**Saint Mark**

**Early Learning Center**

Parent Handbook

2023-2024

Revised 06/26/23

Subject to change

Dear Family,

 Welcome to Saint Mark Early Learning Center, a ministry of Saint Mark United Methodist Church. Choosing a childcare center for your child is one of the most important decisions that you will make. We are glad you have decided to entrust your child to us.

 The ELC provides care in a safe, warm, and nurturing environment that will enable your child to grow and develop through developmentally appropriate activities. We strive to create a place for social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth for your child.

 Adjusting to a childcare setting is a big change for your child and for you. The period of adjustment will vary depending on your child’s age and prior experiences. Our administrators and teachers will work with you to make this transition as smooth as possible. They are available to answer any questions and to make suggestions to ease the transition for your family.

 Your suggestions and feedback are important to us. Please feel free to share your thoughts and ideas with us. We look forward to getting to know you better and to making your time at Saint Mark ELC a pleasant experience.

Sincerely,

Traci Bailey

Director

**Saint Mark United Methodist Church**

**Early Learning Center Administration**

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**Mission Statement**

At Saint Mark Early Learning Center, we consider it a privilege to guide your child as they grow and develop through the most important formative years of their lives.

 \* We are dedicated to assisting families in all areas of their child’s education: spiritual, mental, physical, social, and emotional.

 \* To facilitate the understanding that all people are special to God.

 \* To provide a loving and developmentally appropriate environment.

**Philosophy**

 The ELC at Saint Mark United Methodist Church is an extension of the ministry to the children and families of this church and an outreach to the children and families of the community. As part of the unified church ministry, we can achieve a level of success that would not otherwise be possible.

 Children are a gift from God. We are given the privilege of guiding them as they grow through the most important formative years of their lives. We are dedicated to assisting families in all areas of their child’s education: spiritual, mental, physical, social, and emotional. Emphasis is placed on the whole child and our goal is to provide experiences that will help the child develop to his/her full potential as an individual.

**Enrollment:**

**Hours of Operations:**

Saint Mark ELC is open Monday – Friday from 7:00am - 4:30pm

 Mother’s Day Out is 9:00am-1:00pm

 Before Care is 7:00am – 9:00am

 After Care is 1:00pm – 4:30pm

**Admission/Registration:**

Tuition is due on the 1st of each month and will be considered late on the 5th of the month. A late fee of $50 will be added to your account if tuition is not paid by the 5th of the month. All tuition and fees are payable online only.

 August tuition and first semester supply fee are due on July 1st. Failure to pay by July 1st will result in loss of child’s enrollment.

 There is a credit card usage fee each month you choose to use your credit card. The credit care company sets these fees not Saint Mark ELC. To avoid paying extra fees we suggest using the free ACH echeck method of payment.

 Saint Mark ELC welcomes all children and does not discriminate against any child based on race, color, creed, religion, or special need. The placement of a child is based on his/her age as of September 2nd of the school year.

 3K – 4K children will remain in the same class throughout the school year for which they are registered. They do not move up during the school year.

 Infants, Wobblers, Toddlers and 2K may change classes during the school year depending on developmental progress, class size and/or at the discretion of the Director. Parents will be notified prior to moving a child.

**Required Forms:**

Registration Form (prior to enrollment)

 Enrollment form – both sides

 Parent Signature Form

 Parent Agreement/Release

 Flu Information Sheet

 Alabama Immunization Form – this form can be downloaded on the Sandbox portal.

**Fees and Tuition:**

We are a self-supporting, nonprofit organization and all fees are used to provide the best teachers, equipment and supplies possible. We do not receive funding from any outside source. All Fees and Tuition are nonrefundable.

 Fees:

 Registration Fee - $175 Due upon registration

 Waitlist Fee - $175 Due upon waitlist registration

 Supply Fee Semester 1 - $225 Due July 1

 Supply Fee Semester 2 - $225 Due January 1

 Late Tuition/Fees - $50 Due upon receipt

 Drop-in Day (7:00-4:20) - $75 Request in advance for approval.

