, provides a warm and accepting environment that fosters respect and dignity for all people by modeling Christian values of faithfulness, service and love while achieving academic excellence and as our children grow and learn.

## **CHILDREN ARE OUR MINISTRY**

### **PHILOSOPHY**

It is the philosophy of SHECC that a Catholic Christian based early childhood program should be a time of fun, warmth, security, exploring, and discovery through developmentally appropriate activities. Preschool children are creative and receptive; the staff strives to nurture Christian values of love, acceptance, community, and dignity in the children who attend.

### **GOVERNANCE**

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 the Diocese of St. Petersburg and 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. We adhere to the Diocese's Faith Formation and Safe Environment standards along with the Florida Department of Education Learning Standards for Children Birth through Kindergarten.

### **FLORIDA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE ACCREDITATION**

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center is proud to announce our Florida Catholic Conference Accreditation standing as an *Accredited Infant through 4-Year Old School* as of March 2019. This marks Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center as the first ECC in the Diocese of St. Petersburg to receive this honor.

The Florida Catholic Conference Accreditation Program is one of the oldest Catholic accrediting programs in the country. In the 1960's, the Florida bishops appointed a committee to explore accreditation. After studying various systems, they established a program unique to Catholic schools which would guarantee constant and continued improvement, accrediting the first schools in 1969. The Florida Catholic Conference Accreditation Program is a charter member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation.

The FCC Accredits over 180 Catholic schools and centers located in Florida. Key facets of the program include... that faculty and professional support staff meet diocesan, state, and/or national requirements for academic preparation and licensing to ensure their capacity to provide effective curriculum and instruction. Curriculum and instruction for 21st century learning provide students with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to become creative, reflective, literate, critical, and moral evaluators, problem solvers, decision makers, and socially responsible global citizens. Focus on continued school improvement and accountability. The rubrics for the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools are the core of the program.

Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center opened its doors in October 1984. Since 1984, their purpose has been to provide quality Christian education and childcare in an atmosphere that encourages social, emotional, physical, and intellectual growth & development of the child.

The faculty and staff are honored and excited to be part of the Florida Catholic Conference and are committed to maintaining the highest level of excellence through the review and adherence to the FCC Standards, continued Professional, Education Development and Faith Formation Opportunities. Sacred Heart Early Childhood Center prides itself on its ability to meet all their family's early childhood care and educational needs.

### **ACCREDITED PROFESSIONAL PRESCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (APPLE )**

APPLE (Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment) Accreditation is a national early learning program accreditation that recognizes early learning centers for operating high quality programs. Research shows a direct link between a high quality early learning experience and a child's future success. APPLE sets the standards that accelerate an early learning center's drive to achieve that level of care and education outcomes.

### **GOLD SEAL**

In 1996, the Florida Legislature established the *Gold Seal Quality Care Program* to recognize childcare facilities and family day care homes that have gone above the required minimum licensing standards to become accredited by recognized agencies whose standards reflect quality in the level of care and supervision provided to children.

### **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.

### **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, and receive 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 and 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. Extended care is NOT available. After 5:30 p.m., the late charge fee of \$5 per minute, per child, 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 9:00 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 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. If we are unable to reach any contact person provided, or if no emergency contact numbers are provided, we will contact the Sheriff. 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.

## **PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT** (Revised 02.09.21)

This **Code of Conduct** applies to all parents, guardians, caregivers, volunteers, and visitors who interact with our schools and Catholic Education in the Diocese of St. Petersburg. It also applies to all parents, guardians, caregivers, volunteers, and visitors who are present at school and school sponsored activities, meetings, and/or functions within and outside of school hours. As parents, guardians, caregivers, volunteers, and visitors, there is an expectation of support for the Vision and Mission of Catholic Education in the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

### **Code of Conduct for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of St. Petersburg**

The school is a multifaceted organization comprising a diversity of populations that have distinctive relationships to one another. Relationships are at the very core of our Catholic Christian belief in our Triune (three persons in one) God. The Holy Trinity is God in relationship! This beautiful doctrine inspires all of us in Catholic Schools, to attempt to be a living Christian community in relationship with God and others. It is essential in such a community that all members recognize and respect not only their own rights and responsibilities but also the rights and responsibilities of other members of the community and those of the school itself. "All rights have to be balanced by responsibilities because we are in relationship" (Putney, 2005).

