

Sacred Heart Catholic School

2026-2027 Little Hearts Program VPK & PreK3

Parent & Student Handbook



5752 Blanding Blvd.
Jacksonville, Florida 32244
904-771-5800

www.shcsjax.com

Melissa Kennedy, Principal

Reverence, Respect, Responsibility

Mission

Sacred Heart Catholic School will instill a rich Catholic tradition and the core values of "Reverence, Respect, and Responsibility." Our goal is to become lifelong learners as we prepare today for the challenges of tomorrow.

(Annually Reviewed)

We Believe

- + Each student is a unique child of God.
- + We are actively involved in every aspect of the learning process of each child.
- + We encourage students to become an integral part of the church's mission to proclaim the gospel message of Jesus, to celebrate through worship and service to others, and to build strong faith communities.
- + We provide a safe, nurturing, and supportive learning environment where students can achieve their full potential and individuality.
- + We foster all students' understanding and respect of cultural diversity, including different religions, peoples, and cultures.
- + We show mutual respect among and between the staff and school families to create a wholesome learning environment reflective of Christian values, which includes social justice and peace.

Diocese Mission Statement

We, the Catholic school community of the Diocese of Saint Augustine, are called to provide a Eucharist-centered educational environment committed to high academic standards, faith development, and service, thereby inspiring discipleship in all students.

<https://www.dosaeducation.org/>

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Contact Information

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Website: www.shcsjax.com

School & Extended Day: (904) 771-5800

Church Office: (904) 771-2152

Administration & Support Staff

Pastor	Fr. James Kaniparampil, CMI	frjamessh@sacredheartjax.com
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Faculty & Staff

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VPK Philosophy

We, the Early Childhood Community at Sacred Heart Catholic School, strengthened through the Eucharist, believe that each child is a unique gift from God. We believe families are the first and most influential educators of their children. We are here to partner in the faith journey of the entire family.

Our goal is to provide a loving, safe, and inclusive environment in which children are positively challenged to reach their full potential. Our play-based, child-centered program reflects the integration of all the domains (spiritual, social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and linguistic), to support the development of the whole child. Through building relationships, educators plan and provide a balance of developmentally appropriate learning experiences and environments that engage children as they grow in Christ. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." -Matthew 19:14. We are committed to working together with each family to fulfill His mission.

School-wide Admissions & Financial Policies

ADMISSIONS

Admission Policy

Sacred Heart Catholic School (SHCS) admits students of any race, color, nationality, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at this school. We do not discriminate based on race, color, national, or ethnic origin in educational or admission policies, scholarship or loan programs, athletic, or other school-administered programs. *A parentally-placed private school student with a disability does not have an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the students would receive if enrolled in a public school under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).*

The academic progress and behavior of each new student is subject to periodic review by the principal. Students not demonstrating acceptable progress/conduct may be asked to sign an attendance agreement. If there is no change, the family may be asked to leave the school. There is a 60-day probation period (new students) where students must show they are meeting all behavioral, academic, and financial responsibilities to keep their spot at SHCS. Their continued admission is decided upon by the school administration.

Admissions Documents

The following documents must be submitted to complete student enrollment:

- Proof of a Florida physical exam (required when a student enters school for the first time). DH3040
- Proof of up-to-date childhood immunizations (form may be secured from the Duval County Health Department or at the child's personal physician's office). DH680
 - Students entering the seventh grade are required to complete vaccinations against hepatitis B, a second dose of measles vaccine (preferably MMR), and a tetanus-diphtheria booster.
 - Religious exemptions are no longer accepted by the diocese or diocesan schools.
 - *NO vaccination exemptions are accepted!*
- All Catholic students are to provide a copy of their baptismal certificates and First Communion certificates (2nd grade).

Age/Grade-Level Requirements

Pre-Kindergarten students must be three or four years old on or before September 1st of the school year in which they are enrolling. Kindergarten students must be five years of age by September 1st. Age must be verified by an original birth certificate.

