



Good Shepherd Academy

Preschool Parent Handbook

2022-2023

A ministry of Good Shepherd Evangelical Church, Deltona Florida 32738

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Dear Family,

What a blessing it to have you as part of the Good Shepherd Academy family! We're honored that you trust our preschool to work with you in providing this rich and stimulating school foundation for your child!

High quality education is important, and we know the challenges involved in the process. We are confident that you will be pleased with the care and education provided to your child here at Good Shepherd Academy.

We offer a child-centered, activity-based approach to early childhood education, one which focuses on the well-rounded development of the child's spiritual, cognitive, social, physical, and emotional processes.

A variety of experiences are included in your child's day here at Good Shepherd Academy: Bible stories, chapel, brief periods of formal instruction, structured and free play, science and math activities, language activities, computer activities, music and art.

Despite improvement with COVID-19, we understand you may be a little nervous to send your little one to school. We want to reassure you that we as a staff are taking the necessary precautions to keep your child as safe as possible while here at school, while still providing them with a developmentally appropriate learning environment.

Because we believe teachers and parents need to be partners for the child's well-being, we stress the importance of communication, and we ask for your participation in your child's preschool experience. Please share your concerns, changes in family life, and other pertinent information regarding your child with the teachers. In turn, we will communicate with you through many avenues. This packet is one of them. Since it has important information, we ask you to PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE PACKET.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child, who is a most precious gift from God. We look forward to sharing this important year in your child's development.

In Christ,

Amanda Brake

Preschool Director

And The Staff of Good Shepherd Academy

Philosophy and Mission

Good Sheperd Academy is an arm of the ministry of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. As such it is in every way operated and directed as a part of our ministry through the leadership of our church. The members of Good Shepherd have adopted the following mission statement to direct them in their ministry:

- P Proclaiming God's Word in all its truth;
- R Reaching out to others with the good news of Jesus Christ;
- A Assembling as believers to encourage one another toward greater faith and love;
- I Instructing both young and old in the life-changing Word of God;
- S Serving the congregation and community with our gifts; and
- E Equipping members for ministry and leadership in Christ's church.

The mission of Good Shepherd Academy preschool is to teach young children and their families about God's love and his plan of salvation, to guide them in applying their faith to life and sharing that faith with others, and to provide them with spiritual and educational support.

Our Church

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The Lord has truly blessed the WELS by allowing it to become the fourth largest private/parochial school system in the United States. Individual congregations and associations of WELS congregations maintain and support 330 early childhood programs, 363 elementary schools and 25 Lutheran high schools throughout the country. Christian education is important to us!

Sunday School for children and Bible Class for adults are at 9:15 a.m. and worship service at 8:00 am and 10:30 a.m. each Sunday. In addition we offer individual or group Bible information classes for non-members and those wishing to become members. We welcome your questions about what we believe and teach about God's Word. Please ask to speak to the pastor if you would like to discuss, explore or review basic teachings of the Bible.

SMOKING/VAPING

There is a NO smoking policy in place at Good Shepherd Academy. Smoking/Vaping is not permitted on campus.

ADMISSIONS ELIGIBILITY

Our school has been established in order to provide spiritual growth and quality education to the children who attend. All children are welcome without reference to race, creed, national origin or sex. Openings are on a first- come, first-serve basis.

We encourage parents to visit and tour the preschool prior to admission and see our program in action. Please call to set up a tour with the director or admission coordinator. We will explain the preschool program, policies of the school and answer any questions you may have. Once the tour is complete if there are openings you may register or if no openings are available your child will be placed on our waiting list.

For those families on our Wait list, phone calls will be made to the first family on the wait list. Families have 48 hours to respond back with their decision. After 48 hours, we will move on to the next family on the list.

INITIAL ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Registration must be filled out by one of the parents or guardians of the child(ren).

- VPK only students will fill out the required paper registration packet. Do not enroll through TADS, our online registration program.
- Full Day VPK and Half Time or Full Time Pre-K students will enroll through TADS, our online registration program. You can find this by going to our school website, gsatigers.com and then click on the admissions tab in the upper right-hand corner. Again, VPK only students should not register online via the TADS system, but will need to register at school via the paper packet.
- Once you complete the admissions processes through TADS (Please note that there is an application fee that is non-refundable. A reminder that VPK only students should not register via TADS.), we will accept your registration and then you will be able to pay the registration fee, which will then allow your child(ren) to begin school here at Goodf Shepherd Academy. Once this is complete, there will also be a packet to fill out at school that is required by DCF.
- Immunization record (Form 680 or 681) and an up to date Physical (Form 3040) are required for each child by the State of Florida. All papers in the registration packet **must** be filled out and signed by a parent/guardian prior to the first day of class.

KEEPING EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION CURRENT

It is important that parents keep Good Shepherd Academy aware of changes in contact information, including home, work, and cell numbers, as well as changes of address or email addresses. We will also need updated emergency contact numbers, changes in designated pick-up people, or pertinent medical or educational information. Please give these changes to the front desk in writing or by email. Phone calls with this information will not be accepted. Because of our need to contact you immediately concerning the well-being of your child, it is essential that all information be kept current at all times!

APPLICATION and REGISTRATION FEE

There is a \$20 application fee charged by TADS to apply to attend GSA. VPK only students should NOT register via TADS. You will be charged the application fee and it is non-refundable.

A \$150 non-refundable registration fee is due at the time of registration for those students NOT registered for the VPK only program.

Tuition

Tuition is based on a ten-month billing cycle. All school closures have already been factored into tuition cost and are due even if your child(ren) is absent. Families are free to take the summer off at no charge while keeping their child(ren)'s spot for the upcoming school year. Families who need summer child care services will be billed for those services.

Tuition must be PAID IN ADVANCE and is due the 20th of each month. Tuition that is not paid by the 25th of each month will incur a late fee.

After two consecutive past due notices, child care services will no longer be available to you.

Questions about billing should be directed to our billing manager, Katie Fitzgerald. Her email is kfitzgerald@gslcdeltona.com.

Please see tuition sheet for monthly tuition charges.

Withdraws

Our policy requires that all withdraws, whether before the school year begins or during the year must be made in writing with at least a two week notice and is effective when such notice is delivered to the school office. Tuition is due for that two-week period. If a child should withdraw from the program without a two-week notice, tuition will be charged continuously until a letter of termination, in writing or via email is received. We ask that you provide us with as much advance notice as possible. Please include the reason for withdrawing. If a student leaves for any reason, or enters after the school year has begun the tuition fees are pro-rated on a weekly basis.

HOURS of OPERATION

Good Shepherd Academy is open Monday through Friday from 6:30A.M. - 6 P.M.

Summer hours may vary, but are typically 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Naptime is between 12pm and 2pm and we do not permit drop-off during these hours.

PRE-K PROGRAM- 3-year-old class (Must be 3 on or before September 1st of that school year.)

Part time Program- 8:00 am to 3:00 pm

Full Time Program- 6:30 am to 6:00 pm

Class hours are from 8:00 am to 11:00 am daily, so students are required to be in class by 8:00 am each day in order to get the most out of our learning program.

VPK PROGRAMS (Must be 4 on or before September 1st of that school year)

A.M. Class- Class is 5 days a week and hours are as follows-Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:00 to 11:00 am and Tuesday and Thursday's 8:00 to 11:30am. Students may arrive to class as early as 7:40 am each day.

P.M. Class- Class is 5 days a week and hours are as follows -Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 12:30 to 3:30pm and Tuesday and Thursday's 12:30 to 4:00pm. Students may arrive to class as early as 12:15 pm each day.

