

Preschool & Infant Center



Parent Handbook & Admissions Agreement
2023 - 2024

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Welcome

Welcome to the Grace Christian Preschool! We are delighted that you have chosen to enroll your child in preschool with us here and look forward to a year of learning, fun, much growth and a real knowledge and love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This handbook explains our program and policies in detail. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to ask any of the preschool staff at any time. Our goal is to support you as parents and build on the foundation of learning and discovery you have already begun at home. Encouraging knowledge, exploration and growth in these first early years of your child's life is a critical component, and it is such an honor to participate with you in it.

About Us

We are part of a church body, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and have a rich history of educational excellence. Founded in 1957, Grace Lutheran School began with 76 students, and has since grown to be a National Lutheran School Accredited institution. Our preschool opened its doors in 1991 and continues to grow as an agency of Grace Lutheran Church, providing an outreach of the church's ministry to both its members and the community.

Vision

The teachers and leadership of Grace Christian Preschool work very hard to create a safe and nurturing environment committed to developing the whole child (academically, emotionally, and spiritually), creating responsible leaders, instilling self-confidence and encouraging the development of citizens with integrity. Grace Lutheran Church and Christian School exists to impact and influence our culture with the amazing love of Jesus Christ...inviting, empowering and encouraging all to know and serve Him.

Mission Statement

Grace Christian School provides a Christ-centered, nurturing community along with a rigorous academic program. Students are encouraged to become responsible leaders, life-long learners, and compassionate citizens who are developing a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ.

Philosophy and Purpose

We exist as an agency of Grace Lutheran Church, and are an outreach of the church's ministry to both its membership and the community. The goals and objectives of the church and school are those given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We believe that our formal curriculum, instruction and hands-on learning environment encourage learning through play. Our day-to-day activities in the classroom center around the message of God's forgiving love in Christ. We strive to foster the spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of each child. We do this by providing a Christian education that applies God's Law and the Gospel to all aspects of life and learning. We impart knowledge, strive to develop a positive self-image, and work toward

the realization of each child's full potential. The faculty and staff assist, through examples and guidance, the forming of productive citizens in God's world.

Proper Order of Authority

Grace Christian School is an integral part of Grace Lutheran Church and is an outreach of the church's ministry to both its membership and the surrounding community. The preschool director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the preschool and is directly responsible to the Grace Superintendent, Senior Pastor, the Board of Elders and the Board of Directors. In accordance with God's word in Matthew 18:15-17 any concern or disagreement with a teacher is to be directly discussed with the teacher first. Discussing it with others may lead to gossip and is contrary to God's directive for dealing with others as outlined in Matthew 18 and stated in the 8th commandment. If after speaking to the teacher individually you cannot come to an agreeable resolution of the situation, please talk to the director and a meeting will be scheduled to work out the differences. The director is available to meet with parents at their convenience during, before, and after school hours.

Developmental Goals

We determine goals for the children based on their individual learning styles, interests and skill levels. We help children learn and grow in the following areas:

- **Social**- making friends, sharing, working with others, feeling at ease in school
- **Emotional**- developing independence and self-control, experiencing pride in their work, having a positive attitude toward life and learning
- **Cognitive**- becoming a confident learner, solving problems, asking questions, trying out new ideas
- **Linguistic**- building a strong vocabulary, expressing ideas and feelings, gaining auditory and phonemic awareness
- **Physical**- using small and large muscle groups, practicing eye-hand coordination, developing writing skills
- **Spiritual**- knowing Jesus as a real person in their life, learning to see Christ in Scripture through daily Bible lessons, talking to God through prayer, loving and serving others in Christ

Staff

The staff at Grace Christian Preschool is dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment in which children can create, explore and learn. The teachers have been selected because they have a strong background of course work and experience in Early Childhood Education. Our NLSA accreditation affirms that we exceed state education qualifications. All staff members are current on CPR and First Aid certification. Before being hired, all staff members are fingerprinted and receive Criminal and Child Abuse Record Clearances.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

Preschool hours of operation are from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM, with the exception of the third Tuesday of each month when we close at 5:00 PM for our monthly staff meeting. In the event that you are late to pick-up your child from preschool, your account will be charged \$15, plus an additional \$1 for each minute past our scheduled closing time on that day.

Our daily structured program begins between 8:15 - 9:00 AM (depending on the classroom), therefore we strongly encourage you to drop your child off before 9:00 AM. If for any reason you need to bring your child for a late drop off, please call and make arrangements with the preschool office.

