

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know
them, and they follow me.”

John 10:27



Parent Handbook

Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School
525 Sixty-Third Street
Downers Grove, IL 60516
630-852-5081

WELCOME!

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Welcome to Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center! We are pleased that you and your child will be participating in our program at the Early Childhood Learning Center. We consider it a great privilege and blessing to share in your child's growth and development. We will do our best to make your child's learning experience a meaningful and rewarding one. We also need your participation and involvement since we firmly believe that you are your child's first and life-long teacher.

This handbook has been prepared to introduce you to our Center and explain the purpose, functions, enrollment requirements, and procedures of our program. If we can help you in any way, or if you have questions, please call the school office and ask to speak with the Preschool Director.

Parents are an integral part of our program and of your child's experience here at the Early Childhood Learning Center. We look forward to getting to know you better through your active involvement in the classroom, special parent visits to the Center, conferences and parent meetings. We look forward to working with you in order to ensure that your child's early learning experiences are positive and exciting.

Sincerely,
The Precious Lambs ECLC

MISSION STATEMENT

Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center shall support the mission of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church by providing to children a standard early childhood education which will, by God's grace,

- lead them to eternal life with their Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ,
- contribute to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development, and
- prepare them for life-long Christian faith, service and learning.

PURPOSE

Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center is a Christian early childhood program maintained and operated by Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Congregation. The program is conducted to assist parents in meeting their God-given responsibility to "bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord," (*Ephesians 6:4*).

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that each child is a special gift from God. Each child is a unique individual and is encouraged to develop spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially at his/her own rate. Each child is created by God with his/her own special capabilities. We recognize these differences, and give attention to individual needs.

In a Christian atmosphere your child will experience God's love, know Jesus as his/her Savior, and share this love and forgiveness with others.

Through a stimulating environment, hands-on experiences, and varied learning resources, your child will gain self-confidence, independent problem solving skills, social skills, and a love of learning. These concrete learning experiences will broaden the foundation for future learning.

The education of a child is a partnership between home and school. Parents are recognized as the child's primary teacher and supported in that role. We strive to provide an environment in which the parent/guardian and the school can cooperatively enhance the child's life as a special child of God.

PROGRAM GOAL

The overall goal is to provide early learning experiences that assist parents in nurturing the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development of their young children. We believe this goal can be reached when children learn by doing—by hands-on, active experiences that are developmentally appropriate for young children. We further believe children develop best when all experiences occur in an atmosphere of Christian love, care, trust, and respect. Specifically, this goal is accomplished by

- acquainting your child with Jesus,
- encouraging love for God the Father who created us, God the Son who redeemed us, and God the Holy Spirit who keeps us in the faith,
- providing a relaxed, secure, and happy environment for children which promotes a positive attitude toward school and learning,
- recognizing and respecting individual differences and using those differences for positive learning experiences,
- fostering positive self-concepts in children as feelings of success and security grow,
- providing opportunities for children to assume responsibility in a group and recognize their contribution to that group,
- fostering social behavior which encourages sharing, listening, respect for others, and taking turns,
- providing an atmosphere which encourages children to express themselves creatively through literature, art, and music,
- providing fine and large motor activities that exercise children's bodies,
- working with parents as a team in their child's early learning experiences, and discussing formally and informally their child's development and progress in school.

CURRICULUM AND DAILY SCHEDULE

The Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center curriculum goal covers five areas of development. We seek to provide opportunities for growth in the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social areas of development. Activities are provided to give children opportunities for experimentation, discovery, and hands on learning, as we know that young children learn best when

they are free to interact with their environment. The schedule remains flexible to meet the needs and interests of the children and staff.

Each of our preschool sessions begins with free play. Play is an important aspect of a preschool child's life, probably as important to healthy growth as are food and sleep. During free play the children have the opportunity to work with others and begin to develop ways to problem solve. Much planning goes into the organization of a free play environment to make it effective.

The free play approach focuses on the child as the learner rather than upon the teacher as a dispenser of wisdom. The teacher's task is to create an environment which encourages creativity and imagination and then to enable the child to explore it freely and make his/her own discoveries.

Children should have freedom to explore, experiment, make choices, etc. We want them to have confidence in their own ability, but at the same time they must have the assurance that the teacher will provide the necessary guidance and security. The teacher will act as the facilitator.

