

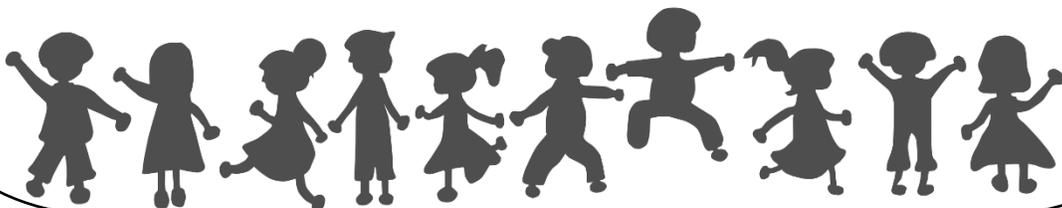


Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten Program

2021-2022 Handbook

Challenging Minds...Engaging Hearts...Nurturing the Spirit

307 Siebert Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
412-364-7171
holycrossacademypgh.org



COVID-19

Due to the current restrictions surrounding Covid-19, some of the information in this handbook may need to be adjusted. Parents/Guardians will be notified regarding any changes prior to the start of school.

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INTRODUCTION . . .

Welcome to our Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten Program at Holy Cross Academy. We are so thankful and blessed to be teaching your child this year.

Rooted in Gospel values and committed to academic excellence, Holy Cross Academy seeks to foster spiritual development, service to community and a life-long love of learning in every child. To build a Christ-centered foundation for our students, we encourage collaboration between our children, families and community. Our goal is to develop outstanding, well-rounded students who are leaders in their communities, who are known by their service to others, and who achieve success in all facets of their lives.

Our Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten programs provide activities to help the children become problem solvers and develop a love for life-long learning through large and small group instruction as well as in learning centers. We recognize that each child is unique and amazing and we encourage all children to learn at their own pace. We help our children develop a relationship with Jesus and we foster the moral attitudes of sharing, caring, helping, thanking and celebrating. We want the first school experience to be positive and joyful for every child. Students will learn how to respect others, listen, fully participate, and develop task persistence, self-control and organizational skills.

Through independent exploration, structured activities, and hands-on learning, our children develop a variety of skills and knowledge in language arts and literacy, mathematics, social studies and science. All of our activities are designed to . . .

- Build self esteem
- Increase fine and gross motor skills
- Develop and enhance vocabulary
- Increase interest in literature
- Introduce problem-solving skills
- Develop social skills

SCHEDULE . . .

Preschool:

Tuesday and Thursday

8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Pre-Kindergarten:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Half-day: 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Full-day: 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Monday through Friday

Half-day: 8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Full-day: 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The Holy Cross Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten Program accepts students of any race, nationality, or ethnic origin, and religious background.

BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS . . .

- When discussing school with your child, talk in a calm and positive way.
- Practice carrying a backpack and getting ready for snack time—opening the lunch box/bag, taking the snacks from the bag and getting organized. There is always adult help available in the classroom!
- Encourage your child to express any feelings about school, positive or negative, and give your child clear and honest answers.
- Encourage your child to talk about the school day by asking open-ended questions instead of a question that will only illicit a yes or no response. Examples include: Where did you play today? Tell me about Circle Time today.

THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF SCHOOL . . .

- Every child is wonderful and unique and comes to school with different experiences and expectations. With that in mind, it can be difficult to gauge how your child will react when coming to school. Some children cry, some want to leave, others walk right in, some start to cry after a few weeks, others want to stay when the day is over. Be patient and talk to your child about school. If your child does not want to come to school please continue to reinforce that going to Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten is important and that it is the next step in getting older and growing up.
- If your child is having difficulty separating from you and other family members some families tape a picture of loved ones in the child's folder or create their own little gesture so as to help reduce any stress the child may be feeling. The adults in the classroom will make every effort to help your child adjust to school.
- Always say good-bye to your child instead of leaving without saying good-bye.
- Mixed feelings about your child going to school are common. Parents may feel like crying even though they are excited about this new, big step.

FAMILY IDENTIFICATION NUMBER . . .

-Every school family at Holy Cross Academy is assigned a family identification number. You will receive a card with your family identification number and we will also attach a card with your family identification number to your child's backpack.

-You, or whoever may be picking up your child on a given day, must have the family identification number card and it must be visible.

-If someone other than the person who normally picks up your child will be picking up please. . .

