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First Presbyterian Church, Hastings, MI



WELCOME TO



Noah's Ark Preschool

First Presbyterian Church, Hastings, MI

PARENT HANDBOOK

**Jesus said,
“Let the little children come to me,
and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of heaven
belongs to such as these.”**



Matthew 19:14

NOAH'S ARK SPECIAL NEEDS POLICY

Noah's Ark Preschool collaborates with local Intermediary School Districts (BISD, KISD, CISD) to provide for and support our students with special needs. We accept children with special needs when the identified disability and Noah's Ark Preschool classroom is a compatible match. This match will be determined by the Director, classroom teacher, local Intermediary School Districts representative, and the parents of the child.

A complete copy of our Special Needs Policy is included in the enrollment packet. Our low teacher-pupil ratio as well as highly experienced staff, makes our program uniquely qualified to support children with special concerns. We work closely with parents, children, referring agency, and any outside consultants needed. Noah's Ark is about what is best for children always.

ENROLLMENT PACKET INCLUDES:

Health Form	Cultural Competence Policy
Child Information Questionnaire	Special Needs Policy
Emergency Child Information card	Snack Listings & Birthday Treats Policy
Signatures Required Form	Staff Introductions
Request for Pictures of Child and Family	Barry County Transit Bus Information/Agreement Form
Volunteer Opportunities and Policies Form	General Calendar with Brief Activity Descriptions
Tuition Policy	Visiting Day Date & Suggestions
Child Management Policy	Various Child Information Articles
Health Care Plan	Welcome Letter from Director
Weather Plan/Policy	Parent Handbook
Admissions/Withdrawal Policy	

CURRICULUM/PLANNING:

Our curriculum is based on “The Creative Curriculum” and encourages an environmental approach in which our preschool staff can implement many resources available to them. We follow the guidelines set down by the state licensing bureau and those recommended by NAEYC (the National Association Educators of Young Children). Our teaching and support staff use many resources including recent publications, High Scope, Core Knowledge, Tools of the Mind, Story Stretchers, MLPP (Michigan Literacy Progress Profile), Wonder-Filled Week-Days (Christian Preschool Ministries), our years of experience, and a healthy respect for the known developmental ages and stages of the children we serve. A classroom note is posted every day on the bulletin board by each teacher, which details the plans for the week. It is an abbreviated form of the lesson plan. Information about content is also included in the class-note, which is sent home for families to read about what is happening specifically in their child’s classroom!

***GENERAL DAILY SCHEDULE:**

Circle Time (greetings/prayers/planning time/ calendar/weather)	10-20 minutes
Free Choice/Center Time	45-60 minutes
Clean Up Time	5-10 minutes
Story/Finger Plays/Games	15-20 minutes
Snack	15 minutes
Small Group Time	15 minutes
Gross Motor/Playground Activities/Gym	15-30 minutes
Closing Songs	5 minutes
Dismissal	

* Each Classroom will have a variation of this general schedule.
Your child’s teacher will provide each family with their classroom schedule.

Noah’s Ark Mission Statement

Claimed by God and called by Jesus Christ,
we acknowledge that we have special responsibility
for all God’s children, therefore,
we commit ourselves as a people of faith to:

Provide a love and caring learning environment.
Foster Christian attitudes and values.
Nurture, shelter, and encourage spiritual,
cognitive, physical, social and emotional growth.
Celebrate the great diversity of all God’s children.
Experience community with children and families
as an extension of the faith and practices
of the First Presbyterian Church of Hastings, Michigan.

We welcome all in the name of Jesus Christ

OUR PURPOSE

Noah's Ark Preschool provides a loving Christian atmosphere where children can grow socially, emotionally, cognitively, physically, and spiritually.

It provides an appropriate learning environment for children ages three, four, and five, rich in experiences and hands-on learning materials.

Play-based learning is intentional and purposeful and critical to every child's overall growth and development.

SPIRITUAL:

Opportunities to learn in a Christian environment, emphasizing love and kindness, sharing, caring, friendship, and appreciation of God's creation.

COGNITIVE ACTIVITIES:

Growing and learning in a variety of ways including: colors, shapes, matching, opposites, sequencing, sorting, conservation, pre-math, numbers, graphing, observing, predicting, interacting, pre-reading, and otherwise discovering and experiencing their world!

ART ACTIVITIES:

Opportunities to create with various mediums: paint, paper, crayons, chalk, clay, playdough, etc.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Opportunities for dramatic play, role-playing, decision making, sharing, interacting positively as individuals and in a group, manners, growing and exploring, and enjoying being a child!

