



Christ-Centered Early Childhood Education

Parent Handbook

2021-2022 School Year

1100 SE Sharon Drive
Ankeny, Iowa 50023
(515)-963-1210
preschool@stpaulankeny.org

Welcome to St. Paul Lutheran Preschool. This handbook is designed to inform parents and guardians of our policies and procedures. In the remaining document the term “parents” refers to parents and guardians. Please read this booklet carefully and keep for future reference. If you have any questions, please refer them to the Preschool Director.

MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

The mission of St. Paul Lutheran Preschool is to provide the Ankeny community and surrounding area with Christ-centered early childhood education where children can grow, learn, and develop in a safe, caring, and distinctively Christian environment.

Our philosophy is to incorporate play-based learning and academic instruction in a Christian learning environment so that we can best prepare our students for success in all areas of life. Our program focuses on growing the child as a “whole” and is based on the emotional, physical, social, spiritual, and cognitive needs of each individual child.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Provide a quality Christian program that increases an understanding of Christ and His love.
- Teach children age-appropriate Christian truths.
- Provide a safe, consistent, and enriched environment where developmentally appropriate activities encourage exploration and hands-on learning experiences.
- Nurture a sense of dignity and self-worth within the child and his/her family, while fostering concern for others and cooperation in work and play.
- Inspire a love of learning and expose children to enriching disciplines including, but not limited to, art, music, science, Spanish, Bible stories, literature, and nature.

GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

3-Year-Old Program

3 years of age by September 15, 2021

Our three-year-old program provides children the opportunity to learn through play and discovery while developing body awareness, self-awareness, social skills, and basic preacademic skills in a Christ-centered environment.

A typical three-year-old class includes:

- Fine-Motor and Gross-Motor Activities
- Creative Play
- Circle Time (Calendar, Weather, Music, etc.)
- Jesus Time (Daily Bible Lesson)
- Art or Craft Time
- Small Group Discovery Time

4-Year-Old Program

4 years of age by September 15, 2021

Our four-year-old program introduces children to pre-kindergarten skills while fostering the child's social, emotional, and spiritual awareness. Children in our four-year-old program will participate in focused lessons that teach language and pre-reading skills. Children will also participate in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programming where children learn through hands-on investigation, discovery, and building projects. While children at this age have improved coordination, gross-motor and fine-motor development is also a focus.

A typical four-year-old class includes:

- Fine-Motor (pre-writing skills, writing skills towards the end of the year)

- Gross-Motor Activities
- Creative Play
- Jesus Time (Daily Bible Lesson)
- Circle Time (Calendar, Weather, Spanish, Music, etc.)
- Art or Craft Time
- Small Group Discovery Time (focusing on specific academic skills)

Pre-K Program

5 years of age by Jan. 1, 2022 or approved by the Director

Our Pre-K program helps children advance their skills in prekindergarten areas such as reading, writing, math, and language. Children in our Pre-K program will also participate in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programming where children learn through hands-on investigation, discovery, building, and science projects. While children at this age have improved coordination, gross-motor and fine-motor development is also a focus. Our Pre-K curriculum is aligned with the Ankeny School District Kindergarten Standards.

A typical Pre-K class includes:

- Fine-Motor (pre-writing and handwriting)
- Gross-Motor Activities
- Creative Play
- Jesus Time (Daily Bible Lesson)
- Circle Time (Calendar, Weather, Spanish, Music, etc.)
- Art or Craft Time
- Small Group Discovery Time (focusing on specific academic skills)

PRESCHOOL ENRICHMENT

Preschool Enrichment is an additional day of programming for our students.

Parents can register their children from month to month for a

small fee. More information will be provided at our Parent Information Night.

REGISTRATION AND FEES

The registration packet includes the following documents:

- Welcome Cover Letter
- Initial Registration Form
- Permission Form
- Emergency Medical Consent Form
- Immunization Form
- Physical Form

When registration opens, the Initial Registration Form must be filled out completely and returned to the preschool along with the nonrefundable registration fee.

All forms must be completed and on file before the child begins preschool, and kept current throughout the school year. Parents must notify the school regarding changes in address, phone numbers, emails, health, or persons authorized to pick-up their children.

TUITION

Program costs for the school year are assessed and divided into nine installments; tuition remains the same for all months regardless of holidays or absences.

