

WELCOME

We welcome you and your child to the Ark Preschool/Kindergarten. While your child is enrolled in our program, he/she will be provided a quality education with developmentally appropriate social skills.

We encourage parents' involvement and participation to reinforce these early years of their child's academic and social development. The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten maintains an open-door policy. Our parents are welcome to visit our classes at any time.

Please take the time to read this handbook. It will help you to have a good understanding of our philosophy, policies and procedures.

ABOUT THE ARK PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN:

The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten is a preschool that operates under the guidelines of the State of Vermont and a kindergarten program that operates under the Vermont Department of Education.

We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, political belief or religion of parents. All the staff at the Ark Preschool/Kindergarten will be working for the best interests of your child and for their welfare.

NO SMOKING ON ANY ARK PRESCHOOL PROPERTY

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten strives to provide a quality education and social skills program for children age 3, 4 and 5 years. First consideration will be given to the needs of children. We feel our preschool must serve the child as well as the parents. We believe that parents are the first and most important educators of children. We see each child and his/her family as unique; therefore, we strive to meet the individual needs in a respectful manner. We strive to create a mutual respect between parents and teachers – a partnership for the benefit of the child. We believe in providing an environment that is safe, clean, healthy and oriented to children. The classrooms are arranged to offer different choices throughout the day and provided space for whole group, small group, and individual activities. Our teachers create a caring and nurturing atmosphere for each child. We support the teachers with training, resources, and freedom to create a unique learning experience for children. We continually work to earn your trust in us.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

We encourage parents to be highly involved in their child's learning experiences at the Ark Preschool. Parents have full access to the facility and staff during school hours. Parents also have full access to their child's records. Parents are welcome to volunteer during many different times including field trips, special lunches and parties, reading, and projects with the children.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten does not share any child's information with anyone without written permission from the parent.

STATEMENT OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a safe, nurturing environment for children placed in our care.
2. Help to develop an understanding of God's love.
3. Help build a lasting love and excitement for learning.
4. Help build a foundation of basic academic skills using developmentally appropriate practices.
5. Encourage curiosity and creative thinking.
6. Build listening and communication skills.
7. Broaden the child's horizon beyond the home through varied experiences.
8. Develop self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-discipline.
9. Help the child feel they are accepted by others.
10. Provide guidance in showing interest in others.
11. Reinforce appropriate behavior through encouragement.
12. Help children create friendships with others.
13. Build good health habits and attitudes.
14. Develop fine and gross motor coordination.
15. Train independence in physical development.
16. Help the child develop problem solving skills.

GUIDANCE POLICY

Children feel more secure when they have limits that are appropriate and consistently enforced. Given limits, children can learn to make independent decisions. Children need the

security of knowing there are adults that will not let them go beyond reasonable boundaries when their own self-control fails them.

The goal of our program is to maintain appropriate limits, which allow children to explore and grow without harming other children or themselves by

1. Providing consistency in enforcing limitations
2. Responding to inappropriate behavior by redirecting activities and providing positive alternatives
3. Talking with children in a natural voice
4. Giving children positive attention and recognizing positive behaviors
5. Helping children to express anger with words rather than inappropriate actions
6. Considering the individual needs of children as well as the needs of the group
7. Providing a choice of developmentally appropriate activities
8. Using encouragement rather than competition, comparison, or criticism
9. Showing appreciation for children's opinions, responding to positive behavior

EXPULSION POLICY

Our goal is to meet the needs of each child and family.

Termination of enrollment is always a last resort action which is carried out only when the director and teachers feel that such

action is in the best interest of the child or the other children enrolled. If the Ark is unable to meet the needs of the child and/or family, every effort will be made to refer the parent to a more appropriate program for their child. The circumstances under which a child may be terminated are explained below.

1. The child exhibits extremely aggressive behavior which endangers other children and/or staff.
2. The child's health and safety at the Ark cannot be assured due to circumstances such as impulsive, risk-taking behavior.
3. Unwillingness of the parents to work with teachers in the management of their child's behavior, and or refusal to follow the preschool's recommendations for outside support services.
4. The child's developmental needs are not being met at the preschool due to general immaturity. Behavior indicative of a child's immaturity may include severe ongoing separation issues, excessive need for teacher attention, and inability to function independently or with the group.
5. The child has individual special needs which require accommodations causing an undue burden on the preschool.
6. Nonpayment of tuition.
7. Continued lateness of picking up the child.
8. Parent's display of inappropriate behavior towards staff or children. May include: disrespectful language,

disregarding program policies, verbal and/or physical abuse or any unlawful behavior.