MUSIC:

Songs, movement, rhythm activities, listening, motor development.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The curriculum at Noah's Ark Preschool is designed to provide a Christian learning environment with individual, self-directed activities and group participation. Through the use of an integrated daily plan, children participate in various activities that encourage growth in all areas of development, including social, emotional, language, spiritual, physical, and cognitive. Each day's plan includes opportunities from each area:

FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES:

Tactile learning, cutting, pasting, drawing, painting, puzzles, small blocks, manipulative toys, sensory exploration.

LARGE MOTOR ACTIVITIES:

Body movement, jumping, large block building, balancing, and music.

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCES:

Expression and learning through sharing, speaking, listening, circle time, puppets, conversation with staff and peers, games, following directions, stories, etc.

LITERATURE:

Stories, nursery rhymes, songs, finger plays, poetry, and creative dramatics.

OUR GOALS ARE TO:

- Provide a secure and loving environment to enhance your child's growth and development.
 - Increase your child's self-image by allowing him/her to make activity choices in the classroom.
 - Develop a sense of wonder, appreciation, and excitement for learning about God and His world.
 - Develop an awareness of process, sequence, and order.
 - Emphasize experience and process more than the final product, thus giving the child confidence and freedom to experiment and learn.
- Enrich your child's ability to express his/her thoughts verbally and creatively.
- Create a sense of social responsibility by encouraging cooperation and sensitivity to others.

ADMISSION/WITHDRAWAL

Children who will be 3 by December 1st and will be no older than 5 may attend preschool. All children must be toilet trained (no diapers/pullups) by the beginning of school in September. If you have to withdraw your child from the school, please give us two weeks notice. We also have a specific withdrawal policy and process available for parents to read in the event removal from school is necessary.

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Simple play clothes and outer clothing with **fastenings the child can handle** will help him/her be more independent and will make the school experience more enjoyable. We have discovered that some fashionable/cute outfits, decorative belts, overalls, and dressy outfits are often frustrating for your child to take care of and requires much adult help. This then does not allow independent dressing. Please label all outer clothing (boots, mittens, hats, scarves, coats, etc.).

Children seem to be most comfortable in tennis shoes. Dressy shoes and flip-flops do not provide stable footing, especially during gross motor activities. During the winter months when children wear boots to school, please remember to always send their shoes. Children may not go bare/sock footed at school.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

There are many reasons why we encourage children to leave their personal toys at home. At times however, an item from home may be useful as an enhancement to a unit of study, as an item to share at group time, or as a form of security in making the transition to school. In these cases it is permissible, but in general, we hope you will cooperate with us in discouraging toys being brought to school.

PHONE CALLS:

Please feel free to call with questions and/or concerns at any time. Our number is 269-945-5463 x3008, but if no one is answering and it is an emergency, call back and press x3001 for the church secretary. PLEASE BE SURE AND CALL US IF YOUR CHILD IS ILL AND WILL NOT BE IN SCHOOL.

SNACKS:

Each day we have a small snack that includes two food groups. We attempt to offer a variety which includes fruits, vegetables, crackers, juice, cheese sticks, cereal, and milk. Due to allergies and changing health issues, we present only prepackaged food - **not anything "homemade"**. This includes birthday treats. For more information, see the "Birthday Treats/Snack Policy" in your enrollment packet. Our snack menu is posted by the preschool information bulletin board.

DROP OFF AND PICK UP SAFETY PROCEDURES

We are committed to creating an educational, trusting and safe early childhood program. To this end:

- Children will only be released to those people whose names appear on the child information card. **KEEP THOSE CARDS CURRENT WITH UPDATED INFORMATION.**
- If a child is not living with both parents we ask you to fill out a Custody/Divorce form which will enable us to be prepared for any visitation or pick up situation.
- Barry County Transit is often used for drop off and pick up of children. Our bus policy is in the enrollment packet. If transit is used, a signed agreement is required.
- **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CHILDREN ALONE IN YOUR VEHICLE AT ANY TIME.** This is an unsafe practice. Occasionally our parking lot is full (due to church functions). If this occurs, staff will assist with drop off and pick up.

FEES/TUITION POLICY

Tuition totals for each class can be found in the Noah's Ark Preschool Tuition Policy which is in your enrollment packet. Payment terms are listed there. Information regarding dates and amounts of each monthly payment will be attached to your payment envelopes/schedule which will be distributed at the Parent Orientation Meeting in August. An initial payment of \$250.00 is due during the month of July, and the remaining tuition is divided into 5 equal payments. There is a 10% discount on additional children for families with more than one child enrolled in the program. Payment is expected on the dates indicated on the tuition schedule. If there is a problem or question concerning tuition, please contact the Director as soon as possible. Communication is very important. Any account that becomes past due is subject to review by the Noah's Ark Preschool Ministry Team, late fees, and/or enrollment status.

****ILLNESS:** There are no refunds or "breaks" for children when they are ill. If your child is ill for a prolonged period of time, please contact the Director.

