

Saint John Catholic Montessori School

Parent Handbook



Saint John Catholic Montessori School
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Mission Statement

Saint John Catholic Montessori School, in partnership with family and the church, will inspire a lifelong love for learning in a safe, creative and Christian environment. We will provide high-quality learning conditions that nurture the whole child in all areas: social, emotional, intellectual, physical, creative and spiritual. The Montessori Method is a unique philosophy for the education of young children. Dr. Maria Montessori taught that placing children in a stimulating environment will encourage learning.

Introduction to the Montessori Method

What Is Montessori?

A Montessori school embodies the educational principles established by Dr. Maria Montessori and characterized by an emphasis on independence, freedom within limits, and respect for a child's natural psychological, physical, and social development.

In a Montessori setting, interactive learning occurs in an environment carefully prepared by an educator trained to work with children of that age group.

In a non-graded class of mixed ages, the children spontaneously and independently use materials designed by Dr. Montessori. They are guided to choose their own activities and develop practical and intellectual abilities through individual discovery and exploration of language, mathematics, geography, geometry, art and music.

The highly social atmosphere of this environment stems from a unique combination of freedom and structure, founded on respect. A Montessori education aids the fullest development of a child's potential and provides each child with the foundation for a life of joyful learning.

Who is Maria Montessori?

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was an Italian physician who was dedicated to the study of children. She discovered that the characteristics at each stage of development are unique, and that the foundation of the whole personality is laid during the early years of life. This discovery is now universally accepted. Maria Montessori referred to the child in the first six years of life as the "Absorbent Mind." It is this stage of development that is most critical and formative.

The Montessori Experience in the Classroom

As you observe the Montessori Method, you'll quickly notice how different it is from the traditional elementary school setting. You won't find the typical rows of chairs filled with students attentively listening to the teacher trying hard to absorb the knowledge. Instead, you'll find the teacher preparing the classroom environment in order that the children can actively discover knowledge. Once this has been

accomplished, the teacher is prepared to link the child to the environment as a participant.

The ultimate goal of the teacher is to be a guide for the children. The younger the child at each level however, the more active the teacher in terms of demonstrating the use of materials as well as explaining activities based on the assessment of the child's needs. As the child becomes more active in participating, the teacher can now become more of an observer but ready to step in when something new needs to be introduced.

Knowing when to observe and when to "step in" is something the Montessori teacher is trained to know. Through this training the teacher knows when it's time to allow the child to move on to a more difficult task or when the child might need assistance.

In the Montessori classroom, a class of mixed age composition works in a prepared environment containing specially designed materials that allow children to assess their own progress. The emphasis is on learning by doing, going from the concrete to the abstract. Children work on projects alone or in cooperative groups, proceeding at a comfortable pace.

Admission Requirements and Procedures

Non-Discrimination Statement

Saint John Catholic Montessori School admits students regardless of gender, race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students. It does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, national or ethnic origin or disability in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, or school administered programs. We welcome children and families to experience our faith with us.

Smoke and Drug Free Campus

Saint John Catholic Montessori School is a smoke and drug free environment.

Admission Requirements

- Your child must be 3 years old on or before September first of the school year in order to register at the school. Your child cannot start school until they turn 3 years old.
- If your child turns 3 years old after September first of the school year, you may request an interview if space is available for your child. The interview will help determine if your child is ready for the Montessori Environment.
- Your child must be ***completely*** self-sufficient using the bathroom (pull up pants, wipe, do buttons, etc.) and able to change his/her own clothes.