Parking

For everyone's safety, please park in the established spaces in front of the preschool. We have a busy parking lot and we ask that you do not park in the disabled parking spaces at any time unless you have a disabled placard. We kindly ask that you don't leave younger siblings in the car alone while you drop off or pick up your child!

Gate

Please help keep your child and other children safe by closely attending them at the front entrance gate to the welcome area of the preschool. We teach the children that only a parent or teacher should open any of the gates at preschool, and ask for your assistance in affirming this safety measure with your little ones. We also ask that you do not allow your child or siblings to ride, climb, or slam the gates.

Sign In & Out

When your child arrives at preschool, parents are required to sign-in, walk the child to the classroom / playground and see that the child is under the supervision of the teacher before leaving the premises. When you are picking your child up, you are also required to walk to your child's classroom / playground and be sure the teacher sees you taking your child from school, before checking out. State licensing requires a detailed sign-in/out log be kept.

Only those individuals listed on your child's emergency card will be allowed to pick up your child. Those who are listed on the emergency card, but are still unfamiliar to staff will be asked to show picture identification prior to leaving with your child.

Tuition Payments

Tuition payments are billed on the 1st for that month's services. Payment is due in full by the 15th. Payments become delinquent after the 15th. All payments outstanding after the 15th of each month are subject to a \$20 late fee. Returned checks (or declined credit, debit, or ACH transactions) will be subject to a \$25 "returned item" fee. All payments made by credit card are subject to 3% service fee which will be updated annually.

Easing Separation

Saying goodbye to your child can be difficult for both parents and children. We believe that a short, speedy drop off helps your child more than a prolonged goodbye. You are more than welcome to call during the day to see how your child is doing, but we find that most children adjust quickly to the preschool environment. Please ask the teacher or Preschool Director if you would like more information on separation anxiety.

Health & Safety

Accidents and Incidents

Despite our best efforts to keep children from harm, accidents sometimes happen. It is our policy to inform parents whenever their child experiences an accident (such as a fall or bump) or incident (bee sting, splinter, hit or bitten by another child) that requires medical or staff attention. Parents will receive an Accident/Incident Report in their child's folder. In the event that a more severe accident occurs, we will attempt to contact the parents immediately by phone.

Behavioral Guidance/Procedures for Aggressive Behavior

(Discipline Policy)

The love and forgiveness of Jesus provides the overall model for our behavioral guidance plan at Grace Christian Preschool. Teachers and staff will provide loving encouragement to the children and provide a positive role model for them to follow. Teachers and staff will redirect children and groups away from problems and toward a constructive activity in order to reduce conflict.

When undesirable behavior occurs, the child will be given an age-appropriate explanation of what is expected and why, and a reminder that the behavior is unacceptable. In some cases, the teacher may provide some quiet time for the child away from distractions, and will work with the child to develop a positive plan for rejoining the group. Jesus' loving forgiveness for all of us will always be highlighted.

In the case of persistently unsafe or disruptive behavior, the teacher will observe and record the behavior of the child and the staff responses to that behavior. The teacher will then work to develop a plan addressing the behavior in consultation with the parents, as well as other staff members and professionals when appropriate.

All children will always be assured that the teacher cares for them greatly and understands that they may need to be reminded of the rules from time to time. The terms "good and bad choices" will be used in reference to students' conduct at preschool, NOT "good or bad boy/girl/kid". Positive reinforcement will be used often and teachers will model behavior they expect the children to follow.

**Services may be discontinued if the Preschool is unable to meet the needs of the child or the parent.*

Behaviors that are determined by the teacher and Preschool Director to be a threat to the safety of the child, their peers or their teachers will result in the following action:

1. The teacher completes a Behavioral Incident Report, discusses the behavior with the parents and has the parent sign the report.
2. The teacher files the Behavioral Incident report with the Preschool Director.
3. The teacher will encourage the child to develop positive problem solving and social skills
4. After a second incident report, the parent meets with the Director to discuss the child's behavior and possible solutions. The parent will be notified at this meeting that a third incident report may result in removal of the child from the Preschool for a day or longer.
5. After a third incident report within a four week period, the child may be removed from the Preschool for a day or longer, depending on the severity of the incident.
6. The teacher and the parent will continue working together on strategies to help the child develop appropriate conduct at preschool.
**Behaviors that are determined by the teacher to constitute an immediate safety threat will result in the immediate notification to the parent and removal of the child for a day or longer.*

Toileting

After their 3rd birthday, we would like all enrolled children to be able to independently use the toilet. We can supervise the children in cleaning themselves and changing clothes as needed, but we will encourage them to help themselves as much as possible.