A room full of happily occupied children may seem noisy, but the end results prove this to be a worthwhile learning experience. If a child is happy and secure at school and knows that God loves him/her, we have accomplished our purpose.

Free play is enhanced through learning centers. Children will be encouraged to role play, dramatize, make comparisons, count, pattern, judge size, experiment with water and sand, cook, etc., in an enriched planned environment.

Opportunities for singing, listening to and playing different instruments, dancing, learning simple songs, and following directions in a song are made available to the children.

Each preschool day will naturally include time for a Bible story and songs about Jesus. The focus of our religion stories for preschool is how Jesus loves us. Our stories are from the Bible and will cover New and Old Testament. In addition, values such as being kind to each other, helping our parents, and working together will be stressed.

Included in the daily schedule is time for art. At this age children need the opportunity to experiment with a wide variety of media. Art activities will include drawing, painting, sculpting with clay and playdough, collage, etc.

Large motor skills will be developed through activities which include running, jumping, hopping, ball play, balancing, animal

walks, games, and the use of indoor and outdoor playground equipment.

ADMISSIONS ELIGIBILITY

Precious Lambs ECLC admits students ages 3 years to 5 years of any race, color, nationality, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students in the program. It does not discriminate on the basis of race or origin in administration of its educational policies or admission policies. “God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4)

A child whose 3rd birthday occurs before September 1 of the year enrolled will be eligible for admission in the Preschool 3 class. A child whose 4th or 5th birthday occurs before September 1 of the year enrolled will be eligible for enrollment in the Preschool 4-5 class. A copy of the birth certificate must be provided to the office to verify the child’s age.

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Parents/guardians are welcome and encouraged to visit the school before applying for admissions by arranging an appointment with the Director or Secretary. The Director will meet with the family, introduce them to staff, give a tour of the facility, and discuss possible enrollment and program plans.

An application for admission and a non-refundable admission fee must be submitted online at www.mytads.com/a/preciouslambs for the child to be considered for admission to Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center. Students qualified for admission to Precious Lambs are admitted on a first-come, first-serve basis, as enrollment permits. However, if all other considerations are equal, preference will be given to children of members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and current school families in that order.

Upon acceptance, a written letter will be mailed to you advising you of your child’s acceptance.

TUITION

Precious Lambs ECLC is a self-supporting educational, non-profit agency of Good Shepherd Lutheran Congregation, financed by tuition and registration receipts. We use TADS, a Minnesota based tuition and admissions management company, to manage tuition payments.

Financial assistance is available for families needing help with paying tuition. A family will be determined as eligible for financial aid only after completing an online financial aid application and submitting required documentation at www.mytads.com. We require applications be submitted prior to May 1st for consideration.

Credit card payment will incur a convenience fee on all payments. Your account will be charged an insufficient funds fee for any payment returned from the bank. Refer to the Fees & Tuition schedule for details regarding payment plans and all associated fees.

Parents who neglect their tuition payments will be contacted by TADS. Precious Lambs ECLC reserves the right to terminate enrollment of any child if the tuition payment is not received within two (2) weeks of the original due date. If a financial crisis occurs, PLEASE speak to the Director.

You may choose to receive statements either through e-mail for no charge, or through the postal mail for a one-time set-up charge fee. Please keep these statements for tax purposes or company reimbursements. Refer to the Fees & Tuition schedule for more details.

Since tuition rates are based on a yearly timeframe, we cannot make tuition allowance or refunds for family vacation, holidays, illness, or school closings.

SCRIP Rebate Program

Many families reduce their tuition charges through the SCRIP program. SCRIP is a fundraising program that consists of purchasing gift cards for major retail and restaurant businesses. The purchaser pays the face value for the gift card, which results in a percentage rebate that can be allocated for a child's tuition. With careful family financial planning this program could be a very useful tool for tuition reduction. Precious Lambs ECLC strongly

encourages families to sign for and utilize the SCRIP program. Visit <https://www.shopwithscrip.com> for program information and contact the SCRIP Coordinator (Ph: 630-852-5081; scrip@gsdg.org) to sign up.