Admission Procedures

1. Tour of the school/ Meet the Teacher
During the tour please have your children stay with you and not touch the Montessori equipment in the classroom. All our equipment has a specific purpose and specific method in which it should be introduced. It is important that the teacher is able to introduce all the materials to the students so that they know how to use it the correct way from the beginning. This will happen during the phasing in process at the beginning of the school year.
2. Interview (if applicable- see *admission requirements* above)
Set a time up with the Director and Teachers to meet with you and your child to assess if they are ready for the Montessori Environment if they do not meet the age requirement.
3. Registration Form and non-refundable \$75.00 fee
 - a. Registration will be open for currently enrolled students for a two week period before it will open to the public.
 - b. Registration will then be on a rolling admission, and will be based on the availability in the classrooms at that time. If there is no availability students can be placed on a waiting list.
4. Phase-in Process (see below for specific information about this process)
5. Alabama Blue Card and a copy of the student's birth certificate
 - a. On or before the first day of school the child must have on record an Alabama Blue Card and a copy of his or her birth certificate in order to be in the classroom.

Phasing in Process

During the phasing in process, which includes the first 6 weeks of school, each child will be gradually introduced to the classroom environment. New students will be shown where the bathroom is, where to hang coats, and learn about the general classroom procedures and ground rules. Each student also will be making new friends and getting to know the teacher. It is possible, therefore, that during these first weeks of adjustment the student may temporarily regress in certain areas. This is normal behavior. They may need to come in only a few hours each day to fully grasp the Montessori Method and be successful in the classroom. The decision will be made at the discretion of the teachers and director to be in the best interest of the child. Please note the Phase in Process also applies to children starting mid-year, and may be more necessary since the class already has their routine and expectations set.

As the school situation becomes more familiar to the child and as she/he becomes more involved with the environment, a cycle of activity will emerge; this may be observed not only during a day's time span but also over a period of a year. During this time her / his emotional, social, physical and intellectual development will most likely progress in spurts rather than in a continuous linear pattern. Given this, we try to view the total child from a broad, long-term perspective.

Goals of Phasing in

We have prepared this list of goals for the first few weeks of school to allow you to see what our expectations are for your children as they learn to work and play together. Your insights into your child's background and patterns of behavior can help us work cooperatively to reinforce these basic goals so your child can move forward during the year and have a happy and enriching experience.

After the first five or six weeks of school, we expect each child to be able to:

Understand the classroom rules of safety and respect:

- ❖ walking, rather than running, in the classroom
- ❖ using a quiet speaking voice
- ❖ speaking and acting kindly to others-no hurting by name calling or in any physical way

Choose work, follow through, and return work to its original place ready for the next person. This helps develop focus, concentration, and coordination necessary for the child to move ahead with more advanced activities and feel a growing sense of inner order and peace.

Respect the work of others by not interrupting, and by assisting only when invited.

Respect the rights of others to be able to listen and participate in group activities by sitting quietly and taking turns when responding to questions or participating in games.

Cooperate with the teachers by being able to listen and follow simple directions such as, "Please come to circle" or "It's time to change our shoes to go outside."

Respect, manners and cooperation are needed to function well socially in the group situation of the classroom and later in society.

Tuition/ Financial Obligations

A contract for payment of tuition and fees is required as part of the registration process. Saint John Catholic Montessori School offers a variety of payment programs. Please speak with the director if you have questions or concerns. Registration and tuition fees are nonrefundable.

Make sure your child's name is noted on the check. Late Fee of \$25.00 will be charged for all payments received after the 17th of the month. Non-sufficient funds (NSF) checks will incur an administrative fee of \$30.00 plus the application of the standard

late fee of \$25.00. Absences will not have any effect on monthly payments.

A supply fee of \$100 can be paid in full or paid monthly with your tuition.

A snack fee of \$250 can be paid in full or paid monthly with your tuition.

Please see your tuition contract for specific payment details.

Withdrawal

In case of withdrawal, the director should be notified immediately. A letter of withdrawal should be submitted two weeks in advance, and include date of withdrawal and parent's signature. Tuition paid is non-refundable, with the exception of a military family with orders to move. Please provide a copy of your orders so we can get you a prorated refund.

Arrivals and Departures

Times

Doors will be open at 8am for drop-off. Please have your child in the classroom no later than 8:15 am.