 Drop-in Day (9:00-1:00) - $50 Request in advance for approval.

 Drop in B/C or A/C - $25 Request in advance for approval.

**Tuition**:

**Infants/Toddlers**:

Full Care (7:00-4:30) \*Mother’s Day Out (9:00-1:00)

$950 – 5 days $750 – 5 days

$700 – 3 days $600 – 3 days

$550 – 2 days $425-2 days

**Two Year Olds**:

Full Care (7:00-4:30) \*Mother’s Day Out (9:00-1:00)

$850 – 5 days $650 – 5 days

$650– 3 days $400– 3 days

$550 – 2 days $300-2 days

**Three-and Four-Year Olds**:

Full Care (7:00-4:30) \*Mother’s Day Out (9:00-1:00)

$600 – 5 days $400 – 5 days

$500– 3 days $325– 3 days

Monthly Mother’s Day Out – Before Care $100, Aftercare $125.

**Supplies:**

 All supplies are covered in the supply fee, except for diapers, nap mats, backpacks, lunches, and water bottles.

**Closures:**

If we must be closed for random inclement weather, medical reasons, facility reasons or any other unscheduled or scheduled days there will be NO CHANGE IN TUITION AND DAYS WILL NOT BE MADE UP. For example: we must be closed on a Monday and that is your regularly scheduled day so you cannot send your child on Tuesday to make up that day.

 If for any reason any federal, state, or local entities require the closure of Saint Mark, parents will be informed of the protocol of charges and payments due to closure. One set policy cannot be made for every scenario that could or might occur. In all things we try to be fair and equitable in all situations to our families and staff.

**Program:**

**Curriculum:**

Our goal is to provide young children with a program that is developmentally appropriate. Children learn best through exploration at their own pace. The program is designed to meet their cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs through a balance of structure and discovery. Children need opportunities to explore their environment and to be guided by teachers who understand child development.

 Along with letter and number recognition, literacy, colors, and shapes, our program also considers mealtime, outside time, and rest time as parts of the curriculum. Opportunities for learning happen when children interact with each other, use their imaginations, complete a task, follow directions, and use good manners. Learning happens all day, every day in many ways. We want the children to be fully engaged in their world by asking questions and sharing their thoughts and ideas in a safe nurturing environment.

 Our goal is to give children a foundation that will create a love of learning, not only while they are at the ELC, but throughout their entire life.

 Saint Mark incorporates a balance of planned activities designed to help children progress toward meeting developmentally appropriate goals. As well as improvised activities that emerge from the children’s interest or from unexpected experiences. Throughout the day, our teachers observe and document the children’s learning to create plans that will continue to meet each individual child’s needs and encourage them to explore and meet new goals. Our goal is to give children a foundation that will foster a love of God and learning.

**Assessment:**

All children are assessed through observations of peer interactions and play, developmental checklist, and portfolios of their work. Areas of assessment include socio-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, math, science, technology, social studies, creative expression, and health and safety. This information is shared during parent/teacher’s conferences. This process encourages parents and teachers to develop a plan that will best meet the needs of the child. It will be sensitive to the family’s values, culture, identity, and home language.

 If, through the above-mentioned process, teachers suspect a developmental delay or other special need, the teacher will communicate the concern to the Director. The Director will observe the child, document the findings, and meet with the teachers to discuss the concern. A meeting will then be scheduled with the family to share the concern in an honest and supportive manner. The ELC will suggest future steps and assist the family by providing information and resources for further assessments. If we feel that we do not have the best environment for the child’s learning, we will work with the family in providing resources and information of other centers in our area that will best fit the needs of the child.