The responsibility for promoting and upholding these core values of the school community must fall on all those with the greatest capacity to reason and control their actions. Therefore, it is the expectation of the school that all parents, guardians, caregivers, volunteers, and visitors model acceptable behavior always

within the school setting, at school sponsored activities or when the school can be involved in any social or professional media. "It is incumbent upon parents to cooperate closely with the school teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated; and in fulfilling their duty, teachers are to collaborate closely with parents who are to be willingly heard and for whom associations or meetings are to be inaugurated and held in great esteem" (*The Code of Canon Law*, Canon 796, Para. 2).

As a parent, celebrate that you play a foundational role in the development of your child's sense of justice, equity, and worth of all members of the school community. You are one of the most instrumental role models within your child's life. "Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators" (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965, para. 3).

This Code is designed to guide all stakeholders in their dealings with staff, other parents, students, and the wider school community. All staff and students at our Catholic schools are guided by similar codes. The Code is written in line with the school's values and expectations. The Code stands beside, but does not, of course, exclude or replace, the rights and obligations of individuals under common law. All Catholic schools are private property owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg. The school joyfully exercises its responsibility to teach Catholic faith and morals in all fullness. Parents whose religious practices and beliefs run counter to Church teaching might experience conflicts as we maintain mission integrity. Sincere questioning of the practices and doctrines of the Catholic faith—whether by students or their parents—in order to more deeply understand them are welcome; but openly hostile or persistent defiance of Catholic truths or morality are a violation of the Family-School Agreement and may result in denial of admission or dismissal from the school.

### **The Gospel and Our Values:**

We are called to emulate Jesus' call to love God and to love each other. We look to the values taught to us in scripture and the Christian belief to guide us, including: **Love** (1 John 4:7-19); **Promoting Life in Abundance** (John 10:10); **Inclusion** (Luke 19: 1-10); **Reconciliation** (Luke 15: 11-32); **Compassion** (Luke 10: 30-37); **Justice** (Matthew 25: 31-46); **Liberation** (Luke 4: 16-21); **Community** (John 15); and **Hope** (Luke 24: 13-35).

### **In living out these Gospel values, we strive to develop the following:**

- An inclusive approach including a non-judgmental and welcoming attitude towards all people
- An ability to appreciate the situation of others
- A cooperative attitude in working with others
- Open, positive and honest communication
- The ability to work civilly with other people
- Reverence for Creation
- Trusting relationships
- Responsible actions

### **As a Parent, Guardian, Caregiver, Volunteer, and/or Visitor, we ask that you:**

- Support in words and actions the philosophy of Catholic Education
- Work in trust with the school for the common goal of achieving what is best for all
- Support your child/ren in all educational endeavors by giving praise and showing interest in school activities
  - Help your child/ren to discover that it is more the process that is experienced, rather than the end-product, that makes it all worthwhile
  - Model flexibility – encourage healthy problem solving
  - Respect the decisions made by the administration, even if you disagree with them.
  - Help your child/ren to understand that 'giving of your very best' is what matters rather than always comparing yourself against the capabilities or achievements of others
  - Listen to your child/ren, but remember that a different version of the event may be interpreted by others



- Understand the importance of a healthy parent/teacher/child relationship and communicate any concerns to your school in a constructive and appropriate manner
- Validate that both parents and teachers work together for the benefit of the child/ren
- Observe the school's policies, as outlined on the school webpage and/or the school's handbook and endeavor to support them in the home
- Cooperate where your child's behavior has overstepped accepted school standards, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct, and follow specified protocol for communication with faculty/staff members
- Support the school in its efforts to maintain a positive teaching and learning environment
- Cast off gossip and hearsay by communicating with the school and always model good manners for your child/ren
- Sustain a positive and co-operative attitude and interact positively with other parents and members of the school community
- Encourage community building with other parents in your year, level, and across the school
- Value the school community and its reputation especially when engaging with social media
- Do not smoke or use offensive language on school premises