The first (of nine) tuition installment is due by May 1, 2021 to reserve your child's space in the program for the upcoming year.

The remaining tuition installments are due on or before the first session of the month (September through April). There is no payment due in May. Once an installment is submitted, it is nonrefundable.

If multiple siblings attend our preschool during the same school year, there is a 25% discount for each additional child's tuition.

FINANCIAL AID

It is our hope that all families interested in Christian education would have the opportunity for their children to attend our preschool. Financial assistance may be available. Contact the Director for more information.

ENROLLMENT TERMINATION

If enrollment is terminated by parents, we ask that parents notify the Director at least three weeks in advance. Tuition payments will not be refunded except for extenuating circumstances due to a medical or emergency event; each event must be reviewed by the school board.

Children attending St. Paul may be discharged from the preschool program if the Preschool Director or the parents decide that continuing the program is not meeting the needs of the child. Termination may occur for any of the following reasons, but are not limited to: failure to comply with payments, unresolved behavior conflict by a child, or any type of hostile situation. All decisions to terminate services, communication concerning the identified problem, or appeal, shall be handled by the Preschool Director.

GENERAL STAFFING INFORMATION

St. Paul Lutheran Preschool is committed to maintaining low child to staff ratios. We believe that high quality education begins with creating personal and nurturing relationships between teachers and children. The following are the maximum teacher to child ratios at our school:

3-Year-Old Program: 1 teacher to 8 children

4-Year-Old and Pre-K Programs: 1 teacher to 12 children

In order to achieve positive growth and development for each child, we hire teachers whose passion and goal is to provide quality Christian education. Our Director and Lead Teachers all hold bachelor's degrees in education, and along with all staff, further their knowledge through continuing education courses and semi-

nars. All staff members are required to obtain certification for CPR, First Aid, Universal Precautions, and are considered Mandatory Reporters. These certifications will remain current the entire time a staff member is working at St. Paul Lutheran Preschool. In addition, every staff member must complete 12 hours of Essentials Preservice training through the Iowa State University Extension and the State of Iowa. By completing this training staff gain an understanding of quality education initiatives along with state rules and policies. The Iowa Code no. 406 requires staff of licensed preschools to report to the Department of Human Services in all instances of suspected child abuse involving children attending the preschool.

Prior to being hired, each employee must have a criminal record check through the State of Iowa. Each potential staff member must also complete a national criminal history check completed through the Federal Bureau of Investigation. We will not hire individuals charged and convicted of child abuse and/or neglect.

ELIGIBILITY

Our preschool is open to anyone desiring the service, regardless of race, religion, color, nationality, ethnic, or economic background. All children must be toilet trained. See the General Program Information section for age eligibility requirements.

SUPPLIES

School supplies will be furnished by the preschool. Parents are asked to supply a tote bag or backpack for their child's belongings. Please clearly label backpacks with your child's first and last name (you may want to label inside the bag for safety). Parents will have the opportunity to make supply donations throughout the year. *(Donations are completely optional, but we do appreciate your support!)*

Children are discouraged from bringing items/toys from the home.

However, teachers may plan assigned “sharing” days when children may bring toys or other special items to school. We urge you not to send items of great value at these times. The preschool does not take responsibility for items that are lost or damaged.

CLOTHING

Children should wear comfortable, washable clothing to preschool. Rubber-soled shoes (gym type) are most appropriate for both indoor and outdoor play. Please do not send children in opened-toed sandals or flip-flops. Activities may be restricted if these are worn to school. The preschool will provide paint shirts to protect children’s clothing.

SNACKS

St. Paul Lutheran Preschool is nut-free, but we do share our facility with St. Paul Lutheran Church that is NOT nut-free. The preschool supplies snacks each session. Water, 100% juice, or 1% milk will be served with snacks. All birthday snacks and donations must be store bought AND nut-free.

BIRTHDAYS

Children may celebrate their birthdays or half-birthdays (for summer birthdays) at preschool by providing a snack on their special day. Snacks must be nutritious, store-bought, and nut-free. Teachers can provide ideas for birthday snacks, if needed.

We encourage preschoolers and families to socialize with one another outside of preschool. Parents may refer to the student phone number and address directory (provided during the first month of the school year) for extracurricular communication. Staff will not send party invitations, thank you notes, etc. via students’ backpacks.