**Discipline Policy:**

 Child guidance has an important place in the program at Saint Mark. Parents and teachers will work together to be consistent and effective in training children to make appropriate choices in a classroom setting. We have developed a formula that is appropriate in

shaping and encouraging responsible behavior. First, we will communicate to the child by name and about the choice they made and try to redirect their focus. Secondly, a hand on the shoulder is a gentle reminder of choices. If needed, time out will be either in the class or if the behavior has warranted the child may be in time out in the office. If needed the parents will be called for a conference.

**Confidentiality:**

All children’s records are available to the parents or legal guardian, teachers, administration, and regulatory agencies (Department of Health, Department of Human Resources). Additional access may be given with written parent/guardian permission. Records are kept in a cabinet in the Director’s office.

**Firearms Policy:**

No firearms are allowed on the campus of Saint Mark unless you are a member of the police department.

**Parent/Staff Relations:**

 The role of the staff at Saint Mark ELC is to supplement the primary role of the parents in providing care for their own children. It is our goal to establish and maintain open and ongoing communication with families to ensure that we enhance the development of the children in our care. We provide a program to help give children a strong foundation to build self-esteem and to develop a love of learning.

 Parents are a child’s first teachers. Parents understand their child’s needs, interests, fears, likes, and dislikes. Teachers know what children can do at various stages of growth and development and how to help children develop at their own rate. Together, parents and teachers can provide endless opportunities for a child’s success.

**Communication:**

 Daily reports are available online through the Sandbox portal.

 Each child is to bring their full-size backpack to school each day along with their folder to carry art papers, notes, etc.

 The teachers will send home a newsletter containing specific class information for each class.

 The ELC will send home a monthly parent newsletter with information and upcoming events for the entire program.

 One of the most important forms of communication is through the Sandbox portal. You may send messages to the teachers or Director.

 If you send a message after 3:00pm it will not be answered until after 9:00am on the next school day. If you send a message on the weekends, it will not be answered until after 9:00am on Monday.

 The best way to communicate with the administration is through the parent portal. You may also call during program hours with any questions or concerns. If you leave a message after hours, it will be returned the next school day after 9:00am.

**Parent Concerns/Grievance Policy:**

 If a parent has any concerns or grievances these should first be discussed with the child’s teacher. If a parent is not satisfied with the results of their conversation with the teacher, then they should meet with the Director.

**Children’s Information:**

**Your Child’s First Day:**

Every child reacts to the first day differently. Some children can’t wait to spend time with new friends, while others are reluctant to leave their parents. The transition for the child is usually easier if the parent establishes a simple routine and leaves with a cheerful goodbye. Parents who linger for one more kiss or hug may hinder the child’s adjustment.

 While some children may become upset, the teachers will not let your child have a prolonged, unhappy experience. They will encourage your child to become involved with the routine of the classroom. If a child continues to have difficulty adjusting, they will work with the parents to develop a plan together. In most cases, children adjust quickly to the center and look forward to coming each day.

 Occasionally, a child that has an easy adjustment may suddenly announce “I don’t want to go to school”. A parents’ first assumption may be that something negative happened; usually that is not the case. The reality is that the child has come to realize that, while the center is a fun place to visit, it will be an everyday event. In time, children adjust to their new routine.

**Arrival and Departure:**

Children will be signed in/out daily on the school app. We ask that you have your cell phone ready to check in/out when you enter the carpool line.

 Everyone authorized to pick up a child must be entered in the Sandbox portal with their phone number and email address.

 Saint Mark will not release children to a person who is visibility impaired due to a suspected medical condition, alcohol consumption, substance abuse, prescription drugs or other causes. In the event the parent or legal guardian is impaired, the Director will call someone designated on the release form.

**Late Pick UP Fees:**

 The ELC is open from 7:00am until 4:30pm. A late pickup fee will be charged at the rate of $1.00 per minute. We ask respectfully that you arrive by 4:20pm. The ELC closes promptly at 4:30pm.

