



# Holy Family Pre-K

# Parent Handbook

**2025-2026**

## **Our Mission**

Des Moines Public Schools Early Childhood Programs will provide quality learning experiences to promote growth of young children and their families and prepare them for kindergarten.

## **Contact Information**

### **Holy Family School**

Phone: 515-262-8025

<https://hfcdm.org/>

## **Equity Statement**

It is the policy of the Des Moines Community School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you believe you have (or your child has) been discriminated against or treated unjustly at school contact Ms. Paulette Theisen at 1265 E 9th St Des Moines, IA 50316; phone number: (515)262-8025; email: ptheisen@hfcdm.org.

Dear Families,

Welcome!

We are looking forward to a successful year for you and your child in our Holy Family Early Childhood Program.

We believe the Holy Family Early Childhood Program enjoys their good reputation largely because of the support of our families. Your participation is the key to the success of our programs. We encourage your involvement. We welcome it.

We have prepared this Early Childhood Parent Handbook for your information. The handbook should answer most of your questions. If you have additional questions, please contact your child's teacher or classroom staff.

Feel free to call or stop by the office to visit the classroom.

Sincerely,

Holy Family Early Childhood Staff

## Table of Contents

Iowa Early Learning Standards p. 4 General Policies and Guidelines p. 5-6 • Attendance p. 5 • Educational Equity Statement-Complaint Procedure p. 5 • School Cancellation/Closing p. 5 • Toys from Home p. 6

Health p. 6-8 • Accident or Illness p. 6 • Cleaning and Sanitation p. 6 • Communicable Disease Policy p. 6-7 • Head Lice p. 7 • Medication Policy p. 7 • Mental Health p. 7 • Nutrition p. 7 • Physical, Immunization records & Screenings p. 8 • Toilet Training p. 8

Safety p. 8-10 • Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting p. 8 • Clothing Suggestions p. 8 • Discipline and Guidance p. 8-9 • State of Iowa Annual Notice p. 9 • Environmental Safety p. 10 • Safety Drills p. 10

Family Partnerships and Family Engagement p. 10-13 • Home Visits and Conferences p. 10 • Newsletters p. 11 • Homework p. 11 • School Readiness Goals p. 12 • Transition to Kindergarten p. 12 • Volunteering p. 13

## **Our Curriculum and Assessment**

Our Early Childhood curriculum is literacy-based and is designed to provide young children with many ways of playing and interacting with others and the learning environment. Teachers use the Frog Street, and PBIS as well as additional research-based strategies to help us meet the needs of our diverse population. The State of Iowa has developed Early Learning Standards that provide the foundation for our programs. By following the Standards listed below, we are ensuring that all children receive a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate experience that prepares them for kindergarten. Teachers assess the progress of each child using a variety of tools. Teachers use screening tools to identify a student's interests as well as their needs. Teaching Strategies Gold is used to monitor children's progress, and the information gathered assists with planning instruction. Student portfolios are also created to show progress over time. Parents receive information about their child's progress during home visits, conferences and as needed throughout the school year.

### **Iowa Early Learning Standards**

- Physical Well-Being and Motor Development
  - Healthy and Safe Living
  - Large Motor Development
  - Fine Motor Development
- Approaches to Learning
  - Curiosity and Initiative
  - Engagement and Persistence
  - Reasoning and Problem Solving
  - Play and Senses
- Social and Emotional Development
  - Self
  - Self-Regulation
  - Relationships with Adults
  - Relationships with Children
- Communication, Language, and Literacy
  - Language Understanding and Use
  - Early Literacy
  - Early Writing
- Math
  - Comparison, Numbers, and Operations
  - Patterns
  - Shapes and Spatial Relationships
  - Measurement
  - Data analysis
- Science
  - Scientific Reasoning
  - Scientific Investigation
  - Scientific Communication
- Creative Arts
  - Art
  - Music, Rhythm, and Movement
  - Dramatic Play
- Social Studies
  - Awareness of family and community
  - Awareness of culture
  - Awareness of the relationship between people and the environment in which they live

- Awareness of the past

## GENERAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

### Attendance

Good attendance is important for school success. Your child should attend school every day, except when they are ill. It is also important for students to arrive on time each day for the following reasons: • Children learn the routine and feel comfortable when they know what to expect daily. • Children begin and end the day as a group. It is important to begin and end the day on a positive note. • The teacher plans each part of your child's day. If your child is frequently tardy they will miss important learning opportunities.