COMMUNICATION

We welcome and encourage frequent and informal communication between parents and staff. Phone calls and emails will be responded to as soon as possible.

Newsletters and calendars will be sent home on a monthly basis. Activities, themes, Bible lessons, and other important information will be communicated through our newsletters.

Telephone or one-on-one Parent/Teacher conferences may be scheduled at any time. Our 4-year-old and Pre-K classes will have Parent/Teacher conferences in the winter and spring of each year. Our 3-year-old class will have Parent/Teacher conferences in the spring.

ABSENCES

Please notify your child's teacher by phone or email if your child is going to be absent.

ILLNESS

For the protection of all children and staff, your child should be kept home if they show any of the following symptoms: Fever (over 100 degrees), diarrhea or vomiting, a rash (undiagnosed or contagious), discharging eyes or ears.

If your child is exposed to a highly contagious disease he/she should be kept home and the condition should be reported to the school (examples: strep throat, chicken pox, pink-eye, pinworms, and others). You know your child best; if he/she is not going to enjoy school because of illness, please keep him/her home. Your child may return to class 24 hours being fever-free or when a doctor recommends.

If a child becomes ill during class, parents or caregivers will be notified with a request to take the child home.

All known allergies and reactions must be reported to the teacher.

The preschool will notify parents through email or a phone call if children are exposed to communicable diseases. Parents will also be notified if there is a confirmed case in their child's class.

MEDICATION

State licensing requires all medications (including cough drops and sunscreen) be in the original container labeled with the child's name and dosage instructions. Parents are to sign and submit a Medication Authorization Form, and give the medication directly to a staff member. All medicine is kept out of reach of children. Staff will complete a medication log for any doses given.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event of a medical emergency or accident, we will contact the parent as soon as possible. If unable to reach the contacts provided and emergency treatment is required, the child will be taken to the hospital designated on the Emergency Consent Form. First Aid will be administered to anyone who receives a minor injury.

PARENTAL ACCESS

Parents have unlimited access to their child, and are welcome to visit our classroom. A court order prohibiting parental contact must be in a child's file to deny access to his/her parent.

CALENDAR

St. Paul Lutheran Preschool follows the Ankeny School District's calendar with the following exceptions: Good Friday (No School), Christmas Break, and our start/end dates.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

If Ankeny School District has a two-hour delay due to weather conditions, our morning classes will not meet, but afternoon clas-

ses will meet are regularly scheduled times. If there is a one-hour delay we will start at our normal time. If Ankeny School District cancels classes due to weather, St. Paul Lutheran Preschool will also be closed. Please check your local news coverage to keep up -to-date during times of inclement weather.

FUNERALS

St. Paul Lutheran Church and Preschool share their space. In the event of a funeral service held at St. Paul Lutheran Church, preschool sessions may be cancelled. If cancellation is necessary, parents will be notified at a minimum of two days prior to the affected day. Any cancelled days due to a funeral will be made up at the end of the school year.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

Drop-Off

Carline: If using the carline, please drive slowly around to the back of the building to the door of the preschool entrance. A teacher will walk out to get your child from your vehicle.

Walk-in: If you would like to walk your child into the building please park in the parking lot by the preschool entrance and walk your child to the preschool doors.

Pick-Up

Pick-up will be carline only. During the first couple weeks of school we ask that you place your child's name card (provided at our parent information night) at the base of the front window for pick-up. ***If someone else will be picking up your child, you must contact the preschool in advance.*** Staff will ask for identification of any unfamiliar person. We will also verify their name is on the approved Permission Form. No child will be permitted to leave without expressed written permission.

Carline drop-off will begin no earlier than 10 minutes before class time and children should be picked up promptly at the time of dismissal.

DISCIPLINE

Situations that arise between children which may require teacher attention and intervention will be handled in a loving, Christian manner. Disruptive, destructive, or aggressive physical or verbal behaviors will not be allowed. If a child's behavior becomes disruptive or inappropriate, the staff will redirect the child to a positive and constructive activity. If this is not successful, the child will be asked to take a "time out." The amount of time will reflect the child's age and the context of the behavior. The child may return to the group when he/she is calm, and able to show acceptable behavior. When appropriate, logical consequences may be used, or the child may be asked to restate the safety rule previously unobserved before returning to the group.