Admission Priority Policy

Families seeking admission to Sacred Heart Catholic School will be accepted into the school having met all other admissions requirements based on the following:

- I. Academic Screening and Assessment Results
- II. Siblings of currently enrolled student(s).
- III. Registered, active members of the parish for at least six months (includes those transferring from other parishes who have recently registered at SHCS).
- IV. Catholics registered in another local parish.
- V. Students enrolled in another Catholic School (in- or out-of-state).
- VI. Non-Catholics.

Pre-K Academics

Our pre-kindergarten program provides a developmentally appropriate curriculum for all areas of a child's development, physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and cognitive, through an integrated approach.

- Pre-K students attend school five days per week from 8:00AM to 11:00AM.
- Pre-K students are asked to follow our school's uniform dress code.
- Pre-K students must arrive **no later than 8:00AM**, unless meeting one of the "excused absences" reasons, in order to be marked present. Please bring your student to the main office if you arrive after 8:00AM.
- Good behavior is expected. A student who continually demonstrates inappropriate behavior may not be ready for pre-school and may be asked meet with administration to discuss a behavior plan. This includes aggressive behaviors and/or lack of emotional regulation (crying, screaming, evasive behavior, etc.)

Assessment Reports

All Early Childhood students will receive a progress report (PK3) or Diocesan Progress Report Card (PK4), at the end of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th quarter of the school year. At the end of the first quarter a Parent/Teacher Conference will be scheduled through the main office.

Additional conferences will be held on an as needed basis and may be requested by the teacher or parent. PK3 assessment reports will be mailed home for the fourth quarter. Pre-K4 reports will be sent via RenWeb/FACTS SIS. Pupil progression for students entering Sacred Heart's Kindergarten will be determined based on the standards mastered, teacher recommendation, as well as, principal approval.

Bathroom/Accident Policy

Each child is expected to be fully potty trained. This means that he/she is able to recognize when he/she needs to use the restroom in a timely manner and must also be able to use it independently. Pull-ups are not allowed.

As Early Childhood Educators, we understand that accidents can happen. In the case of a bathroom accident, we request that each child have a complete change of clothes, including socks, in a Ziploc bag, in their classroom at all times. All students need to have an extra pair of tennis shoes, also. This does not have to be a uniform change of clothes; however, it must be school and weather appropriate. If an accident occurs, we will accompany the child to the restroom and give them all the verbal guidance and support possible. We will coach them through the steps, if necessary. However, if the child is having difficulty properly cleaning him/herself, then the parent will be called to come and assist in the clean-up and possibly take the child home.

If accidents continue, a conference will be held to discuss further actions and/or solutions to aid the child's independence in this area. However, in a case in which a child is unable to achieve independence, then he or she may be asked to leave the school.