Full Day VPK Class Hours are from 8:00 to 3:00 – Our Full Day VPK class has a daily schedule similar to a Kindergarten daily schedule, with the exception of a one-hour rest period. After the rest period, students are working on a variety of learning standards to better prepare them for kindergarten. The VPK voucher covers a total of 540 hours of this program. Tuition will be charged for the remaining hours of class and includes morning and aftercare, if needed.

Entering the Building and Classrooms

The entrance to Good Shepherd Academy is monitored by a doorbell camera. To enter the building, you **MUST** ring the doorbell and **STAND** in front of the camera in order to be let in the main building. Please do not ring the bell and move to the doors. Staff will not open the doors to anyone they cannot see in the camera. Once you are recognized by staff, the doors will be unlocked and you can enter the building.

For family and friends who are picking up your child, they should ring the doorbell and stand in front of the camera as stated above. Front Desk Staff will ask who they are here to pick up. Their name will be checked in your child's file and then staff will go to the front door and ask for their i.d. Without proper i.d., they will not be permitted to enter the building, nor pick-up your child.

To enter your child's classroom, please ring the doorbell outside of the classroom door. A staff member will open the door as quickly as they can. A friendly reminder that it may take a minute for staff to open the classroom door as they may be tending to student needs.

*** The Front Office doors will be unlocked for the 30 minutes prior to class starting and for the 30 minutes after class ends, because of bulk pick-up and drop-off times.***

Sign-In and Out Policy Through the HiMama App

The preschool of Good Shepherd Academy uses the HiMama App for a variety of purposes, one of them being signing in and out daily. It is important that both parents emails are kept up to date in the app itself, as a daily report will be sent home most days to parents/guardians. We also encourage you to download the app to your phone so that you are receiving real time updates when they are sent.

A parent or guardian are first required to walk to the front lobby to sign their child(ren) in using the HiMama App. You **MUST** type your first and last name, click "Done Signing and Confirm Check-In", **before** walking your child to their classroom. Staff are not permitted to accept children into their classrooms until they have been signed in by parents/guardians.

At pick up time a parent or guardian for each child **Must** first walk to the front lobby, sign their child out by typing your first and last name, click "**before** walk to their child's classroom to pick them up. Staff are not permitted to release children to anyone until they have been signed out by parents/guardians.

The parent or guardian's first and last name must be typed in, not only for our records, but for the Early Learning Coalitions as well. This is required by the state. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in termination of child care/VPK services at our school.

Please be sure that you have signed in/out the correct child(ren) as the App is very sensitive to touch.

Three laptops will be available to use for sign in/out purposes. You may use any one of these laptops for these purposes.

Student Arrival and Pick-Up Safety

Children should remain with the person dropping them off until they arrive in their respective classroom. Please do not allow children to run on campus.

1. When dropping children off in their classroom, please be sure that the teacher acknowledges that the child has been dropped off. Often times teachers are helping other children settle in for the day and do not see other children being dropped off. Before leaving your child for the day, make sure you get a “good morning” or wave from the teacher.
2. No child can be left unattended in a parked car in the parking lot at any time! This is against the law in the state of Florida.
3. Children are only to be released to individuals listed on the Authorized Pick-Up List. We must have an email or written authorization directly from you the parents (prior to pick-up) allowing anyone other than those listed to pick up a child. Phone calls or verbal expression are not acceptable.
4. Staff will not release students to anyone who is on a cell phone at the time of pick-up.
5. Staff will not release a child to go with anyone who appears intoxicated or impaired.
6. Children will not be released to anyone under the age of 18 years old.
7. Florida law requires the use of seat belts or child restraint devices by drivers of motor vehicles, all front seat passengers and all children riding in a vehicle under 18.
8. Florida law requires children age 5 and under to be secured properly in a crash-tested, federally approved child restraint device.
9. Children ages 0 through 3 must be in child restraint devices of a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer’s integrated child seat.
10. Children age 4 through 5 must be in a separate carrier, integrated child seat or booster seat.

Please note: We will not release your child to anyone not authorized on his/her registration form and each authorized person MUST be at least 18 years of age or older. Any additions or changes to those authorized to pick-up MUST be made via email or in writing. Phone calls WILL NOT be accepted

Court Orders & Custody Agreements

Good Shepherd Academy recognizes in most situations both parents have a legal right to be a part of their child’s life. The school denies a parent access to their child only if there is a legal document, which addresses that denial. If, pursuant to court order, one parent has been given the legal right to child custody or visitation, and such custody or visitation determines which parent may pick up her/his child who participates in the school program, or if one parent has been restrained by court order from visiting or has been ordered to stay away from said child, Good Shepherd Academy requires the following:

1. A certified copy, with an original signature and certified seal of the current court order, and which states the right or restraints ordered, must be filed with the administration.
2. If a later court order is issued changing the terms of the original court order, it will not be honored until it is filed as the more recent certified order, with verification that a fee was paid for filing at the County Courthouse.
3. We will not accept information regarding the validity of orders over the telephone. Only written instruction will be accepted regarding a court order.
4. Visitation with the non-custodial parent will not be permitted to take place at the school.

Outside Visitors and Volunteers

In this time of COVID-19, we are striving to keep the exposure to virus as a bare minimum and because of this; visitors and volunteers will be limited on campus for the 2022-2023 school year. Those necessary to maintain the day-to-day operations of our school, such as DCF representatives, Fire Inspectors, maintenance crews, student therapists, etc. are always welcome on campus, provided they follow COVID-19 safety protocol.

Please note the because we are contracted with The Early Learning Coalition of Flagler and Volusia County, **ALL** classrooms and students are subject to classroom/student observations. These observations may take place at any time with or without notice to parents.

School Closures

Please refer to the school calendar for days when the school is fully closed, as well as for the days when there is child care only and no VPK classes. Families needing child care on non-academic days in which we provide child care, **MUST** sign their child up at the front desk on the sign-up sheet provided.

Weather Closures

In the event of weather causing Volusia County Schools to close, Good Shepherd Academy will also close. Once the weather has passed, the staff of Good Shepherd Academy will determine if our campus is able to reopen safely. Notifications will be posted via HiMama and/or REMIND and on the Official Good Shepherd Academy Parents and Teachers Facebook page.

Fire Safety/Tornado Drills/Lock Down Drills

- A. Each month fire drill will be held at a random time during the day.
- Staff will have their I-pad or transition sheet with them at all times.
 - Staff and students will go to the designated area until the all clear has been given.
 - The dates of review will be kept on a log for future reference.
 - Students may not be picked up or dropped off while a Fire Drill is taking place.
- B. Tornado Drills will be held a few times during the year.
- In the event that severe weather requires us to seek shelter, teachers will bring their class to their designated area.
 - Staff will have their I-pad or transition sheet with them at all times
 - Staff will try to make it fun by singing songs and doing finger plays
 - In the event of an actual Tornado Warning for our area, students are not permitted to be released to parents while we are sheltering in place; nor can we accept students to the classroom until the Tornado Warning expires. Doing so puts students and staff at risk of harm.
- C. Lock-Down Drills will be held a few times during the year. Lockdown drills are a specific safety drill to prepare students and staff to achieve maximum safety in the event of an internal threat such as intruder or active shooter in the school building or on campus, or external threat, including community violence or disaster.
- Students and staff are to remain quiet at all times.
 - Students and staff are to remain out of sight of windows and door at all times.
 - Staff will have their I-pad or transition sheet with them at all times.

(Continued on the next page)

When and Why Are Students and Staff Asked to Lockdown, Shelter-in-Place or Evacuate?

