



St. Gabriel Cradle Preschool Handbook 2023-2024

St. Gabriel Cradle

August 2023

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the faith Community of the St. Gabriel Cradle, a developmental playschool program at St. Gabriel Catholic Church. It is our pleasure to invite you and your child on a journey rich in spiritual, educational, physical, and social growth.

We believe each child and his or her family is a gift from God, possessing special talents; each one is unique. It is our hope that the Cradle will provide a nurturing environment, helping each child to develop, grow, and learn therefore enabling them to fully experience the world God has created for each of them. It is our wish that each child will safely explore and discover the world around him or her through a developmental hands-on approach to learning.

Our staff continues to be determined to give opportunities for parents to partner with us in their child's school experience. Communication is of the utmost importance to us. We want you to feel free to email and/or schedule a meeting or Zoom call with teachers at any time. Thank you for joining with us to foster a preschool community committed to happy, healthy children. With great anticipation, we look forward to a new school year of working and playing together; helping our children learn in the most fundamental way that God loves them and that their families love them.

On behalf of the staff and me, we look forward to beginning our journey- a journey of growing faith, love, and learning.

Welcome and thank you for sharing your child with us.

Kate Stephens
Director, St. Gabriel Cradle

GOALS OF OUR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

- * To provide a safe, nurturing child-centered environment for all children.
- * To plan and create a program based on the developmental milestones in a young child's life, using appropriate lessons and activities to foster his or her developmental growth.
- * To provide a program that will nurture confidence, learning, and caring.
- * To show children and their families how special they are to God and us each day.

THE CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is designed to encourage growth and learning across several developmental areas:

- ***Spiritual Growth**- learning to love God and knowing that we are all a part of God's family.
- * **Cognitive Development**- problem solving, hands-on learning about their world.
- * **Social Skills**- learning to share, play with others, and develop kindness and compassion.
- * **Speech and Language**- providing opportunities for growth through story-telling, music, and dramatic play.
- ***Self-help Skills**- gaining independence by practicing toileting, feeding, and dressing.
- ***Gross Motor Skills**- opportunities in play to move: crawl, climb, walk, jump and run.
- ***Fine Motor Skills**- learning to use two hands together and learning to manipulate toys, writing tools and materials in play.

Kindergarten Readiness

The Teachers in our Pre-K classes will provide lessons and activities that will enable each child to practice the prerequisite skills needed for kindergarten classrooms. The educational philosophy of the St. Gabriel Cradle is centered on the belief that "the work of a child is play." Within our community, kindergarten is becoming more academic in nature, requiring skills that are more developmentally appropriate for children who will enter kindergarten at age 5 ½. It is not appropriate to drill skills with young children that they are not ready to learn. Four year-olds still need to play and incorporate the skills that come from play to become confident learners in elementary school. Children in our classes will be allowed to learn at their own pace. Research shows that children who are

nurtured and cared for during their preschool years and are exposed to a variety of experiences will acquire skills at a variety of different rates but will all attain comparable basic skills by the second or third grade. We are confident that our Pre-K classes address all the readiness skill areas. If you have any questions regarding your child's readiness for kindergarten, your child's teachers and/or the Director will be happy to meet with you.

IMMUNIZATION FORM

A current immunization form and medical report completed by a physician must be submitted before the 14th of October 2023. No exceptions. State law requires the verification of immunizations of all children enrolled. Immunization forms must be updated and kept current during the school year in order for a child to remain in school. All children are required to comply with the NC state immunization recommendations. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html> Immunizations are required for enrollment at The Cradle. No exemptions.

THE STAFF

The St. Gabriel Cradle is coordinated by a director with experience and training in early childhood education and special education. We have twenty teachers who all have extensive experience in working with and teaching young children. All teachers have one or more college degrees. Most have earned Undergraduate and Master's degrees in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education and/or Special Education. Prior to the beginning of each school year, all teachers are recertified in Child & Adult CPR and First Aid. All Cradle Preschool staff members hold the belief and understanding that every child can learn and benefit greatly from a developmentally appropriate, nurturing, safe, structured, whole group classroom experience.

SCHOOL DAYS **DAYS OF OPERATION:**

Monday / Wednesday OR Tuesday / Thursday	Two Year-old Classes
Monday / Wednesday/Friday OR Tuesday/Thursday	Terrific & Fantastic Three Year-old Classes
Monday through Thursday	Pre-K Classes
Monday through Friday	TK Classes

2023-2024 PROCEDURES FOR ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

M/W and T/Th 2's classes will drop off at the Playground between 9:00 and 9:15, as well as dismiss from the Playground at 12:45. In the event of inclement weather, we ask that you park at the first floor of the Ministry Center and walk your child to Room D. We will also dismiss from this location when there is inclement weather.

