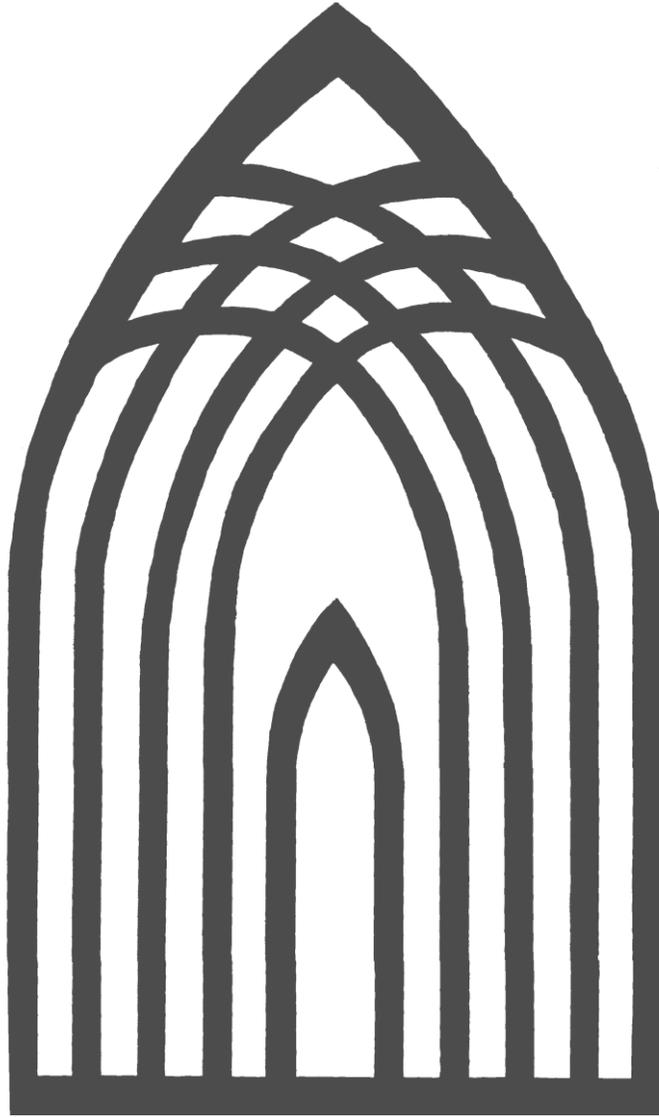


Emmaus Catholic Parish Early Childhood Education Program



2017-2018 Parent Handbook

1718 Lohmans Crossing Lakeway, Texas 78734

Office Phone: 512-261-8500 EXT 305

Cell Phone: 512-289-6885

Email: preschool@emmausparish.org

Emmaus Early Childhood Education Program - A Ministry of Emmaus Catholic Parish

Our Mission

The Emmaus Catholic Parish Early Childhood Education Program is a ministry of Emmaus Catholic Parish, which ministers to families and their children ages 2 – 5.

Our program fosters a child-centered approach founded on the stages of early child development where the whole child (physical, spiritual, emotional, social, intellectual) is able to thrive in a positive Catholic environment.

We believe children learn best through play. Based on the most current research on early child development, we offer an environment where authentic learning takes place through hands-on learning centers in the classrooms, helping children learn about God and the world around them.

Our classes are open to any child regardless of race, nationality, or religious beliefs. Priority enrollment is given to registered parishioners.

Our Goals

- To foster a faith in God, with empathy, acceptance, and respect toward self and others.
- To encourage children to think, reason, question, experiment, and develop self-regulation and decision making skills.
- To offer authentic opportunities for children to learn through play.
- To develop centers for learning that nurture a sense of wonder, creativity, problem solving, as well as, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical growth.
- To foster a loving and safe environment.



Table of Contents

Our Mission	2
Our Goals	2
Overview of the Program	
Our Governing Body	4
Our Staff	4
Our Facility	4
Our Curriculum	5
Program Calendar	6
Operational Policies and Procedures	
Preparing for Separation	6
Arrival	7
Dismissal	7
Inclement Weather/School Closings	8
Student Absences	8
Discipline and Guidance	8
Health and Safety Policies	
Illness	10
Medications	11
Immunizations	11
Emergencies	12
Tornado	12
Fire	12
Lock Down	12
Release of Child to Authorized Person	13
Child Abuse	13
Clothing	13
Food Guidelines	14
Severe Allergy Plan	15
Water Activities	15
Animals	15
Communication and Involvement	
Parent Communication	15
Parent Involvement	16
Tuition Policy	
Program Enrollment	17
Tuition	17
Returned Checks	18
General Policies	
Birthdays	19
Parent Pointers	19
Withdrawing from Program	20
For Your Information	
Gang Free Zone	20
Infant Feeding Room Available	20
ECEP Policy Changes	21
Policy Questions or Concerns	21

Overview of the Program

Our Governing Body

Our program is a ministry of Emmaus Catholic Parish in Lakeway, Texas. The program is run by the Preschool Director who reports directly to the Pastor of Emmaus.