ENROLLMENT

Children must be three years old and toilet trained to enroll in the preschool. Upon enrollment there will be certain forms that must be completed and returned in order to meet enrollment requirements for the State of Vermont. These are:

Registration Fee

Parent Interview and Statement of Understanding

Enrollment Card including financial agreement and attendance schedule

Child's Immunization Record and copy of annual physical

Signed Statement by physician

Each child enrolling in the Ark Preschool/Kindergarten is required to pay a non-refundable once-a-year fee of \$35.00.

CURRICULUM FEE

This is a yearly fee for A Beka curriculum for each child for the entire year's worth of worksheets, curriculum, etc. These workbooks will be ordered for your child after the fee has been paid. They are a daily part of the Ark Preschool/Kindergarten and are required in the curriculum.

\$40.00 for preschool

\$65.00 for four year old pre-kindergarten

\$65.00 for five year old kindergarten

TUITION

The tuition for the Ark Preschool/Kindergarten is a fee set by the administration according to the program in which your child is enrolled. **Full tuition is charged regardless of whether your child is present or not.** If your child is absent for any reason, we reserve his/her place, therefore, we must charge for the service. This applies to all age groups and all sessions.

Our tuition is based on an *annual fee* that can be paid by your choice of the following plans. This annual fee is divided into a weekly amount that allows you to pay only during the weeks that your child is attending school. This allows you the freedom of not paying any tuition during the full weeks of school vacation, but tuition is paid during all the rest of the weeks beginning in August through the end of the school year. All other weeks are considered to be full weeks and should be paid each week in advance. Tuition must be paid in advance. You may choose to pay weekly, biweekly, or monthly, but each payment needs to be in advance of the week or weeks it is for. Please make checks payable to The Ark Preschool.

School Option

Full Days – 8:30-3:00

Five Days: \$132.00 per week

Three Days: \$83.00 per week

Half Days – 8:30-11:30

Five Days: \$88.00 per week

Three Days: \$55.00 per week

If your child is dropped off before 8:15 or picked up after 3:15 (or 11:45 for half day) an early/late fee will be charged. This fee will be \$.25 per minute.

School Plus Option

Full Days – 7:30-5:00

Five Days: \$160.00 per week

Three Days: \$99.00 per week

Half Days – 7:30-11:30

Five Days: \$98.00 per week

Three Days: \$61.00 per week

The School Plus Option allows you to drop off your child any time after 7:30 and pick them up any time before 5:00 (11:30 for half days), while only paying one flat fee per week.

All children must be picked up by 5:00. There is a \$1.00 per minute charge after 5:00.

SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

7:30 -8:30 (School Plus) Free Play

8:30-9:00 Activity Time—Includes art/crafts, stories, songs, music, poetry, poems, verses

9:00-9:30 Circle Time—Includes pledges, songs, calendar, Bible story, character development story, show and tell

9:30-10:00 Restroom Break & Snack Time

10:00-10:45 Numbers & Phonics & Language Development

10:45-11:30 Recess

Half Day Dismissal

11:45-12:30	Lunch
12:30-12:45	Story Time
12:45-1:30	Quiet Time
1:30-1:45	Individual book time
1:45-2:15	Wake up, free play
2:15-2:30	Snack Time
2:30-3:00	Project, cooking, music
3:00	Dismissal
3:00-5:00	(School Plus) Free Play

ORIENTATION

Our goal is to make each child and family feel comfortable with the transition into preschool. All parents and children are encouraged to visit before enrollment or starting preschool. If you would like to stop by for a visit and see the facilities, classes, or teachers please call to set up an appointment. Depending on the needs of you and your child, more than one visit can be planned. Each year, we have an Open House prior to the beginning of school. During the Open House, you and your child can talk with the teachers, meet other families, and see the classroom set up and ready for the beginning of the new school year.

ARRIVAL

Children must stay with their parents upon arriving and leaving the building. All parents must escort their child to the restroom to wash their hands upon arrival. After the child has washed their hands, the parent should enter the arrival time and then initial the daily attendance sheet.