Please take your child to the restroom before bringing him/her to class to reduce disruption early on in the morning.

Doors will be locked at *8:15 am*. If any student arrives between 8:15-9:00 am the parent/guardian will need to ring the doorbell to have a teacher come sign-in your child and escort your child into the classroom. Since the school day has started, teachers may not be able to come to the door right away so please be patient. Unless previous arrangements have been made, please do not bring your child in past 9:00am. It can be disruptive to the classroom activities already in progress. Late arrival hampers a child's ability to establish a constructive cycle of activity and interrupts the flow of the classroom. We are working very hard to instill consistency, as well as respect for your child's self and others in our school. Please keep this in mind when planning your morning routine.

School Ends at 12 p.m. (noon).

Parents should be prompt in picking up their children. It can be very upsetting to students when a parent is late. Children are also learning early lessons in respect for others and the value of punctuality. We do understand, however, that unforeseen circumstances can arise. Please call the director at 347-0413 as soon as possible to alert us to a problem so we can ensure that your child is cared for and in a safe environment. Late pick up fees will be assessed starting at 12:10pm and will be \$1.00

per minute after this time.

Drop off/ Pick up procedures

During drop off, please park your car and escort your child into the building. The parent/guardian must sign child into the classroom. While signing in the child please let them start to independently walk into the school (not being carried), take off their jacket, hang up jacket and bag, and carry snack into the room. This will help them with a life skill that we also promote in the classroom.

During pick up, you must sign out your child. Your child will only be released to individuals listed on the form, and a note (email or handwritten) by the parent/guardian must be given to the teacher and director no later than when the student arrives that morning. Once a child is signed out they need to be in the custody of the parent/guardian.

Goodbyes

Children go through various adjustments in separating from their parents so we recommend that you say good-bye with confidence and leave promptly. We discourage long good-byes because they often make children insecure about staying and delay the start of our day.

Transportation

The school does not engage in the transportation of any child.

Attendance

Saint John Catholic Montessori School asks parents to call the school office to notify us if a student will not be attending. In particular, we need to know of any contagious disease so that we can send out a health notice.

Emergency Closing

In the event of inclement weather, we will follow the Enterprise City School System. If they close or have a delayed school day opening, we will as well. If we close early due to inclement weather, we will notify you.

Crisis Management Plan

The Crisis Management Plan is located in the director's office. Maps of emergency routes are posted in the classrooms, bathroom and the hallway. In the event of an emergency, the children will be taken to a safe location and parents will be notified immediately.

Communication between Home and School

Changes in home situations

Changes in a child's home life may affect his/her behavior and performance at school. Please inform your child's teacher by note or personal conversation (when they are not teaching) if there is a change in the home situation, such as:

1. Deployment
2. Extended vacations or business trips by a family member
3. Child staying somewhere other than home for more than a day or two
4. Loss of a family member or pet
5. Moving
6. Change in family environment (separation, divorce, new baby)

Student records

All student academic records and personal files are secured in the director's office. Parents are free to review their child's student records and files with teachers and/or the director upon request. All records will be released to parents/guardians, or to an appropriate follow-on school, at time of a student's withdrawal, with written notice to the school's director.

Newsletters

A newsletter of events and relevant information for the school will be sent out monthly. Please review each month as there is important information within the newsletter.

Parent- Teacher Conferences/Communication

While not mandatory, formal conferences will be held in the fall and spring (see specific dates on school calendar).

If you manage to catch your child's teacher when she is available for a few moments of face-to-face conversation, please show your child the respect that he/she deserves by refraining from talking about your child in his/her presence. Remember too that the teacher may have obligations that prevent her from spending more than a moment with you, and if necessary you may request to schedule a conference with your child's teacher.

Teachers will not be able to respond during the school day since they will be working with your child in the classroom. Please allow 24 hours for teachers to respond to your inquiry.