**Withdrawal from the ELC:**

A thirty-day written notice or payment of one month’s tuition must be received in the ELC office to withdraw a child from enrollment. The ELC reserves the right at any time to suspend or permanently expel a child from enrollment.

**Foods and Snacks:**

We ask that you try to make lunches as healthy as possible. No fast-food deliveries are allowed. The school provides midafternoon snacks and water for children that are in aftercare.

 If your child arrives prior to 7:30am you may send your child’s breakfast to school in a labeled paper bag. Breakfast ends at 7:45am.

 Jefferson County Department of Health requires that potentially hazardous foods be refrigerated until lunch. These foods will not be refrigerated after lunch. There is a refrigerator in each classroom. Also, under the direction of the Fire Marshall we are not allowed to heat food for children.

 All foods need to be cut prior to being sent to school. (Veggies, fruit, etc.) When sending a sandwich please cut it in fourths or half so they can handle it easily.

 According to the USDA food guidelines a child must have milk with lunch. We will place your child’s milk box or sippy cup of milk in the refrigerator. JCDH sample menu plans are included in the back of the handbook.

 Plan for your child’s lunch to be as convenient, neat, and easily opened by your child. Please supply all needed utensils, bowls, etc. No glass containers. Practice with your child what goes back home and what is ok to throw away. For 3K and up, we encourage them to clean up after themselves.

 Please label everything. Make sure your child’s name is clearly marked on their lunch box and each container. Saint Mark is not responsible for any lost items.

 All children should bring a labeled water bottle that your child can easily open. (No more than 7.5 inches tall) Water bottles will be refilled by teachers as needed.

 Cooking for instructional purposes is allowed and will be conducted as part of Saint Mark’s curriculum and activities.

**Allergies:**

 Parents must provide written documentation from a physician indicating food allergies and an individual care plan in the event of an allergic reaction. **Saint Mark ELC is a nut-free facility**. This includes tree nuts, peanuts, and hazelnuts. If you use a peanut butter substitute, it must be labeled otherwise it will be assumed it is peanut butter and a substitute lunch will be provided.

**Nap/Rest Time:**

 DHR requires the center to have a designated nap or rest time, the child does not have to sleep, however they are required to rest.

 Infants and Wobblers nap times are on an individual schedule to meet their needs. Unless written authorized by a physician, infants are placed on their backs to sleep. Wobbler children will be transitioned from crib to a cot after their first birthday. They will need to provide a nap mat at that time.

 Toddlers – 4K are required to provide a nap mat. Nap Mats will be sent home on Fridays to be washed. Please return on Mondays. Nap mats should have pillow and blanket attached. They may also bring a special lovey for nap time. Children are required to keep their shoes on during naps for quick exit if an emergency arises. Nap time for Toddlers – 4K children is 1:00pm – 3:15pm.

**Clothing:**

 Children should be dressed in washable, seasonable clothing that they can easily manage. Children are encouraged to learn self-help skills as much as they are able. Children must have at least one complete change of appropriate seasonable clothing that remains at the ELC for emergencies and/or accidents. This should include underwear, top, pants, and socks.

 Label all clothing, coats, and other belongings to help ensure their safe return. All children will play outside each day that weather permits, so dress them accordingly.

 Children who are walking should wear closed toe athletic shoes.

 Children are not allowed to wear jewelry, scarves, sunglasses, or other accessories. We are not responsible for children’s hair bows or personal items.

**Potty Training:**

Children in 3K and 4K must be potty trained before the start of school. They are never allowed to wear pull-ups or diapers.

 Any preschooler can regress for a short time because of life changes, emotional concerns, or physical problems. If a child that we know has been successfully potty trained begins to have accidents, we will work with the parents to help the child find success again.

 If a child must return home to potty train, monthly tuition must continue to be paid, if a parent wishes to hold a place for the child at Saint Mark while he/she is not in school.

 A child may be asked to leave Saint Mark if they are not fully potty trained. Every effort will be made on our part to ensure success.

