

LITTLE LAMBS PRESCHOOL

A ministry of First Lutheran Church

PARENT HANDBOOK



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Welcome!

Welcome to Little Lambs Preschool (LLPS), a ministry of First Lutheran Church. We seek to promote learning in a safe environment of love, acceptance, discovery, and exploration. We recognize that children are alike in many ways but also different from one another. We look forward to discovering your child's unique personality.

As a ministry of the church, we seek to give God the glory in all we do. Our mission is to joyfully proclaim and enthusiastically share Christ's love with preschoolers and their families. Our goal is to prepare children for later school experiences. Little Lambs Preschool staff provide affection, support, and comfort as often as needed. They encourage children to satisfy their natural curiosity, learn about their environment, and explore cause and effect relationships. Children are helped to discover God's presence, love, and care. They are taught through stories, songs, and actions of the constant presence of Jesus and His love for them.

Once again, welcome to the family of First Lutheran Church and Little Lambs Preschool. Feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, or compliments at any time.

Stephanie Mosely

LLPS Director

Mission

As a ministry of First Lutheran Church, Little Lambs Preschool joyfully proclaims God's Word and enthusiastically shares the love of Christ with preschoolers and their families.

Little Lambs Preschool serves two equally important missions: the Christian education of the congregations' children and the sharing of the faith with the children of the community. Neither is of greater value than the other. Sharing the love of God with young children is vital. It is during this time in their lives when they are most receptive to learning about God's love through words and actions of people around them. Children learn concepts, values, and attitudes that will remain with them throughout their lives. In keeping with its mission, Little Lambs Preschool equally welcomes the children of the congregation and the children of the greater community. All are alike in God's eyes and in the minds of those who devote their lives to the development of Jesus' special ones.

Statement of Philosophy

The practices of Little Lambs Preschool are based on current knowledge of child development and early childhood education. We are responsible for supporting the development of the whole child. All areas of development are considered interrelated and equally important. Our program acknowledges that children learn through active, hands-on involvement with their environment, peers, and caring adults. We respect each child's unique interests, experiences, abilities, and needs. Children are valued as individuals, as well as part of a group. Likewise, our program respects and supports the ideals, cultures, and values of families in their task of nurturing children. We advocate for children, families, and the early childhood professionals within our program.

Goals

The goals of Little Lambs Preschool are as follows:

- To lead children to a greater awareness of God's love as it is revealed to us in Jesus Christ.
- To help children develop an appreciation of their surroundings in God's world and a loving concern for all people.
- To provide children with opportunities for social interaction with other children through group activities under the supervision of qualified teachers.
- To prepare children for later school experiences.
- To minister to unchurched families.

Absences

As a courtesy, please notify the school when your child will not be in attendance.

If your child is absent for three or more consecutive days of school due to illness, LLPS requires a written note from either a parent or physician before the child may return to school.

Animals/Pets at School

Some of our classes may have a live mascot in their classroom (fish, frog, etc.). From time to time, we may have the opportunity for animals to visit us for a special occasion at school. Every effort will be made to notify parents in writing prior to their child's class having a live animal in the classroom or at the school.

Birthday Celebrations

Little Lambs Preschool recognizes that birthdays are a special day for our children, therefore we cherish the opportunity to celebrate life. Children are welcome to bring a special snack to share on their birthday, however this is optional, we will celebrate your child's birthday regardless. Please check with your child's teacher for any food allergies in the classroom. Food items must be store bought and in their original packing with ingredients listed, no homemade items will be allowed.

Also, keep in mind good nutrition. Special snacks not only include cupcakes and sweets, but also fresh fruit, cheese with whole grain crackers, or yogurt tubes. Children may also choose to send in non-edible items, such as bubbles or small toys. The options are endless!

Children's Arrival & Dismissal

Arrival

For your child's safety, we require that you, or another authorized adult, bring your child into the school each morning and get him/her settled. Sign your child in upon arrival. Be sure that a staff member is aware of your child's arrival before you leave.

As a courtesy, please notify the school if your child will be late or not in attendance.

Children's Arrival & Dismissal continued...

Dismissal

During dismissal, all children are escorted directly to the parking lot by their classroom teacher. Parents are expected to be in the car pick-up line at each class's specific ending time.

If an emergency delays you and you are going to be late picking up your child, please call the school before dismissal or as soon as possible.

If your child remains at the school 10 minutes past the dismissal time, and we have not heard from you, we will take the following steps:

- Your child will be brought to the Director's office to wait for your arrival.
- We will attempt to reach you at all possible contact numbers,
- Finally, we will call the people on your Emergency Form.