The program is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. The ECEP Advisory Board reports to the Preschool Director.

Our Staff

Each ECEP staff member receives 30 – 48 hours of training each year. In addition, new staff receive 12-24 hours of pre-classroom training before entering a classroom. All staff are certified in CPR and first aid and have completed the Diocese of Austin's Ethics in Ministry training which includes a background check. Teams meet weekly to discuss such topics, but not limited to, discipline and guidance, curriculum, emotional and social development, health and safety.

Our Facility

Our program is located at 1718 Lohmans Crossing Road on the grounds of Emmaus Catholic Parish. Classrooms are located in the Parish Life Center rooms 101, 102, 103,104, and 105 B. Our hours of operation are Monday to Friday 9:15AM to 2:00PM. The PLC is a multi-use facility shared by various organizations of the church including, but not limited to, Faith Formation, CRHP, the Rosary Ministry, Bright Horizons, Adult Formation, and various prayer groups.

Our playground is clean, spacious and furnished with safe and age-appropriate playground equipment. It also has covered shade over the majority of the playground.

Our Curriculum

Our curriculum is based on the High Scope model of intentional teaching whereby teachers and children are active partners in the learning process. Adult-child interaction is the process of working alongside children and communicating with them both verbally and nonverbally to encourage learning. One of our most important strategies for adult-child interaction is sharing control with children: creating a balanced climate where adults and children are partners in the learning process.



The classroom is divided into interest areas stocked with a stimulating range of materials designed for specific types of play. These materials are arranged in consistent places and the shelves are tagged with child-friendly labels so that children can get out and put away materials themselves. Even the outdoor play area is considered part of the learning environment and is arranged and equipped to support all areas of child development.

There are five main content areas for learning activities: 1) approaches to learning; 2) language, literacy, & communication; 3) social and emotional development; 4) physical development, health, and well-being; and 5) arts and sciences.

Learning is not simply a process of adults giving information to children. Rather, children discover things through direct experience with people, objects, events, and ideas. They learn best by pursuing their own interests while being actively supported and challenged by adults. The five ingredients of this active learning are 1) materials; 2) manipulation; 3) choice; 4) child language and thought; and 5) adult scaffolding or supporting and challenging the child.

The daily routine is a consistent framework for the day that provides a balanced variety of experiences and learning opportunities. The most important segment of the daily routine is the plan-do-review sequence, in which children make choices about what they will do, carry out their ideas, and reflect upon their activities with adults and other children.

Program Calendar

The program runs from Wednesday, August 30, 2017 through Wednesday, May 23, 2018. We follow the Lake Travis ISD calendar for major holidays (Thanksgiving week, Christmas, and Spring Break). On LTISD elementary early release days, our program will close at 11:15AM to allow our staff the opportunity to pick-up their children from school. Our calendar also reflects 1-2 parent/teacher visits and 1-2 staff training days.

Operational Policies and Procedures



Preparing for Separation

Transitioning into a new environment can be difficult for some children and parents. The staff will help you and your child adjust. The following are suggestions to ease the transition:

- Introduce your child to his/her teachers and friends
- Talk with your child about their teachers and friends
- Develop a routine and follow it each time.
- Arrive on time and make good-byes brief.
- In order to help build a trusting relationship between your child and teacher (especially if your child has difficulty separating), give your child a hug, assure your child that you will be back, and then leave quickly. We recommend that you not linger or prolong the goodbye.
- Encourage your child to be independent. Upon arrival, allow them to put their lunch, snack and water in the appropriate containers, wash their hands and then they can find a table activity to engage in.

Arrival

Children should be dropped off in their classroom no earlier than 9:15AM. Teachers use the time before 9:15AM for preparation. We ask that those families arriving earlier than 9:15 wait in the foyer until the classrooms open.