PICKUP

Parents will provide a list of individuals that are approved to pick up their child. If there is a change in the person picking up the child, the Ark staff must be notified prior to dismissal. The person picking up the child should enter the pickup time and their initials on the daily attendance sheet. Please do not allow your child to leave the classroom without you. Children cannot be outside, especially in the parking lot, without an adult.

DIVORCED OR SEPARATED PARENTS

We must allow a child to leave with either parent unless we have a copy of a court order giving only one parent custody. We must also have written notification, which will be kept in the child's file, indicating that the other parent is not permitted to pick up the child.

QUIET TIME

A quiet time is provided each day. Each child must have their own mat with a covering or sleeping bag. The blankets/sleeping bag must be in a bag. It is suggested that these be brought in a drawstring bag for easier storage. They may stay at the school throughout the week, but must be brought home each weekend to be washed.

SNACK

The Ark offers a nutritious snack for the children each morning and afternoon. Parents will also be given the opportunity to provide snacks. In addition to being provided with something to eat and drink, the children have opportunities to learn about nutrition, good eating habits, and table etiquette in a social environment.

LUNCH

The parents provide lunch. We request that you send a healthy, nutritious lunch with your child, e.g. sandwich, fruit/vegetable, drink, and healthy snack. We have a microwave if you would like to send a lunch item that needs to be warmed up, but we cannot cook items. Lunch and snack time is viewed as time for the children and staff to interact positively, and as an opportunity to practice skills such as good manners and healthy and nutritious habits. *Please do not send candy and soda in your child's lunch. It will be returned home.*

USDA/CACFP meal pattern requirements:

Breakfast – milk, fluid; fruit, vegetable, or juice;
grain/bread

Lunch/Supper – milk, fluid; meat or meat alternate,
vegetable and/or fruit (at least 2); grain/bread

Snack (choose 2 components) – milk, fluid; fruit,
vegetable, or juice; grain/bread; meat or meat alternate

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

You are welcome to send in special snacks for your child's birthday. Invitations to parties and events can be put in children's folders or mailed. As it is difficult to invite everyone to a party, we try to limit discussions of parties during school so that others do not feel excluded. We cannot give out addresses or phone numbers due to our confidentiality policy.

TELEVISION/MOVIES

We rarely watch television. If the children are very interested in a topic that has a DVD or video that would complement what we have been discussing, we may watch it. During other special occasions, a short video may be watched. The children

are not required to watch when a video is shown; an optional activity will be available.

CLOTHES

We request a complete change of clothes for your child each day. Please provide appropriate clothing for your child that will allow him/her to be comfortable in the environment. Please take time to be aware of weather conditions and have your child prepared to go outside. We go outside everyday it is possible. We recommend having your child wear sneakers outside. This allows them to run, climb, and play safely. If your child comes to school in boots, please make sure they have shoes or slippers to wear inside. Self-help is an important part of the development of independence. Children need clothing they can manage, including their snaps, buttons and any belt buckles. All outerwear should be marked with child's name in permanent marker. This includes snow pants, boots, hats, mittens, and coats.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

As stated above, we practice an open door policy at The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten. Parents are encouraged to be involved in many ways. Throughout the year we have special parties and luncheons that parents can attend. Other opportunities for parent involvement include:

- Chaperone field trips
- Help plan and assemble The Ark's Memorial Day float
- Attend special work days,
- Volunteer to help with luncheons/parties
- Various other opportunities
- Bring in snacks

Parents are also welcome to come by the preschool at any time to spend time with their child, observe their child's day, or join in special activities. We strive to maintain a positive partnership with parents through good communication. This can be done through daily contact with parents during drop off and pick up, informal meetings, parent conferences, newsletters, and emails.

TRANSITIONS

It is important that children are kept in "the know"; i.e., that they know their parents are leaving and will return, and the caregivers in their room will play, comfort, and support them. Therefore, please do not "sneak" out on your child when they are distracted. Instead, alert a staff member that you are ready to go, say goodbye once to your child, and leave. It usually helps to keep the drop off time as short as you can. Caregivers will reassure your child that you will return later as stated, will provide comfort, and will engage your child into a favorite activity to smooth things along. This way of separating will best support your child to have a successful transition. Repeated good-byes tend to confuse and cause worry, and should be avoided. You are welcome to call after you have dropped off your child to see how things are going.