-Write a note or send an email message to your child's teacher stating the name of the person who will be picking up your child. It is also helpful to tell us if your child knows the person. Some families also provide a brief description of the person who will be picking up the child.

-In the event that you will be late picking up your child at dismissal, please call the school office at 412-364-7171. An adult will wait with your child until you arrive.

ARRIVAL FOR ALL STUDENTS . . .

For Pre-Kindergarten Students: 8:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

-All Pre-Kindergarten school families are to park in the upper parking lot and walk down to the front door of the school. Due to safety concerns and the number of buses bringing the older students to school, please do not park in the lower parking lot near the front entrance. All children are welcomed at the front door by the Principal or a teacher.

-Please make every attempt to arrive at school by 8:30 a.m. It can be difficult for a child to enter the classroom after school has started, especially if it becomes a regular occurrence. It is also a disruption to the other students and the teacher when students arrive late to the classroom.

For Preschool Students: 8:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

-All Preschool school families are to park in the upper parking lot and walk down to the front door of the school. Due to safety concerns and the number of buses bringing the older students to school, please do not park in the lower parking lot near the front entrance. All children are welcomed at the front door by the Principal or a teacher.

-Please make every attempt to arrive at school by 8:30 a.m. It can be difficult for a child to enter the classroom after school has started, especially if it becomes a regular occurrence. It is also a disruption to the other students and the teacher when students arrive late to the classroom.

DISMISSAL . . .

. . . for students who leave school at 11:30 a.m.

-Dismissal is from the gymnasium door at 11:30 a.m. Please pull around to the back of the building and then park in a single row by the guide rail near the gymnasium door and come to get your child. We ask that the adults waiting to pick up form a line in front of the door. Children will be released one at a time. Please form a single line when leaving in your car and do not attempt to pass another vehicle as you leave.

-This above procedure has been implemented for the benefit and safety of your child. We appreciate your patience as we dismiss all of the half-day students. If your family would rather not follow the vehicle dismissal procedure, you are welcome to park in the upper parking lot (not in front of the school) and walk down the driveway to the gymnasium door and get in line to pick up your child. Remember your family identification number card.

. . . for students who leave school at 3:00 p.m.

-All students are dismissed from the upper parking lot. Parents form a line in their cars in the designated area. Stay in your car. Please pull up to get your child when it is your turn. Make sure to have your family identification number clearly displayed in the car. An adult will help your child to get into the car seat. Then move to a parking spot to buckle your child into the car seat. As a reminder: It is a state law that all young children must be secured in an approved car seat in the back seat of the vehicle and restrained with a seat belt. **Change of the dismissal driver must be in writing.**

If an emergency occurs, and you will be late picking up your child, please call the school office at 412-364-7171. Children will be taken to the Extended Care Program if not picked up by 3:15 p.m. and parents will be charged for this service.

SAFETY AND SUPERVISION . . .

-All doors in the building are locked throughout the day. In order to enter the building, all visitors must go to the school office located at the side of the building.

-All classrooms doors are equipped with the Nightlock Door Security System. This allows an additional security measure for each door in the case of an emergency lockdown.

-All activities in the classroom are supervised by the teachers and classroom aides. All staff have the proper clearances as required by the state of Pennsylvania and the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

-No child can be taken from the classroom or picked up at dismissal without authorization of the child's parent or guardian.

-Safety rules are reviewed each year and the Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten students participate in Fire Drill and school Lock Down Drills. These drills are explained to the children at the start of school and are discussed and reviewed throughout the year. We tell the children that we must prepare for an emergency, just like they do at home.

-Smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and security cameras are located throughout the building.

FULL-DAY PRE-KINDERGARTEN . . .

Following are details and instructions related to students in the full-day Pre-Kindergarten class . . .

Extended Care Program: Full-days students in Pre-Kindergarten are eligible to participate in the Extended Care program before school beginning at 7:00 a.m. and after school until 6:00 p.m. Details for this program will be covered in the full-day Pre-Kindergarten Orientation meeting.

Snack: Full-day student snacks should be placed in the zippered portion of the backpack. This should be a small, nutritious snack and drink since snack time occurs in a 15-minute time period. Please send snacks in disposable containers or bags. If your child needs to return a container, please label it with your child's name. *No lunch boxes are to be used due to lack of space.*

Lunch: Our full-day students may pack their lunch or purchase a lunch from the school cafeteria. Lunch boxes/bags labeled with the child's name are to be used for packed lunches. We do *not* heat lunch items. Nutritious lunches should be packed, including a drink. Bottled water and milk can be purchased. Information regarding our lunch program will be explained in more detail at Orientation.