- Children begin to develop good habits and a positive attitude about school attendance.

**Parents must call the office to report when their child will be absent.** You will receive the phone number to call to report an absence.

- If your child is absent and staff does not hear before the specified time, you will be contacted to determine the cause of the absence.
- If your child has a record of unexplained or frequent absences, your child may no longer be able to participate in the program. If your child is repeatedly tardy, leaves early or is left at the school after the program day (morning or afternoon) your child may no longer be able to participate in the program.



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Children will only be released to an authorized adult as determined by the guardian. Authorization must be given on the Emergency and Pick-Up Permission form by the parent or legal guardian. The names and telephone numbers of adults authorized to pick up your child must appear on this form. **Families should provide as many emergency contacts as possible for emergencies. Please keep these numbers updated if your phone number changes or is disconnected.**

### School Cancellation/Closing

The Holy Family classrooms follow the Diocese of Des Moines calendar and are closed when the Diocese schools are closed. The school calendar is available from your center staff or online on the Holy Family website: [www.hfcsdm.org](http://www.hfcsdm.org).

If Holy Family is closed due to bad weather, Early Childhood programs will be closed too. For half-day classrooms: in the case of delayed start the AM class will be cancelled. Please check local television, radio or the Holy Family website for information on school closings. There may also be days when early childhood classes need to be canceled due to staff illness and appropriate substitutes are not available. Families will be notified as soon as possible

## **Toys from Home**

Please do not send toys to school with the exception of 1 small stuffed animal for nap time that can stay at school. Everything that children need for a successful early childhood experience is provided. The school district has a **zero tolerance policy** regarding guns, knives and other weapons, including toy weapons. District Early Childhood programs follow this policy. You may find the policy on the district website [www.dmschools.org](http://www.dmschools.org) in the Elementary Parent Handbook.

## **HEALTH**

### **Accident or Illness**

- Parents will be contacted immediately in case of serious illness or accident. Preschool staff provides written incident reports to parents when there are minor injuries, minor changes in health status, or behavioral concerns. Accident reports will be completed at the discretion of the school nurse for injuries that require medical attention.
- Please notify the classroom if your emergency contact numbers change, so we can contact you in case of illness or emergency.
- Parents who are working or going to school are encouraged to have a “back-up” plan for a sick child

### **Illness Exclusion Policy**

To protect the health and well-being of all students and staff, Holy Family School follows illness exclusion guidelines. Children and staff who are ill must stay home to prevent the spread of illness within the school community.

A student or staff member must stay home or will be sent home if any of the following symptoms are present:

- Fever
- Sore throat with fever
- Any illness that prevents the student from participating in normal school activities

If a student develops a fever during the school day, the parent or guardian will be notified, and the student will be sent home for the day. The student may not return to school until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.

Students experiencing vomiting or diarrhea may not return to school until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours without medication.

Parents are asked to notify the school office if their child is diagnosed with a contagious illness so appropriate precautions may be taken.

These guidelines help ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for all members of the Holy Family School community.

## Injury, Incident, and Emergency Procedures Policy

- When a student is injured or involved in an incident at school, the supervising teacher or staff member will immediately assess the situation and ensure the student's safety.
- An **Accident/Incident Report** will be completed by the supervising staff member as soon as possible. A copy of the report will be sent home with the student, and a copy will be kept on file at the school for documentation and follow-up by the school nurse and principal.
- Parents or guardians will be **notified promptly**, depending on the severity of the injury or incident. In cases requiring immediate medical attention, emergency services (911) will be contacted first, followed by notification of the parent or guardian.
- The **school nurse and principal** will oversee any necessary follow-up, including continued monitoring of the student, communication with the family, and documentation of actions taken.
- All incidents will be handled with care, confidentiality, and in accordance with school and diocesan guidelines to ensure the health and safety of all students..