A safe environment for our students is a primary concern. St. Paul Lutheran Preschool reserves the right to terminate enrollment at any time.

Punishments that are never used at our preschool include:

- Corporal punishment including spanking, slapping, shaking, humiliating, or frightening punishment.
- Verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks.
- Punishment or threat of punishment associated with food or rest.

BITING POLICY

(Policy in accordance with Department of Human Services)

Preschool aged children may bite for a variety of reasons: teething, sensory exploration, cause and effect, imitation, crowding, attention seeking, frustration, and stress. Biting is not something to blame on children, their parents, or their teachers. If a biting incident occurs, staff will immediately take action, not to blame the biter, but to change the environment and help the child change his/her behavior.

In the case of a biting incident, the following steps will be taken:

- 1.The teacher will remove the child from the situation and focus caring attention on the child who was bitten.
- 2.First aid will immediately be provided to the child who was bitten. The wound will be washed with soap and water, and bandaged as necessary.
- 3.The teacher will talk to the child who bit about different strategies the child could use next time (give them appropriate words, if able) instead of biting. This should be done in a short simple way.
- 4.The teacher will write a detailed incident report and notify the Director.
- 5.The parents of both children involved will be notified personally and privately the same day. All information is confidential and names of the children involved in the incident are not shared between parents.

If biting continues to happen, staff will work with parents to gather information about the child’s behavior and begin observations to determine the reasons for biting. Once triggers are identified, staff can work on prevention strategies, and start teaching specific replacement skills.

UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS

(Policy in accordance with Department of Human Services)

The safety of our students and staff is a top priority at St. Paul Lutheran Preschool. Our preschool takes all steps necessary to ensure the safety of our facility.

Any person in the preschool who is not a staff member, substitute, or volunteer who has not had a record check and approval to be involved with child care **shall not** have **“unrestricted access”** to children for whom that person is not the parent.

*“Unrestricted access” means that a person has contact with a child alone or is directly responsible for child care.

1. Persons who do not have unrestricted access will be under

the direct “supervision” and “monitoring” of a paid staff member at all times and will not be allowed to assume any child care responsibilities. The primary responsibility of the supervision and monitoring will be assumed by the teacher unless he/she delegates it to the teacher assistant.

2. Preschool staff will approach any unknown person within the school facility to ask of their purpose. If staff is unsure about the reason, they will contact the Director to get approval for the person to be on site. If it becomes a dangerous situation, staff will follow the “intruder in the facility” procedures. Any persons who are in the preschool facility for other reasons such as maintenance or repairs will be monitored by paid staff and will not be allowed to interact with the children on premise.
3. A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor (even if the sex offender is the parent) is required to register with the Iowa sex offender registry (Iowa Code 692A):
 - a. Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer in our preschool.
 - b. Shall not be in the preschool facility without the written permission of the Preschool Director, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender’s own child to and from preschool.

If written permission is granted, it shall include the conditions under which the sex offender may be present, including:

1. The precise location in the school where the sex offender may be present.
2. The reason for the sex offender’s presence at the facility.
3. The duration of the sex offender’s presence.
4. Description of how the school staff will supervise the sex offender to ensure that the sex offender is not left alone with a child.
5. The written permission shall be signed and dated by the Director and sex offender, and kept on file for review by the DHS licensing consultant.

SAFETY POLICIES

- Children are supervised at all times within the facility and on the playground
- Children and staff participate in fire and tornado drills on a monthly basis
- An emergency plan is posted in each room for evacuation
- Emergency numbers for the police, fire department, poison control, and ambulance will be kept by the telephone. Children's emergency information is easily accessible
- All staff will be certified in First Aid, Universal Precautions, and CPR
- First Aid kits are clearly labeled and easily accessible
- Preschool has written emergency plans for fire, tornado, flood, blizzards, earthquakes, intruders, intoxicated parents or caregivers, lost or abducted children, power failures, bomb threats, and chemical spills

EMERGENCY EVACUATION AND REPORTING PLAN

In the case of an emergency, students will be taken to safe designated areas at first warning or alarm. The teachers will take portable emergency files and cell phones with them. Students' safety is our first priority; parents will be notified by phone as soon as reasonably possible. The teachers will remain with the children until an authorized person arrives for pick-up.

This handbook is written in compliance with the Iowa Department of Human Services standards for childcare facilities.

