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General information

Using the handbook  The staff of St Mark’s Pre-school extends a warm welcome to you and your child.

This handbook has been compiled to help parents understand some of the Pre-school’s operations.

There are many ways to obtain updated information about what is happening at St Mark’s. We have regular newsletters which can be found on Cranbrook’s portal. The portal address is portal.cranbrook.nsw.edu.au. Parents are given the login and password to access the portal at the start of the school year. You are encouraged to visit the portal regularly.

The School’s website address is www.cranbrook.nsw.edu.au.

Contacting the Pre-school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postal address</th>
<th>1 Greenoaks Avenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darling Point NSW 2027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>(02) 9363 2260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facsimile</td>
<td>(02) 9362 0896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tloker@cranbrook.nsw.edu.au">tloker@cranbrook.nsw.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cranbrook.nsw.edu.au">www.cranbrook.nsw.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portal</td>
<td>portal.cranbrook.nsw.edu.au</td>
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 Philosophy

St Mark’s is a community-based pre-school that is part of Cranbrook School.

We believe

– Children come to pre-school with cultural beliefs, experiences and knowledge to share.

– Through modelling and guidance children are encouraged to accept and respect themselves, peers, family, belongings and the environment.

The program

– Children learn best from a play-based program with intentional learning, using their interests as stimuli for a holistic educational program.

– Children are powerful contributors to the program.

– Our child-centred program is based on the principles of the NSW Curriculum Framework, the National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the National Quality Standards (NQS).

– We aim to celebrate each child’s individuality on a journey of learning, friendships, collaboration, wonder, inquiry, play, creativity, expression, experimentation and reflection.

Families

– We are committed to open communication with families and their participation in the program.

Staff

– We employ an Atelierista (Visual Arts teacher), Music teacher and Learning Support teacher to extend the children’s interests and support their needs.

– Each staff member brings personal qualities to the environment which combine to make us a unique, close-knit team.
Staff

**Headmaster**  
Mr Nicholas Sampson  
MA(Cantab)

**Head of Junior School**  
Mrs Chrissy Gamble  
MEd(Murdoch) BEd(Curtin)

**Director of Early Learning**  
Mrs Michele Marquet  
BA MEd(UNSW) DipEd(SCAE)

**Director (Nominated Supervisor)**  
Ms Christinna Loker-Christison  
AssDip(TAFE), DipTeach(EarlyChildhood)  
BEd(EarlyChildhood)(Macq)

**Teachers**  
Mrs Tamara Jones Kormendy  
AssDip(Children'sServices)

Mrs Julie Hayes  
BEd(EarlyChildhood)(Macq)

**Child Care Workers**  
Mrs Amanda Wakefield  
Ms Kylee Mulet  
Ms Meredith Street  
Ms Meg Wittingslow

**Support Teacher**  
Ms Anna Mellefont  
NNEBC, Montessori Dip

**Music teacher**  
Mrs Holly Kozlovsky  
BCreativeArts GradDipEd(Music)(WesleyInstitute)

**Atelierista**  
Ms Jacqui Bolt  
BVVisArts DipEd DipFine Arts
About the Pre-school

St Mark’s pre-school was established by Cranbrook School and opened in 1944 with three teachers and sixty children, boys and girls. Our circumstances are quite unique as we are a non-selective and non-profit institution with a focus on the community as a whole. Many families have a long-time connection with St Mark’s which creates familiarity and a sense of belonging.

The old church hall behind the church was the original premises and the playground was where the present hall stands. In 1953/4 the lower section of the new hall was built and a play area for Kindergarten children was provided on the flat roof. In time a top storey was built and the playground was moved to the present site next to the church.

We are a forty-place community-based Pre-school that comes under the umbrella of Cranbrook School. We receive funding from Community Services which is used for additional staff for children with extra needs. Our Cranbrook brother Pre-school is St Michael’s in Vaucluse.

DEC requires that certain standards are maintained with every aspect of the centre, including management, programming, safety and health. St Mark’s is operated in accordance with Community Services’ requirements and Cranbrook’s high standards.

Pre-school aims

The staff at St Mark’s Pre-school aims to:

- foster the individual growth of each child intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally

- provide open and honest communication through informal and formal meetings between families and staff. Communication is considered to be a vital aid in achieving common goals for Pre-school life

- provide a warm, safe, home-like, secure environment in which children feel confident enough to take on challenges

- create the desire to learn by providing a wide range of experiences in a stimulating environment.

Code of Conduct

Children are encouraged to develop those social skills which will allow them to resolve conflicts and have their needs met without the use of aggressive or destructive behaviour.

When disciplinary situations occur which require adult intervention, staff will provide the child with clear explanations as to why a particular behaviour is unacceptable and then help the child to find alternative, acceptable behaviours.
**Pre-school hours**

St Mark’s Pre-school is licensed to operate between the hours of 8.45am and 2.45pm, and operates on the four term system with Cranbrook School holidays.