## Cleaning and Sanitation Practices

To ensure the classroom is properly cleaned and sanitized, all classrooms use the Monthly Cleaning and Sanitizing Frequency Table. Staff will complete each item on the Monthly Cleaning Checklist; initialing and dating as completed daily. The current month's Cleaning Checklist may be posted in an area accessible to staff, and placed in the Classroom Monitoring Binder upon completion, at the end of each month. Completed Monthly Cleaning Checklists will be filed in the Classroom Monitoring Binder for one program year.

To promote indoor air quality, aerosol, spray or other air fresheners, sanitizers or perfumes cannot be used in child occupied/used areas. Chemical air fresheners and sanitizers may cause nausea and an allergic response in some children. Odors should be controlled by ventilation and appropriate cleaning and disinfection. DMPS is a fragrance/scent safe environment.

## Communicable Disease Policy

**Please keep your child home if they have any of the following symptoms**

Symptom or disease: Child may not attend class until:
Diarrhea Free of diarrhea for 24 hours
Fever – 101 degrees by mouth Fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicine
Impetigo 24 hours after treatment is started
Pink eye Note from doctor
Rash with fever Note from doctor
Ringworm 24 hours after treatment is started

Vomiting Free of vomiting for 24 hours
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- You will be contacted and asked to pick up your child if he or she becomes ill at school.
- Please notify the classroom if your child has a communicable disease
- The classroom will post notices of exposure of children to a communicable disease from the Principal/Nurse.

Standard Precautions:

- Handwashing
- Gloves when handling bodily fluids
- Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
- Proper disposal of contaminated materials
- Protecting staff and children from exposure

**Please keep your child at home if he or she has an illness that is contagious OR:**

- Prevents them from being comfortable at school (for example-ear infection or continuous coughing).
- Your child needs more care than the staff can provide without affecting the health and safety of other children.

## Head Lice

If your child has head lice, you may be asked to pick your child up from school and begin to treat the lice. The school nurse can provide additional information upon request.

## Medication Policy

Families are encouraged to give medication at home where children are under the supervision of a parent/guardian. Occasionally, children will need to take medication at school or have medication available for an emergency. The school district's medication policy is as follows:

- Only nurses or other trained district staff will give medicine to a child at school
- The parent or guardian must sign the Authorization for Medication Administration Form.
- The parent must personally deliver medicine in its original pharmacy container to the office.
- No over-the-counter medications will be given without a doctor's order, in its original packaging and the Authorization for Medication Administration Form. All medications will be kept in a locked cabinet in the nurse's office which is not accessible to any children.

## Mental Health

Holy Family recognizes the importance of mental wellness in our children and our families. Our goal is to assure that each child and family is supported in handling life's challenges in effective ways. Building support staff, community agencies and resources are available to our families and children. For more information, please contact the school office.

## Nutrition

Nutritious meals or snacks are served to all children. Children will be served only food prepared by Holy Family employees. All food served meets the nutritional requirements of the Federal school lunch program.

- **Let us know if your child has any food allergies or religious food preferences.** If your child has a food allergy, the Diet Modification Request Form must be completed by your child's health care provider and returned to your teacher/school nurse. This form can be found at the Holy Family office. .

- We encourage children’s independence and decision-making by allowing them to choose the foods and the amount they want to eat. “Clean plates” are not emphasized. Mealtimes are opportunities for children to practice their communication and social skills. Birthday treats are ok if the treats are prepackaged or individually wrapped. NO CUPCAKES OR CAKES are allowed.

## Physical, Immunization Forms & Screenings

### Physical Examination, and Immunization

- Children are required to have a **current** physical and valid certificate of immunization on file at all times. Physicals are due within 30 days of the start of the school year.
- If your child does not have a doctor or dentist, a list of providers can be provided upon request.

### Screenings

- Screenings provide important information about your child’s health. Each child will have a vision and hearing screening. If you do not want your child to participate, please notify the school nurse in writing.

## SAFETY

### Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All classroom teachers are mandatory reporters as required by local and state laws.