****SNOW DAYS:** While there will be no tuition refunds for these days, adjustments may be made if extended school cancellations occur, including the possibility of adding days.

FIELD TRIPS

Parents will be notified in advance of trips. Field trips may be parent transported or by Barry County Transit. Siblings are welcome on some field trips, but not on others. Please carefully read the information we will provide for each field trip in order to be fully informed. Our "Signatures Required" form found in the enrollment packet gives permission in advance for some field trips.

HEALTH POLICIES

Noah's Ark Preschool has a comprehensive **Health Care Plan** that is included in your enrollment packet. An overview of our policies: children must have a physical evaluation (updated every two years) upon entering school, and copies of current immunization/waivers are required to be on file. Be sure to inform the school of any food allergies your child may have. We request these be on file before a child starts preschool, but no later than 30 days after. (Required by the State of Michigan.)

In case of illness, we ask that you keep your child at home if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms: **(please consult our Health Care Plan for a more comprehensive list)**

- fever and secondary symptoms
- deep or excessive cough (every 3-5 minutes)
- excessive drainage from nose coupled with a secondary symptom: crankiness, low grade fever, coughing, etc.
- persistent diarrhea (2 times)
- vomiting (once)
- unidentified rash
- lice (until treatment - a head check may be needed upon return)

After an illness, please keep your child home for 24 hours after beginning an antibiotic for any nose or throat infection, for 24 hours after his/her temperature has returned to normal in the case of fever, and 24 hours after the cessation of diarrhea or vomiting.

We know you will appreciate every precaution taken to prevent the spread of illness within the preschool. Parents must notify the preschool when their child has a communicable condition. It is the policy of the preschool to notify parents when their child has been exposed to a communicable disease at the preschool.

PLEASE CALL THE SCHOOL AND LET US KNOW IF YOUR CHILD WILL BE ABSENT DUE TO ILLNESS.

PARENT/CHILD ORIENTATION

There will be a Parent Orientation Meeting in late August. The staff will be sharing information concerning your child's early childhood education, preschool policies, and any other information parents may have questions about. This meeting is geared **just for the parents**. All forms will be handed in at this time.

In early September, a visiting day is scheduled for parents and children to come and visit their new classroom. Those dates are posted on the calendar and coincide with the child's school session. This time in the classroom will allow both the child and their parents opportunities to explore their new room and to become familiar with the staff. This is a specifically set time, but parents should feel free to stop by anytime during the last weeks of August and the first weeks in September.

PARENT PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION

Parent participation takes many forms. Classroom visits are always welcome but our Volunteer Policy (required by state licensing) does state that we reserve the right to ask an adult to leave the classroom based on classroom concerns, dynamics, or at the Director's request. All visitors must sign in, and fill out the required paperwork. Parents or relatives who do not have legal rights to visit will not be allowed to visit. Parent participation takes place through field trips, snacks, special projects and/or classroom activities. Also, involvement takes the form of keeping current on preschool events and information. This happens by reading the newsletters, class notes, and other important information sent home in backpacks as well as the web page and our Facebook page. Check out our bulletin boards located inside the Waiting Room for the latest information.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

In the fall, informal observations are sent home regarding your child's adjustment to preschool. Sometimes, phone calls are made as well to touch base with families. Formal conferences are held in the spring. Frequent communication is essential throughout the year; notes, informal conversations and phone calls are encouraged.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Noah's Ark Child Management is as follows:

Staff will utilize the direct and indirect methods of child management that encourage self-control and are developmentally appropriate. Indirect methods will include a predictable daily schedule, an interesting and well-stocked environment, a thoughtfully lesson-planned day, and clear and consistent guidelines (rules). Direct methods will include appropriate modeling, conflict resolution, redirection of inappropriate behavior, and encouragement of acceptable behaviors. Time outs will only be used as a last resort, and will last no longer than it takes for a child to get control of him/herself (one minute per age of the child).

No corporal punishment of any kind is allowed, nor any method that shames or humiliates a child. A more comprehensive child management guide for Noah's Ark is provided in your child's enrollment packet. The First Presbyterian Church and Noah's Ark Preschool also has a comprehensive Child Abuse Prevention Policy.

SCHEDULE OF OPERATION AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Included in your enrollment packet is a calendar of the days Noah's Ark Preschool will be in operation. Sometimes, it may be necessary to cancel school for weather or mechanical reasons. If the problem is mechanical (for example, the heat is not working in the winter), we will attempt to contact you by phone or text. If weather related, you will need to watch the television (WWMT - Channel 3, WOOD - Channel 8), and check Facebook to see if Hastings Area Schools are closed.

***SCHOOL CLOSINGS:** If Hastings Area Schools are closed due to weather problems, we will also be closed.

***2-HOUR DELAYS:** On the days Hastings Area Schools have morning delays, we will have afternoon classes, no AM classes.