Birthday/Holiday Celebrations

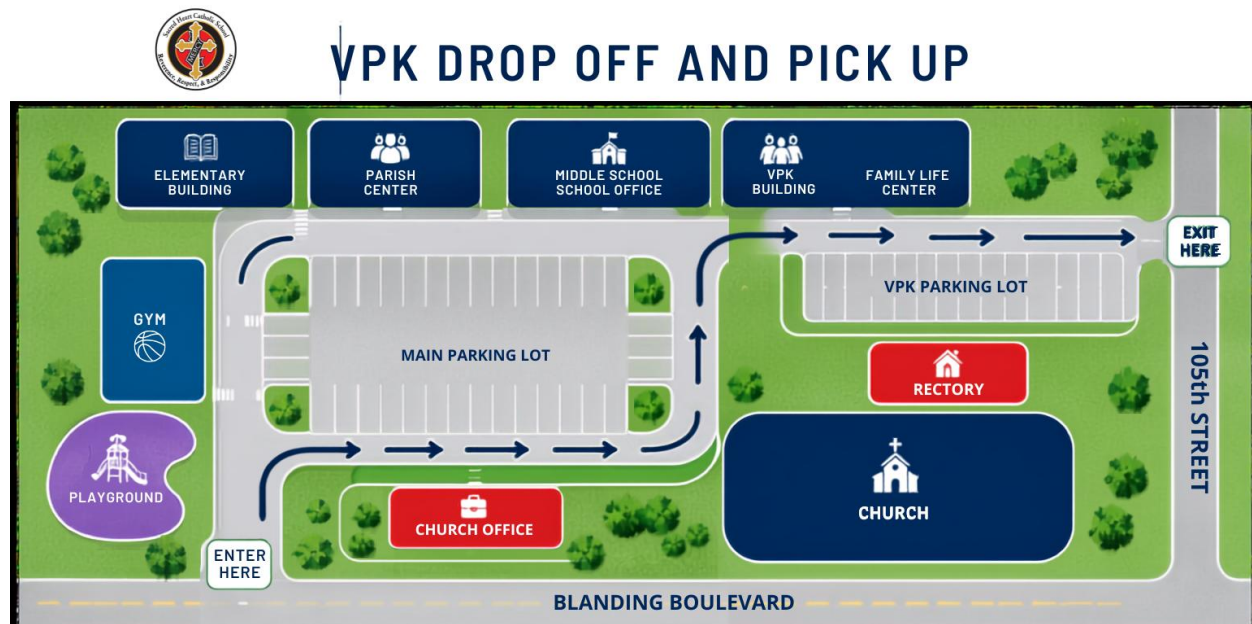
We love to celebrate birthdays and holidays with the children in a fun, exciting and educational way.

Birthday celebrations are a special time. A small snack may be sent in with your child during morning carline (no cupcakes or cakes). The teacher will celebrate your child's birthday with the class during an appropriate time of their day. Please be sure to contact your child's teacher regarding what is appropriate for a birthday snack. Prepackaged, individually wrapped snacks are greatly preferred, for example mini muffins, Little Debbie or Hostess type treats, individual bags of mini cookies or crackers. No goodie bags or parents are necessary.

For holiday celebrations, we will hold holiday center-type celebrations in which the students will be actively engaged in projects and games that directly relate to the holiday and the curriculum. These celebrations are coordinated with/through the Homeroom parent(s). We always need parent volunteers for these busy days, however, the volunteers **MUST** be fingerprinted, have attended the Virtus Training (Protecting God's Children) and be cleared with the office. Celebration days are extremely busy so we ask that younger siblings not attend. Goodie bags are not permitted for holiday parties.

Arrival/Dismissal Procedure

The teachers, paraprofessionals, and staff will be present during carline to help the children safely to and from their cars.



Morning arrival: enter the school campus from Blanding Blvd entrance and follow the traffic pattern to the Preschool parking lot. Park in the Preschool Parking Lot. THERE IS NO PARKING IN THE SPACES ALONG THE SIDEWALK! Walk child to the benches holding his/her hand where the teachers are waiting. The teachers will walk your child into the building. Exit through the 105th Street gate.

11:00 Dismissal: Enter from the Blanding Blvd entrance. Park in the Preschool Parking Lot—NO PARKING IN THE SPACES ALONG THE SIDEWALK. Walk up to the area near the benches. The teachers will release your child as soon as they see you. Exit through the 105th Street gate.

Extended Day: Enter through the Blanding Blvd entrance and follow the traffic pattern to pick up older siblings first. Loop around to the PK parking lot. PreK will be waiting in front of our building.

We will bring the kids to your driver's side back door. Please have your name sign visible on the front windshield. You will then exit the campus through the 105th street gate.

Attendance & Tardy Policy

Regular attendance and punctuality are key to ensuring your child gets the most out of the PK program. A parent or other authorized adult **MUST SIGN THE MONTHLY ATTENDANCE RECORD** on the last day of each month. The form will be provided by the teachers directly. This record is sent to the Early Learning Coalition.

If your child is sick, please send a note with your child upon return to school. Please let your child's teacher know if your child will be out of school for a planned absence (appointments, vacations, etc.) so they can plan accordingly.