Friday Folders

Each Friday your child will be given a folder to take home with work from the week prior and important information from the SJCMS staff. Please make sure to check the folder, empty it out and return it on Monday so we can prepare it for the next week.

Montessori has different materials and methods for learning, which sometimes doesn't demand a lot of worksheets, so if your child does not have a lot of completed work in his/her folder, do not be concerned. You can always speak to your child's teacher about their classroom behavior and growth when needed.

Photo/Video Release

Students will be photographed and may be videotaped during school events throughout the year. These photographs may be used in publications, advertising, brochures, slideshows, school marketing videos, the newsletter, our Facebook page and on the website. A Photo/Videotape/Media Release Form is a part of the registration package to have on hand at the school. Please fill out and return to the school.

Grievances

If you have concerns regarding your child or the administration of the program, we welcome your input. Please first speak to your child's teacher. If you remain concerned, please contact the director. If further resolution is required, please contact the pastor.

Parent Involvement

Volunteering

Montessori schools are built on the spirit of community and volunteerism. We ask parents and families to support the school and the children by lending their skills and talents. We recognize that every family brings different strengths, talents and resources, we ask you to work with us to identify your best gifts. The school will provide you with continuous opportunities that can be done either at the school or at home, and your ideas are welcome. This is your child's school and your child will directly benefit from the effort you contribute.

Child Abuse Prevention Program training

Child Abuse Prevention Program (CAPP) training is required before working in the school or around the children during school hours. Please talk to the director to find out when/how to get your CAPP training.

Fundraising

Our school's annual expenses are covered by tuition and fees, but the purchase of classroom materials and capital improvements to the classrooms and playgrounds require additional funding. There will be multiple opportunities to volunteer your time and abilities to some of our annual fundraisers. We also have fundraisers that happen year round (such as using your keychain card at Publix) that are easy to add to your normal routine. Please ask your child's teacher, director, or parent representative about any of these wonderful opportunities to help the school.

Field trips

We will have some field trips that will be scheduled throughout the year. Attendance is not mandatory, but we hope you will participate. The school will be closed on those days. Children must be transported and accompanied by a parent/guardian. There may be a small cost associated with some of our trips.

Birthdays

Each birthday is observed with a “Celebration of Life” ceremony. A few weeks before your child’s birthday you will need to get a Celebration of Life form from your child’s teacher. If your child’s birthday falls during the summer months we can celebrate it on their half birthday if you wish.

The Celebration of Life ceremony will take place at 11:15 a.m. in the classroom. Your family is invited to come to the ceremony and read the story of your child’s life, or it can be read by the teacher. Parents are encouraged to donate a book or classroom supply in honor of your child. If you would like, you may bring a special treat for the class to enjoy at home that is already in a bag/container for each child to take. All food items must be store bought.

In consideration of the child’s feelings, if invitations are distributed at school, all children in the class must be invited to the party. Please do not expect teachers to hand out invitations for a child’s party.

Nutrition/Snacks

The school will provide a morning snack and water to the children as part of the Montessori curriculum, known as “Food Preparation.” In addition to snack preparation skills (measurement, weight, temperature, sizes, shapes, color, washing and drying), these healthy snacks will allow the children to explore and practice healthy eating and table manners.

Discipline Policy

The Montessori philosophy for social and intellectual development is centered on respect; for oneself, others and the environment. In order to develop the child’s God-given gifts and talents to the fullest, the child is encouraged to cultivate a natural capacity for self-control. In addition, children are encouraged to interact with others in a Christian manner as “brothers and sisters in Christ.”

The Teacher will:

1. Provide a structured Montessori environment in which a child feels secure and confident to choose his/her work
2. Set behavioral expectations through classroom instruction, and role modeling
3. Redirect a child and use conflict resolution techniques
4. Work one-on-one with children who need additional guidance.