Children are escorted to the classroom by a parent each day. *Each child is to wash their hands when they enter the classroom.* The children should be encouraged to place snack and water bottles in the appropriate baskets independently. Lunch boxes and other items should be placed in the child's cubbie. **All children must be signed in and out each day by a parent or caregiver.**

An optional "curb-side" drop-off is available starting the second full week of school. The children may be dropped-off in the circular drive with a staff member who will assist the child out of their car and will walk them to their classroom. Curb-side drop-off will occur daily from 9:10AM to 9:25AM. More detailed information will be shared at parent orientation.

We highly discourage late drop offs because they disrupt the classroom. In addition, the child arriving late usually has difficulty adjusting to the day's school routine.

Dismissal

Children should be picked up no later than 2:00PM. Children are dismissed from the classroom and are to be picked up by a parent or caregiver. **Any changes to pick-up must be in writing and given (or emailed) to the director at pickup@emmausparish.org before the start of the school day. If an emergency situation arises, and you will be late picking up your child from school, please call the school at 512-289-6885 as soon as possible to make proper arrangements.**

In the event that a child is picked up after 2:05PM, a late pick-up charge of \$10/family plus \$1/minute after 10 minutes will be assessed. After 2:30PM, the child will be escorted to the church office.

Inclement Weather/School Closings

Emmaus ECEP follows the Lake Travis ISD bad weather schedule. In the event that Lake Travis ISD closes due to bad weather, Emmaus ECEP will also be closed.

If Lake Travis ISD has a delayed start, Emmaus ECEP will open ½ hour after LTISD elementary schools. If the delay is after 11am, Emmaus ECEP will be closed for that day. Parents will be notified by email and text for confirmation of late starts or closings.

In the event that the school must close due to an emergency situation, a school email and text will be sent out to inform parents.



Student Absences

Please email, text or call the Director if your child will be absent on any day. **There is no refund of tuition or make-ups for days that a child misses due to, but not limited to, illness, school holiday(s), vacations, parent/teacher visit days, teacher in-service days or school closures due to inclement weather or emergency situations.**

Discipline and Guidance

We use the Conscious Discipline model in our approach to classroom guidance. It is an emotional intelligence program based on current brain research, child development information, and best educational practices that teaches children how to positively react or respond to situations. Everyday life events are used as teachable moments and guide children to develop

self-control, self-regulation, and conflict resolution skills to boost self-esteem and foster positive relationships and social skills. Conscious Discipline is specifically designed to teach helpfulness (pro-social skills), cooperation, empathy, and problem solving while utilizing tools for anger management, impulse control, and assertiveness.

Conscious Discipline promotes a positive relationship-based community in the classroom. As we develop our “school family,” students will learn about physical and emotional safety, trust, and problem solving.

In our classrooms, students learn through:

- Creating a School Family
- Cultivating higher order thinking skills through brain smart activities
- Class meetings
- The 7 Basic Skills of Conscious Discipline
- The Safe Place
- Meaningful classroom jobs
- Instant replay center
- Celebration station
- We care center
- Friends and family board

The following discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Pinching, shaking, or biting of a child
- Hitting a child with a hand or object
- Putting anything in or on a child’s mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for a child’s age

Health and Safety Policies

Illness



Every effort to prevent the spread of disease is made by the ECEP staff. This includes frequent hand washing by children and teachers. Care is taken to disinfect diaper changing areas after each change.

The following guidelines are set by the Texas Department of Family & Protective Services in order to protect your child as well as others from contagious illness. While we regret the inconvenience caused by strict adherence to these guidelines, our concern for all the children dictates a conservative approach when dealing with health matters.

If a child becomes ill, the parent will be notified immediately and is expected to pick up their child within 30 minutes of being called. In the event a parent cannot be reached after a period of time, a person listed on the child's emergency contact list will be notified and asked to come for the child. The child will either be at the Director's desk or the parish office until picked up.

A child will be sent home if any of the following symptoms are seen:

- Fever over 100.4
- Pink eye with discharge
- Vomiting
- 2 diarrheas over the course of 2 hours
- Head lice or nits
- Rashes with fever
- **Any other condition the Director deems necessary** for the well-being of the child and the other students.

If a child has been ill and must stay indoors, it is required that the child be kept at home until he/she is able to participate fully in all of the activities of

the program. No child is allowed to stay in the office or with another class during this time.

If your child's physician diagnosis your child with a contagious disease or illness, please notify the school immediately.

Medications

Medications will not be administered at Emmaus ECEP. If a child needs medication, the parent is asked to come to the program and administer the medication.