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION AND IMMUNIZATIONS

All children entering Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center for the first time must have a physical examination and the required immunizations. The results of this physical must be signed and dated by a licensed health care provider (MD, DO APN, or PA) on the physical form. All immunizations must be up to date and in compliance with the Illinois State Department of Health codes. **Please note: A TB test must be given at the time of the physical examination. The Health History portion is to be completed and signed by the parent/guardian.** The completed physical/immunization form must be submitted to the school within six (6) months prior to the first day of school. The forms are available from the school secretary.

POLICIES

(in alphabetical order)

ABSENCES

If your child will be absent from school, please call the school office prior to the beginning of class.

AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Good Shepherd offers After Care from 3:15 to 5:45 p.m. for full-time students. The cost for care is \$3 per half hour. There is a non-refundable \$10 registration fee due at Orientation in August. If signing up after Orientation Day, the non-refundable registration fee is \$15. Please be advised only students whose tuition payments are in good standing are eligible for the After School Care program.

ALLERGY, ASTHMA, AND DIABETES MANAGEMENT

The faculty and staff at Good Shepherd Lutheran School and Precious Lambs Preschool are looking forward to an excellent year for your child. As a part of our management program, you and your child will work with the school faculty/staff, as well as your child's doctor, to develop

and follow an action plan that will prevent and manage allergic, asthmatic, or diabetic emergencies.

If a child has an allergic reaction, an asthmatic attack, or a diabetic emergency, our faculty and staff are CPR/AED certified and have been trained at recognizing signs and symptoms of allergic reactions, asthmatic attacks, and diabetic emergencies.

In order to provide the best possible allergy, asthma, and diabetes management for your child at school, you will be required to sign the Good Shepherd Lutheran School and Precious Lambs Preschool Allergy, Asthma, and Diabetes Management form. You must also submit the school issued Health Action Plan and Medication Administration Release forms; completed with authorizing signature(s) as required.

APPROPRIATE DRESS

Please dress your child in play clothes and soft-soled shoes. No sandals, please. Since the children will play in the classroom and on the playground and will be involved in many messy projects, this type of dress will be most beneficial. The paint we use is washable, but we cannot guarantee that it will come out of your child's clothes. Soft-soled shoes cut down on the possibility of slipping on the floors and pavement and help create ease of movement while playing games, running, or jumping.

Please send 2 complete extra sets of clothes (a set of summer clothes and a set of winter clothes), including underwear and socks, to be left at school. The clothes should be brought in a zip-lock bag, marked with the child's complete name.

Please label all outer clothing and boots with your child's complete name. Remember to send an extra pair of shoes when boots are worn to school.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

When arriving for school, parents should escort their child to the classroom. The child's outer clothing, tote bag, snack and lunch should be placed by their name tag on the cubby shelves in the hall. At dismissal, all children should be picked up promptly, so the teacher will have adequate time to prepare for the next session, or close up for the day. **Part time students remaining at school after 12:15 p.m. will be charged \$6. Full-time students remaining at school after 3:15 will be placed in the After School Care Program and will be charged \$3 per half hour per child.**

Parents are required to sign out their child and must escort their child from the school doors to their vehicle. Only those people

authorized in writing by the parent will be allowed to receive the child.

Please do not park in handicapped parking spaces without having the proper license plate or sticker indicating you are authorized to use said parking spaces. The police do have the authority to issue tickets even if you are just doing a quick drop off of your children.

BAGS

Please send a canvas tote bag with sturdy handles or a backpack to school with your child. The tote bag or backpack must be the appropriate size to accommodate a school folder. It will help to protect your child's library books, works of art, and notes which are sent home. Please put your child's name on his/her tote bag or backpack in bold print. Check your child's bag daily for messages, notes, and school work.

BEFORE SCHOOL CARE PROGRAM

In order to provide a safe and reliable place for students arriving before school, a Before School Care program has been implemented. This program eliminates unsupervised students from being in our school. ALL STUDENTS arriving at school before the designated time will be required to attend Before School Care. The following are procedures and rates regarding Before School Care:

- The Before School Care program will run from 6:50 AM – 7:50 AM.
- The doors will remain locked until 7:50 AM. All students arriving before this will be required to attend Before School Care (Including faculty and staff's children).*
- Parents/Caregivers dropping off students before 7:50 will need to sign in the student to Before School Care.
- Students will be escorted to their respective classrooms by the Before School Care leader at 7:50 AM.
- The rate for Before School Care is \$3 per one half hour (If students arrive ANYTIME during that half hour will be charged the \$3 fee).