**Rights of a Parent, Guardian, Caregiver, Volunteer, and Visitor:**

- To be treated with respect and courtesy by staff, students and other parents
- To be listened to, and clearly communicated with by the school, regarding your child/ren's education and development
- To have confidentiality over sensitive issues respected by faculty/staff
- To be treated in a caring and polite manner
- To have a timely response to concerns raised, usually within 24-48 hours
- To be treated with professionalism by all faculty/staff members

**Responsibilities of a Parent, Guardian, Caregiver, Volunteer, and Visitor:**

- Value and advocate for your school and its reputation. Be mindful of the hurt and damage social media may cause to faculty/staff members and other parents
- Under no circumstances approach another child while in the care of the school to address, discuss or reprimand them because of actions towards your own child/ren
- Respect the rights of faculty/staff members and other individuals
- Respect the reputation of teachers and be mindful of communications especially social media; e.g. tone of emails
- Follow the correct procedures to resolve a grievance or conflict, as outlined in the school's handbook
- Respect teachers' preparation time before, during, and after school. Make an appointment for long discussions at a mutually convenient time. If you wish to speak to a teacher, please do not expect a meeting unless pre-arranged
- To protect our children do not discuss any grievances or perceived failings in front of them regarding the school
- On excursions, helping in class or on campus, parents must follow the instructions and directions of the teacher. A parent may remind students of the rules but at no time issue consequences and should refer the student to the teacher if the behavior continues
- As valued members of the school community attend and participate appropriately in school liturgies or special events including athletics, concerts, academic and cultural events

**Grievance Process for a Parent, Guardian, Caregiver, Volunteer, and Visitor:**

Our Catholic schools want to work in partnership with our families. If anyone has a **current complaint, criticism, or concern**, it is expected the following steps be followed in the first instance:

1. Speak to the appropriate school person involved (e.g. class teacher) first and try to resolve the concern with mutual respect and clear communication. Where/if possible, make an appointment with the relevant person. Follow the chain of command.
2. If for some reason this is not possible, then make an appointment to see an administrator, or other designated leadership personnel.

3. The Administrator (or designee) should attempt to mediate and find resolution in the presence of both parties.
4. If, having followed Steps 1-3 with no satisfaction, you may complete the online form found on the website of the Diocese of St. Petersburg - Office of Catholic Schools and Centers for further facilitation.

**It is important to note that criticism regarding a faculty/staff member will only be heard if it is related to their professional conduct.**

***Deliberate breaches and inability to respect the Diocese of St. Petersburg – Office of Catholic Schools and Centers Code of Conduct for Parents, Guardians, Caregivers, Volunteers, and Visitors, or exasperating complaints, may result in exclusion of a parent, guardian, caregiver, volunteer, and/or visitor from a school, and/or possible termination of enrollment of their child/ren.***

If your complaint relates to Sexual Abuse by a faculty/staff member towards a child in both an historical or current matter, you should, contact the statewide toll-free abuse and neglect registry at 1-800-96ABUSE ( 1-800-962-2873) and/or law enforcement.

Parents, Guardians, and/or Caregivers, when signing off on accepting the school's policies in the Enrollment Application Form, and by the act of accepting enrollment at a Diocese of St. Petersburg Catholic School, are accepting of this Code of Conduct in its entirety.

*Excerpts of this policy have been used by permission of the Diocese of Townsville, AU.*

## **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 Contractual Agreement

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 per 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. Please note that food or cereal may not be put in children's bottles.

Part-Time placement for Infants may be available on a limited basis. Two day minimum required. SHECC reserves the right, if needed, to withdraw the availability of Part-Time care to accommodate Full-Time placement.