Immunizations

All children in our program are required to have updated shot records on file within a week of the start of the school year. The Director will notify the parent if a child's immunizations are not up to date. Failure to comply by the deadline may result in dismissal from ECEP until we receive updated immunizations records with tuition paid in full to hold the spot.

Any time your child receives an immunization, please give a copy of the record to ECEP.

Children who are in the Pre-K class are also required to have hearing and vision screenings on file. For your convenience, Emmaus ECEP offers on-sight hearing and vision screenings in the fall of every school year.

At this time, the state of Texas does not require TB tests for children in Travis County.

Please visit www.tdh.state.tx.us/immunize for current immunization requirements for Texas child care centers.

Emergencies

The following steps have been put into place for emergency purposes:

In the event of a medical emergency, a child's emergency care card (yellow form) will be activated.

1. Parents are notified in the order listed on your emergency care card.
2. If parents cannot be reached, ECEP will contact the individuals listed on your child's emergency information card.
3. If no one can be reached, the child's physician will be called to determine what action should be taken.
4. If the emergency requires immediate medical attention, EMS will be called to transport the child to the nearest medical facility.

Tornado

In the event of a tornado, staff will escort all children to our tornado evacuation site in the Parish Life Center (multi-use room A) located off the main foyer entrance. Drills are practiced four times a year.

Fire

In the event of a fire, Emmaus ECEP staff will evacuate children from the classrooms using our primary or secondary routes (see classroom maps) to our main evacuation site which is the front entrance of the church. In the event that the front of the church is not safe, the staff will go to our secondary evacuation location which is the labyrinth next to the pastoral center. Drills are practiced monthly.

Lock Down

In addition to fire and tornado drills, Texas Minimum Standards requires that we practice lock down drills four times a year.

In the event we need to evacuate the campus, ECEP will relocate to Lakeway Christian Church.

Release of Child to Authorized Persons

All children in the program will only be released to those listed on their authorized release form. If someone other than the normal caregiver is picking up the child, the parent is asked to bring a note or email pickup@emmausparish.org no later than the start of the school day to notify the staff of any pick-up changes. All pick up changes must be made in writing. All pick-up persons are asked to bring in their driver's license and sign-out with the Director when picking up a child for the first time. In the event of an emergency, the center will use your child's "yellow" Emergency Care Card for pick-up.

Child Abuse

We are required, under the Texas Family Code, Section 34.01, to report any suspected cases of child abuse to the Department of Human Services Protective Services office and a local or state law enforcement agency.

Clothing

Children need to be sent to school in clothing that allows them to move freely and easily both inside the classroom and outside on the playground. Clothing should be simple to allow the child to manage alone. Belts, complicated straps and snaps are discouraged. Preschoolers are very active, so please do not send them in their "Sunday Best."

Well fitted, closed toed, rubber soled shoes are required. Crocs, sandals, flip-flops, and cowboy boots are not allowed. A change of clothes in a labeled zip-lock bag (including underwear and socks) are to be left at school at all times. Please be sure to label all items with your child's name.

Outdoor play is an essential part of our curriculum and essential for the children's health. Children will go out every day unless it is raining, the temperature is below 40° (or chill factor below 40°) or over 95° (or heat index of 95°). Please be sure that your child is dressed appropriately for the day with coats, hats, and mittens for cold days or have sunscreen applied on sunny days.

Please do not send backpacks to school. We suggest a small bag to carry home items daily.

Food Guidelines

Parents are responsible for providing a nutritious snack, lunch, and water bottle for their child each day. We ask that food items reflect selections from the nutrition pyramid (fresh fruits and vegetables, healthy whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean proteins).

All soda, cookies, chips, candy, and food with high sugar, high salt, high saturated fats or foods with less than 1 gram of fiber are not allowed in our program. Please send low fat milk or water ONLY for snack and lunch. Fast food and lunch-ables are also not permitted. If any of these items are sent to school our staff will not serve them to your child. To help foster independence and self-reliance, children are encouraged to be involved in getting and preparing their own snack and lunch. Please send your child's food in easy to open containers. Please be sure to pack at least one ice pack in your child's lunch to keep items cool and fresh. Milk and yogurt must be placed in the classroom refrigerator.

Due to the risk of choking, we ask all children 24-36 months of age to bring grapes, olives, cherry tomatoes, and other similarly sized items cut up into quarter pieces only. Hot dogs must be cut length-wise into sticks. Please no hard nuts.