SCHOOL EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS- A school crisis can take a number of forms including an environmental event, such as a chemical spill or gas leak; a weather emergency, such as a tornado warning; or an intruder in or near the school. The nature of a school crisis dictates whether school administration or Law Officials will put in place a lockdown, shelter-in-place, evacuation or any combination of two of these protocols, as a means to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff

In the event that an actual emergency is taking place on campus, it is important for you to know these terms (and please make sure those that may be picking up your child(ren) are aware of these procedures as well):

LOCKDOWN - A lockdown takes place if an internal or external threat is identified at the school. All school doors are locked and students are confined to classrooms. No entry into or exit from the school will be allowed until an “all-clear” announcement is made by authorities. Students will NOT be accepted or released during a lockdown. Students will only be accepted on campus after Law Enforcement has given the okay to do so. Likewise, students will only be released to parents/guardians with picture ID after Law Enforcement has given the okay to do so.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE- Students take refuge in designated areas to protect them from hazardous materials or severe weather. No entry into or exit from the school will be allowed until an “all-clear” announcement is made. Students will NOT be released during shelter-in-place. Students will only be released to parents/guardians with picture ID after Law Enforcement has given the okay to do so.

EVACUATION- In the event of certain building emergencies, students will be relocated to an evacuation assembly area. Students will be released ONLY to parents/guardians with picture ID and permission from administrative staff. This procedure is necessary to account for the whereabouts of all students.

In Case of a School Emergency -Although your first reaction would be to call or rush to your child’s school, please follow the tips listed below:

- Watch for updates in the HiMama App, REMIND App, or on our school Facebook page.
- DO NOT call or rush to your child’s school. Your presence could interfere with emergency responders.
- DO NOT phone your child or school. Staff and students are not permitted to use their cell phone communication for safety reasons (example- bomb detonation).

How Can I Be Reunited with My Child? Parents/Guardians will be directed by school or public safety officials via TV/Radio to their child’s specific location. Students will be released ONLY to parents/guardians who are documented as emergency contacts and who present a picture ID such as a driver’s license, military ID or passport. The reunification process can be time-consuming so parents are urged to be patient.

Attendance and Absence Policy

You have chosen to take part in our preschool/VPK program, which is a wonderful learning opportunity for all students! Not only do they learn and grow academically, but they do so socially and emotionally as well. Daily attendance is crucial to your student's growth during the school year. Typically, those students who regularly attend school are those who make steady learning and social/emotional gains.

When children are at school, they are learning information that helps them grow both academically and socially. We understand childhood illness and ask that you keep them home until they are well. Missing excessive amounts of school though does cause a strain in learning gains, so we ask that you please consider planning vacations and such for when Good Shepherd Academy is closed for non-instructional days.

Class begins each day at 8:00am for all of our classes, with the exception of our afternoon VPK class which begins at 12:30pm each day. Students should be in their respective classrooms and ready to begin the day prior to class starting. We ask that you call the school office at (407) 3234-2274 if your child will be late or absent.

It is crucial that all students arrive to school on time each day. When students are late to class, their daily routine is thrown off, it causes them to miss valuable learning time, and it also causes a disruption to the day already in progress for students already in class.

We do understand that there are going to be days where you might run late. If this happens, please enter the classroom quickly and quietly. Since class will already be in progress, we ask that you not pull the teacher away from the lesson in progress. Any messages that need to be given to a teacher can be left with the assistant or front office staff.

Students are only allowed 3 tardies a month. Those students who are late on a consistent basis will have a meeting scheduled with the teacher and Director to discuss the situation. Further lateness may result in termination from the program.

By signing the registration form, you are agreeing to comply with the attendance policy. Your signature acknowledges your review and acceptance of the entire attendance policy.

The following is the attendance policy for our PreK Families:

We understand that there will be days where you may be running late. PreK students are allowed 3 tardies per month. A pattern of tardiness involving 3 or more tardies may be cause for dismissal from the program.

The PreK program allows up to 3 absences a month without documentation. After 3 days of absence, documentation stating why the child was absent will be required.

Those families who receive School Readiness funding must also abide by the ELC's attendance and tardy policy or risk losing funding.

The following is the attendance policy for our VPK families:

Attendance during scheduled instructional days is of utmost importance to remain in the VPK program. Student success in kindergarten is strongly linked to consistent attendance in the program. Additionally, program funding is linked to attendance. Excessive absences reduce the funding paid to us by the Early Learning Coalition; therefore, you agree that:

Your child must arrive to their classroom no later than 8:00am for morning and Full Day VPK and by 12:30pm for afternoon VPK. We ask that you call the school office at (407) 3234-2274 or email your child's teacher if your child will be late or absent.

Daily attendance in the VPK program is necessary for optimal for learning. Each child allowed up to 3 absences per month. Parents should email the teacher or call the front office if their child will be absent.

Any absence beyond the allowable 3 days will require a written note from the parent/doctor citing on of the following reasons:

- illness/injury of the child or family members residing in the home which requires hospitalization or bed rest
- Physician or dentist appointment (If you are a Morning VPK student, appointments should be scheduled in the afternoon. If you are an Afternoon VPK student, appointments should be scheduled in the morning.)
- Funeral/memorial service, or bereavement upon the death of a family member
- Compliance with a court order
- Special education or related service for child's disability
- Observance of a religious holiday or service
- Family vacation, not to exceed 5 absences per school year
- Those families who receive School Readiness funding must also abide by the ELC's attendance and tardy policy.

Parents must complete and sign an Attendance Verification form **EVERY** month. A parent or guardian for each child **MUST** sign the form at the end of each month to sign these forms. A parent or guardian signature on this form will not only verify attendance for the month, but will also direct the ELC to give payment for your child that month.

More than three (3) tardies per month is unacceptable and could be cause for termination from the VPK program. Those students who are late on a consistent basis will have a meeting scheduled with the teacher and Director to discuss the situation and ways to improve arriving to school on time.

If termination from the VPK Program is due to the inability to follow the above requirements, you will be given the option of keeping your child enrolled, but paying the current monthly tuition rate.

Early Pick-Up Policy

VPK Only students may only be picked up early for emergencies, but these should be rare. Students are expected to participate in VPK activities until the scheduled class dismissal. Appointments should be made during non-class hours.

By choosing to enroll your child in our Full Day VPK/Pre-K class, you have committed to your child being in class for the duration of the school day, which is from 8:00 to 3:00 daily. We understand that there may be the need to occasionally pick your student up from school early due to an appointment, but frequent pick-ups prior to 3:00 from class will not be permitted as this is a disruption to the other students learning. It should also be noted that early pick-ups will not be permitted from 2:30 to 3:00pm, unless there is an emergency.

We ask that if you know you will need to pick your child up early from the program for an appointment that you inform the front desk at drop-off in the morning. This will give staff the opportunity to try and have your child prepared for pick-up close to the time you will be arriving, causing less disruption to the class as a whole.

Vacations

All monthly tuitions are payments toward the yearly cost of enrollment and are expected monthly. There are no refunds or credits for sick days or holiday closures, as these have already been factored into tuition costs.

VPK students are permitted one excused 5-day vacation period and requires a parent not stating the dates of the vacation period.

Please be sure to view the school year calendar to see when there are extended periods of non-school days and try to plan any vacations on those days when there is no school.

Late Pick-Up Fee

We close promptly at 6:00 p.m. You will be charged a late fee of \$1 for every minute your child remains on campus after their scheduled pick-up time. This varies based on the classroom the child is enrolled in.

Because VPK only parents do not have tuition accounts on file, this fee MUST be paid prior to your child attending school the next day.

If a child remains at the center after closing the staff will try to contact the parents. If unsuccessful, persons listed as authorized emergency contacts on registration will be phoned to pick-up the child. Three late pick-ups in a year may result in termination of childcare services.