Special Classes: Our full-day students participate in . . . Art, Music, Library, Computers, Gym, and Spanish classes.

DETAILS TO KNOW FOR PRESCHOOL AND PRE-KINDERGARTEN

-Rules to Follow: Be kind, use nice manners, share, show respect for all children, adults, and our classroom, follow the classroom rules, help to clean-up, make new friends, learn as much as possible, and have fun.

-Backpacks: Each child will need a full-size backpack. This size works best because the children will bring home many treasures of varying sizes during the year. Always send a backpack on party days and other special event days.

-Supply Lists: Please take the time to read the supply list posted on the [school website](#) for the Preschool class and the Pre-Kindergarten classes. (The lists do contain different items for each class.)

-Labeling of Items: Please label all items your child brings to school—backpack, lunch bag/box, water bottle, jackets, gloves, hats, etc. It can be hard to remember sometimes which item belongs to which child!

-Snacks: Your child should bring a small daily snack including a drink. Snacks are not needed on party days or other special event days. We are a ***NUT FREE SCHOOL.***

-Birthday Celebrations: Individual birthdays will be celebrated as close as possible to your child's actual birthday. Bringing in a treat is optional. Your child may bring in a birthday treat (no cakes) to enjoy with the class. Please notify your child's teacher as to the day you would like to bring your child's treat. Summer birthdays will be celebrated toward the end of the school year. We are a ***NUT FREE SCHOOL.***

-Personal Hygiene: Your child needs to be able to use the bathroom independently. We do not go into the bathroom with the children although assistance is certainly provided when needed. It is always helpful for your child to also know how to use the sink/soap for handwashing and how to use a paper towel for hand drying.

-Extra Set of Clothing: Please send a set of clothing to school for your child—pants, top, under garments, socks—in a plastic bag labeled with your child's name. (We will send a reminder to switch out the clothing when the weather gets colder.) If your child does have an accident, those clothes will be sent home, so please send in replacement clothes the following day.

-Clothing and Shoes: Please have your child dress in comfortable seasonally appropriate clothing. We make visits to the church, take walks, and go to the gym every week therefore rubber soled shoes such as tennis shoes are the safest and most comfortable choice for your child. Please no flip-flops or sandals. If your child wears boots to school, please send in a pair of shoes to change into.

-Items from Home: We ask that you do not allow your child to bring items from home (special blankets, stuffed animals, etc.) unless the children are scheduled to bring items for classroom activities. This way, your child will not need to be asked to put the item away and no items will be lost or damaged.

KEEPING IN TOUCH . . .

-[Holy Cross Academy website](#): A wealth of information such as calendars, documents, fundraising, and more can be found on our website. In addition, the teachers' webpages will contain specific information and updates concerning your child's class. Teacher webpages can be found under [Faculty and Staff](#).

-**Classroom Updates**: Regular updates from your child's teacher are sent to our families outlining activities for the month, days off, special activities, etc.

-**Contacting your child's teacher**: Please feel free to email your child's teacher with any questions and concerns. Teachers will respond within 24 hours. A meeting can also be scheduled when requested.

- **Option C**: Regular updates to school families and guardians are sent through Option C. **BE SURE TO READ THESE WEEKLY UPDATES FOR THE MOST CURRENT SCHOOL INFORMATION.**

- **Monthly Packet**: These are provided to each family and include pertinent information for the month such as fundraising opportunities, special dress days, etc.

-**School Calendar**: We follow the HCA school calendar for holidays, in-service days, and clerical days. Calendars are posted each month and are available on the school website: www.holycrossacademypgh.org

-**Parent/Teacher Conferences**: Formal conferences will be scheduled during the school year and families will be notified of the date. Families will have the opportunity to select a convenient time to meet with their child's teacher.

-**Family Updates**: Please inform your child's teacher if there are any changes at home such as illness, family death, upcoming big events, vacations, new home (don't forget to provide the new address), job change, etc. The more your child's teacher knows about

your child the stronger the relationship will be and additional support and resources can be made available as needed. All information discussed with families and guardians is kept in strict confidence. **Any changes to contact information should also be shared with the school office, ex: address, phone number, email address, emergency contact information, in addition to any serious student health issue.**

-School delays and cancellations: Holy Cross Academy follows the North Hills School District regarding decisions on any delays and cancellations which are announced on WTAE, WPXI or KDKA radio or television. Notifications are also sent through the school wide alert system. Morning care is not available on delay days.