M/W/F and T/Th Terrific 3's Parents and/or Caregivers should park on the 1st floor of the Ministry Center and upon entry to the building, should use the elevator or stairs to reach the 2nd floor where all classrooms are located. Parents and/or Caregivers should walk their child to the Terrific 3's classroom where their teachers will be awaiting their arrival. Please plan your morning so children are brought to the classroom between 9:00 and 9:15. Dismissal will be at 1:00pm from the classroom.

M/W/F and T/Th Fantastic 3's will arrive and dismiss from the "upstairs" carpool (the 2nd floor of the Ministry Center/the one-way street between the Church and the Ministry Center). Arrival will be between 9:00 and 9:15. Dismissal will be at 1:00.

Pre-K C will arrive and dismiss from the "upstairs" carpool. Arrival will be between 9:00 and 9:15. Dismissal will be at 1:00.

Pre-K A and Pre-K B will arrive at the "upstairs" carpool. Arrival will be between 9:00 and 9:15. These classes will dismiss from the "downstairs" carpool at 1:00.

TK will arrive and dismiss from the "upstairs" carpool. Arrival will be between 9:00 and 9:15. Dismissal will be at 1:00.

Carpool Notes

For "upstairs" carpool, please enter campus from Providence Road only, taking a right at the campus stop sign and proceeding up the hill past our preschool playground then taking a right down our one-way drive between the preschool and church.

For "downstairs" carpool, please enter campus from Providence Road only, take the second right into the parking lot, and make a single line starting in front of the entrance to the Ministry Center.

Safety: All families will receive at Open House a brightly colored cardstock to be placed in their front passenger side window (2 per family) with Child's name, Class name, and Teachers' names. Each class will have a different color to ensure we all learn new names and faces quickly to keep children safe. No child will be allowed to leave at dismissal in a vehicle that does not have that child's car tag displayed. Exceptions will be made if a parent has contacted me in an emergency situation and an adult's name is given for their child to be picked up by and that adult brings identification or can be recognized by one of our seasoned teachers.

Once dismissal begins please stay in your car so that we can keep the line moving.

TEACHERS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE TIME AT THE CARPOOL LINE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH PARENTS. We must keep the line moving but encourage you to email your teacher at any time to set up an appointment to discuss your child's day in person, via the phone, or email.

We **do not** want you to have to go through both carpools lines in you have two or more children in your family/carpool that typically have different dismissal locations (1st Floor and 2nd Floor driveway). Therefore, please let the teachers of your youngest child know about the conflict and we will arrange a central location of dismissal for everyone in your family and/or carpool. If you have any questions about this, not to worry, we'll explain at Orientation or feel free to email or call Kate Stephens directly.

If you plan to have someone else pick up your child, please keep your classroom teachers informed attaching a written note to your child's clipboard. We will expect that you've given the adult your child's personalized car tag and we will ask that they show us a driver's license to verify their identity if the driver is not known to us. If there is a last minute change, please contact Kate Stephens directly via email (kate@stgabrielchurch.org).

Please do not get out of your car while in the carpool line.

At dismissal, if you need some extra time getting your child(ren) into the car and safely buckled, please pull forward or to the side once you have your child(ren) so the line can continue to move forward.

We ask that you do not use cell phones or DVD players while moving through carpool traffic to avoid distractions and accidents.

Please drive carefully when exiting the church parking lot and please try to maintain enough room for two-way traffic outside the parking areas.

LATE PICK-UP

Please be considerate of our staff and pick-up your child at the specified dismissal time. If it becomes necessary, the director will assess a fee of \$5 per each 5 minutes past the dismissal the child remains in the classroom. If a child has not been picked up by the time the Cradle office closes at 3:00, the Director will keep the child with her and safe, (though not necessarily on the church campus) while attempting to reach the parents. If the parents have not been located by 5:00, the police will be contacted.

DAILY CLASS SCHEDULES

In each classroom a daily schedule will be posted to acquaint you with the routine of your child's day. The teachers will send home a monthly calendar that will let you know what special themes and activities your child will be participating in week to week. Any additional needs your classroom teachers may have will be posted on their signupgenious.com site. Details of this will be further explained at Orientation.