Naptime

Naptime is a relaxing part of the day. To transition your children into a quiet time, soft music is played while they lie down on their cot and snuggle with their blankets. Teachers make their way around to each child in order to make sure they are comfortable. During the two-hour naptime, even non napping children are required by state licensing to rest quietly. This gives the other children needing sleep the opportunity to do so, and also ensures that our staff is able to adhere to ratio requirements during teacher lunch recesses.

Allergies & Special Diets

Please inform us in writing of any allergies (food or non-food related) or special dietary needs that your child has. We want to work with you to insure the safest environment possible for your child. Please be advised that we will consider each case on an individual basis, but that we may not be able to accommodate severe allergic conditions.

Medication Policy

If your child needs prescribed medication, you must bring it to the Preschool Director and sign the medication form she has. All medication must be in the original container with the prescription label from the pharmacy. Medications needing refrigeration will be stored in the refrigerator located in the director's office. For the safety of all the children, please do not put medication into your child's lunch or backpack. We are unable to administer over the counter medication such as Tylenol or cough syrup unless it is prescribed by a doctor.

Health Policy

For Enrollment:

A Physician's Report (a pre-admission general health evaluation) along with a current record of immunizations signed by a licensed physician is a state mandated requirement and must be completed prior to enrollment.

Illness policy:

We want your child to have the best day possible in school. If he or she exhibits any of the following symptoms, please call us and keep your child home until it is determined your child is healthy enough to return to school. A child who has been prescribed antibiotics may return to school no sooner than 24 hours after their first dose. We really appreciate your consideration in keeping the other children healthy when your child is not feeling well!

The following require children to be free of listed symptoms for 24 hours prior to reinstating care:

- Fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher within the last 24 hours.
- Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness within the last 24 hours (i.e. lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, wheezing, persistent crying or irritability, or difficulty breathing.) Diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting within the last 24 hours

The following require 24 hours of appropriately prescribed treatment prior to returning to child care:

- Scabies, Head Lice or other infestation – In the case of head lice, the child must undergo 24 hours of treatment **AND** be nit-free.
- Impetigo
- Strep throat or other streptococcal infections

The following require a written physician's clearance prior to returning to child care:

- Mouth Sores with drooling
- Rash with fever or behavior change.
- Pink eye (i.e. purulent, bacterial conjunctivitis with white or yellow eye discharge)
- Scabies, Head Lice, or other infestation
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Chicken Pox
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
- Mumps
- Hepatitis A
- Measles
- Rubella
- Shingles

NOTE: Tuition credit or schedule changes are not given due to illness.

Emergency Form

Remember to update your contact numbers throughout the school year by contacting the preschool office.

Closed Campus Policy

Grace is a closed campus. All gates are closed and locked during the day. The only way to enter the premises is through the preschool gate, the grade school or the church office.

- All volunteers and visitors to our preschool must check in at the main office and enter through the preschool office.
- All volunteers must complete the volunteer screening process. Applications are available in the preschool office.

Drills

- An approved and efficient fire alarm system is installed in our school. The principal (or other designated person) under the authorization of the Escondido Fire Department conducts announced/unannounced fire drills monthly, and/or disaster drills periodically.
- The teachers and administration conduct earthquake drills.
- Lock down procedures, bomb threats, and evacuation drills are reviewed in each class.
- Safety doors, fire extinguishers, and apparatus in the school building and church are tested each year.
- Fire exits are clearly marked.
- Safety demonstrations are given from time to time in addition to the regular class instructions.
- In the event of a natural or other disaster, instructions will be given at that time. If evacuation is necessary, students will be released individually, as safety permits us to do so.

Parent Visitors and Volunteers

Parents are always welcome to visit the school and/or volunteer to help in the classroom or with special activities. State Licensing does require that all volunteers undergo a background clearance and submit proof of MMR and seasonal flu vaccinations (see preschool office for more information). Please see the teacher or Preschool Director to arrange visiting times in advance. Sometimes preschool-aged children will behave differently when their parents visit school. To help your child experience a successful day we ask that, during your visit, you encourage him or her to remain involved with the preschool activities.

Birthdays

Parents are welcome to bring a special snack to share for their child's birthday. We ask that you make arrangements at least a few days in advance with your child's teacher, and inquire about class allergies, etc. We also ask that you please refrain from handing out party invitations at preschool, unless you are able to include your child's entire class.

Field Trips

The preschool does **NOT** participate in any off campus field trips. However, our Jr. Summer Camp (the group consisting of Pre-K and Pre-K PLUS graduates who will be entering Kindergarten at the conclusion of the Summer) **MAY** attend weekly field trips as part of their Camp package. More information about our Jr. Summer Camp will become available each Spring.