The First Few Weeks

The first few weeks in any new environment can cause anxiety for your child. The director and teachers are sensitive to these feelings. Our staff is trained to be alert and aware of your child's reactions to this new environment and will make every effort to help your child adjust as easily as possible.

There are some things you can do as a parent to help ease the adjustment period:

Take time to get to know the teachers and staff involved in the care of your child. Since your feelings may be indirectly communicated to your child, it is important that you feel confident in the staff's abilities and comfortable about bringing your child to the center.

If possible, stop by and visit the classroom with your child on or before the first day of attendance.

Talk with your child positively about the center and the things he/she will be doing there.

If you anticipate a problem in separation, discuss this with the staff and decide on a procedure to follow in advance. We suggest that you begin to prepare your child prior to school starting about drop-off procedures and that you will not be permitted to enter the classroom with them. At drop-off, a suggestion would be to say to your child, "Good-bye. I will pick you up later. I know you will have a good day," and then leave. This method may seem abrupt, but it will minimize separation anxiety for your child. This is preferred to "sneaking away", because it's better that your child be well informed and has the opportunity to say good-bye to you.

During the first weeks you may feel some apprehension after leaving your child. This is a perfectly natural response. We know how very important your child's wellbeing is to you. We encourage you to feel free to call the school during the day to find out how your child is doing. The director and staff are eager to keep you informed.

A re-adjustment may occur after a long weekend or vacation. Your continuing positive attitude will facilitate any such transitions.

Staff

We are fortunate to have a professional, caring staff that is dedicated to helping each child develop to their full potential. Each member of our staff has been employed as a qualified and competent person in Early Childhood Education to provide loving, caring direction and guidance to all the children. Each staff member is aware of unique differences and will provide appropriate care for each child according to their needs. All of our teachers are certified by the State and most are certified in Adult and Child FIRST AID/CPR. Our staff continually participates in education conferences and in-service training to remain up to date in the field of early childhood education and the needs of families and young children.

Ratios

Appropriate ratios are kept according to the Florida Department of Children and Families. The appropriate ratio varies with the age of the children enrolled. The ratios are as follows:

PreK 3- 1 teacher for every 15 students.

4- and 5-year old's (During VPK hours)- 1 teacher for every 11 students, or a max of 2 teachers for every 20 students

4-year old's (Non-VPK Hours)- 1 teacher for every 20 students

5-year old's and up (Non-VPK Hours)- 1 teacher for every 25 students

Students who are 2 years of age and older may be combined in mixed age groups when necessary. In the event that this happens, ratios are "majority rules."

Cultural Diversity

As a Christian preschool we have a message for all people. We are all created by God and equally precious in His sight. Because this is what we believe, we reach out to and respect all people and encourage that attitude in our parents and children.

We will explore the various cultures and ethnicities within our preschool, community and world through study, toys and art supplies, wall decorations, books, and music. The children will be encouraged to appreciate the differences between themselves and others.

Curriculum

Curriculum includes the child-initiated and teacher-directed activities and experiences offered to young children that support and enrich their development physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively.

GSA preschool uses the Creative Curriculum for Preschool in both our PreK3 and VPK classes and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness in our VPK as guides for planning the curriculum.

Our Pre-K and VPK program utilizes the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards, which were adapted in the fall of 2017. The standards and benchmarks reflect the knowledge and skills that a child on a developmental progression should know and be able to do at the end of an age-related time frame.

There are 8 Domains:

- Physical Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematical Thinking
- Scientific Inquiry
- Social Studies
- Creative Expression through the Arts

Each classroom has weekly lesson plans that are posted in the classroom. These plans contain a number of activities, designed to foster each child's development, and the development of the group as a whole. Lesson plans may be changed in order to accommodate the children's changing interests.

Good Shepherd Academy is a Christ-centered preschool. At Good Shepherd Academy, children thrive in a safe and comfortable environment where exploration and interaction are encouraged and supported. Our preschool provides experiences for construction, self-expression, dramatic play, language, experimentation and large and small motor activity. The major activity of young children is PLAY and it is the basic ingredient of all learning. The young child learns best with concrete, specific and tangible materials and sees greater value in the actual handling of objects than in the use of abstract symbols which represent the object. One of our goals is to help children develop habits of observing, questioning and listening. These habits give increasing awareness of their own feelings and their right to express those feelings through various means such as talking, moving, drawing, building, etc. THE PROCESS OF LEARNING TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER THE PRODUCT DURING THESE EARLY YEARS.

Many parents worry about being "academically ready" for kindergarten. While academics play a role in the PREK/VPK years, children who lack sufficient social-emotional skills tend to struggle more than those who do have strong social-emotional skills. Together as a team, we strive to help our students with their social-emotional development.

Christian Education

Christ Light Bible Stories will be taught each week in the classrooms. Each teacher has scheduled Christian Education time into their day, focusing on a weekly Bible story, Bible songs and a verse. We end our week with a chapel service with either Pastor Goelzer, our Principal; Joshua VonDeylen, or our Preschool Director; Amanda Brake. Prayers will begin and end the day, and start our snack and lunch times. We will celebrate birthdays, Christian, and secular holidays during our school year with emphasis on Christian holidays celebrated in the Lutheran church.

Learning Objectives

SPIRITUAL: The child will:

1. Learn that Jesus is his/her best friend and Savior from sin.
2. Learn that the Bible is God's Word.
3. Learn God's plan of salvation and His love for each of them.
4. Gain a greater understanding of God's world and all He has created.
5. Learn to apply God's truths to everyday living through the daily use of prayer, worship & devotion.
6. Learn that all abilities are gifts from God and are to be used to serve God.

SOCIAL: The staff will strive to:

1. Help each child learn to enjoy the friendship of others-both children and adults.
2. Help each child learn to work and play independently.
3. Give each child many opportunities to work and play cooperatively in a group.
4. Provide each child with opportunities to experience success.
5. Strengthen family ties and to help parents understand their children better.

EMOTIONAL: The staff will strive to:

1. Instill in each child a healthy self-image as a child of God.
2. Help each child understand his feelings and how to cope with them in a God-pleasing way.
3. Instill in each child the awareness of their God-given abilities and learn to respect the varying abilities of others.

PHYSICAL: The child will:

1. Develop fine motor skills such as: cutting, coloring, writing, using glue, etc.
2. Develop gross motor skills such as: hopping, skipping, throwing and catching a ball, etc.
3. Practice safety, hygiene, nutrition and basic health procedures through everyday experiences.

INTELLECTUAL: The staff will strive to:

1. Inspire in each child the love of learning.
2. Extend familiarity with God's Word.
3. Acquaint children with good literature and literacy activities. Pre-number and number concepts will be extended through problem-solving experiences with sequence, sizes, shapes, and other organized play activities.
4. Help your child develop an ever-increasing attention span

Assessments and Progress Reports

The S.T.A.R. assessment will be given three times a year to all VPK students. Star Early Literacy is a computer-based assessment designed to measure the early literacy skills of beginning readers. The assessment is adaptive, meaning that questions get harder or easier based on how children respond. Star Early Literacy addresses children's mastery of literacy and early numeracy concepts that are directly related to their future success as readers. VPK students will also receive a progress report twice a year. It will document the spiritual, physical, intellectual, social and emotional progress of your child. A copy of the report will be saved in the child's cumulative file.

A progress report will be filled out twice a year for our Pre-K students. It will document the spiritual, physical, intellectual, social and emotional progress of your child. A copy of the report will be saved in the child's cumulative file.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

To ensure frequent and ongoing communication between school and parent, parent teacher conferences will be scheduled during the school year. Your child's progress will be documented and shared at that time. We hope you will feel free to communicate with your child's teachers or director. Please plan to visit with the teacher at a time when he/she is not responsible for the children in class.