The behavior expectations we have for our children are:

1. Respect for self, others and our environment
 - a. Treat all classroom materials with care
 - b. Return all things to their proper place
 - c. Keep the school environment clean and orderly
2. Demonstrate responsibility, respect, and self-restraint
 - a. When in the classroom, be “engaged” in an activity or job at all times
 - b. Work quietly in the classroom
 - c. Use ‘walking feet’ at all times except when on the playground
 - d. Walk quietly around the classroom and hall

For the safety and well-being of all individuals in the school environment, the following are unacceptable behaviors:

1. Talking back and arguing
2. Intentionally disrupting the learning environment
3. Misuse of Montessori materials or playground equipment
4. Intentionally not following directions
5. Encouraging others to misbehave
6. Disrupting or impeding the work of others
7. Showing rudeness or disrespect to others

If a child exhibits unacceptable behavior, the following disciplinary actions will be taken, according to the severity of the misbehaviors.

1. Redirection/ “Gluing”
 - a. The teacher keeps a child close to her before inviting the child to find an appropriate activity. Gluing is not punitive. It gives the child time to refocus and observe others working in the Montessori classroom. It is a way to re-center and calm them so that they may work effectively in the classroom.
2. Separation from class
 - a. The child will be taken outside the immediate environment, supervised by an adult, to be given the opportunity to calm down and discuss the behavioral issue.
3. Incident report/ talk with parent
 - a. First incident – written notification from teacher
 - b. Second incident – written notification from teacher and conference
 - c. Third incident – evaluation of benefits of program for the child with the director
4. Remove from classroom specific length of time
 - a. A parent/guardian will be called to pick-up their child from the school for a specific length of time and conditions will be set for the child’s re-admittance.

- b. In cases where the family and school have worked diligently together to come to a resolution, but the problem persists, or it appears that the child continues to be disruptive to the school's working environment and detracting from other children's ability to learn, it may be necessary to ask that the family to withdraw the child from the school.

The director reserves the right to waive and/or deviate from any and all disciplinary regulations for just cause at his or her discretion.

Medical/Health

1. Illness

When a child has a contagious illness, or will be absent from school, please notify the school. An ill child must not attend if one or more of the following exist:

- a. The illness prevents the child from comfortably participating in school activities.
- b. The illness results in a greater need for care than staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children.
- c. A child with any of the following symptoms will be isolated and the parents guardians notified and asked to remove the child from the school as soon as possible
 - i. Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit
 - ii. Diarrhea
 - iii. Vomiting
 - iv. Nausea
 - v. Severe cough
 - vi. Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes
 - vii. Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, excessive itching, or pus-filled
 - viii. Stiff neck and headache with one or more of the symptoms listed
 - ix. Difficulty breathing or wheezing, sore throat
 - x. Thick green or yellow mucus with one or more of the symptoms listed
 - xi. Complaints of severe pain
 - xii. Unusual tired appearance
- d. Communicable diseases
 - i. Chicken pox
 - ii. Pink eye
 - iii. Fifth disease

- iv. Whooping cough
- e. **24 Hour Symptom free rule**
 - i. Your child must be **free of symptoms of illness: fever, diarrhea, or vomiting for at least 24 hours**. Fever-free means without medication for fever reduction. Please keep in mind that if we send your child home because of illness, **the child will not be readmitted the next day because the 24 hour period will not have elapsed**. Do not rush a child's return to the school following illness. We reserve the right to require a doctor's statement before the child can be readmitted.

2. Medication

Medication will not be administered during school hours by any employee.

3. Hygiene

One of the most serious challenges facing group care situations for young children is preventing illness. Every effort is made to prevent the spread of germs. We strive to maintain the highest standards of cleanliness, which includes daily sanitizing of materials and surfaces, frequent hand washing/sanitizing for children and teachers, and instruction in hygiene to help minimize the spread of germs. This instruction should include how to blow and wipe your nose correctly in a tissue, cover mouth when you sneeze or cough, not touching private areas or picking noses, etc. This instruction should be coming from both parents and teachers.