If your child arrives late (after 8AM), you must check in at the school office. Your student will be walked to the PK Building by an adult after they are checked in. If you plan to pick up your student early, please go to the front office so they may contact our building.

Authorized Pick-Up/Personal Information

It is helpful to inform us of any changes to personal information as soon as possible so that we can keep our records current, especially changes in phone numbers. *People authorized to pick up your child MUST BE IN OUR RECORDS. We will ask for a picture ID before the child is released. A form can add people and phone numbers to your registration information.* If your child is going home with another child and their parent or babysitter, please give the teacher a signed note with the appropriate information, including contact phone numbers.

Communication

Little Hearts sends home communication folders every Monday. These folders will include homework, completed classwork, and parent fliers/newsletters. Please look at these folders and remove any *Keep at Home* pocket items. Communication folders need to be returned to school before Friday with completed homework. Any folders not returned must be replaced at the parent's expense.

Discipline Policy

Positive discipline is used with the children to help them learn what behavior is acceptable. The motivation for discipline should always be love through gentle explanation and

training. Positive reinforcement will encourage and reward good behavior. Teachers will use loving guidance and discipline techniques that are age appropriate for each individual child. Distraction and redirection work well with the younger children, while reasoning and logical consequences are very effective with the older children.

In the event the above disciplinary actions prove unsuccessful, the child will be removed from the situation and placed in time out. If the unacceptable behavior continues, the parents/guardians will be called to pick up their child. Failure to correct the problem will result in the child's dismissal.

In the event the child does bodily harm to a teacher/child, i.e. biting, hitting, punching, kicking, or hitting with an object, the following consequences will apply:

- First incident: The parent will be called and asked to pick up their child.
- Second incident: The parents will be called again to pick up their child. The child will not be allowed to return until a teacher/parent/administrator conference has been held to try to resolve the matter.
- Third incident: The child will not be allowed to return to school.

Sacred Heart Catholic School does not permit the use of corporal punishment under any circumstances. Corporal punishment by parent/guardian may never be administered on school property or in any school-sponsored setting.

Dress Code

Students should wear their school uniform every day. No belts are required. Sneakers with ankle-sock height are required. No sneakers with lights. These pose a safety risk in the event of a school lockdown. No jewelry may be worn except small stud earrings for girls. No fingernail polish or tattoos are allowed. Boys' hair must be kept short and off the collar and ears.

Preschool students are required to keep a complete change of clothes in their cubbies. Please label all clothing with your child's name and place it in a gallon-size Ziplock bag labeled with their name. PreK3 students are required to have three sets of extra clothes. Extra clothes are not required to be uniform; black shorts/pants and any T-shirt will be acceptable.

When picking up and dropping off your student, please wear appropriate clothing when dropping off or picking up your children. We are a Catholic School and strive to instill values such as modesty in our students. Please consider your attire carefully; our students think you are a great example.

Early Dismissal Days

Extended Day students who stay until 2:45PM must be picked up by 11:45AM on early dismissal days. There will be no lunch these days, but you may bring a small snack and drink. Children who attend after-school care will be sent there at that time. Early Dismissal Days do not affect students who leave at 11:00AM.

Emergency Closing

The Diocesan Office of the Superintendent will decide whether to close school due to inclement weather. We will also be closed if they cancel school due to the weather. Please listen to the local television and radio broadcast or check out the school's social media posts for this information.

Extended Day

Extended Day is offered as a flexible service. There are three PreK Options:

- Full Day (Half Day (11AM) + Lunch) (leave at regular afternoon carline 2:45PM)
- Full Day & Additional Extended Day (ability to stay from 3:30-6:00pm)
- Drop in (unplanned full day) \$25/day per child

If you are using it occasionally, please be sure to write a note to your child's teacher on the days they are staying for Extended Day. Please be sure to include whether your child will be going home at the 3:00PM carline or if they are staying later. You will be charged either monthly or daily.