We hope you will feel free to communicate with your child's teachers or director at any time during the year about your child's progress. We just ask that you please do so before or after class.

Children With Varying Exceptionalities

As much as we strive to be, Good Shepherd Academy is not equipped to meet the needs of all children, including, but not limited to, those with severe physical and/or learning challenges. We will make every attempt to serve every child and every family.

It should also be noted that the school staff is willing to consult with you and your physician, psychologist, social worker, etc., about any special needs your child may have. Also, if the school should notice any special development needs a child may have involving speech, hearing, behavior etc., we will inform you of our concerns and of any outside help that may be available. We work with the Early Learning Coalition and intervention programs in each local school district and can direct you to the appropriate assessment teams.

Should the staff be unable to adequately meet the child's needs, we reserve the right to ask families to seek other educational avenues that may better suit your child's needs.

Communication

Good Shepherd Academy recognizes how important it is for parents to know what is happening at school with their children. Open communication is the foundation of a harmonious school environment. The school utilizes various tools to help facilitate ongoing communication including the HiMama App and the Remind App.

1. Students and parents may access the school's website at gsatigers.com for announcements and information regarding upcoming events. It is important to check it regularly for new information
2. A monthly newsletter and from the school to include things that have happened as well as sharing plans for the near future. This can be found on the school website, as well as on the HiMama App.
3. A monthly calendar and newsletter from your child's classroom to include things that have happened within that specific classroom and upcoming learning activities. This can be found on the school website, as well as on the HiMama App.
4. Use of the Hi Mama App and REMIND app to connect with you about upcoming events where ever you may be. All families are required to sign-up for both the REMIND app at registration. School administration will add families to the HiMama App, but it will be necessary for you to download the app to your phone or computer.
5. According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, teachers are not permitted to answer emails or phone calls outside of their scheduled hours. In the event of an emergency, you may reach the director via email at director@gsatigers.com and she will get back to you as soon as her time allows. Please note that this may not be until the following day.
6. Staff will answer any emails sent or return phone calls at naptime or before they go home at the end of their shift.
7. Text or phone calls to staff member's personal cell phones are prohibited.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is important to a child's physical development and is included in both the morning and afternoon schedule. It's a time for students to explore, exercise their muscles, and breathe in fresh air. We ask that all children to be dressed appropriately for both indoor and outdoor activities. If your child is too sick to play outside, they are too sick to attend school. We play outdoors everyday unless the heat index puts the temperature at 100 degrees or higher. Students should bring a water bottle to school and it **MUST** have their first and last name on it, per DCF requirements. For health and safety reasons, water bottles **MUST** have a lid or flip top that covers the area that students drink from. Water bottles are required to go home daily to be cleaned. Disposable water bottles are required to be thrown away at the end of each day. Water bottles may contain **only** plain water, nothing flavored. Water bottles that contain anything other than plain water, will be poured out and filled with plain water. This helps prevent ants on the playground.

Clothing

Please send your child to GSA in comfortable play clothes. Play is usually active and often messy. Comfortable, washable clothes are important if your child is to participate fully in the program.

Sneakers are the only shoes to be worn at school for safety purposes. High-heeled shoes, dress flats, cowboy boots, sandals/flip-flops and crocs are not permitted at school. If your child arrives at school in shoes other than sneakers, you will be asked to bring sneakers to school.

All children occasionally get their clothes messy and/or have toileting accidents. Because of this, an extra set of clothing must be provided by each family. For those that are toilet training, we ask for 2-3 pairs of clothing (especially underwear). We request that you bring a complete change of clothing, including underwear, to be kept at school and replenished as needed. Due to health reasons, if a child soils their underwear, staff is not permitted to rinse or wash the underwear. Staff will double bag the underwear and depending on how messy, may throw them away. **Please be sure to clearly label all items of clothing. GSA is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing.**

Toileting

Children in our VPK program **are required** to be toilet trained. Children will be responsible to take care of their own toileting needs, including wiping themselves; as staff are unable to assist children once toilet training is complete. Pull-Ups are not permitted in the VPK program.

Children in our Pre-K program do not have to be toilet trained and teachers will assist when needed. Three-Year-Old Students who are not toilet trained will be billed at a higher tuition rate until they are fully toilet trained. This includes being able to wipe themselves on a consistent basis and not requiring a Pull-Up/Diaper at naptime.

What if my child is toilet trained at home, but not at school? Some students may be toilet trained at home, but not so at school. There can be a variety of different reasons for this. It may be they are not comfortable with their new environment, there are far more distractions at school, they are now part of a larger group of children and the individual attention is not on them so they don't respond in the same manner. As the year progresses, students become more comfortable with their new setting and the toilet training tends to happen quickly.

How do the school and home work together? Since toilet training is a process, it requires the support of both parents and teachers. One way that parents can help with the process at school is to start the day and end the day by taking your child to the restroom. This helps children understand that mom and dad have the same bathroom expectations as the teachers at school. Teachers will take students to the restroom with other students at regular times during the day. While they may not actually use the toilet, we will be working with them to go through the motions. They will be expected to pull their pants down, sit on the toilet (even if they don't go), and then pull their pants up again, flush the toilet and wash their hands.

What should my child wear when learning to use the toilet at school? Children should wear clothing that can be easily pulled up and down (no onesies). They should not wear overalls and or belts, and they must come to school in a pull-up.

Learning to use the toilet is a significant event in the life of a young child. Toilet training is a process that can take weeks for some children and months for others. Needless to say, no two children are alike and we do not have a one size fits all policy. The preschool staff is always ready to help answer any questions you may have.

Please Note: To be considered fully toilet trained, a child must be able to use the bathroom without reminders, remains dry through naptime, and can clean themselves without the assistance of the teacher. Once your child is fully toilet trained, teachers are not permitted to assist with wiping. In the event of diarrhea, teachers will assist any student needing help; as this is due to illness.

Pacifiers and Bottles

Pacifiers and bottles for preschool aged students are not permitted at school.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that:

- Continued use of bottles after one year of age has been repeatedly documented to increase the risk of tooth decay in children.
- Pacifiers are best for infants, especially newborns, and can be used during the first six months of life. After six months and before turning one year old, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends removing the pacifier to reduce the risks of ear infections, dental problems, and speech delay.

We respect each family's decision about how to use these items with their children, but ask that they be left at home.

Nap and Quiet Time

Nap time is an important opportunity for growing, active children to rest and re-energize. This is also a time for teachers to regroup, clean, do paperwork, discuss the day's activities, and plan future curriculum for the class. Children not enrolled in our VPK only program will rest/sleep in the afternoon. Children are asked to rest but are not required to sleep. Children are helped to relax by a variety of methods: darkened room, soft music or story tapes, rubbing backs, etc.

Pre-K Classroom- Nap is from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Full-Day VPK Classrooms- Nap is from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Each child is required to bring a crib sheet to cover the cot, a small blanket and/or pillow and a stuffed "lovey" if desired. All items will be sent home every Friday (or as necessary) for laundering. Please be sure to clearly label all items. GSA is not responsible for lost or damaged nap items.

As stated above under Hours of Operation, **we do not permit drop off of children during naptime.** This is to allow a full period of rest for all students without being woken by a child who is distraught by being dropped off by parents/guardians. We have the best interest of all students at heart, so we ask for your understanding with this.