### **PRESCHOOL I, II 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 Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards.

The programs we use for Social/Emotional Development are taken from the Pyramid Model, Skillstreaming, and Character Kids. 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 and Discovering God's Child, 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 always follow the public school calendar. A calendar will be provided to each family. For those parents wishing to have full day care, we offer an Extended Learning program to accommodate those needs. There is an additional fee for this service. If your child is enrolled in the full day Extended Learning 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.

**POTTY TRAINING:** Prior to admission into our Preschool II class, ALL children must be fully potty trained. Potty trained is defined as the ability to independently use the restroom with minimal reminders and without adult assistance throughout the day.

**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 in advance. Two day minimum required.

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

SHECC serves as a bus stop for San Antonio Elementary School. Pasco Middle School *may* provide transportation to SHECC. Parents of school age children must be notified of any schedule changes for children arriving on the afternoon school bus. A \$5.00 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 available beginning the day after school finishes and ending the last weekday before school starts for children of elementary age that have completed kindergarten through the sixth grade. It is available from July 31 for all emerging kindergarteners who have completed VPK at SHECC. Children that have attended SHECC throughout the year receive priority placement.

T-shirts will be issued and billed to campers at the start of camp. They are available in Youth Small through adult sizes. Summer campers will be **required** 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 \$80 per child or \$160 per family. ELC registration fee is \$40 per child or \$80 per family. Drop-in registration fee is \$25 per child. The summer only registration fee is \$45 per summer, plus \$14 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 insufficient 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.

## **SCHOOL AGE**

Middle school before and after care is available for those children that have attended our center throughout elementary school. Services provided are contingent upon Pasco County Schools Bus Transportation.

## **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 be 18 years or older) must bring the child to the Main Entrance 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 9:00 a.m., please wait to bring him/her until after classroom nap time.

## DROP OFF PROCEDURES

ALL Children will be visually screened daily prior to being signed in at the main entrance. Any child that appears ill or presents with a fever of 100° or higher will not be allowed to enter the facility.

Once your child has been screened and signed in, they will be escorted to their classroom by a designated staff member, if they are in the main building. If they are a VPK or School Age Children, you will be able to take them to the door of the school age building. All VPK and School Age Children will enter and exit from their classroom Front door.

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 will let you know how things are going.

## PICK UP PROCEDURES

Since we believe communication between parents and teachers is especially important even while limiting contact, parents will pick up at the back door of your child's classroom or at the front door of the school age building. We ask that you do not enter the classroom, but rather pick your child up at the door. We feel this will allow you to speak to your child's teacher about their day and give you the opportunity to still see the classroom while maintaining social distancing. Your children's lunchboxes and shoes will be at the door along with the sign out sheet.

When picking up your child at the main building for ages One through Pre-school II, please use the afternoon gate entrance to access the sidewalks around the building to your child's classroom back door. Infants may be picked up at the front entrance baby room door.

1. Knock LOUDLY on door.
2. The teacher will acknowledge that you were seen by tapping on the door window.
3. Sign your child out while the teacher gets your child ready to go home.
4. The teacher will open the door and help your child out. Please maintain social distancing.
5. Communication concerning your child is important to us. Due to proper supervision needs in the classroom, your teacher will not be able to have an extended conversation at pickup. Please feel free to call during the day to speak with the teacher or make an appointment to meet in person.

Thank you for your cooperation!

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., driver's 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. Individuals must not be observed to be under the influence of substances during the child's pick up.

## **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, toys, phones, and electronics are prohibited in the classroom. SHECC will not be held responsible for damage or lost items. Car seats may NOT be left at the center.