PK students who stay after 11:00AM are considered "Full Day" students. The students will go out for recess, have lunch, take a nap, and be engaged in various activities. If your child is going home at the 2:45PM carline, please follow the school dismissal policy. If your child is staying later, they are considered "Extended Day" students. Please send in a snack and a re-fillable water bottle if your child is staying for Extended Day.

HEALTH

All families must update the Emergency Information in RenWeb/FACTS at the beginning of each school year. Whether a child is not feeling well, or a serious accident has occurred, parents or other authorized persons should be able to be reached at all times. It is the responsibility of the parent to update their child(ren)'s emergency contacts throughout the year. Please inform the school office of any changes as well via email or phone call to the front office.

Illness

If your child will be absent from school, the school office and homeroom teacher are to be notified via e-mail before 8:00AM of that day. **Fever will be considered any temperature over 99.8 degrees Fahrenheit (F).** All students need to be fever free (back to 98.6°F), without medication, as well as vomit free for 24-hours prior to returning to school. If your child has any type of disease or rash, please notify the school immediately. Following an incident of such disease or rash, students will need a release from their physician for re-admission to school. (For example: measles, mumps, chicken pox, etc.). The school health room is not set up to care for sick children. Children who are too ill to attend class will be sent home.

Food Allergies

It is the responsibility of the parent to provide appropriate treats for their child with allergies in order to celebrate birthdays and/or special events. The teacher will do his/her best to inform you of an upcoming special event or birthdays, however, providing acceptable snacks that can be stored in the classroom will ensure that your child will be included in celebrations.

Prescription Medication

Prescription medication must be left in the front office and will be dispensed by office staff. Medication cannot be kept in the classroom or distributed by a teacher. A signed Medication Permission form, available from the school office, must be on file in the school office for all medication distributed to students. Medication that must be carried around by a student, such as an inhaler or Epi-Pens requires a separate diocesan form completed by parent and physician to be given to the office.

Prescription Medication may be given by office personnel only if the following requirements are met:

- Medication must be clearly identified with the name and type of medication.
- Medication must be in its original container sent from home.
- Medication must carry a current prescription label with the child's name, drug identity, dosage instructions, doctor's name, and prescription date.

Over-the-Counter Medication

Over-the-counter medication is not to be sent to school without a doctor's note and the Administration of Medication Permission form. The doctor's note must specify the dates medication is needed. Leftover medication will be sent home after two weeks.

There should be no medication in a child's possession at school. If your child needs some sort of pain reliever, sinus medication, allergy medication, etc., they must follow the previously stated policy. If a student is found to have medication in their possession, they will receive consequences for breaking school rules.

Epinephrine Auto-Injector Pens

A student who has experienced or is at risk for life-threatening allergic reactions may carry an epinephrine auto-injector and self-administer epinephrine by auto-injector while in school, participating in school sponsored activities, or in transit to or from school or school-sponsored activities if the school has been provided with parental and physician authorization as designated under Florida statutes.

Emergency Epinephrine Use (effective August 2015)

The following Policy for Administering an Injection of Epinephrine otherwise known as the "Epinephrine Auto-Injector" for Adults and Students has been approved by the Diocese of St. Augustine in accordance with Florida statutes: All medical and trained school personnel (including, but not limited to, any Registered Nurse) employed by or acting on behalf of the school system may administer epinephrine via an undesignated epinephrine auto-injector to an individual using professional judgment if an individual is experiencing a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction, such as anaphylaxis during the school day, including before and after-care school programs. Upon administering epinephrine, call 911. This policy does not extend to off-campus activities (including transportation to and from school, field trips, etc.) or outside of the academic day (athletic or extra-curricular activities, etc.).

Lice

Upon determining that a student has a case of head lice, he/she will immediately be sent home. To be readmitted to school, the student is to be rechecked in the school office and determined to be lice and nit free. SHCS adheres to the diocesan "no-nit" policy. School-wide lice checks will not occur, unless it is determined there is a widespread outbreak. In the case of a widespread outbreak, families of affected classrooms will be notified and a check of every student in each classroom will be facilitated.