Students/families that use Before School Care are expected to:

- Provide their own food or eat breakfast before attending.
- Follow the above stated procedures and rates.

- Follow student guidelines set forth by the Before School Care leader.
- Always remain in the supervision of the Before School Care leader.

In an event where procedures are not followed, the student/family may not be invited back to Before School Care and students may be subject to school discipline. Please be advised only students whose tuition payments are in good standing are eligible for the Before School Care program.

* Employees of Good Shepherd Lutheran School will not be assessed a fee for Before School Care for their children.

BIRTHDAYS

You may send a treat to school for your child's birthday. Please discuss with your child's teacher what would be an appropriate treat to send. If you are having a birthday party for your child and inviting children from the class, **please do not send invitations to school to be handed out or to be put in children's bags. All birthday invitations should be sent through the mail or handed to the parents.**

CHAPEL

A chapel service will be conducted on the first Wednesday of each month and the third Tuesday, beginning at 8:10 a.m. (check the school calendar for dates). Our Wednesday class will be invited to join the students of Kindergarten through Grade 8 for this worship opportunity. Parents are also invited and encouraged to attend.

CLASS SIZE & RATIO

At all times there are sufficient teachers and aides in the classrooms. We follow the most stringent of regulations for teacher-to-student ratios based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

CLASS LIST

A class list of students by name, parent/guardian name, address, and phone number will be distributed to all class families. The parent/guardian must notify the school in writing upon enrollment, if the family information cannot be released. The class list will be included in the Good Shepherd Lutheran School Family Directory.

CONFIDENTIALITY

TADS believes that protecting your privacy is an integral part of the customer service provided to you. In addition to the TADS policy, TADS has multiple certifications and audits completed each year.

TADS uses your information to provide the service with your school. School information is used only to provide the service. TADS will never sell your information.

Keeping Your Information Safe and Secure

The TADS name is a trusted symbol of service and reliability. TADS is red flag certified to protect against identity theft.

Highlights Of TADS Commitment To You

- TADS does not sell, give away or in any way disclose customer information to third parties.
- TADS does not share customer information with outside parties who may wish to market their products to you.
- TADS is committed to protecting your customer information in every transaction, at every level of our organization.
- TADS is committed to helping you protect your privacy every day.

DISCIPLINE

In a Christian environment the child will be taught to treat all people with mutual respect and love. The child will be assured of constant love, acceptance, and forgiveness, while he/she is made aware of his/her good choices and bad choices and their consequences. Teachers will alert parents/guardians when troublesome misbehavior occurs.

Through the example of God's love and forgiveness, children can learn to forgive each other and themselves, learn from their mistakes, and begin to make better choices in the future.

FAMILY CHANGES

Please let your child's teacher know if there have been or will be any changes in your child's routine or home life. Moving, a parent traveling, illness of a loved one, or a death in the family can greatly affect little ones.

If we know about these things, we can give your child extra Christian love and support as he or she needs.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are scheduled as an important part of enriching and supporting the curriculum. Walking field trips on the church property are also part of the curriculum. The parent/guardian provides

permission for these trips on the Parental Consent Form. If the field trip necessitates leaving the property, a separate permission slip is made available in advance for the signature of the parent/guardian.

Please note: No child will be allowed to participate in a field trip without a signed permission form. The parent/guardian will be contacted to provide care during the field trip for any student without a signed permission form.

Illinois law requires that the parent/guardian of a child under the age of eight (8) must provide an appropriate child restraint system to any person who transports his or child. When private cars are used for transportation the drivers must be over the age of 21, hold a valid State of Illinois driver's license, hold collision insurance, and carry only those children for whom the vehicle has appropriate child restraint systems.

FOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN

Good Shepherd Lutheran School and Precious Lambs Preschool seeks to provide the safest environment for our students. In order to ensure that, Good Shepherd and Precious Lambs look to work as a team with the parents and the child's doctor. If your child has a diagnosed allergy, the family must provide the school with a doctor-signed action plan. The family also needs to provide the prescribed medication from the doctor for the school staff to administer.

Good Shepherd and Precious Lambs are also taking further steps to ensure your child's safety. The following are restrictions regarding allergies:

- For food meant to be shared, parents will work with the classroom teacher to determine what can be provided in your student's classroom.
- A peanut free lunch table will be provided at both lunch sessions. Teachers will check the lunches of those who choose to sit at that table.