SNOW DAYS

The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten will be closed when the Vergennes schools are closed because of weather. We will not have delayed openings like VUHS. We will open at our regular time. When the weather becomes inclement during the school day, we may find it necessary to close early. We will contact the parent in order for you to make the necessary arrangements

for early pick-up. (A full day under these circumstances is until 1:30). Please refer to payment schedule about snow days.

ABSENCES

If your child is going to be absent, please call the school by 8:30 to let us know. There are no substitutions for days missed for absences, illness, vacations, or school closure days (including weather related closures).

SICK POLICY AND ILLNESS

It is in the best interest of your child and other children in the preschool not to bring your child to school if he/she is ill. If your child becomes ill during the preschool hours we will contact you first, and if unable to reach you, then we will call your designated alternates. Reasons for sending a child home, or for keeping your child at home, include a temperature over 100 degrees, vomiting, diarrhea, unidentified rash, conjunctivitis (pink eye), or other symptoms of illness. Children that are sent home from school cannot return to school for at least 24 hours after symptoms are gone. We go outside every day, weather permitting. Due to staff/child ratios and the importance of fresh air and exercise, we cannot keep one child inside. If your child is too sick to go outside, they are too sick to be at school.

If a child in the Ark is diagnosed with a communicable disease, we will confidentially (without names) notify all parents that there has been possible exposure.

Symptom	Keep child home until...
Fever	fever registers below 100 ^o for at least a <u>full</u> 24 hours without medication.
Earache	a physician determines the

cause and treatment, and recommends the child return to school.

Rash	a physician determines the cause and treatment, and recommends the child return to school.
Sore throat	a physician determines the cause and treatment, and that no strep infection exists.
Red or watery eyes	a physician determines the cause and treatment, and recommends the child return to school.
Upset stomach or diarrhea	no further problem exists and the child is eating normally without causing symptoms to recur/ must be 24 hours since last episode
Draining sore	a physician determines the cause and treatment, and recommends the child return to school.
Chicken pox	all sores have crusted over

For all other communicable diseases, such as influenza, measles, mumps, scarlet fever, etc. we must have a statement from a health care provider stating your child may return to school.

ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

If your child has asthma, please submit a care plan that includes a description of triggers, how to treat the symptoms when they arise, and the names, doses and methods of all treatments. All medication/equipment will be securely stored and readily available for staff to administer.

If your child has an allergy that requires the use of an epi-pen (epinephrine injection) for severe allergic reaction please submit a care plan that includes a description of triggers, how to treat the symptoms when they arise, and the names, doses and methods of all treatments. If your child has any other type of allergy, please submit a care plan, if necessary, that includes all pertinent information regarding descriptions and treatments.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event of an accident or medical emergency we will attempt to contact you or others you have listed as appropriate to contact in an emergency. If unable to contact anyone on your emergency list, we will contact your doctor directly, or go straight to the emergency room at Porter Medical Center.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Within 45 days of enrollment and annually thereafter, we will need a copy of your child's annual physical including information regarding any health conditions and medications that may impact the care of your child.

IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

ADMISSION REQUIREMENT: When your child is admitted, you must present a signed medical statement along with a copy of an immunization record signed or stamped by a physician or

health professional. All children must meet the minimum state vaccine requirements.

Note: If medical diagnosis and treatment and/or immunizations conflict with your religious or moral beliefs, you must sign an affidavit to that effect and attach it to this form. If immunization would be injurious to your child or family, you must obtain a certificate (signed by a physician) to that effect and attach it to this form. In the event of a disease outbreak, a child not adequately immunized may not be allowed at his child care provider until the situation is resolved.