Parents are requested to adhere to these times. No child should arrive before 8.45am. The morning period is very busy as both indoors and outdoors have to be set up before children arrive.

Children at the Pre-school should arrive between 8.45am and 9.15am. Children who come in later may miss out on activities and beneficial learning experiences, which have been especially planned.

**Late Fee Policy**

The children are the responsibility of their parents after 2.45pm. If the children are not collected by this time, the staff will make every effort to contact the parents and/or emergency contacts and persons authorised to collect their child.

If the staff are unable to contact an authorised person, two (2) teachers will wait at the Pre-school with the child for a reasonable period of time.

Under no circumstances is a staff member to take a child home in a car. Under no circumstances will a child be given into custody of a taxi driver.

Parents will be responsible for all expenses incurred if they are late collecting children. The rate for late arrival is $1.00 a minute and will be charged to your account.

Parents and authorised persons will be required to sign a late form at the time of arrival.

The Director should be contacted in an emergency.
Starting at Pre-school

Settling in

We encourage parents to spend some time at the Pre-school with their child before commencement date. This experience helps you and your child to become familiar with the environment, staff, other children and Pre-school routine, and it is invaluable as the staff get to learn more about your child’s individual needs and requirements.

Each child will settle in differently to Pre-school. Some children separate and say goodbye quickly, and it is the parent who feels upset. Other children require a parent to remain until they are involved in an activity. Please be guided by the staff about what is appropriate for your child.

Please don’t go without saying goodbye as a child’s feeling of trust and security may be eroded. We encourage parents, once ready to go, to tell a staff member, say goodbye and leave promptly. We welcome and encourage you to call during the day to check on your child.

Leaving and collecting children

In the Morning

1. Please sign in with your full signature and time of arrival on the Sign-in/out Book in your child’s classroom.

2. Assist your child by:
   a. placing your child’s bag in his or her locker
   b. bringing your child’s fruit in a clearly named container and placing it in the appropriate fruit basket or trolley
   c. placing your child’s water bottle in a basket.

Take your child to his or her teacher for a morning greeting.
Leave time for a cuddle or for helping your child find an activity.

In the Afternoon

1. Note the time of departure and sign with your full signature in the Sign-in/out Book.

2. Assist your child in collecting his/her bag and belongings.

3. Take your child to his/her teacher to say ‘Good Afternoon’.

4. Please take time to read the notices.

As we understand that parents may have to collect other siblings, children may start to go home from 2.00pm.
Uniform

Boy’s summer uniform
– Navy blue shorts – straight front, elastic back, pocket
– Sky blue shirt – open neck, short sleeve
– Sun hat – legionnaire cap

Boy’s winter uniform
– Navy Cranbrook tracksuit with Cranbrook School crest
– Red skivvy

Girl’s summer uniform
– Navy blue skirt
– Sky blue shirt – either open neck or Peter Pan collar
– Sun hat – bucket hat

Girl’s winter uniform
– Navy Cranbrook tracksuit with Cranbrook School crest
– Red skivvy

Clothing is available from the Cranbrook Uniform Shop.
Pre-loved uniforms can be obtained from the Pre-school with all proceeds going to the Cancer Council.

All clothing should be clearly labelled with your child’s name.
The program

The staff at St Mark’s believes that every child is unique and develops at a different rate. Our support teacher assists us in catering to each child’s individual learning style. We believe that children learn a lot from each other and their environment. Children are encouraged to be mindful of others’ varying levels of ability.

Daily routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.45am</td>
<td>Children arrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.45am – 10.00am</td>
<td>Group 1 inside (fortnightly rotation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2 outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mondays/Thursday</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00am – 11.00am</td>
<td>Group 2 inside (fortnightly rotation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 1 outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00am – 12.30pm</td>
<td>Music and Language – The children participate in discussions, news time, musical activities and listening to stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30pm</td>
<td>Wash for lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.40pm – 1.15pm</td>
<td>Lunchtime and outside play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15pm – 1.30pm</td>
<td>Toilet routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30pm – 2.00pm</td>
<td>Quiet time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td>Shoes on, story time or activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.40pm</td>
<td>Child-initiated play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.45pm</td>
<td>Home time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An extension program is provided in the afternoon for children who will enter school the following year. In 2012 we trialled full days outside which have been especially successful. This allows children to be fully immersed in experiences without interruption allowing their investigations to have a lot more depth and value.

Environmental awareness

We are keen environmentalists and incorporate recycling, composting, low waste lunches, growing vegetables, energy efficiency, water-wise usage into our program.
What to bring

A bag, easy for the child to open containing:
– a nourishing lunch (chips, sweets and nuts are not permitted)
– a drink which is easily opened by the child (not plastic)
– a sun hat
– a change of clothes, particularly undies, should always be in your child’s bag.