If you suspect a child under the age of 18 is being abused or neglected please call:

- **The Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-362-2178** (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). Please be ready to provide identifying information and the whereabouts of the child. You may remain anonymous unless you are making a report as a mandatory reporter. If you are making a report as a mandatory reporter, you must leave your name and contact information.

**If you believe the child is in imminent danger, CALL 911 immediately.**

### Clothing Suggestions

Please dress your child in clothing appropriate for play. Tennis shoes or other shoes with rubber soles should be worn.

#### For safety reasons:

- Avoid flip-flops and other loose fitting shoes.
- Avoid or remove drawstrings on jackets and coats.
- Avoid having students wear jewelry (necklaces, long dangly earrings) they may be lost, broken or present a danger while playing.

**We go outside every day, weather permitting.** When the weather is cold, please dress your child warmly in a hat, coat, gloves and long pants. In warm weather, please apply sunscreen at home. If you need assistance obtaining appropriate clothing for your child, talk to your classroom staff.

### Discipline and Guidance

In the Holy Family Early Childhood Programs, our overall goal is to prepare children for kindergarten. To support this goal, we provide our students guidance and practice in developing social skills. Early Childhood teachers use PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) to teach developmentally appropriate social skills. When a child’s behavior affects his/her ability to handle the classroom environment, a meeting with the center team and support staff will occur. The team may be made up of the following people: parent/guardian, teacher, teacher associate, nurse. This team will develop a plan to assist the child.

Here are some of the types of guidance used in our programs and examples of how they might also be used at home:

- **Positive Redirection:** For example, children are throwing toys. A *positive redirection* would be to give the children beanbags and a basket for a beanbag toss as an appropriate alternative.
- **Ignoring misbehavior when appropriate:** Often the best way to discourage negative behavior like showing off or pouting is to ignore it. Instead pay attention and praise the child when he or she demonstrates positive behavior.
- **Choices to control the situation and not the child:** Use choices with limits. Instead of saying, “Do you want to ride in your car seat?” You might say, “Do you want to hold your book or your toy while you are in your car seat?”
- **Use “First—Then statements:** For example, “**F**irst put on your coat, **t**hen we will go outside.”
- **Use of natural and logical consequences:** *Natural:* “You splashed water on the floor when you were washing your hands, so you need to help clean it up.” *Logical:* “You hit a child with this toy; so I’m going to put this toy away for today.”
- **Acknowledging children’s feelings:** By helping children recognize and name their own feelings they begin to learn that people may have different feelings about the same things, and that’s ok. This also helps children begin to control the behaviors associated with strong feelings.
- **The Holy Family Pre-K program does not use corporal punishment of any kind.** This is listed in the Holy Family Parent Family Handbook under Code of Conduct.

The K-8th grade and Early Childhood Parent Handbook, which includes the school's full Code of Conduct is available online at [hfsdm.org](http://hfsdm.org) (in the Family Handbook) or you may contact your school office for more information.

## State of Iowa Annual Notice

**Notice: Corporal Punishment, Restraint, and Physical Confinement and Detention** State law forbids school employees from using corporal punishment against any student. Certain actions by school employees are not considered corporal punishment. Additionally, school employees may use “reasonable and necessary force, not designed or intended to cause pain” to do certain things, such as prevent harm to persons or property. State law also places limits on school employees’ abilities to restrain or confine and detain any student. The law limits why, how, where, and for how long a school employee may restrain or confine and detain a child. If a child is restrained or confined and detained, the school must maintain documentation and must provide certain types of notice to the child’s parent.

If you have any questions about this state law, please contact your school. The complete text of the law and additional information is available on the Iowa Department of Education’s web site: [www.iowa.gov/educate](http://www.iowa.gov/educate).

## Environmental Safety

- Teachers and school staff are responsible for the supervision, guidance and safety of children throughout the school day.
- Parents and guardians have unrestricted access to their own child (except during a building lock-out or shelter in place)
- The school district has written emergency plans for fire, tornado, flood, intruders.. These plans include evacuation sites. Emergency evacuation plans are posted at all exits. Emergency numbers for police, fire department, Poison Control Center and ambulance service are posted by all phones. Children’s emergency information is accessible to staff.
- All full-time teachers have current First Aid and CPR certification.