4. Injuries/Accidents

We are not authorized to give out medicine to any of our students. If a child has a minor injury that requires a Band-Aid or ice we will provide it for them. When doing so you will get a written incident report of the accident and what was done to remedy it. If your child needs care above and beyond what we can provide we will call the parent or emergency contact.

Health Emergencies

The teachers are trained in First Aid and CPR. Emergency contact information should be on file and should be current. Periodic updates will be requested throughout the year for both emergency contact information and health information. First aid will be administered as needed. Parents will be called when necessary and an accident reports will be completed.

Clothing/Personal Items

Clothing

Children in our classes are focused on the active pursuit of functional independence and the mastery of movement. From very early on, part of each child's work is to dress and undress them self. In order to help them be successful and allow them to meet this need, we, the adults, need to provide them with clothes that are manageable.

Here are some guidelines that minimize children's frustration when trying to master the skill of dressing themselves and to keep them comfortable throughout the day.

- Elastic waistbands, loose enough for children to pull up and down easily. When children are first learning to use the toilet, snaps and buttons can be overwhelming.
- Clothing that moves with the child and is not restrictive
- Clothing that fits properly – baggy, saggy sleeves sweep materials out of place, and sleeves that are too long can interfere with finger dexterity
- Please keep in mind that children will engage in a variety of activity throughout the day and may get dirty. If you want to ensure that a particular outfit stays free of dirt, paint or anything else your child might encounter while at school, please reserve that outfit for wearing outside of school.
- Children should be sent to school with appropriate layers for working indoors and outdoors each day.

Change of clothes

We ask each parent to send in a complete change of clothes for your child (underwear and socks too!) labeled in a gallon size zip-lock bag. In case of accidents, wet clothing will be sent home in the bag. Remember, as the seasons change, the spare clothing will need to reflect current weather conditions.

Personal Belongings

Of the Child: Toys, books, jewelry, stuffed animals and blankets should remain at home. Please assure your child and he/she will have special work to do at school. Please do not allow children to bring candy, gum or cough drops. These are a choking hazard. Other items that may distract the student during the school day include jewelry, hats (not for cold weather), etc. We are not responsible for items lost or stolen.

Of the School: Small items, such as cylinders, beads, and cubes may look insignificant but are often vital to a piece of classroom equipment. Sometimes they are inadvertently taken home. Please ensure that they are returned to school so that others may learn with them.

Child Abuse

Alabama law mandates that any day care employee or school teacher must report by telephone or direct communication any known or suspected child abuse or neglect. See Code of Alabama, Title 26 Chapter 14.

Under Alabama law, child abuse is: "harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare which can occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury; sexual

abuse or attempted sexual abuse; sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation.”

Under Alabama law, neglect is “negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, medical treatment, clothing, or shelter: provided, however, that a parent or guardian legitimately practicing his religious beliefs who thereby does not provide specified medical treatment for a child, for that reason alone shall not be considered a negligent parent or guardian; however, such an exception shall not preclude a court from ordering that medical services be provided to the child where his health requires it.”

If any employee of Saint John Catholic Montessori School suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, he or she must make a report to the police or to the Department of Human Resources by telephone or in person. This will be followed by a written report furnished by the Department of Human Resources.

Handbook Statement

While intended to be as complete and helpful as possible, no handbook can address all of the issues that may be encountered in a school year. The judgment of the administration will be used to decide issues not covered by this handbook. The administration of Saint John Catholic Montessori School reserves to itself the right to interpret, amend, or change the contents of this handbook at any time. Students, parents and guardians will be informed of any changes to this handbook.

Receipt & Acknowledgement of the Parent Handbook

This statement is to acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Saint John Catholic Montessori School's *Parent Handbook*. I understand that it provides guidelines and summary information concerning the policies and procedures of this school.

I acknowledge that I have read this handbook.

I acknowledge that I will comply and cooperate with all policies and procedures and will instruct my child in all manner of these procedures and policies.

Parent's Name (printed)

Date

Parent's Signature

Date