-School Delay for half-day students:

Class meets from 10:25 a.m. - Noon

-School Delay for full-day Pre-Kindergarten students:

Class meets from 10:25 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

-Gift Card Program: Gift cards are available for purchase from the school office and online at giftcards@holycrossacademyppgh.org. This is one way for your family to help reduce your tuition because a designated percentage of the purchase of each gift card can be deducted from your tuition bill. The list of available gift cards can be found on the school website. Any questions regarding the program, please call the school office at 412-364-7171.

-Fundraising: All school families are encouraged to participate in the fundraisers offered by Holy Cross Academy. These fundraisers help to support our school.

-Parent/Teacher Guild (PTG): All school families are invited to join the Holy Cross Academy PTG. Several meetings are held throughout the year and meeting notifications are sent through Option C. The PTG is comprised of school families and organizes social events for the school, fundraisers, etc. The PTG is always in need of volunteers! (See “Room Parents and Party Helpers.”)

ROOM PARENTS AND PARTY HELPERS . . .

-Each classroom has one or two room parents. These room parents help the teachers through the year to coordinate activities and projects and they also work with the party helpers.

-We have several classroom parties throughout the year—Halloween, Thanksgiving Feast, Christmas, and Valentine’s Day. We also host an end-of-the-year celebration. Volunteers are also needed for seasonal events and special activities.

-At the start of school, the room parent coordinator for the school will send an email to all families asking for volunteers.

-Every volunteer MUST have all clearances as specified by the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The required clearances are as follows and are listed on the school website. The school secretary maintains all paperwork for clearances.

DIOCESAN SAFE ENVIRONMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS . . .

The Diocese of Pittsburgh has issued mandatory requirements for anyone who will be having regular contact with children. This includes homeroom parents, party helpers, playground monitors, chaperones, coaches, etc.

To obtain **all** of the required clearances, please visit: <https://diopitt.org/school-volunteers>

Required Clearances listed on the website are . . .

- 1. Safe Environmental Database/PA State Police Clearance/Code of Pastoral Conduct/Child Protective Services Law**

- 2. Child Abuse History Clearance**
- 3. FBI Clearance or Waiver**
- 4. Protecting God's Children**
- 5. Mandated Reporter Training**

Any questions please call the school office at 412-364-7171.

If you have already completed the Diocesan requirements, please check with the school office to verify that they are current.

Copies of certificates are to be turned into the office to be placed in a confidential file. You must have your certificates on file with the office before volunteering.

DISCIPLINE . . .

Holy Cross Academy's Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten program practices a positive discipline approach. This approach helps the children to learn skills that will teach them to be responsible, respectful, and resourceful. In the classroom, the students will learn to respect themselves, others, and the classroom. If it becomes difficult for a child to follow this approach, the teacher will communicate with the parent(s) or guardian(s) to resolve the issues.

If behavior issues continue to occur, the school principal will be included in discussions with the teacher and parent(s) or guardian(s) regarding a child's behavior. The principal will determine how to proceed if:

- The child poses a threat to himself/herself or to other children in the classroom.
- The child behaves in a manner that is difficult to manage in a large group.
- The child uses abusive language or threatens other children.
- The child or family continues to act against the early childhood policies.
- The principal's professional judgement is that the child can no longer function effectively in the program and/or the program is being adversely affected by the child's behavior.

The parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child will be notified in writing when infractions of policies occur and a conference will be scheduled with them as well as with the principal, teacher, and child to discuss the problems before a child is removed from the program. However, some situations may occur that jeopardize the welfare of the children and/or staff in the classroom. In this case, the principal reserves the right to dismiss a student immediately if such an incident occurs.

GRIEVANCE: A parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child may appeal a decision by following these procedures:

- Talk with staff involved.
- If a settlement is not reached, the principal will be contacted.

-Withdrawal from the program: Causes for withdrawal from the program will be discussed between the family, teachers, and school principal. The education and well-being of every child must be considered in order to maintain a positive learning environment for all students. The Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten staff reserves the right to ask for withdrawal of a child if the child is unable to adjust and benefit from school, or failure to comply with school rules which could endanger the child or other children. An additional reason for withdrawal is if financial obligations are not met.