Lunch Time

Students who remain after 11AM will have lunch in PK building. Students must bring a healthy lunch in a lunchbox labeled with their name. NO COOKIES OR CANDY! Please pack food that your child will eat that do not need to be warmed up. They should not be

overpacked. Please keep in mind that we DO NOT HEAT ANY FOOD ITEMS. VPK eats lunch in our cafeteria, and Pre-K 3 eats lunch in their classroom.

Nap/Rest Time

For the purpose of Early Childhood, the definition of a nap is “a brief period of rest during daylight hours”. Therefore, each child who is enrolled in an Early Childhood program for more than 4 hours per day must be provided an area in which he or she can rest quietly. We follow this guideline, in that a rest time is provided for all children who attend an all-day program, (until 2:45PM). It will immediately follow the lunch and recess periods. Nap/Rest will be ~45 minutes in mid-extended.

Each child is provided with a cot to sleep on for rest time. They will be kept in the classroom and cleaned daily by the staff. Families will need to provide a small blanket or towel to lie on during rest time. Blankets must be small enough to fit in a backpack, as they are sent home on Friday’s to be cleaned. Pillow Pets and pillows are NOT permitted in school.

Personal Belongings

All personal belongings not necessary for school are not permitted in class. For example, but not limited to, watches, toys from home, or electronics from home. Please see the dress code policy regarding hair accessories, nail polish, and jewelry. Show and Tell days provide an opportunity for children to bring in a special item that can fit in their backpack.

Religious Exemption

Sacred Heart Catholic School, Little Heart’s Program, is a child care facility operating under an exemption pursuant to the laws of the State of Florida and is not subject to licensure or regulation by the Department of Children and Families. (SB1690, s. 402.316)

Snack Policy

PK3 students at Sacred Heart Catholic School are allowed a snack break at a time that is determined by the teacher, which is convenient for maintaining the momentum of instruction. Parents are responsible for supplying a nutritious snack, which includes a water bottle. Water must be in a reusable container or thermos. If candy or soda is sent in for a snack, the child will not be allowed to consume it. The teacher will supply an alternate snack for that day and notify the parent.

Student Orientation

Prior to the start of school, parents and children are given the opportunity to get acquainted with each other at Student Orientation and Meet Your Teacher Day. The date and time for this can be found on the school's website calendar.

Required Signatures

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten/PK3 Handbook 2026-2027 Acknowledgment & Signature

Parent-Student Handbook Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and reviewed the VPK/PK3 Handbook, including the school's discipline policy. I understand the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the handbook and agree to support and uphold them as a condition of my child's enrollment at the school.

Legal Guardian Signature

Student Name and Homeroom

Legal Guardian Printed Name

Student Name and Homeroom

Date

Student Name and Homeroom

Sacred Heart Catholic School Attendance Policy

Attendance Policy Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the attendance policy for Sacred Heart Catholic School's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) Program. I understand the requirements and expectations outlined in the policy and agree to abide by its terms and conditions.

Legal Guardian Signature

Student Name and Homeroom

Legal Guardian Printed Name

Student Name and Homeroom

Date

Student Name and Homeroom

Diocese of St. Augustine Child Photography Release

Without compensation, I hereby grant permission to the Catholic Diocese of Saint Augustine to use and reproduce photographs of my child. These photographs may be used for news and editorial purposes in publications, electronic reproductions (websites), and/or brochures. In addition, I grant my permission to alter the same photos without restriction and to copyright the same. I hereby release the photographer, the journalists, and the publications or media outlets they represent, as well as the Catholic Diocese of Saint Augustine from all claims and liability relating to said photographs.

Legal Guardian Signature

Student Name and Homeroom

Legal Guardian Printed Name

Student Name and Homeroom

Date

Student Name and Homeroom

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____