



PARENT HANDBOOK

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Email: noahsarkpreschool@tcoha.org

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Noah's Ark Preschool!

We are a play-based program that offers age-appropriate activities designed to ignite your child's creativity, curiosity, and natural love of learning. We use a "whole child" approach, which encourages social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual growth. We strive to build your child's self-esteem and to help him/her understand their uniqueness as a child of God.

Our staff consists of educated, experienced professionals dedicated to making your child's preschool experience a positive one. Our goal is to create a safe, nurturing environment for the children and to make learning fun!

Please take a few minutes to read through this handbook. It will answer questions you may have regarding our program and it describes our policies on many issues. If you need any further information, please feel free to contact the preschool at (815) 388-0158 or noahsarkpreschool@tcoha.org.

Sincerely,

The Staff at Noah's Ark Preschool

The Church of Holy Apostles

Noah's Ark Preschool

We were established in 2000 as an outreach of **The Church of Holy Apostles**. The preschool is located in the building's Angel's Wing. We serve children between the ages of three and five and also offer an introductory program for two year children. Enrollment in our programs is open to all preschoolers in McHenry and the surrounding areas—you are welcome!

Our Philosophy

Noah's Ark Preschool provides a safe, nurturing environment that promotes social, emotional, and cognitive growth, and allows each child to discover his/her own uniqueness as a child of God.

Goals

- To help each child become aware of the love of Jesus
- To help each child establish a positive self-image
- To help each child build the social skills needed to interact as part of a group of friends
- To help each child reach his/her potential physically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually
- To build skills that set children up for success in Kindergarten and beyond

What is a “Play-Based” Preschool Program?

Children are naturally motivated to play. A play-based program builds on that motivation, using play as a context for learning. Our classrooms are designed to provide a learning-enriched environment, which provides stimulating and challenging experiences for our students. Our Learning Centers allow for meaningful play which encourages curiosity and problem solving, leading to individual growth and development of a positive self-image. A play-based approach involves both child-initiated and teacher-supported learning. The teacher acts as a facilitator: encouraging, promoting and reinforcing a child’s attempts, questions, skill development, and discoveries. Children acquire knowledge through the active exploration of their environment. Teachers also encourage children’s learning through interactions that aim to stretch their thinking to higher levels. Our program enables each child to reach his/her highest potential by supporting children wherever they are on their own learning path and timeline.

Christian Curriculum

Through weekly devotions, daily prayer, and Christian example each child will become aware of Jesus’ love in his/her life. Catholic teachings will be presented in ways a young child can understand. Prayer, Bible stories, visiting the church building, and learning about the saints are some of the topics we will explore. Age appropriate service projects allow the children to experience the faith in action. We believe that nurturing your child’s beginning faith is an important component of our program here at Noah’s Ark.

Learning Centers

Learning centers are designed to engage the children in active learning through child-initiated exploration and discovery. Our program is theme based so our centers are changed weekly to correspond with the current theme. Learning Centers allow children to explore their environment in a meaningful way through “hands on” discovery:

- **Creative Art Table and Easel** – activities that help develop a child’s fine motor and pre-writing skills while giving them a place to express themselves creatively
- **Science and Math Table** – develops counting, sorting, balance, and critical thinking
- **Block Area** – physical science, balance, spatial awareness, and social development activities
- **Writing Table** – a place to develop pre-writing skills with a variety of writing tools, paper, and social interaction
- **Dramatic Play Area** – invites children into pretend play and helps develop social skills, language, and imagination
- **Library/Language Area** – a quiet center to explore a book or play with a flannel or magnet board activity
- **Discovery Table** – an area of sensory play that encourages hands-on science discovery and social interaction
- **Manipulative Table** – a center that offers everything from play-doh to stringing beads, to puzzles; all designed to build fine motor muscles and hand/eye coordination
- **Large Muscle Play** – daily large motor play on our outdoor equipment or during music/movement; these activities help develop balance, hand/eye coordination, spatial awareness, and build self-esteem

Class Sessions

Classes are made up of children 3-4 years old and 4-5 years old. Classes are based on the age of the child as of September 1st.