Children's Health & Safety

Children will be supervised, and their activities closely monitored, and all safety rules will be strictly enforced at all times. Security cameras will be used to monitor the hallways, lobby and parking area. They will not be installed in the classrooms and will be monitored by the Director and Admin Assistant, not an outside company.

Children's Health & Safety continued...

Injuries will be documented on an Accident Report Form by a staff member. The teacher will report the incident to the parent or authorized pick-up person at dismissal and present the Accident Report for signature. A copy of the Accident Report will be given to the parent or authorized pick-up person and the original to the Director for filing.

For health and safety reasons, Little Lambs Preschool does not allow children to have bottles, pacifiers, sippy cups, or other special lovies in the classroom. Please speak with your child's teacher if you have any concerns.

Children's Illness

We ask you to keep your child at home when he/she shows signs of illness such as:

- Fever
- An upset stomach (vomiting or diarrhea uncontained, two in one hour)
- A childhood communicable disease
- A rash of unexplained origin
- Any sign of eye, ear, or sinus infections
- A need for constant one-on-one attention

If your child becomes sick at school, he/she will be excluded from contact with the other children, and you will be notified to pick up your child.

Your child may return to school when he/she:

- Has maintained a normal temperature for 24 hours without medication.
- Has been vomit free and diarrhea free for 24 hours.
- Has been approved to attend childcare from a physician or medical advisor.

Class Offerings

Little Lambs serves children ages two to five. The classes are broken down as follows:

- **Two-Year Old's**: Children who will be two-years old by September 1st are eligible for our two-day program.
- **Three-Year Old's**: Children who will be three-years old by September 1st have two options for enrollment:
 - Two days per week
 - Three days per week
- **Four-Year Old's/Pre-K**: Children who will be four-years old by September 1st have two options for enrollment:
 - Three days per week
 - Four days per week

In keeping with its mission, Little Lambs Preschool welcomes equally the children of the congregation and the greater community. All are alike in God's eyes and in the minds of those who devote their lives to the development of Jesus' special ones. Little Lambs Preschool admits children of any race, religion, color, national and ethnic origin. It does not discriminate on any of these bases in its educational policies, admissions policies, and other programs.

Clothing

Children need to wear shoes that have closed toes with socks. Children are scheduled for outdoor activities every day and should be dressed appropriately for the weather.

Children are often uncomfortable or upset if their clothes are wet or soiled. We request a change of clothes be brought to school with your child in a labeled bag. Please label your child's clothing, especially jackets and coats.

Discipline Policy

A loving, nurturing, and hugging environment prevails at all times. Through developmentally appropriate activities, materials, and clear limits, we provide a supportive framework for effectively guiding children.

Acceptable discipline techniques include:

- Redirecting the child to another activity.
- Verbal corrections.
- Planning ahead to prevent problems.
- Encouraging appropriate behavior.
- Having consistent clear rules that are developed in conjunction with children.
- Describing the situation to encourage the child's evaluation of the problem rather than imposing a solution.
- Separation, if necessary.

Should a child repeatedly behave in a way that is detrimental to himself/herself, other children or adults, the Teacher will bring the problem to the attention of the Director. At that time, parents will be contacted to discuss the problem and an action plan will be developed.

Fire & Emergency Preparedness Drills

LLPS will conduct monthly fire drills. The drills will be a combination of scheduled and surprise drills, both for the children and the staff. Emergency preparedness drills are practiced twice a year. The drills cover topics such as severe weather procedures as well as personal safety drills. A written copy of our emergency preparedness plan is posted in all classrooms and in the lobby.

Inclement Weather Policy

The Little Lambs Preschool follows the Calvert County Public School system for closings due to inclement weather. When Calvert County closes school, LLPS will also be closed. Due to our later opening time, LLPS will open on time when Calvert County announces a delayed arrival, unless notified by LLPS staff.

Licensing

Little Lambs Preschool is licensed and annually inspected through the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Childcare. The preschool is also annually inspected by the Fire Marshall.

Little Lambs Preschool Board

Little Lambs preschool is governed by a preschool board. The Preschool Board is made up of members of First Lutheran Church, administrators of the church, the Preschool Director, and a parent from the preschool whenever possible. The Board meets regularly to discuss all aspects of the school.

Meals & Snacks

Snacks are served to children in our two and three-year old classes. We offer a variety of snacks from at least two different food groups that may incorporate our theme, letter of the week or color of the month.