**Diapering:**

 Disposable diapers are provided by the parents. You will be notified by the teachers when additional diapers are needed.

 If diaper cream is used, send the product in original container. A medical authorization form must be completed for use. All items must be labeled with your child’s full name. Diapers are changed a minimum of every two hours.

**Physical Activity:**

Children will have an opportunity for appropriate amounts of active play each day. Children who are here for 4 hours will have at least 30 minutes of active outdoor or gym play daily. Those who are here all day will have at least 60 minutes of active play daily.

**Hitting/Rough Play:**

 No child should ever be afraid to come to school because he/she fears another child. During the day if a child has been corrected 3 times for hitting or playing roughly, they will then be removed from class and taken to the office. After the child returns to class if the behavior continues the parents will be contacted.

**Biting:**

In the case of biting, every effort is made to ensure the safety of every child. Biting is typical for toddlers and children who are not yet verbal. When biting occurs, the following steps will be implemented:

 When a child bites they will be isolated. The bitten child will be given first aid. A report of what action was taken will be provided to the parent of the biter and to the parent of the child that was bitten. If the bite breaks the skin, the parents will be notified.

 If the biting persists, we will then have a mandatory conference with the parents and a prevention plan will be set in place. If the biting continues after this, it will be at the discretion of the Director but may result in dismissal of the child.

**Infants:**

 We will gladly work with families to coordinate feeding times according to your baby’s schedule.

 Parents supply ready to feed formula or breastmilk in sanitary non-glass bottles and/or baby food in factory sealed containers. All items must be labeled with the child’s full name and date. Bottles may not contain solid food unless the child’s physician supplies written instructions and a medical reason. Bottles will be sent home at the end of each day.

 All bottles will be refrigerated in the designated area labeled with your child’s name. All containers of food may be stored in your child’s cubby.

 Bottles will be warmed in a crock pot. Microwaves will not be used. Teachers will discard any formula or breast milk that has not been consumed after one hour. All infants will be held for bottle feedings. Bottles will never be propped. Infants will be introduced to fluids in a sippy cup at a time agreed upon by the parents and teachers.

 Each infant has their own crib for nap time. Sheets are changed weekly or when soiled. Infants will be given naps based on each infant’s individual schedule.

**Breastfeeding Policy:**

 Breastfeeding is encouraged. The ELC will accept, store, and serve breastmilk for feedings. If you would like to come nurse during the day, we will be happy to provide a quiet place away from the classroom for you and your baby.

 Breast milk must be in a ready to feed, sanitary, non-glass bottle and be labeled with the infant’s name and date. Breast milk may be stored in a refrigerator for no longer than 48 hours or for no more than 24 hours if the breast milk was previously frozen. Breast milk may be stored in appropriate bags in a freezer for no longer than three months. It is recommended that you send extra milk in case of accidental spills.

**Safety:**

The ELC follows all health and safety policies and procedures required by the Alabama Department of Human Resources and the Jefferson County Board of Health.

**Staff:**

The hiring process for staff includes background checks through the ABI and FBI, child abuse and neglect background check, and references.

 Teachers are certified in Pediatric First Aid and CPR. Teachers receive training on proper hygiene practices which include hand washing procedures, general infection control, safe food handling, and diapering and toileting procedures.

**Mandated Reporters:**

 Saint Mark ELC staff members are mandated to report any suspected child abuse or neglect as stated in the Alabama Minimum Standards for Day Cares. All staff members are trained in recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse and or neglect.

**Child Abuse/Neglect Policy:**

 If a staff member is accused of child abuse or neglect, the staff member will be removed immediately from the classroom and the parents of the child and DHR will be notified. The staff member will be placed on administrative leave while an investigation is completed. While on leave, the staff member is not to have any contact with other staff members or families.