3 year olds: Tuesday/Thursday 9:00-11:30 AM

4 year olds: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 9:00-11:30 AM OR

Monday/Friday 9:00-11:30, Wednesdays 9:00-2:00

A school calendar will be issued at the start of the school year. It lists the start and close of the school year as well as days off and special events.

My School Two

My School Two offers a fun introduction to the preschool experience for the two year old child. Throughout the school year, four separate sessions are offered. Each session consists of six classes. Child and parent/caregiver attend an hour long session that includes group time, free play, creative art, and a large motor group activity. Children must be two years old by September 1st. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. There is an additional fee for these classes.

Noah's Ark Plus

This program offers an extended day of learning and discovery for our currently enrolled four year old children. The program is offers phonics, pre-writing, creative art, science, and fine motor activities. Group activities promote problem solving and cooperative learning. Writing activities introduce letter formation and beginning sight words and include developmental journaling activities. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. There is an additional tuition charged for this program.

Daily Schedule

9:00-9:05	Arrival
9:05-9:30	Group Time (Helpers and Theme Activities)
9:30-10:30	Learning Centers (Art, Science, Blocks, Dramatic Play, Etc.)
10:30-10:45	Second Group Time (Teacher directed learning activities)
10:45-11:00	Snack and Library Time
11:00-11:15	Music and Movement
11:15-11:30	Large Motor (Indoor or Outdoor Playground play)

Admission

A child must be three years old by September 1st to be enrolled for the current preschool year. The child must be toilet trained and have current health forms on file.

Arrival and Departure

For arrival, we will be using a drive-up drop off system. Parents are to line up in their vehicles outside of Door #2 (Angel's Wing Entrance in the Father Sherry Center parking lot). If you are the first car in line, please pull up directly outside the doors and bring your child to the entrance. The teachers will then bring the children to their classroom. Once the previous family has finished, the next person in line should pull forward and come into the building. Teachers will begin the arrival process between 8:50 and 8:55 AM.

For departure, we will be using a drive-up pick-up system at the end of the school day. Parents are to line up in their vehicles outside of Door #3 facing West. If you are the first car in line, please pull forward to the end of the sidewalk. Once you are parked along the sidewalk, please come and meet your child by the door entrance. Teachers will bring 2 students out at a time. For safety purposes, children should hold their parent's hand until they reach their vehicle. Please make sure your child is securely fastened into his/her car seat before leaving the parking lot. In order to keep the line of cars moving, teachers cannot use this time to answer individual questions about your child's day. We are always available to talk with parents in person or by phone once all the other children have left.

If a child is to be picked up by anyone other than a parent, the name of the person the child is released to must be on file with the preschool office. In the event that someone not listed on the authorization form is

going to be picking up your child, we will need written authorization from the child's parent in advance. Persons unknown to the preschool staff will be asked to present photo identification. The preschool staff will refuse to release the child to any person, whether related or unrelated to the child, who has not been authorized in writing by the parent to receive the child.

A late fee of \$5.00 will be charged for each 15 minutes if a child is picked up later than 11:45 AM. If you know you are going to be late, please call and let the staff know so they can inform your child.

Class Sizes

Class sizes will be limited to fifteen children with two staff members. This child/teacher ratio allows our staff the opportunity to get to know each child's developmental needs and plan classroom activities accordingly. Small class sizes also allow children to gain social confidence when interacting with their peers.

Clothing

Because our program is based on play and exploration, please make sure your child is dressed in play clothes when they come to school. Our classroom is filled with fun (but often messy!) activities. We use paint smocks to prevent staining, but at times accidents may happen. Comfortable clothes also allow for easier movement during our active times. In order to foster independence and self-help skills while using the bathroom, please make sure clothing is free of complicated fastening. Please use discretion in regards to the wearing of jewelry. Small, simple jewelry is permitted, but parents should be aware that these items can easily be misplaced/lost during an active school day. For the safety of your child, it is important that they wear proper fitting, appropriate footwear. Closed toe, rubber soled shoes work best to

minimize accidents. As the weather turns colder, please label all outerwear including mittens, hats, and boots with your child's name.