## **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 they become 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 suggests 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 priority. Parents may be asked to pick up their child or 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 every day (weather permitting), as we believe the playground is an extension of the classroom. Accordingly, please dress your child in weather appropriate play clothes and rubber soled tennis shoes. Slick bottom cowboy boots, sandals and flip-flops are not permitted. In our ongoing efforts to curtail the spread of germs, all children will provide a pair of slip on, yet secure, pair of indoor shoes that can be sanitized such as crocs. A jacket is required for outdoor play on cold or damp days. 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 **two** changes of clothing for emergencies. The child's first and last name should be placed on all clothing and other belongings (diaper bags, lunch boxes, backpacks, 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 Remind instant alert. Please make sure all your information is up to date. We require at least one family member to be connected via Remind.

## **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, Wheezing Cough, 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 alternate contact number.

Such children shall not return to the childcare 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 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 reapply the product in the afternoon before outdoor play times. Product must be labeled with first and last name of child.

## **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 do not send candy, Hawaiian punch, Kool 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. Our center is tree nut free, and lunches and snacks should be provided keeping this in mind. One staff member 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.

Snack 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, **eBreakfast 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 cannot leave the other children to heat or prepare lunch for any child. The small thermos containers work well for hot or cold foods. Please make sure that lunches include a protein, fresh fruit and/or vegetables and offer a variety of taste, textures, and colors. You may find additional nutrition information and meal suggestions at [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov) and [www.feedinglittles.com](http://www.feedinglittles.com).

### **WAITING LIST POLICY**

To be placed on our waiting list for enrollment, a completed pre-registration form and non-refundable registration fee must be received (\$80 per child or \$160 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. Priority is given to staff and current families of SHECC. Pre-registration forms may be obtained from our office or at [www.sacredheartecc.com](http://www.sacredheartecc.com).

### **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.

### **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

This booklet has been supplied 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 weekly peeks, notices and signs posted throughout the Center. SHECC also uses the REMIND APP. We strongly encouraged at least one member from each family enroll in REMIND.



**REMIND Class Codes should be obtained from your child's teacher or the Front Office.**

#### **Signing up for text messages**

1. Text your child/ren's class code to the phone number 81010.
2. Reply to the text messages from the Remind team.



#### **Signing up for smartphone notifications**

1. Download the **Remind** app on your Android or iOS device. You can access the installation link at [rmd.me/a](http://rmd.me/a).
2. Open the app and create an account (or log in if you already have one).
3. Tap the + by classes joined and enter the class code.

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 Parent Appreciation Night and provide free childcare for 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.

### **FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES**

Our fundraising activities help provide a necessary source of extra funds for the center. These extra funds help keep the tuition as low as possible. We ask that each family please commit to support the center by volunteering Ten Hours at our fundraising events or by raising \$100 through fundraising activities. Events that are held annually are: A Spring and Fall photo session; Cookie-Dough Fundraiser, Kumquat Festival, and "Lenten Fish Fry's." Others may be scheduled throughout the year.

Many of these not only raise funds for the childcare center, but they also allow us to reach out into our parish community and the surrounding community. Developing a spirit of community is an especially important aspect of our mission. Your support is especially important to us.

### **SPECIAL ACTIVITIES**

An important part of SHECC's curriculum is exposing the children to many and varied experiences within the community. Therefore, several 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 (State and local regulations permitting). 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.



## Why It's Important to Give Children Hard-to-Chew Foods

Developing softer food has been a human quest since we first started cooking our food. While no one wants to go back to the days when our ancestors spent half their waking hours chewing, we might argue that the modern era of processed foods has given us so many soft foods that we miss out on important benefits of chewing. This is especially true for children who need to chew to develop their teeth and jaws.

Prevention is more than regular dental checkups, brushing, and flossing—it starts with a good diet. A diet that includes hard-to-chew foods can do wonders for your child's development and health.

### Practice Makes Perfect

First, we want to stress that you always want to scale the "hard-to-chew" foods to your child's age and experience. You don't want to use raw carrots to help wean a one-year-old. This isn't just too hard for them, it can be a choking hazard, which you should also avoid.

However, perhaps parboiled firm starts to become a better choice than mushy once they start chewing. Giving your child more challenging foods in a variety of textures over time helps them to develop better chewing techniques. Becoming better chewers as children helps kids eat a healthy, varied diet when they're older.