In our Pre-K classrooms, the children bring their own lunch. We are required to serve 1% milk at each meal and refrigerate the lunches. A few times a year the school provides a special lunch. Parents will be notified in advance. A detailed letter explaining our lunch procedures will be sent home prior to the start of the school year, typically at the class orientation.

Medication Administration

The administration of medication to children by school staff is discouraged. However, decisions as to the administration will be made by the Director on a case-by-case basis.

If a physician deems it necessary, and the Director has approved the request, the following conditions should be met for medication administration:

- A medication Authorization Form must be filled out by the parent and given to the Director.
- All medications must be brought to the school by the student's parent or guardian.
- All medications are to be labeled with the student's name and in the original container.
- All medication shall be returned to the parent at the end of the time period designated by the physician, or upon the expiration date, or at the end of the school year.
- Sunscreen, body lotions, and bug spray should be applied prior to arrival. However, if your child requires an additional application, please notify your child's teacher for administration policies.

Parent/School Communication

We maintain personal contact with parents daily. Each class has a private Facebook page which we use to keep parents informed of upcoming events, changes in the calendar, and program happenings. Teachers will post weekly updates and pictures of the students. Pre-K uses a communication folder that goes home every day for parents and teachers to communicate.

Parent/School Communication continued...

Parent-Teacher conferences are offered throughout the school year at which time we will discuss your child's progress and overall development. Special conferences can be scheduled at any time when teachers or parents feel there is a need.

Parent Grievance Policy

The Little Lambs Preschool Administrative staff makes every effort to evaluate and resolve parent concerns regarding the program's effectiveness in meeting the needs of the children and families served. It is important to be respectful, supportive and constructive during this process. If a conflict occurs between two families, the Preschool Director may involve the FLC Pastor and/or Preschool Board immediately. Anonymous complaints or suggestions can be made at any time by leaving a note for the Director in the box outside the office or in the tuition box. Suggestions for improving Little Lambs Preschool are always welcome.

If a Little Lambs parent has a grievance or concern, they should follow the steps outlined below:

Step One: Informal discussions

All parent concerns regarding the facility, staff, curriculum, or policies should be reported to the Director of Little Lambs Preschool. The Director is available during operating hours to discuss parent issues, concerns or complaints either in person or by phone.

Step Two: Parent Meeting

If desired, Little Lambs Preschool Director will schedule a meeting with the parent to further discuss and resolve complaints immediately.

Parent Grievance Policy continued...

Step Three: Preschool Board

If the situation remains unresolved to the parent's satisfaction, the parents must submit their grievance to the Preschool Board in writing or by email. The Little Lambs Preschool Board will work with the Director to evaluate and act on the grievance

Step Four: Unresolved Grievance

If no resolution is reached the Preschool Director along with the Preschool Board Chairperson will submit a signed written statement detailing the attempts at conflict resolution to the Pastor of First Lutheran Church. The Pastor will provide a final written resolution to the Preschool Board within a reasonable time period.

Persons Authorized to Pick-up Children

At the time of enrollment, parents must provide us with the names and telephone numbers of persons authorized to pick-up their child on the emergency form. It is the parent or guardian's responsibility to notify the school of any changes in this authorization. If someone other than the authorized person is to pick up your child, please notify the school in writing.

We will only release children to authorized persons. Photo identification may be requested by the school before the child is released.

Photo Policy

Little Lambs Preschool reserves the right to use your child's photo for school related publicity or classroom activities (such as private class Facebook pages) unless we receive written notification otherwise.

Registration

Registration will first be offered to all currently enrolled families, including siblings of currently enrolled students, at LLPS in January. Registration will then open to the community in February.

Religious Experience for Children

A variety of experiences bringing children closer to God are provided in every class. These include chapel time with a member of the ministerial staff, prayer before meals, Bible stories about Jesus, and talking about God as a normal part of conversation between children and adults. Integrating the Christian faith into every aspect of the children's experiences is a major emphasis in the Little Lambs Preschool curriculum.

Scholarships

Little Lambs Preschool offers financial aid to eligible families. Please contact the Director for more information.

School Calendar

Little Lambs Preschool operates from September through May. A detailed yearly calendar is provided to all families at orientation. If the total number of school days is reduced below 90% due to inclement weather or other closure reasons, make-up days will be provided.

Screen Time

LLPS does not currently use computers in the classroom. We follow the Office of Childcare regarding “Interactive Technology” and “Passive Technology.” We typically only use movies, videos, and/or cartoons during special events at school (i.e., pajama day). In the event we choose to watch a special show it will not exceed 30 minutes. Parents are notified in advance of the show content. Technology will not be viewed during meals or at snack time.