 Upon the completion of the investigation, the staff member will be notified of the results. If the results indicate that a child was abused or neglected under the staff member’s care, the staff member will be terminated. If the results showed no wrongdoing, the staff member will return to work as scheduled. Additional training may be required.

**Staff to Child Ratio:**

Infants: 1 to 4 Wobblers: 1 to 4

 Toddlers: 1 to 6 2K: 1 to 7

 3K: 1 to 11 4K: 1 to 13

**Center Security:**

The Early Learning Center is in the Children’s building of Saint Mark United Methodist Church. Doors into the ELC require a code for access. Only the ELC staff and Church staff have the codes.

**Visitors:**

Saint Mark will allow visitors this year. Please call the office or send a message in the parent portal to make an appointment.

**Authorization for Pick Up:**

Parents must list those people that have permission to pick up their child from Saint Mark. They must be listed on the registration form along with a telephone number and email address. Any person not recognized will be asked to show their driver’s license for identification. Please notify us if someone other than parents will be picking up your child. We also need to know if anyone is not allowed to pick up your child for any reason such as the other parent. If this is the case, we must have a copy of the divorce decree or custody letter stating that they are not allowed to pick up. This must contain a judge’s signature and time stamp. Legally we cannot keep a parent from picking up a child unless we have documentation on site.

**Emergency Procedures:**

Utility Failure – Utility failure is the loss or interruption of electrical power, natural gas, water, or sewage services to the school. If power or other utilities cannot be restored in a timely manner and a level of care cannot be achieved, then the parents will be informed via Sandbox to pick up their child.

 Emergency Evacuation – If we need to evacuate Saint Mark, we will notify parents of our location via the Sandbox portal. It is your responsibility to make sure that your phone numbers and contact information stay up to date.

 Inclement Weather – In case of inclement weather, Saint Mark will make the decision to close. Parents will be notified via the Sandbox portal. Please do not call the office during inclement weather.

**Health:**

 Saint Mark ELC and Saint Mark UMC is a smoke – free environment. Smoking is never permitted on the grounds or in the building.

**Handwashing:**

Hand washing is required at the following times:

 \* Upon entering the classroom

 \* Before meals and snacks and before preparing or serving food

 \*After diapering or toileting

 \* After handling bodily fluids and discharges (wiping noses, coughing in hand, or touching any mucus, blood, or vomit.)

 \* Before or after feeding a child

**Medical Record/Immunizations:**

 The Alabama Department of Health requires that all enrolled children have an up-to-date record of immunization on file at the ELC. The Health Department monitors and has the discretion to send children home if they are attending with an expired immunization form. The ELC will monitor expiration dates of immunizations and will remind parents to have children receive necessary boosters.

**Child Illness Policy:**

 The ELC follows the policies of Alabama DHR and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

 The policies set forth may differ from those of your pediatrician. Our goal is to apply the policies fairly and uniformly to keep our children healthy. We encourage families to have alternate arrangements in place if your child becomes ill and cannot attend school.

 The policies are:

 \* Upon arrival, a routine daily health check for all children is completed by staff members.

 \* Children who appear ill will not be admitted to the ELC.

 \* Children who become ill while at the ELC will be separated from the other children, and the child’s parents will be called to pick up their child immediately. **Make every effort to pick up your child within 1 hour of being contacted.**

\* If the parent cannot be reached, the child’s emergency contacts will be called.

 \* Children excluded from attending due to a reportable communicable disease must have a physician’s note stating that the child is no longer contagious prior to admission.

 \* Notify the ELC when your child is ill so we can be alert to similar symptoms in other children.

 \* When children return to the ELC after an illness, they must be able to fully participate in the program, including outdoor play.

 To prevent the spread of disease, children may be excluded from the ELC until the symptom or condition listed below is resolved, or until an evaluation by a physician determines that the child can return.

 These conditions are:

 \* Fever of 100.4 or higher. A child must be fever free for 24 hours without medication prior to returning to school.