Toys From Home

Children are required to leave toys, electronics, phones, food, gum, pets and money at home. The learning materials at GSA are shared by all children as part of the learning experience. Lack of concern about one's own toys being lost or broken enables the child to participate more fully in our educational environment. We provide ample supply of equipment and materials for the day. Show and Tell may be provided on special occasions. Check with your child's teacher. If Show and Tell occurs, please be sure to label the item being brought from home. **GSA is not responsible for lost or damaged items brought from home.**

Please do not allow your child to bring toys, tablets, etc.. to the classroom door and then expect/ ask the teacher to take the item from your child. It is not the responsibility of the teacher to take these items from your child. Doing so harms the relationship between the teacher and the child.

Discipline and Guidance Policy

GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES

Good Shepherd Academy seeks to provide children with a caring and nurturing Christ-centered atmosphere. Our goal is to lead children to monitor their own behavior. To that end, God-pleasing behavior and attitudes will be modeled by the teacher, verbalized to and expected from the children. Children will be treated with love and respect as children of God. They will be assisted in their growth in self-discipline by using encouragement and praise for God-pleasing behavior, redirection of a child's activities, narrowing of choices, and offering alternatives. This positive approach encourages self-control, self-respect and cooperation among children. In addition, developmentally appropriate programming, activities and room arrangement will go a long way toward avoiding problems due to excessive waiting time, frustration or congested play areas.

In the event that a child is crying, distraught or fussing, every effort will be made by staff to reassure and comfort the child, perhaps by holding, giving the child a quiet location, minimizing stimulation, or distracting the child. At no time will the staff act in a punitive, humiliating or injurious way toward the child.

BITING

Biting is a normal stage of development, commonly seen in infants and toddlers — sometimes even in preschoolers. It is a natural phenomenon (not something to blame on children, families, or teachers), and almost all young children will try biting at least once. Still, when it happens, it's scary, frustrating, and very stressful for everyone involved. Brief episodes of biting do not mean a child is having a social or emotional problem, nor does it mean the family is to blame. It simply indicates that your child is going through that particular stage in his or her development. As with many developmental stages, most biting behaviors end quickly. In all cases of biting, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten, help the biter to learn a more appropriate behavior, and examine our program to maintain an environment that is consistent with children's needs. Our focus will not be on punishment but rather on effective techniques that address the specific reason for biting. We encourage you to talk to your child about this behavior, but we also caution that delayed punishment at home, hours after the incident, will not be understood by the child.

Biting may occur for any of the following reasons:

* Oral exploration * Teething * Hunger * Fatigue * Showing affection * Lack of awareness that biting hurts * Frustration, anxiety, or stress * Inability to express feelings or needs verbally
* Mimicking behavior * Inexperienced peer interactions * Showing affection * Exploring cause-and-effect relationships * Exploring holding on to and letting go of relationships * Making an impact * Impulsiveness and lack of self-control * Excitement and overstimulation

- When a child bites another child, staff will write an Accident/Incident Report for each child, keeping both identities confidential. Staff will communicate with each family involved.

- If your child bites 2 times in a day, your child will be sent home for the remainder of the day.
- If a child bites 3 days in a week (even if it's only once a day for those 3 days), they will be suspended for the next school day.
- If your child bites and breaks the skin of another child or bites the face/head of another child or staff member, he or she will be sent home immediately.
- Biting is not something that is typical for 4- and 5-year-old students (VPK classes). VPK students who bite, whether they break the skin or not; will be sent home for the day.

While biting is a normal stage of development, excessive biting is not. If biting continues and causes an undue stress on the other children it may become necessary to terminate child care arrangements.

TECHNIQUES TO CONTROL REACTIVE BEHAVIORS

A staff member can often anticipate reactive behaviors, such as hitting or biting, by noticing signs of frustration, anger or helplessness in a child. Intervention in advance by diversion, discussion or redirection can often help. If an event occurs, the child should be led to acknowledge the misconduct, helped to make a plan to avoid future behavior, and make amends. The child should be assured of forgiveness for the behavior.

TIME OUT GUIDELINES

Time-outs may occasionally be used as a last resort for a child who may be in danger of harming himself or another in order to help a child calm down and cool off. The child will be given a quiet place to regain control. Once the child has regained control, they may return to the activity taking place at that time. The teacher will be available to talk with the child about what has happened, help them understand what is expected of them, reassure him of forgiveness through Jesus and lovingly restore them to the group as soon as possible. A child may also be guided to make amends if the situation warrants.

PROHIBITED PUNISHMENTS

Because we wish to reflect God's love in Christ to these little ones, actions that are aversive, cruel, humiliating, and actions that may be psychologically, emotionally or physically painful, discomforting, dangerous or potentially injurious are prohibited. Such actions include spanking, hitting, pinching, shaking, slapping, twisting, or inflicting any other form of corporal punishment on the child; verbal abuse, threats or derogatory remarks; physical restraint, binding or tying the child to restrict the child's movement or enclosing the child in a confined space; withholding or forcing meals, snacks or naps, or punishing a child for lapses in toilet training. These forms of punishment will never be used, even at the request of the parent.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents and teacher will work together to help a child correct persistent problems. If the behavior continues, the teacher will make every effort to refer parents to appropriate sources of help.

- If through staff observations, a pattern of behavior is observed, a request for outside assistance is made for the child by staff, parents will have 14 days to set up an appointment with a provider.
- Proof of the appointment will be required to be submitted to the school. If proof of the appointment is not provided after the 14th day of the request, you will be asked to keep your child home until the appointment has been made. Tuition will still be due during this time of absence.
- We understand that many places are often booked out a month or two in advance and will do our best to continue to guide students who may be struggling with behavior. Even with an appointment in place, in the event that the safety of staff and other students in the classroom is at risk at any time, termination of care may occur without notice.

Discharge of Enrolled Children

CAUSE FOR DISMISSAL

A child may be dropped from enrollment with or without notice for reasons such as, but not limited to:

- The needs of the child cannot be met by the preschool.
- Tuition is not paid promptly and alternate arrangements have not been made.
- Required enrollment and health forms are not submitted.
- Lack of parental cooperation.
- Non-compliance with policies of Good Shepherd Academy Preschool/VPK classes.
- Parent or child verbally or physically abuses another child or teacher.
- Repeated failure to pick up the child at the scheduled time.
- Aggression that cannot be redirected or controlled.
- Repetitive use of foul language.
- Repetitive biting (see Biting Policy).
- Students who put their teachers or classmates in unsafe situations.

PROCEDURE FOR TERMINATION

In the event of an issue possibly leading to termination, the following procedure may be used:

- The parent will be given a verbal warning.
- Written notice of the reason will be given. Notice of a specific time frame for resolution of the problem will be given. Time frame is variable depending on the nature of the reason.
- A meeting between staff and parents may be held to discuss the issue and seek resolution.

- The pastor, principal, and/or Board of Education may be consulted in reaching a decision to terminate enrollment.
- Christian love compels us to make every effort to work with parents and children toward a mutually beneficial experience. However, the Preschool Director of Good Shepherd Academy reserves the right to dismiss a child from the preschool program without advance notice.

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT PROCEDURES

If a child is injured or injures another student after arriving at school, the person who picks up your child will be informed of the injury through an Accident/Incident Report at pick-up time. We are required by DCF to have these reports signed at the time of pick-up. If someone other than the legal parent/guardian picks up, then a copy of the report will be provided to them to share with the parent/guardian. We will call the parents/guardians of any child who injures or receives an injury to their face or head while at school. Please note that we are not allowed, by state licensing regulations to use anything other than soap and water on a cut, scrape, sting, or splinter (we are not permitted to remove splinters).