Emergency School Closing

Noah's Ark Preschool follows McHenry School District 15 closings due to inclement weather. On rare occasions, the preschool may close independently if The Church of Holy Apostles makes the decision to close the building. In the event of a school closing, parents will be notified via text or email. The information will also be posted on the Noah's Ark Preschool (Parent Page) on Facebook or can be found at online at www.emergencyclosings.com. If the preschool opens as usual but inclement weather becomes a serious threat, the Director will determine if an early closing time is necessary and will contact the parents directly by phone. We do not adjust tuition or hold make-up days for closings due to inclement weather.

Field Trips

Periodically, our four year old classes will leave the school grounds on field trips to enhance their learning experience. Permission slips will be sent home prior to each field trip and will need to be signed by the parent. Any fees or costs associated with the field trip will be listed on the permission slip and are payable prior to the outing. Parents or caregivers will provide transportation and must accompany their child for the entirety of the field trip. Children are encouraged to wear their school t-shirts on field trips.

Guests and Visitors

Prospective parents coming to observe the preschool must check in with the Director and remain with the Director or other staff member for the duration of their visit. Children currently enrolled at Noah's Ark Preschool are prohibited from bringing other children as visitors to

their class session. Only children who are enrolled may attend and participate in class activities. Observation visits may be set up with the director, but a parent must accompany the non-registered child.

Guidance

The goal of guidance is to help children learn responsibility and self-regulation of their behaviors. We encourage the children to verbalize and problem-solve their differences with each other. A child involved in inappropriate behavior is re-directed to another quieter activity until he/she is able to gain control. We believe that communication with parents on cooperative discipline is important. If persistent negative behavior seems a concern at school, we will communicate with the parents immediately to provide a consistent approach to the behavior. Serious, recurring behavior that jeopardizes the safety of other children attending Noah's Ark Preschool may lead to the removal of a student from our program.

Health Policy

Section 407.310 of DCFS Licensing Standards requires that a medical report, on forms prescribed by the Department, be on file for each child. The report must be dated less than 6 months* prior to enrollment and include a Lead Risk Assessment. A completed immunization record must be included with the physical form. All children must have the following immunizations before entering preschool:

4 DPT

3 Oral Polio

Hepatitis B Series

1MMR

1 HIB

Varicella (chicken pox)

Under Illinois law, a parent may request that immunizations be waived on religious grounds. An Illinois Certificate of Religious Exemption must be completed by the parent, signed by the Health Care Provider, and kept in the child's file. Illinois law allows exemption for religious reasons only, not personal or philosophical reasons. Students who are not immunized may be excluded from the preschool should there be an outbreak of one or more diseases from which the student is not protected. The preschool will maintain a list of all enrolled children who are not immunized as required by Illinois Department of Public Health rules. The number of non-immunized children on the list shall be available to parents who request it.

*If transferring from another preschool, the physical examination form will be accepted if it is less than one year old.

Illness

If a child shows any signs of illness, parents are urged to keep them at home. This helps minimize exposure to other children and prevents the spread of illnesses throughout the school. Please call the school or contact your child's teacher to let them know if your child is going to be absent.

Your child may not attend school if he/she:

- Has had a fever, diarrhea or vomited within the last 24 hours
- Has a persistent cough, severe runny nose, or has started a fresh cold and/or sore throat
- Seems lethargic, or complains of a headache or not feeling well
- Has strep throat or pink eye until he/she has been on medication for at least 24 hours
- Has begun a new antibiotic within the past 24 hours

- Has an unexplained rash (unless accompanied by a note from a physician stating it is not contagious)
- Has head lice until it has been treated and no nits are present

In the event a child has contracted a contagious disease (measles, strep throat, chicken pox) we may require a written release from your child's doctor in order for your child to return to school.

If a child becomes sick at school, parents will be contacted and asked to make arrangements to pick up their child.