Each child is required to have sheets in a draw string bag which is placed in a basket near the main door or stairs, depending on where your child rests. Blankets are required for cooler months while small pillows are optional.

A piece of fruit in a small clearly marked container is to be placed in the basket or on the trolley in your child’s classroom. Paper or plastic bags are not allowed.

Two passport size photographs, one regular-sized photograph of your child, a family photograph and a photo of your pet, if you have one, are to be brought when your child commences Pre-school. Photographs are a great way to assist your child to feel a part of the St Mark’s family as well as helping your child identify his/her locker, name card, etc.

Guided by children’s interests

The children’s interests guide our program, whether it be an inquiry into spaceships on the data projector or a dinosaur investigation. We ascertain the children’s current level of understanding and build on it by providing stimulating and challenging investigations based on the curriculum. We use photography and snippets of conversations or descriptions to show how children learn and to demonstrate their thought processes. Through photos you can often see the learning that occurs.

Children’s journal

Each child has a journal. The journal is an overall view of your child’s development and you can see how his/her work has progressed and changed over the time spent with us. In the journal we keep examples of your child’s work, learning stories and some recorded conversations and photographs of your child being involved in the program. Feel free to look at your child’s journal with your child at any stage.

The Daily Diary

The Daily Diary is located in the rooms. It acts as a history of the children’s time at Pre-school. It also provides an insight into what your child has been doing throughout the day. Activities and interests are discussed. The Diary shows evidence of how the children’s play develops, and their learning and understanding of concepts is also documented.
Parents’/Guardians’ involvement

Parent input
Parental/guardian input combines with teacher input to create a partnership for a better Pre-school.

Parents are encouraged to join in the daily program as this fosters continuity between home and the Pre-school and helps to develop staff-family relations.

Parents and other family members are welcome visitors at any time. They are encouraged to share cultural activities with the children, such as craft, cooking, musical experiences and stories.

We encourage feedback via parent questionnaires throughout the year. We are always looking for ways to improve and it is also encouraging to receive positive feedback.

Parent chats
Parent/teacher chats are held twice a year and dates are announced in the newsletter and on the portal. A booking sheet can be found in your child’s classroom where you are invited to book in a time with your child’s teacher. These chat times allow you to find out more about your child’s progress and to discuss goals.

Communication
Communication is a vital tool in building a positive relationship between parents, staff and children. Staff pride themselves on being available to talk over daily occurrences, activities and observations with parents.

Notices of importance are displayed on the notice board in the hallway near the back door and on the portal.

Newsletters are published each month and can be found on the portal.

If your child is ill or there is a change in arrangements for your child please ring the Pre-school. The Director is in the office on Monday morning, Tuesday and Wednesday if you need to make an appointment to discuss any issues.

Safety and security
To ensure safety and security an adult 18 years or over, accompanying a child to and from Pre-school, must sign the Sign-in/out Sheets indicating the time of arrival and departure. The child must greet a member of staff on arrival, before the parent/guardian departs.

When arriving or leaving the premises please ensure the gates are securely closed and do not allow your child to open, close or climb on the gates.
Children will only be released to adults nominated by the parent on the enrolment form unless the parent instructs the teacher to do otherwise in writing, or by phone in the case of an emergency.

There is a section on the Sign-in/out Sheet where alternative arrangements can be noted. This section must be filled in if these arrangements differ from the usual routine.

What did you do today?

Unless your child has concrete evidence, for example a painting or drawing, your child's answer to this question might be ‘Nothing'. Try phrasing the question a little differently. For example ‘You look happy. What sorts of things did you do today?’ or ‘Who did you play with today?’ Have a look at the Daily Diary to see some of the activities in which your child participated throughout the day. You may get a more comprehensive answer this way.

Many activities cannot be taken home, for example, puzzles, blocks, games, music, dramatic play, book corner, our tadpoles, the computer and time spent at the light table.

The visual evidence of your child’s learning demonstrates only a proportion of the wonderful array of activities your child experiences at Pre-school. Your child learns so much from his/her social interaction with each other and the staff.

Parent Committee

The Pre-school is required to have at least three parents on the Parent Committee each year. The Committee organises events during the year, such as a cocktail party and picnics.

The meetings are low key and relaxed, and are held every month. Parents can become involved in issues and topics that involve the Pre-school, allowing you to contribute to your Pre-school. Issues that are discussed include:

- arrangements for our activities
- discussions on policy development
- examination of our philosophy and goals
- visits by guest speakers for parents
- any area in which you have a special interest.

Minutes and an agenda are kept for each meeting. These are posted on the notice board and the portal.
Parents'/Guardians’ involvement

Social activities
During the year special family social activities are arranged so that all family members can participate. The times and dates for these activities will be available on the notice boards and the portal.