If the child should require treatment in the Emergency Room, the parent will be contacted and arrangements will be made for transporting the child to the Emergency Room. If a child needs immediate medical attention, staff will call 911. Then the parent or the child's physician will be called. If we cannot reach the parent, the emergency contact will be phoned.

An ACCIDENT report will be filled out when a child injures themselves or another child injures them unintentionally. Examples of this include but are not limited to: tripping and falling, running and bumping into another student, biting their tongue while eating, etc...

An INCIDENT report will be filled out when a child has acted inappropriately. These reports will be filled out if the behavior resulted in harm being done to another child. Hitting, biting, and kicking are very normal reactions to frustration and anger for young children. These reports are NOT to tell you your child is "bad", but to let you know which behaviors are occurring here at school and to help staff notice any emerging behavior patterns.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information regarding children in childcare, their families and Little Lambs Academy staff must be held in strictest confidence. We will protect the confidentiality of child and family information. Little Lambs Academy follows FERPA guidelines. There is a link on our school web page to those guidelines.

REPORTING ABUSE and or NEGLECT

In accordance with s.39.201.F.S, Good Shepherd Academy staff **MUST** report any and all suspected cases of child neglect or abuse. If you suspect that any child in our center is being abused or neglected, report this to the Director immediate.

Media Release

Pictures/Videos for Classroom Use, Assessment, and Document Purposes-Your child will be photographed and/or videotaped for classroom use, as well as the purpose of assessment as required by the state of Florida. Beyond this, there are a variety of media outlets where children's photographs may be used. There is a place in the paper enrollment packet for you to check how you are permitting your child's pictures to be used. You will need to **mark one of the following** on the enrollment packet:

I give permission to GSA to use my child's photo for classroom/school use, any and all media use, yearbook use

I give permission to GSA to use my child's photo for classroom/school use, GSA private Facebook page use, and yearbook use only

I give permission for GSA to use my child's photo for classroom use and yearbook use only

I give permission for GSA to use my child's photo for classroom/school use only

PETS

Personal pets are not permitted in the building for allergy and safety purposes. Classrooms may have a class pet that will receive proper care per DCF guidelines.

ALLERGIES

If your child has any kind of allergies, you **MUST** inform the staff of Good Shepherd Academy **IMMEDIATELY!** If an epi-pen is required for the allergy, we **MUST** have the epi-pen in the front office with the required paperwork **BEFORE** your student can attend school.

It should be noted that we are **NOT** a peanut free school. Students with peanut allergies must provide written documentation as to whether this is a consumable allergy, airborne allergy, or both.

A student allergy list is posted in each classroom.

STUDENT SICK POLICY

If a child in our care becomes sick while at the center, the child must be isolated from other children in care and the parent/guardian called immediately. Students are required to be picked up within one hour of contacting parent/guardian. A sick child must be supervised at all times. The following are included in our Parent Handbook sick policy:

- **Fever:** Children will be sent home if their temperature is 100.4 or higher and must stay home the next day for observation. Children must be free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication. If your child develops a fever at home, they may not attend school that day and cannot return until fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.
- **Rash:** Any rash other than a common diaper rash or skin irritation will require that child to be sent home for an evaluation and diagnosis from their doctor in writing of exactly what it is. They may return to school based on that written doctor's evaluation, and clearance that it is not contagious.
- **Diarrhea:** Children will be sent home if they have two loose bowel movements in one day, or if the loose bowel movement is not contained within a diaper, pull-up, or if a toilet trained child cannot make it to the bathroom. Children must stay home the next day for observation. Before returning to school (after the day of observation) children must be free from diarrhea for 24 hours with at least 1 regular bowel movement. If your child has one or more loose bowel movements (even if contained in the diaper/Pull-Up) on their first day back they will be sent home again.
- **Vomiting:** Children will be sent home if they vomit and must remain home the next day for observation. Before returning to school after the observation day, children must be 24 hours free of vomiting.
- **Conjunctivitis (pink eye):** Children will be sent home if there appears to be an unusual amount of discharge from or irritation to their eye(s). Before returning to school in 24 hours, they will need an evaluation and diagnosis from their doctor and clearance to return to school.
- **Thick White, Green or Yellow Discharge:** Children will be sent home if they appear to have any thick white, green or yellow discharge. This is often indicative of an infection and before returning to school they will need an evaluation and diagnosis from their doctor in writing and at least 24 hours of treatment. If in fact they do not have an infection, we need a doctor's note with a clearance that it is nothing contagious.
- **Sore Throat/Strep Throat:** Children will be sent home if they complain of a sore throat. They may return to school once they are symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.
- **Persistent Hacking Cough:** Children will be sent home if they have a persistent hacking cough that is interfering with their learning or sleep. They may return after being symptom free for 24 hours, but keep in mind; may be sent home again if the cough still continues to interfere as stated above.

- **Lice:** Any child that has been found with lice or nits in their hair will be sent home immediately. Children will not be readmitted until 24 hours after treatment and must be lice and nit free. The Director or Office Staff will make an evaluation and determine if the child can be readmitted.
- **Molluscum contagiosum** is caused by the molluscum contagiosum virus (MCV), a member of the poxvirus family. This virus thrives in warm, humid climates and in areas where people live in close quarters and are the small round pink, white, or skin-colored mollusca on the skin. These bumps are filled with a white, waxy core that contains the virus, and might have a shiny or "pearly" look. Kids can get molluscum contagiosum in a few different ways. It spreads easily, and most commonly, through direct skin-to-skin contact, but kids can get it by touching objects that have the virus on them, such as toys, clothing, towels, and bedding. Because of how easily molluscum spreads, any child with molluscum must have all lesions covered either by clothing or a Band-Aid and must remain covered until the lesions have healed completely.

COVID-19: Current CDC guidelines state that those who test positive for COVID-19 should remain home for 5 days from the start of symptoms and then wear a mask for an additional 5 days. The preschool of Good Shepherd Academy requires that students remain home for 5 days from the day they tested positive for COVID-19.

Children who have been exposed to Covid-19, but are symptom free, are still permitted to attend school. **CDC guidelines to this virus are ever changing. It should be noted that our COVID-19 policy may change at any time and without notice.*

Vaccinations

Please be aware that some families and children attending Good Shepherd Academy may not have a vaccination record, but may have an exemption record for medical or religious reasons instead.

MEDICATION

The child's name must be on the medication. We are not permitted to give medication to any child that is prescribed to someone else.

Office staff will administer medication to students. The exception to this is diaper rash ointment, Chap Stick, and sunscreen, as classroom teachers will apply these items.

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Medication, with the exception of diaper rash ointment, Chap Stick, and sunscreen; **is not** permitted in the classroom.

Medication must be in the original container with the child's dosage written on it from the manufacture. Adjustments can only be made by a physician with a written note.

All medication requires parents to fill out an authorization form so that we can administer the medication. Diaper rash ointment, Chap Stick, and sunscreen only require a signed permission slip. Both of these forms can be obtained in the front office.

Parents must list symptoms to look for when leaving medication to give on an "as needed basis.

Medication should NEVER be put into a student's water bottle or any other drink sent here to school by parents. Should this be discovered, care will be immediately terminated as you are putting other student's health and safety at risk.

MEALS

Good Shepherd Academy does not provide meals to its students. Parents/guardians are required to pack a nutritional breakfast (if here during breakfast hours), lunch, snacks (if here for snack), as well as drinks for their child.

Our staff encourage healthy eating habits in students no matter what is packed within their lunchbox. This would include, but is not limited to saving sugary treats for after their main dish, fruits and vegetables before sugary/salty snacks, etc...