Covid19 Protocol

In regards to COVID19, Noah's Ark will continue to follow the guidance set forth by the CDC (last updated May 11, 2023)

IF A STUDENT TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID19:

According to CDC guidance, anyone that tests positive for COVID19 must isolate for a minimum of 5 days. Days of isolation are calculated as follows:

Without symptoms:

Day 0 is the day the test was administered. Day 1 is the first full day following.

If the student develops symptoms within 10 days of testing positive, the clock restarts at Day 0 on the day of symptom onset.

With symptoms:

Day 0 is the day of symptom onset, regardless of when the test was administered. Day 1 is the first full day after symptoms started.

Students may return on Day 6 but MUST wear a well-fitted facemask from Day 6 through Day 10. If students are unable to wear a facemask they must remain at home through Day 10 and can return to school on

Day 11. Please note that students must be symptom free for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Anyone experiencing “long COVID” symptoms (i.e. lingering cough, diarrhea, etc.) may be required to provide a doctor’s note stating they are no longer contagious before returning to school.

Tuition will not be adjusted for individual student absences. By submitting the tuition contract, you are agreeing to the terms stated above.

IF A STUDENT HAS BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID19:

Close contact is when you have been within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID19 for 15 minutes or longer

Anyone who has been in close contact with someone with COVID19 should wear a facemask for 10 days to avoid potential spread of the virus. In addition, it is recommended to test for COVID19 on Day 6 (even if no symptoms are present) Days are calculated as follows:

Day 0 is the day of last exposure to someone with COVID19. Day 1 is the first full day after last exposure.

Facemasks must be worn from Day 1 through Day 10. During this time, watch closely for any developing symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath). If symptoms develop, isolate immediately, get tested, and stay home until results are received.

Students who are required to wear a facemask will need to have 2 masks with them at school at all times. If families are utilizing reusable masks, masks will need to be washed every day. If families are utilizing disposable masks, masks should be discarded after every school day.

Medication Authorization

In the event that a student needs to receive medication while at school, a Medication Authorization form must be filled out by the parent. Any prescription medicine must be in its original pharmacy container labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, and instructions for administration. This includes inhalers and EpiPens.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is a key element in creating a sense of community and we encourage parents to be involved in their child's experience here at Noah's Ark Preschool. At the beginning of the school year, a form will be sent home that gives a description of volunteer opportunities and different ways to become involved. We understand that involvement will vary from family to family given work schedules and time availability. If you have an interest in volunteering in a capacity outside of what is listed on our form, please feel free to contact the Director with your suggestions.

Parent/Teacher Communication

We believe that open communication between the school and the parent is the key to giving your child a positive school experience. We use several methods of communication to keep our parents informed.

On Sundays, parents will receive a weekly email called Preschool Parent Notes. These emails contain an overview of the week ahead, as well as important information about activities, events, and reminders. Please be sure we have a current email address on file to ensure you receive these notifications.

Our Noah's Ark Preschool (Parent Page) on Facebook will allow you to see pictures of your children and stay up-to-date on preschool events.

In order to access this page, you must join the group, which is open to parents only.

Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held in the Spring. These conferences will inform you of your child's development and offer suggestions to build readiness skills. In addition, special conferences can be held any time parents, teachers, or the Director feel a conference is necessary. If you have any concerns regarding your child, please see your child's teacher to schedule a time to meet and discuss your thoughts.

In addition to these formal methods of communication, ongoing, informal conversation between parents and teachers regarding your child's progress is highly encouraged. Our staff is available to talk before or after class, in person or by phone. Please feel free to text, email, or call us at any time. We want the line of communication between parents and staff to always be open!