- Mothers’ (or Special Friends’) Day, Fathers’ (or Special Friends’) Day, Grandparents’ (or Special Friends’) Day
- barbeques
- excursions – lending a hand on the day or helping with arrangements
- end-of-year party
- input into the curriculum
- social events

Portal
St. Mark’s has a site on the School portal. Accessing the portal allows you to find out what is happening at the Pre-school. Parents can see what the children’s interests and experiences are at Pre-school, and read announcements and newsletters.

Parents can access the portal using any computer with internet access. They will be given the log in and password at the commencement of each year.

Parent library
A bookshelf in the hallway contains books, pamphlets and articles of interest. These publications include information on discipline, self-esteem, health, nutrition, art and development levels.

*St Mark’s Pre-school Policy Folder* is kept in the library and includes policies on emergency evacuation procedures, home observations, health issues, anti-bias, multiculturalism, confidentiality, complaints/grievances, intruders, a business plan, behaviour management programming, parent teacher conferences.

Library items are available to be borrowed.

Toilet training
All children must be fully toilet trained to attend St Mark’s in accordance with our licensing guidelines set out by DEC.

Birthdays
You are invited to send a cake and candles to the Pre-school on or near your child’s birthday. Please let your child’s teacher know if you wish to do this, as we need to take children with food allergies into account.
Toys from home

The bringing of toys from home is discouraged. Not only can they cause conflict, but there is also no guarantee that they will not be broken.

If children want the security of a special soft toy, please ensure it is clearly labelled with your child’s name. During the day, staff may encourage the child to store the toy in a safe place in a bag in his/her locker.

Sunscreen

The Pre-school provides Cancer Council SPF 15 broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen for the use of all children. If your child needs a different sort of sunscreen, please provide the appropriate type, clearly marked with your child’s name. Sunscreen should ideally be applied before leaving home as it takes 20 minutes to become effective. Please note that when applying sunscreen, cover all exposed skin but do not rub it in completely. It should be left to be absorbed naturally. Parents should apply sunscreen to their child on arrival at Pre-school if they have not done so at home. Note that we have a ‘no hat, no play’ policy.

School readiness

There are lots of things that can be done to prepare and encourage the children for Kindergarten. Most of these points are discussed in your parent/teacher chat as we cater for your child and his/her individual needs. Kindergarten classes may have different expectations of what your child should be doing. It is worthwhile to check with your intended school as well. At St Mark’s in Term 4 the children are encouraged to be more independent and responsible for their own belongings. They are encouraged to arrive at school by a certain time, carry their bags in and out of Pre School, remember their hat, etc. and work on individual goals.
Health Policy

The health and safety of all children are of major concern to staff and parents at St Mark’s Pre-school. Since the Pre-school does not have separate facilities for the care of sick children, parents are asked not to send sick children to the Pre-school.

If your child falls ill while at the Pre-school, a staff member will contact you as soon as possible. We may request that you collect your child if the illness makes your child uncomfortable. Children commencing at pre-schools are often susceptible to infection because of close contact with other children.

Parents should ensure that they have made alternative arrangements for their child if he or she falls sick.

It is essential that parents inform staff of any health-related problems. A child’s life could depend on staff having the right information, (eg history of convulsions). If your child suffers from any allergies or chronic conditions, this should be discussed with staff, so that they know how they should attend to your child if necessary.

*Please read the full Health Policy available at the Pre-school.*
Accidents

The children are supervised at all times by two members of staff with at least one holding a current First Aid Certificate. Minor injuries are attended to by the certificated member of staff and the injury reported to the person who collects your child. An accident form will be completed for the parent to sign when collecting their child.

Should a more serious accident occur parents or emergency contacts are informed immediately. An ambulance will be called if necessary. If parents or emergency contacts cannot be contacted and an ambulance is not necessary, the School Sister or the child’s GP may be called.

A critical incident form will be completed and given to DEC for investigation.

Medication

If your child has to take medication during the day, please refer to the centre’s Health Policy, which is available at the Pre-school. Please do not leave medication in your child’s bag.

Infectious diseases

If your child has an infectious disease, eg measles, rubella (german measles), chicken pox or whooping cough, please notify the Director immediately. This is particularly important with rubella for the benefit of any pregnant mothers. Parents will be notified of any cases of significant infectious diseases by way of a notice at the entrance to the Pre-school.

Please read the Health Policy for further information on infectious diseases and other issues.

Illness

If your child has a heavy cold please keep him/her at home until he/she is well enough to attend.

Should a child become unwell during the Pre-school day we use the following procedure:

1. The child’s temperature is taken.
2. The child is made to feel comfortable and secure.
3. Parents or emergency contacts are notified.