Clipboards – Please remember to look at these daily for any important information, notes from teachers and/or director, special artwork and writing by your child.

CLOTHING

Parents are asked to dress their children in clothes that will allow them to participate in all activities both inside and outside; tennis shoes or some other type of rubber soled shoes would be preferable. Jackets or sweaters are needed for cool weather. **Please label all personal belongings especially coats and sweaters.** If your child is potty training, please be sure to keep extra undergarments and clothing necessary to make that special time as pleasant as possible. ☺

HEALTH POLICIES

St. Gabriel Cradle Preschool and its staff will be taking every precaution available to keep children and their families safe and healthy. Our #1 objective is to protect the health and safety of students, staff, their families and the community at large. We will therefore, adhere to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as well as the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) as they apply to our program.

*Please report all sicknesses to the director as soon as you've become aware. From there, the director will make the best decision as to when the child can return to school.

MEDICATIONS

Parents/guardians, in consultation with the student's physician, are urged to develop a time schedule which allows the student's medication to be taken at home before and after school hours. Neither the teachers nor the Director can be expected to administer any medication or external creams or lotions. In cases of asthma or upper respiratory problems, please discuss emergency inhalation medications with your classroom teachers and director.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Slight injuries (scrapes and minor cuts) will receive treatment by a staff member with first aid training. You will be called immediately in the event of a serious injury and the necessary steps will be taken to obtain medical aid. In case of just such an emergency, the office will call 911 (if applicable), attempt to reach a parent, the emergency contacts listed on your enrollment form, or your physician, in that order.

It is very important that parents keep their work, home, mobile, emergency numbers and email address current. Please make sure the classroom teacher has a primary phone number where a parent may be reached during school hours.

LUNCH AND SNACKS

Mealtimes are an important time for socialization and developing self-help skills for young children.

*For each class, parents need to provide a lunch and drink for their child. Lunches should be simple, healthy foods that their child can safely eat. We are unable to heat or refrigerate lunches.

*Please refer to your Orientation Packet provided by your child's teachers for classroom snack procedures.

Birthdays are special occasions, and we would be happy to help celebrate! Parents are welcomed to send a special snack but will not be able to participate in the celebration due to cross contamination during this time.

ACHIEVING AGE APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

An interested, involved child who has appropriate play materials available in a stimulating environment with consistent, reasonable limits is rarely a discipline problem. Children will have days when they need direction and guidance in assessing and selecting appropriate choices and behaviors. We will guide children in a manner so that they are able to begin to develop self-discipline by providing consistently age appropriate limits. Acceptable behavior will be encouraged and rewarded at all times with smiles, hugs, praise and/or the use of reward based behavioral charts. When redirecting is required for an unacceptable behavior, the teacher will provide helpful guidance, encouragement and support to teach a child the skills he or she will need to get along with others (sharing, problem solving, taking turns, dealing with disappointment and communication).

Punishment, sarcasm, ridicule, withholding food, or harsh treatment of any kind will never be used.

If a child exhibits persistent, disruptive behaviors, parents will be notified so that a behavior management plan can be implemented. Usually these behaviors are transitory

in nature, and it is not unusual for these behaviors to occur during the preschool years. However, if these behaviors are persistent, parents will be asked to meet with their child's teachers and the director to re-evaluate the child's behavior and determine if alternative assessment or placement should be sought to best meet the needs of the child.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS & DELAYS

We will observe the St. Gabriel Cradle Calendar regarding school holidays.

In the event of inclement weather:

*If St. Gabriel Catholic Church closes **and/or** the Mecklenburg Area Catholic Schools **and/or** the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Schools cancel school due to weather conditions, we will cancel classes. You will be notified by email should this occur.

*If MACS and/or CMS and/or St. Gabriel Catholic Church is operating on a **delayed** schedule, The Cradle will open at **11 am** and regular dismissal time/procedures will remain of 12:45 for 2's and 1:00 for all other students.

*On rare occasions, circumstances may require the closing of the larger school systems for reasons that do not affect us at the church, or we may need to close unexpectedly. If such an occasion occurs, you will be notified by email. If you have any questions about whether school is in session, please do not hesitate to email the director or your classroom teacher.