- No smoking is allowed within the facility, or on the playground.
- First aid kits are clearly labeled and available within the center and in the outdoor play area. • All classrooms clean and sanitize surfaces as indicated in the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table. Please contact the classroom teacher for a copy of the table.
- All staff are certified in Universal Precautions to protect against the spread of potentially infectious body fluids. Please contact the school nurse for detailed information.

## Safety Drills

A lock-out is a safety measure we take in response to a threat in the surrounding neighborhood. Shelter in place is when the threat is directed or inside Holy Family school. As a part of the District Emergency Response Plan, all school buildings hold safety drills, just as we do fire and tornado drills. The teachers talk with students and read a story about lockdown drills prior to the first drill.

During a safety drills:

### - Lock out

- All school activities are moved indoors.
- Exterior doors and classroom doors are locked.
- No one is allowed to enter or exit the building. Parents may not enter or exit the school during a lock-out. .  
This is for your safety and the safety of your child.

### - Shelter in Place

- A *shelter in place* is a safety procedure used when there is a potential threat outside the school, such as police activity in the neighborhood. During this time, all students and staff remain inside the building, and exterior doors are locked. no one is allowed to enter or leave the school until it is safe to do so. Students and teachers will remain in their rooms in hiding with all blinds and window covering closed. This is done as a precaution to keep everyone secure.

Parents: Please be sure that the teacher has your most up-to-date emergency contact information. In the event of a lock-out or other emergency, school staff will use that information to contact you.

Following a shelter in place, parents will be informed that the school was placed on shelter in place, the nature of the incident, and how long the shelter was in place.

## FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS and FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The DMPS Early Childhood Programs work with each family to create the best possible experiences for their child's growth and social development. We believe that:

- You are your child's first and best teacher.
- Children do best when parents and classroom teachers work together.
- Parents who support and extend their child's learning contribute to their child's success both in school and in life.
- Parent input is vital to program improvement. Input can be provided through parent surveys, and consultations with faculty and/or administration.

## HomeVisits and Conferences

- Family visiting is an important part of our Early Childhood program. These visits usually take place in the child's home. Early childhood staff will make **one or two** visits to your home a year. Ideally, the first visit takes place before the child starts in the classroom.

- There will also be **two parent-teacher conferences** at school per year. During visits and conferences teachers will share information about your child's progress. You can share information, strengths and concerns about your child at this time. This information is helpful to the teaching staff as they plan learning activities for your child and the other children in the classroom.
- Parents and guardians may request additional conferences with staff any time.

## Newsletters

A weekly newsletter will keep you informed of classroom, school and community-based activities and opportunities. Check your child's backpack regularly for notes and other classroom information.

## Homework

Research shows that worksheets and other homework that is typical in older grades is not an effective way for preschoolers to learn. Here are the types of developmentally appropriate homework we use:

1. Weekly papers come home with ideas of things to do at home to support your child's learning that week.



## School Readiness Goals

School Readiness means that we are working to be sure that, by the end of pre-k, children are ready for kindergarten. The Early Childhood department sets specific school readiness goals each year in four areas; reading, math, social skills, and following directions.

## Transition to Kindergarten (Holy Family Does Not Offer this currently)

One of the goals of the Early Childhood programs is to assist children and families to successfully move from preschool to kindergarten. Families are encouraged to be actively engaged in helping to prepare children for kindergarten by participating in a variety of different activities including home visits, conferences, Family Events, and related learning and reading activities in the home.

During the spring months,

- For children who are 5 years old on or before September 15<sup>th</sup>, parents will receive information regarding kindergarten enrollment along with registration information.
- For children who will not be 5 years old by September 15<sup>th</sup>, parents will receive information about continuing preschool next year.
- For identified students with IEPs, students will need to be identified as needing special education. .

## Volunteering

Parents are encouraged to participate in our program. Your participation is welcome in the following areas:

- Decision-making about the design and operation of the program
- Helping in the classroom
- Preparing materials for the classroom
- Developing and participating in activities for parents

All prospective volunteers must meet with the school principal and consent to a background check including but not limited to screening for assault, felony convictions, child and dependent abuse charges.