Muffins, parfaits, and fruit-kabobs are permitted for special birthday celebrations. The Director must have the ingredients list 72 hours in advance to post in the classroom for other parents to see. Please communicate with your child's teacher at least one week in advance about when would be an appropriate time for special treats to come in.

Severe Allergy Plan of Action (Food, Insect, and Environmental)

If a child has a severe allergy, parents are asked to submit a letter from their child's pediatrician that states: 1. Child's name, 2. Name of allergy, 3. Plan of action recommended, and 4. Signed by the pediatrician on letterhead. This information will be used to create an allergy plan of action for the child. Allergy action plans are posted in the child's classroom for staff to use if needed.

Water Activities

In the winter we will have a "Winter Wonderland" day where we play with ice and snow in water tables and small pools. In the spring we will have a "Splash Day" where the children will use sprinklers, water toys, water tables and small pools. Parents are notified at least one week in advance of activities. Please send your child in the appropriate attire needed, including mittens, coats and hat or swimsuit and water shoes and apply sunscreen beforehand. The children will be supervised at all times during these events.

Animals

Parents will be notified one week in advance if any animals are to be brought into the classroom. Animals must have proof of vaccines and be approved by the Director before coming on campus.

Communication and Involvement

Parent Communication



Teachers communicate daily with the parents on the classroom communication boards about the day's activities and any special or unusual events concerning their child. New this year, teachers will be communicating with parents with a new

application called “Hi-Mama.” This new feature will allow parents to access information from the convenience of their cell phone through the use of an app. We will also be sending email communications with a new program called S’mores. In addition to these new systems, we still ask parents to check your child’s folder in the classroom **daily** for classroom and program information.

In addition to these routine forms of communication, Emmaus ECEP has two parent- teacher visit days established on our school calendar. Fall parent/teacher visits are held for all classes; with Tigers and Monkeys having an additional visit in the spring. There is no school on the parent teacher visit day in the fall. Parents can also make an appointment at any time to visit with their child’s teacher before school.

Emmaus ECEP strives to be a “green” school with our communications to parents. We send all forms of communication by email whenever possible. We also use a text reminder system called Remind for emergencies and to send home reminders about important events happening on campus. More detailed information will be shared about our communication systems at parent orientation. Please be sure that the Director has your most current email and cell phone number.

If you have any concerns, questions, comments, or suggestions about the programs, policies, procedures, staff or structure, please feel free to email the Director at preschool@emmausparish.org or call the ECEP office at 512-261-8500 EXT 305 or call the main cell phone number at 512-289-6885.

Parent Involvement

Parents are welcome to visit the classroom at any time during the school year. If a parent plans to volunteer in the classroom, the Texas State Minimum Standards states that volunteers must complete a criminal history check and attend an Emmaus ECEP Volunteer Orientation. Parents are also asked to complete an Ethics in Ministry class by the Diocese of Austin. Classes are held monthly in the Austin diocese. Each family is encouraged to sign-up at parent orientation and support at least one school event each year.

Tuition Policy

Program Enrollment

Registration takes place annually in February for currently enrolled families and Emmaus parishioners for the following program year. Parents of students currently enrolled will receive a form to fill out for registration for the next school year for their children and siblings entering the program. Priority is given first to currently enrolled families and their siblings, then to parish families. Registration is done on a first come first served basis for all classrooms. Open registration begins in March for the Lake Travis community and spots are filled based on availability.

In order for registration to be complete, the registration form AND a non-refundable registration fee of \$100.00 must be turned in to the Director.

A \$125.00 supply fee is also collected annually. The supply fee is non-refundable after August 1st.

Enrollment packets are given to newly registered families in the spring. All enrollment paperwork (including doctor's statement, shot records, and supply fees) are due by May 1st to secure your enrollment in the program for the following year.

Tuition

Tuition is due by the 1st of each month. Tuition received after the 10th of the month is considered late and will be charged a \$35.00 late fee.

Tuition Rates for 2017-18 school year:

2 day a week:	\$255.00 a month
3 day a week:	\$335.00 a month
5 day a week (dolphins):	\$525.00 a month
5 day a week (monkeys):	\$435.00 a month

Payments may be made by check, money order, or cash and should be left in the payment box in the foyer of the Parish Life Center. Payments should be made payable to Emmaus ECEP. Tuition is for space reserved for the child,

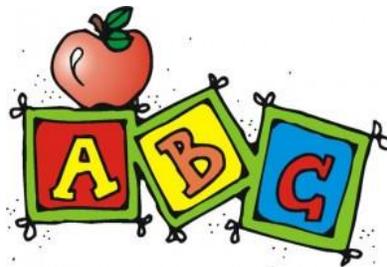
not for periods of attendance. This year parents will have the new option of paying for tuition electronically. Information will be shared at parent orientation.