SUGGESTIONS, QUESTIONS, REQUESTS, CONCERNS

Any question, request, or concern a parent/guardian may have should first be addressed to the child's teacher. Any matter that cannot be resolved by the teacher may then be addressed to the director.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND SUPPLY LIST

*Every child should come to school with a school bag that will hold his or her supplies for the day. These will include:

- ☐ A complete change of clothing including socks in a plastic bag
- ☐ a snack, lunch, and drink
- ☐ disposable diapers and wipes as needed
- ☐ a clipboard that will be provided by the preschool

Your child may wish to bring a special comfort item with him or her to school, which is acceptable. When the child's comfort level at school increases we will encourage them to leave these items in their bags. Toys should be left at home.

**PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING THAT COMES TO SCHOOL SO THAT IT
WILL RETURN HOME WITH YOUR CHILD.**

SCHOOL SAFETY POLICIES

While the preschool program encourages family involvement, steps and policies are in place to maintain adequate security for the protection of our staff and your children. St. Gabriel Church has installed a “Fob” system that prevents entry into the preschool hallways without staff authorization. These doors will be secured from 9:15 a.m. to 1:00p.m. each day and after closing. Our preschool parents and their families will be able to gain entry to the preschool hallways at arrival, dismissal, and under the following circumstances:

- A parent has called to make an appointment to visit with the director, their child’s classroom, or their child’s therapist, when applicable
- A parent has been invited by a preschool staff member
- A parent has arrived unannounced during preschool hours, checks in with the receptionist at our 2nd floor lobby desk, and the receptionist will then call the staff member whom the parent needs to visit.

In the event of a city emergency, you may pick up your child at any time. We will continue to provide care and supervision for any children in our care until their parents can come to pick them up. We will not dismiss any child to another adult unless we can verify that such direction has come from that child’s parents specifically.

THE PARENT COMMITTEE

A parent committee (PC) has been created to increase parent involvement in maintaining and furthering the growth and success of our preschool by setting goals and assisting the Director in meeting those goals. It is our desire that this cooperative effort enhances the educational and spiritual mission of The Cradle Preschool. Additionally, this group will work on directing fellowship and fundraising projects which will help enhance our ability to serve the children in our care and maintain reasonable tuition rates. When needed, parents will be invited to serve on the council at the start of the preschool year by the director.

TUITION

Each family will be asked to pay a registration fee for each child registering for our program. This payment is **nonrefundable** should you choose to withdraw your child from our program and we will not hold a spot for your child if this fee is not paid.

Your “Family Tuition Statement” will be sent to you in July before the fall semester. Parents will use this statement as reference in making the *required* September tuition

payment **before Aug. 16** while also setting up reoccurring payments for the 8 months of preschool to follow.

(a \$50 fee will be automatically added to any family account negligent of paying September tuition during the month of August. This fee will apply for neglecting to set up recurring payments for the 8 months following (Oct. through May).

Parents will be asked to use the link provided to set up payment using a debit or credit card.

Each “Family Tuition Statement” will also state the *ONE-TIME Curriculum Fee* amount which is also due each August. Parents should reference their statement and use the link provided to make payment.

(a \$25 fee will be automatically added to any family account negligent of paying their family’s Curriculum Fee during the month of August)

If you have any problems or questions, please contact the church business manager, Chelsea Addler at (704) 362-5047 ext 209 or chelsea@stgabrielchurch.org. Tuition may **not** be paid in cash unless special circumstances have been discussed with the preschool director or church business manager. Families are asked to pay tuition for all 9 months that the program is in session. We cannot hold a child’s place in a class without receipt of tuition regardless of his/her attendance.

SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

You will receive a **class list** from your child’s teacher containing the names, addresses, emails, and phone numbers for the students in your child’s class. If you would prefer that this information not be given to your child’s schoolmates, please let us know.

Contacting the school: The office of The Cradle Preschool may be reached by phone:
(704) 362-5047 ext. 280

Emails are appreciated, welcomed and preferred for any home/school communications needing to reach the Director’s attention. They are checked often and answered as promptly as possible:

kate@stgabrielchurch.org

Each class will send home a monthly or weekly calendar to outline the lessons for the weeks ahead either on your child’s clipboard or via email. This is our main form of communication with the addition of impromptu teacher’s notes as needed. If you have not received these communications, please don’t hesitate to let teachers know.

As the world speeds up, we are keeping up. Every family has been entered into a group distribution list so that we can contact everyone efficiently via email. News and upcoming events from the Director will almost always be sent out via email.

One last note...

Other than your own children, please do not post pictures of any Cradle Preschool students online. Please do not post comments or discussions regarding Cradle Preschool staff, events, or families in a public forum. Thank you for using your common sense, best judgement, and understanding where these matters are concerned