 \* Any child who has vomited or had diarrhea within 24 hours of school time. They must be symptom free without medication prior to returning to school.

 \* Conjunctivitis or eye discharge

 \* Any rash suspicious of contagious childhood disease

 \* Evidence of severe illness such as lethargy, prolonged crying, obvious discomfort, difficulty breathing, uncontrollable cough, wheezing or poor appetite.

 \* Any condition preventing the child from participating comfortably in the program.

 \* Any child with a suspected concussion should not attend.

 \* Any child treated for head lice must have no evidence of nits in his/her hair to return to school.

 \* A child may not attend the day after any surgery. A written excuse from a physician is required before returning to school.

 \* Any illness that results in a greater need for care that the teacher can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.

**Staff Member Illness Policy:**

 No staff member shall be permitted to work at Saint Mark ELC while experiencing any of the following symptoms:

 \* Vomiting

 \* Diarrhea

 \* Jaundice

 \* Sore throat with fever

 \* Fever of 100.4 or higher

**Medication Administration:**

 It is not our policy to administer medicine, however if a child has a chronic condition and requires medicine, please notify the Director for the correct procedure. DHR prohibits us from applying sunscreen, bug repellent, chap stick or hand sanitizer. Please do not place these items in your child’s backpack.

**Medical Emergency:**

 In the event of an accident or illness requiring emergency medical attention, the paramedics will be called, followed by the child’s parents. If the child needs immediate transportation to a hospital, the child will be taken by ambulance to the emergency room at Children’s Hospital, accompanied by an ELC staff member.

 All accidents or injuries will be documented on an accident report. A copy will be given to the parents, and a copy will be placed in the child’s file.

 Parents are responsible for updating their emergency contact list and phone numbers, including the child’s physician. Children with known medical and developmental concerns must create a written plan with the ELC administration describing special instructions in case of an emergency.

 For minor scrapes and bruises we will send home an ouch report.

**Additional Information:**

**Babysitting:**

To maintain the professional status of the teachers and to avoid potential conflicts of interest, Saint Mark ELC strongly discourages the hiring of staff members for personal childcare outside of their responsibilities as ELC employees. Please be aware that Saint Mark ELC staff may not advertise, discuss, or solicit personal babysitting arrangements while at work. If a staff member elects to babysit for a family, all such activities must occur outside the ELC. Saint Mark ELC is in no way responsible for payment of services or arrangements made between the staff member and the family.

**Birthdays:**

Birthdays are special days. Parents are welcome to bring a special birthday treat to share with the class. Please talk with your child’s teachers prior to the special day to coordinate the best time to celebrate. Please follow the procedures below to ensure that all children can participate:

 \* Ask the teacher if there are any children with food allergies in the class.

 \* Snack should be kept simple – mini cupcake, doughnut holes, etc.

 \* The use of candles is prohibited.

 \* Balloons are not permitted in the ELC.

 \* Goodie bags are not permitted.

 \* Outside vendors are not permitted.

 \* If you are sending invitations, they may be distributed within the classroom if every child is invited, or at least every child of the same gender.

**Solicitation:**

Saint Mark ELC may not be used as a setting for solicitation.

**Toys/Personal Belongings:**

The ELC provides appropriate toys, learning materials and equipment for each child. Please do not bring toys from home (except on special designated occasions). These items should be labeled with the child’s name. Children are not permitted to bring toy weapons, gum, money, jewelry, or any item that promotes violence or conflict. If these items are brought to the ELC, they will be kept in the Director’s office until the child is picked up.

 Saint Mark ELC is not responsible for any personal item that is lost or damaged.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:**

Our program complies with non-discrimination laws covering hiring of staff, enrollment of children and termination of staff or children.

**If anything in this handbook is unclear to you or if any of your questions have not been covered, please call, or send a Sandbox portal message to the Director. We want to make sure that you feel comfortable about your child’s safety and wellbeing while he/she is at school.**