Holidays/Preschool Closures

Grace Christian Preschool will be **closed** on the following dates. PLEASE NOTE: Our monthly tuition rates are based on a *four week month*. Because there are *52 weeks* in the calendar year, the below listed closures will ***not*** change your monthly tuition rate except where noted.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Presidents Days

Good Friday

Easter Monday

Memorial Day

Three days before summer session begins

July 4th

*A week and a day in August prior to new school year

Labor Day

Veterans Day

Thanksgiving and the day before and after

2 weeks for Christmas Holiday (please refer to preschool calendar)

Regional Teachers Conference in March (date to be announced)

**tuition prorated*

Vacation Credit

We do offer one week of vacation credit for those enrolled in our summer camps. You must give at least 2 weeks advance notice prior to using this vacation time. (One week consists of your scheduled days - i.e. 5 day program = 5 vacation days, 2 day program = 2 vacation days). All vacations are subject to office approval, and may not be used in lieu of payment when a child has been in attendance.

Chapel

All parents and children are given the opportunity for group worship at our regular weekly Preschool Chapel on Fridays at 9:15AM. This service is a high-energy worship experience that is developmentally appropriate for our younger students. Bible stories are presented each week with special emphasis on the Gospel message. Parents are welcome to attend. Pre-Kindergarten and Pre K PLUS may join our grade school at chapel on Wednesday mornings at 8:30 AM in addition to our Friday morning Preschool Chapel.

Bringing Items from Home

Please leave toys and other personal items at home! We do not want valuable belongings to get lost or broken. The children have many toys and activities to keep them busy at school. We will inform you of any "show and tell" or "share" days, if applicable.

Checking Backpacks or Totes, and Student Files

Please check your child's backpack, totes and student files daily for artwork, newsletters, book orders and other important information.

Reporting Changes of Information

In case of an accident or emergency we need to be able to get in touch with you quickly. Please inform us in writing (email is fine) when you have a change of address, phone number, or any changes to emergency or medical information.

Clothing

Appropriate Dress

As a safety precaution, children ***must wear closed toed shoes*** (preferably tennis shoes) at all times. Shoes such as boots, shoes with wheels, flip-flops, crocs, or those with slippery soles are not conducive to active play and should not be worn to preschool. Please have your child dress according to the weather. We play outside everyday unless there is strong wind or rain and we want your child to be comfortable. Please allow your child to wear clothes that can get dirty. We have a busy preschool day that often includes messy activities!

Changes of Clothing

Please bring at least one change of clothes (i.e. shirt, pants/shorts, socks and underwear) to leave at school for your child. Place them in a gallon size Ziploc-type bag and label the bag with your child's name. If your child needs to change clothes during the day and dirty clothes are sent home, please send a replacement change of clothes on the next day they attend school.

Clothing Labels

Please be sure to label any clothes that your child may take off during the day, such as sweaters or jackets. Many children have similar sweaters and jackets, so please be sure to check the name inside as they tend to get mixed up from time to time.

Nutrition

Due to a rising number of children with extreme allergies to tree nuts, we are a Peanut / Tree nut free preschool. Please ask your child's teacher about popular alternatives.

Snacks

Please provide your child with a nutritious snack for the morning and one for the afternoon (after Nap Time).

Lunch

Hot Lunch - You may choose to order Hot Lunch for your child through our vendor Choice Lunch. More information can be found at alacarte.choicelunch.com/parents.

Lunches from Home – You may choose to supply your child with a lunch from home. If you choose to do so, please make sure their name is labeled on the box or bag. We ask that you please DO NOT pack candy, soda, or glass containers. Please remember that we are unable to refrigerate or microwave any food items and plan accordingly.

Supplies

1. **Water** - Each child needs to bring a refillable water bottle to preschool and bring it home to be cleaned DAILY. If a child does not bring a water bottle on a given day, we will provide a disposable one and his/her account will be charged a \$1.50 fee in Procure.
2. **Nap necessities** - If your child is staying for nap, please bring a fitted crib sheet and a crib-sized blanket. Sheets and blankets stay at school and are laundered each week.
3. **Diapering** - For children still in diapers, please bring enough diapers and wipes for a week. Or, if you prefer, you may bring a case at a time.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Grace Christian Preschool welcomes students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. Grace Lutheran does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies or other school programs.

Worship Opportunities

There are many worship opportunities at Grace including small groups that meet on a regular basis. Please see the Grace Lutheran Church website at www.gracelutheranescondido.org, or call the church office (760) 745-0831 ext. 7113, for more information on meeting times and locations.

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