All lunches at a minimum should include the following:

- A main dish item such as a sandwich that is protein or plant based (No jelly or Marshmallow Fluff only sandwiches), dinner leftovers, soup, chicken nuggets, etc.
- A fruit and/or vegetable
- Milk or juice

We encourage students to eat at least half of their main dish before they move on to their other food items.

Lunch may then include the following to be eaten at lunch or snack time:

- Cheese, yogurt, meat sticks, etc.
- Chips and/or crackers
- Cookies, fruit snacks, etc. If more than one sugary item is packed in the lunch box, students will only be offered one of those items. The other will be saved for snack time.

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Soda, sports type drinks, energy drinks, and candy are **NOT** permitted. These items will be removed from the students' lunch and sent back home (even if it is included in a Lunchable). Water is always available to students who drink all of any other drink that may be packed in their lunch.

We do not have microwaves or refrigerators for students use and cannot heat or refrigerate food. Because of this, we encourage the use of a thermos and ice packs.

Good Shepherd Academy does not provide eating utensils for students. Please be sure to include these when packing your child's food.

Please be sure to write your child's name on any containers you may send to school. We are not responsible for any lost or damaged containers, nor can we clean them before sending them home.

PLEASE NOTE the FOLLOWING FROM OUR DCF HANDBOOK (rules we are required to follow)

3.9.3 Food Safety

C. Foods that are associated with young children's choking incidents must not be served to children under 4 years of age, such as, but not limited to, whole/round hot dogs, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, whole grapes, nuts, cheese cubes/sticks and any food that is of similar shape and size of the trachea/windpipe. Food for infants must be cut into pieces ¼ inch or smaller, food for toddlers must be cut into pieces ½ inch or smaller to prevent choking. *This applies to all food, even food provided by parents/guardians.*

**** **** Parents of Three-Year-Old Students- please be aware that you are permitted to send foods such as those mentioned above, but they **MUST** be cut into the serving sizes mentioned. Staff are not permitted to serve any foods sent to school by parents such as those mentioned in the above rule that have not been cut up into appropriate serving sizes by parents. Staff are also not permitted to cut foods such as these into the appropriate sizes.

Breakfast- Students who are enrolled in our Full-Time program can eat breakfast between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. If your child will need to eat breakfast at school, they will need to be in Morning Care no later than 7:20 a.m. Students will not be permitted to eat breakfast prior to 7:00 a.m. nor if they arrive to school after 7:20 a.m. Students who arrive after breakfast has finished, must finish breakfast with a parent due to staff cleaning-up from breakfast and preparing students for the start of the school day. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Snacks- Please be sure that your child eats a good breakfast. A daily snack is not scheduled in our VPK classrooms during contracted VPK hours, but we ask for donations of snack items to be kept in the classrooms because sometimes a snack is needed.

PreK students should pack a daily morning snack. PreK students who are not picked up at 3:00pm daily should also pack an afternoon snack.

Full Day VPK students who are not picked up at 3:00pm daily should pack an afternoon snack.

Snack time is time to eat a small amount of food to give them the energy needed to get to the next meal time. This is not a time to eat several food items at once.

Lunch- Pre-K and Full-Day class hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Lunch time is scheduled from 11:30 to 12:00pm daily.

BIRTHDAYS and HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays are very special occasions and we are eager to celebrate with families on birthday celebrations. If you wish to bring a treat on or near your child's birthday, please let the teacher know ahead of time, and she will discuss the best time for the celebration; as well as any possible allergies in the classroom. **Birthday treats MUST be store bought.**

COOKIES/DONUTS ARE MUCH PREFERRED OVER CUPCAKES, AS STUDENTS TYPICALLY ONLY EAT THE ICING. IF YOU CHOOSE TO SEND CUPCAKES, ONLY MINI CUPCAKES ARE PERMITTED. DUE TO FOOD ALLERGIES AND SENSITIVITIES, WHITE ICING IS PREFERRED.

The classroom is not a place to conduct a birthday party. Balloons, decorations, etc are not permitted at school. The exception to this rule is goody bags. They may be sent to school for the whole class, if you choose to do so.

If you decide to invite students from preschool to your child's birthday party and want invitations sent home from school, you have two options:

1. Invites can be sent to the whole class.
2. If your child is a girl, then invites may be sent to all of the girls in the classroom. If your child is a boy, then invites may be sent to all of the boys in the classroom. If you would like to invite even one child of the opposite gender to your child's birthday party; then invites must be sent to the entire class for staff to send home.
3. If either of these options do not work for you, then you may hand out invitations on your own.

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GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

As a preschool, we are a community of children, parents, and staff all interacting and sharing our lives together, striving our best to live a Christ-like life. In a community, people work closely together and hopefully interactions are positive, helpful, kind and understanding. That being said, it is to be expected that from time-to-time people will experience some conflict, some concerns, and some difficulties. We recognize that parenting is an amazing gift from God, but also one of the most difficult, intense and rewarding experiences in your life. We want you to share your thoughts, hopes and dreams for your child. You want what is best for your child and we know it is your job to advocate and protect your child.

It should be noted that because we are sinful by nature, staff will make mistakes; create misunderstandings, and occasionally have miscommunications. When these mistakes occur, we want you to tell us. As a staff it is our goal to offer your family the best in preschool services possible. In order to meet our goal, we need your input, your suggestions, your questions, and concerns.

When you have a concern, please remember....

- Teachers want the parents to feel very satisfied with the care their child is receiving.
- Talk to the teachers directly whenever possible. If you feel comfortable, ask your child's teacher first about any concern. Teachers prefer that you talk with them directly, but they do understand if you would prefer to talk with the Director.
- Realize that if you have a concern with a teacher, the Director will need to investigate and talk with the teacher directly about your concern and deal with the issue in a straight forward manner so that the teacher can improve her performance and/or correct any mistakes or misunderstandings.
- Be assured that teachers do not hold a grudge against your child or "take it out" on your child after you have expressed a concern. We would not hire anyone at our school that would react in such inappropriate manner. Actually, after expressing a concern, your child's teacher will be more conscientious about your issue and try to improve.
- Consider using the "once is OK" rule. With minor issues, allow staff to make a mistake once or twice, they are after all human and need forgiveness. But when issues become a pattern, it is definitely a time to bring it to their attention.
- On the other hand, don't allow concerns to build up. As concerns occur, share them with the teachers. It is frustrating to find out "later" that a parent had a number of concerns and never expressed them.
- Sometimes we cannot make changes you may request due to other restrictions, but we ALWAYS want to hear your suggestions. We promise to consider them seriously and respond to you in a timely manner.

Should a situation arise that you, the parent or guardian, cannot resolve by speaking with the teacher(s) or the Director; please schedule a meeting with the teacher(s), the Director, The School Board, The Church Council, and our school Principal. Again, open and ongoing communication between parents and staff is an essential part of our program, and we encourage sharing of all concerns with the staff at the school.

CLOSING STATEMENT

We're excited to have your family join us here at Good Shepherd Academy! A strong home and school environment is essential when building a good environment for young children. All of our staff will try to do our very best to keep you informed and involved in our preschool program. Clearly, ongoing communication and support from both families and staff make the connection between home and school a two-way street. Please share with us information about your child and report any changes especially during a major crisis. Anything you share with us will be held in confidence. We hope to nurture mutual trust and respect at every opportunity. We look forward to getting to know you and your family this school year!

If there is ever anything that we can do for you and your family, please reach out to any staff member. We'll happily take the time to listen and pray with you if need be! The Lord has called us to be a part of each other's daily lives and we're so excited to share HIS love with you all!

Wishing our entire school family a blessed and successful school year!

Walking In HIS Footsteps,

Amanda Brake

Preschool Director