- The school will provide Kraft Easy Mac and Cheese if a child has forgotten his/her lunch. If this food does not suit your child's condition, the parents need to provide the school suitable food for their child.

All parents reserve the right to refuse any food given by another family or by the school. If you do not wish for your child to be given food, please contact your classroom teacher and provide an alternate snack for your child.

If a child has an allergic reaction that is undiagnosed, our faculty and staff are CPR/AED certified and have been trained at recognizing signs and symptoms of allergic reactions and asthma attacks.

ILLNESS AND INJURY

Please do not send your child to school when he/she is ill. If your child has a stomachache, fever, severe respiratory infection, or any flu symptoms, he/she belongs at home.

If a child becomes ill at school, we will separate the child from the class and call you immediately to come and pick up your child. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency contact on the Family Information Sheet will be called.

If your child is well enough to be in school, he/she is also considered well enough to participate in all school activities including outdoor play.

In the event of a minor accident, basic first aid will be administered by the staff. The staff will complete an accident report for parent/guardian review.

In the event of an emergency, an attempt will be made to contact a parent/guardian and/or call a local ambulance service to take the child to the nearest hospital. The parent/guardian is responsible for all costs incurred for the medical treatment.

Please note: Your child is to be fever free 24 hours before they can return to school.

ITEMS FROM HOME

We have plenty of toys and games for the children to use, so we ask that children do not bring personal items from home. We are not responsible for personal items that are lost or broken.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Precious Lambs Early Childhood Learning Center admits 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. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its education policies and other school-administrated programs.

PRE-K ORIENTATION

To most children the first day of school is a big step, and for some a difficult one. In order to make the transition from home to school easier, we have Orientation Day prior to the first day of school. Orientation Day allows the teacher to introduce the school year to the parents. The child will have the opportunity to meet their classmates and explore the classroom.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE

The Learning Center will hold an optional parent/teacher conference in the fall and spring for the Preschool 4 class to evaluate the five major areas of growth (spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social) upon entering Kindergarten.

At any time, a parent may request a conference with the teacher and/or Director. An after school meeting will be arranged at the convenience of both the teacher and the parents.

PUBLICITY PICTURES

Occasionally pictures of the children will be taken to appear in a local newspaper. These pictures are used for publicity regarding the school and our program. If you do not want your child's picture taken you must notify the school in writing. If your child's name is to be used in conjunction with a story, your permission will be obtained prior to publication.

SCHOOL CHOIR

To sing forth God's praise is a natural response for the child of God. Therefore, at selected times during the school year, the preschoolers, along with the children in the elementary school, will serve as the choir during the worship services. Parents will be notified of such occasion in advance.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

If it becomes necessary to close the school because of inclement weather or other reasons, we will make use of an automated calling system.

SCHOOL NEWS

Important news will be sent home with your child. This newsletter includes classroom news, curriculum, Bible story themes, and special events. Please be sure to check your child's bag at the end of the school day. The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School newsletter will be e-mailed.

SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS

Individual school portraits are taken in the fall by a professional photography company and are available for purchase.

SNACKS

The children will eat a nutritious snack each day. Due to various food allergies, parents are asked to provide a snack for their child. Milk (white or chocolate) can be purchased on the August Orientation morning.

SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

The State of Illinois requires that the staff of a child care or school facility report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Child and Family Services.

TOILET TRAINING

It is expected that all children entering the three year old preschool class will be toilet trained. While we are happy to help with buttons, zippers, etc., children are expected to be able to use the toilet and wash their hands without assistance. A parent will be called to assist the child if the child has an accident that presents needs beyond the staff's ability.

WITHDRAWAL FROM PROGRAM

Parents must inform the Director in writing when a child's enrollment will terminate. We require a minimum of one (1) month advance notification. Tuition is due for this entire month whether or not the child is in attendance. If one yearly payment has been made, the remaining full months of tuition will be refunded.

WORSHIP

We encourage all families of our Early Childhood Learning Center to join our church family on Sunday mornings for worship. What better way can we find to thank our God for His marvelous blessings! Please worship with your child here at Good Shepherd on a regular basis. You may speak to one of our pastors about membership opportunities.

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