Special On-Site Activities & Field Trips

First-hand experiences are a very important part of the LLPS program. We hold special on-site activities throughout the school year. Activities range from our Fall Fun Day to Grandparent’s Day to the ever-popular Pajama Day! These activities are not only filled with fun and variety, but they are also designed to promote physical development and early learning.

Occasionally, off-site field trips are planned to expand the children’s knowledge. Parents will receive advanced notice of any field trips. Parents are responsible for transportation to and from the field trip location and your supervision is required for the duration of the activity. If you choose not to participate, then your child will need to remain at home on the day of the field trip.

Staff Requirements

The Maryland State Department of Education Office of Childcare requires a lead teacher to have a 90-hour childcare class, one year experience, and be 18 years of age. An assistant teacher is required to be 18 years of age. Traditionally, LLPS has maintained a staff that exceeds these expectations.

Little Lambs Preschool seeks Christian staff who have a love of the Lord and have a strong desire to teach preschoolers. All employees are fingerprinted and have cleared a background check.

Staff-to-Child Ratio Requirements

The state of Maryland requires the following staff-to-child ratios:

- **Two-year old's**: One staff member to 6 children.
- **Three-year old's and Pre-K**: One staff member to 10 children.

Customarily, LLPS operates with lower than required staff-to-child ratios in all the classrooms as follows:

- **Two-year old's**: Two staff members to 10 children (class size not to exceed 12).
- **Three-year old's**: Two staff members to 12 children (class size not to exceed 14).
- **Four-Year old's/Pre-K**: Two staff members to 15 children (class size not to exceed 15).

Toilet Training

Two-Year Old's

Toilet training is a major milestone in your child's life! We would like to support you in this endeavor. Parents and staff need to work together to ensure success for your child/ Our goal is to be consistent in working together. Toilet training should not be rushed. When the child begins to show signs of readiness (i.e., wakes up dry after naps, seems aware of bodily functions, etc.) is when toilet training should be initiated. If your child does not show an interest in toilet training and resists staff efforts to help, training will be postponed until interest is shown. If your child is being toilet trained, please pack a change of underpants/training pants and clothes in a plastic bag and place it in your child's backpack.

Three-Year Old's

Children in the three-year old class are expected to be toilet trained. If after a certain period, a child in the three-year old class is not toilet trained, the child may no longer be eligible for enrollment and may be asked to withdraw following the recommendation of the Director and approval of the Preschool Board.

Four-Year Old's/Pre-K

Children in the Pre-K class must be toilet trained. This means that the children are able to manage their own bathroom needs without help. If a child in the Pre-K class is not toilet trained, the child is no longer eligible for enrollment and may be asked to withdraw following the recommendation of the Director and approval of the Preschool Board.

Tuition & Registration Fees

Tuition and Registration fees are established by the Preschool Board. At the time of registration, a registration form must be completed by the parent or authorized guardian. A registration fee, along with the first month's (September) tuition will be collected to secure your child's enrollment. Currently enrolled families must be up to date with respect to their current tuition payments prior to registering for the following year.

Tuition is paid one month in advance and is due by the first Friday of each month. Registration fees and monthly tuition paid are non-refundable. There will be a \$15.00 late fee for any tuition payment made after the 15th of each month.

If tuition is late, parents will be reminded by email and/or a letter will be sent home. In the letter, parents will be reminded that financial aid is available and how to apply. We will give every opportunity for the parents to pay, however if LLPS does not receive (1) a response from a parent regarding late tuition, or (2) no promise to pay is made, or (3) full payment is not made by the third month, their child will be dismissed from the preschool. The child's position will then be offered to the next student on the waitlist. Please speak with the Director if you are experiencing a financial need at any time during the school year.

A fee will be charged for all returned checks. This fee and any outstanding registration fee or tuition will be due immediately upon notification.

Tuition Discounts

If two or more children of the same family are concurrently enrolled, each child after the oldest child is eligible for a ten percent tuition discount.

Volunteer Opportunities

Parents are not required to work in their child's classroom. Sometimes volunteers are needed for special events at school, to make items, assist with projects from home (playdough, baked goods, costumes, cutting, assembling, etc.), or to donate items. There will be a sign-up sheet or contact from your child's teacher or administration when the need arises. Volunteers at school, when school is in session, will be asked to wear a nametag and assist under the direction of a LLPS staff member and will not be alone with students. Volunteers are asked to follow the staff members' instructions and keep matters regarding specific students at school confidential. Regularly scheduled volunteers, that work directly with students, meet the requirements of LLPS staff in regard to a fingerprint/background check and new staff orientation.

NOTES



Little Lambs Preschool

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