It's important to remember that learning to chew isn't just for babies. Children continue to learn new habits of chewing as long as their teeth are developing, gaining more and better control over the years. They don't transition to mature chewing behaviors until they reach the age of 10-14.

### Improved Speech

Speech is a very complicated act, using numerous muscles, nerves, and other structures of the mouth. The more practice your child gets using these structures, the better they will get at controlling them. This makes it easier for them to control their speech sounds. The better they develop their chewing patterns, the more control they have for speaking.

It's not just control that helps speech, either. Chewing encourages development of the jaws, teeth, and tongue, which gives your child the equipment they need to produce all the important sounds of language.

### Facial Development

Much of our facial structure depends on the size and shape of our jaw and jaw muscles. Chewing food, especially hard foods, directly affects the size, shape, and density of the jaw bones.

Every time your child chews, they put pressure on the bones of the jaw and skull. This pressure causes bone cells to release proteins that stimulate the production of more bone. This increases the size and strength of the jaw bones. Strong chewing helps children develop a strong jaw and chin, rather than a smaller, recessed chin. More chewing also leads to better cheekbone definition.

Although chewing alone can't take the place of orthodontics, more chewing now can make it less likely that a child will need orthodontics like Invisalign, or reduce the severity of correction required.

### Brain Development

So far, everything we've talked about probably seems straightforward, but the positive effects of chewing hard food go beyond the mouth and teeth. In fact, chewing can stimulate the development of your child's brain. It improves the flow of blood to the brain. Better task focus and impulse control, as well as stress reduction comes with chewing, too. The result can be beneficial brain development for children. On the other hand, chewing soft foods can affect the brain in different ways, reducing jaw control.

While we're on the subject, this isn't just important for children. More chewing might be able to postpone dementia in older adults. Studies show that dental implants might help people retain more brain function as they get older because it's easier to chew with implants than with dentures.

### Dental Health

Chewing hard foods is good for your dental health. Hard foods take more chewing, which stimulates the production of more saliva. Saliva has many benefits for your teeth. It kills harmful oral bacteria, neutralizes harmful acid, and supplies minerals that help teeth stay strong.

Many hard foods are also good meal-finishing that can clean your teeth when you eat them. Of course, sugar-free gum is a good choice after eating, because it cleans your teeth, removing food debris and bacteria. Carrots, celery, and apples can have a similar effect. Ending a meal with these types of foods can be almost as effective as brushing your teeth after eating, and in some ways it's better for you.

You might not be able to get your child to brush their teeth after lunch, but ending lunch with a tooth-cleaning food might be more reasonable.

### Overall Health

More chewing of hard foods can also improve your child's overall health. First, it can reduce their risk of obesity. Spending more time chewing hard foods gives the brain time to catch up on how full the stomach is. This, combined with the low calorie density of the foods, helps children avoid overeating.

Chewing gives your stomach more time to digest. Plus the more time your child spends chewing, the more the food will be digested before they swallow it, which can reduce the risk of indigestion.

Saliva also contains powerful antioxidants, so the more time chewing, the more they can neutralize oxidants that contribute to cancer risk.

### Oral Health Begins at Home

If you want to maintain good oral health for you and your family, it begins at home. Developing healthy diet habits and oral hygiene from a young age can help your children grow up healthy and happy.

Dr. Robert W. Fornalczyk, DDS

# CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE



*If children live with criticism,  
They learn to condemn.*

*If children live with hostility,  
They learn to fight.*

*If children live with ridicule,  
They learn to be shy.*

*If children live with shame,  
They learn to feel guilty.*

*If children live with tolerance,  
They learn to be patient.*

*If children live with encouragement,  
They learn confidence.*

*If children live with praise,  
They learn to appreciate.*

*If children live with fairness,  
They learn justice.*

*If children live with security,  
They learn to have faith.*

*If children live with approval,  
They learn to like themselves.*

*If children live with acceptance and friendship,  
They learn to find love in the world.*