Registration fees and tuition are non-refundable.

There is no refund of tuition or make-up days for days that a child misses due to, but not limited to, illness, school holiday(s), vacations, parent/teacher visit days, teacher in-service days or school closures due to inclement weather or emergency situations.

Returned Checks

The fee for returned checks is \$15.00. Parents will be notified when a check is returned. Payment arrangements must be made. If a second check is returned, all future payments will have to be made in cash or with a money order. After 30 days with no payment, parents will be notified that their child's enrollment will be dismissed unless payment arrangements are made. Failure to resolve the issue will also result in losing their eligibility for a spot in the upcoming school year.



General Policies



Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated in our program! If you wish to celebrate your child's birthday with a healthy snack, please inform the teacher at least one week in advance. Ingredient lists must be submitted to the Director at least 72 hours in advance. We ask that birthday treats be: muffins, parfaits, or fruit kabobs. We welcome non-food treats as well!

Birthday invitations may only be sent out in the classroom if all students are invited. For safety reasons, balloons and candles are not allowed in the classroom.

Parent Pointers

1. Please label **all** items brought to school with your child's name.
2. Please refrain from bringing any valuable items to school.
3. Weapons and weapon-like toys are not permitted.
4. A small sturdy bag is encouraged for each child to hold notes, artwork, and lunch boxes. **Backpacks are not allowed.** Please be sure to label everything.
5. **Please refrain from bringing toys from home.** We will have periodic show-n-tells throughout the year for your child to share.
6. Books and items related to the classroom theme are always welcome to share with the class.



Withdrawing from Our Program

Parent Initiated Withdraw

If you need to withdraw your child from our program, a 30-day written notice must be turned in to the Director. You will be responsible for all fees due through the end of the 30 days whether or not your child attends class.

Program Initiated Withdraw

Should a situation arise where a family is asked to leave our program by the director, the director will submit in writing a transition plan for a smooth departure from our program. The following list are possible reasons for withdrawal initiated by the program:

- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions towards staff members
- Parent fails to pay or is habitually late with payments
- Parent is verbally abusive to staff
- Child does not adjust to program within a reasonable amount of time

For Your Information

Gang Free Zone

Under Texas Penal Code, Emmaus Early Childhood Education Program and any area within 1000 feet of Emmaus Early Childhood Education Program is a gang-free zone.

Infant Feeding Room Available

Any mother on our campus during program hours has a right to nurse or bottle feed her infant child. For your convenience, we offer room 105A (the church nursery) as a comfortable place for you to nurse during program hours (Monday to Friday 9:15AM-2:00PM).

Emmaus ECEP Policy Changes

In the event that a policy changes with Emmaus ECEP program, parents will be notified in writing by the Director.

Policy Questions or Concerns

If for any reason you have a question or concern about Emmaus ECEP policies, please call 512-261-8500 ext. 305 or 512-289-6885. You can also email the Director of the program at preschool@emmausparish.com.

The following information is provided for your convenience:

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services – Child Care Licensing

1400 Summit Drive Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78728

DFPS Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-252-5400

DFPS website:

dfps.state.tx.us

Information about minimum standards and our most recent childcare licensing inspection report can be found in the foyer of the PLC.

Child's Name: _____

This page is provided for your records.

I acknowledge I have received The Emmaus Early Childhood Education Program Parent Handbook for the 2017-2018 school year. I also acknowledge responsibility for reading, understanding, and abiding by the procedures contained in this document.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Discipline and Guidance Acknowledgement

My signature verifies I have received and read a copy of Emmaus Catholic Parish Early Childhood Program Discipline and Guidance policy (pages 8-9) for the 2017-2018 school year.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Child's Name: _____

Parent Copy

Child's Name: _____

After you have read the Emmaus ECEP Parent Handbook, **please sign and return this page to your child's teacher.**

We acknowledge we have received The Emmaus Early Childhood Education Program Parent Handbook for the 2017-2018 school year. We also acknowledge responsibility for reading, understanding, and abiding by the procedures contained in this document.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Discipline and Guidance Acknowledgement

My signature verifies I have received and read a copy of Emmaus Catholic Parish Early Childhood Program Discipline and Guidance policy (pages 8-9) for the 2017-2018 school year.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Child's Name: _____

School Copy