Registration

Registration for the following year opens in January. Registration for the current year is dependent upon available space in a specific session. Enrolled three year old students are guaranteed space in the following year's program for the same class session time. Registration in My School Two and Noah's Ark Plus programs are on a first come, first served basis. **Registration fees are due at registration and are non-refundable.**

Separation

Children sometimes have difficulty separating from their parents during the first few weeks of school. Even a child who has been eagerly awaiting the start of the school year may feel shy, uncertain, or homesick once classes begin. This is typical behavior which, over time,

should decrease as children become more secure in their new environment. Here are a few suggestions to ease separation:

- Allow adequate time in the morning so you don't have to rush. Starting the day off at a relaxed pace will help your child from feeling hurried and anxious.
- While traveling to school, talk to your child about their day ahead; who will be there, what they will be learning about, etc. This prepares your child for what will occur.
- When you arrive at the preschool, give your child hugs and kisses and reassure them that you will be back.
- If they are still having difficulty, teachers are close by to help your child when you leave. Most children will settle down soon after your departure. We recognize that each child is unique in his/her patterns and ease of adjustment to new situations, and that the techniques to calm a child will vary. The teachers will work with you and your child to develop an individualized plan to ease their separation anxiety.

Show and Tell

The children will have a chance to bring something from home for "Show and Tell" on a rotating basis. Please allow your child to choose one item that they would like to show to their classmates. This is a fun experience for the kids, and it is important to let them choose what to bring (any expensive or valuable items should be sent at your discretion) Children should only bring one item in at a time. If they are having a hard time choosing just one item, please remind them that they will have several opportunities to have the Show and Tell bag and can bring something new in the next time.

Snacks

Parents will provide snack on a rotating basis. Monthly snack calendars will be sent home at the beginning of each month. With the exception of birthdays and holiday parties, we ask that snacks be relatively healthy and low in added sugar. The McHenry County Health Department requires all snacks to be prepackaged and store bought.

No home baked goods or opened packages will be accepted. The school will provide cups of water, napkins, and any needed utensils. Some suggestions for healthy snacks are:

- Pretzels, goldfish crackers, graham crackers
- Bananas, grapes, raisins
- Baby carrots (prepackaged)
- Mini bagels
- String cheese or cheese cubes
- Low-sugar yogurt

Noah's Ark is a nut-free school. Please do not send any snacks containing nuts. Snacks that come from a facility that processes peanuts/tree nuts are allowed.

Supplies

A \$75 material fee is due at the start of the school year to cover the cost of supplies. In addition, parents are asked to provide the following items:

Back Pack – All children are required to have a backpack or tote bag to carry any paperwork home from school. The backpack should be large enough to place a 9 x 12 sheet of paper inside. Please label the bag with your child's name.

Extra Clothing – A complete set of clothing including pants, shirt, underwear, and socks must be supplied. Place the set of clothing in a gallon sized zip-lock bag clearly labeled with your child's name. These clothes will be kept at school in case of accidents. We suggest sending clothing that would work in a variety of seasonal temperatures, such as a short sleeved shirt and a pair of lightweight pants.

Toys From Home

We have many new and exciting things for the children to play with at school. Therefore, we ask that children leave their personal toys at home. Toys from home can be misplaced, can cause sharing difficulties, and can distract children from the play and social opportunities the teachers have planned. The preschool is not responsible for any articles brought from home.

Tuition

Noah's Ark Preschool is nonprofit and depends solely on tuition for income. The Church of Holy Apostles governs all the financial affairs of the school. Tuition shall be charged in nine monthly installments and is due on the first class period of every month. Online payments can be made on Give Central, which is accessed through our preschool website, or by cash or check. Please note that checks cannot be postdated or held for deposit. Tuition fees cannot be adjusted for daily absences due to illness or vacations or for school closings due to inclement weather. If you withdraw your child from our program, tuition is owed until you give written notice.

Late Tuition Payments: If tuition is not paid by 3:30 PM on the first class period of the month a \$5.00 late fee will be assessed for each class day it is late, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director.

In the event a check is returned for insufficient funds, a \$25.00 fee will be assessed and future payments will need to be paid in cash or online.

The policies and procedures set forth in this handbook have been established to create a quality program that ensures the safety of all children enrolled at Noah's Ark. Any questions regarding these policies should be brought to the attention of the Director. By enrolling your child you are agreeing to comply with the policies stated here.

All Noah's Ark families are invited to learn more about our parish, The Church of Holy Apostles, and our parish elementary school, Montini Catholic School.

Father Paul White, Pastor
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