Schedule

*According to the Vermont Department of Health the required and recommended immunizations should be administered at the following intervals:

DPaT: 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 15-18 months and 4-6 years

Polio: 2 months, 4 months, 6-18 months, and 4-6 years

MMR: 12-15 months and 4-6 years

Hib: 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and 12-15 months

Hepatitis B: birth, 1-2 months and 6-18 months

PCV: 2 months, 4 months, 6 months and 12-15 months

Varicella: 12-15 months and 4-6 years

MEDICINES

Because of the limited number of hours your child is in the preschool, we prefer not to dispense any medication, but if it is necessary we will under the following conditions:

1. Prescribed by physician
2. Medicine is in container showing name of child, doctor, dosage, time to be given

3. The parent giving the preschool permission to administer the medicine must sign an authorization form.

HEAD LICE

Head Lice seems to be an ongoing problem each year in all school districts and preschool programs. To help protect children the following policy is in effect:

1. When a child is observed to have head lice or nits (lice eggs), the child will be sent home. Information will be sent home with the child to help the parent get rid of the lice.
2. A child infected with head lice will not be allowed to return to the classroom until a staff person has checked and confirmed that the child is **nit and lice free**. The program does not require that a child be seen by a doctor for head lice.
3. Whenever a child has been sent home with head lice, the parents or other children in the classroom will be notified in a letter sent home with each child. The letter tells parents what to watch for and how to prevent their child from contracting head lice.

FIELD TRIPS

From time to time we will engage in field trips to give students more hands-on learning that relate to areas which we have discussed in our preschool. Permissions slips are filled out at the beginning of the year that lists each field trip that is planned for the year. There is also a field trip fee that is required at the beginning of the year. Parents are notified well in advance before each field trip is taken and have the right to choose to not have their child participate in any field trip. If you choose

to have your child not participate in a field trip, you are responsible for their care during that time. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to join us as chaperones for all field trips. Victory Baptist Church owns a large 26 passenger bus that will be used on field trips. The State of Vermont does not require children to use seat belts, booster seats, or car seats on buses. However, because we want to be as safe as we can, we had the bus company where we bought the bus put seat belts in it. Every child will have to wear their seat belt when they ride the bus. If you want your child in more than a seat with a lap belt, then we need you to provide a booster seat that will work with the lap belts that the company installed. Your child's safety is of utmost importance to us, which is why we have exceeded what is required. We also own a twelve passenger van. The van does require your child to use a carseat/booster seat. For some trips additional parent drivers will be needed. You will be notified and asked to provide a carseat/booster seat for your child if they will be riding in the van.

During a field trip, the emergency procedures are as follows:

1. An emergency bag will be taken on all field trips that will contain copies of emergency information on each child, consent forms, and the first aid kit.
2. In an emergency, we will attempt to contact the parents or alternates. If not possible, medical treatment will be sought from the scene of the emergency. We will continue to try to contact the parents.

FIRE DRILLS

The preschool will conduct at least 1 fire drill a month while children are in attendance. This will ensure that your child will be aware of what to do in an emergency and therefore adding to his/her safety during such times.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

All staff at the Ark is trained in CPR and first aid. The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten has in place a written emergency response plan. It covers what would happen during various contingencies such as illness, missing child, fire, evacuation, and shelter-in-place (quarantine). You are welcome to ask to see a copy of our emergency response plan.

PARENT CONFERENCES

The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten staff will schedule a parent conference each spring to discuss your child's progress and goals. Other conferences can be scheduled at any time during the year as needed by either the parent or child's teacher. Progress reports will be sent out quarterly. Parents will be kept informed consistently through daily conversations with the staff, newsletter, and other notes sent in your child's folder.

DISCIPLINE PHILOSOPHY

The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten sees discipline as equipping the child to learn good behavior and also to feel good about themselves. We will use gentle and positive guidance to help the child achieve this goal. We believe in clear and consistent limits for the children, thus enabling the child to learn to work within the framework of expected behavior. Teachers facilitate the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling and

encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to a more acceptable activity, and setting clear limits for the benefits and safety of all children.

POLICY OF REQUIRED REPORTING

All child care providers/preschools in the State of Vermont, by law, are required to report any incidents of suspected neglect or physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to the Department for Children and Families. The Ark Preschool/Kindergarten will report such incidents.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM LICENSING REGULATIONS

The State of Vermont provides access to early childhood program information and Early Childhood Program Licensing information by Internet at <http://www.state.vt.us/srs/childcare/license.htm>. You can also reach the Child Care Consumer Concern Line at 1-800-540-7942.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

If you have any questions or concerns about any of these policies or procedures at the Ark Preschool/Kindergarten, please first talk to your child's teacher or the director. If that is not possible please contact the Executive Administrator, Pastor Tim Taylor.