

Little Lambs Parent Handbook

Philosophy and Goals

Our goal is to help children grow emotionally, socially, physically, intellectually, and spiritually. Our staff will guide children to learn and grow as children learn and grow best -- by touching, seeing, and doing.

At Little Lambs, children will create and build, paint and draw, laugh and play, sing and dance, run and jump, and love and pray. Each child will have the opportunity to meet the following goals:

- ❑ To learn and understand school is another place besides home where one can feel cared for, protected, and secure.
- ❑ To encourage each child's expression of his or her feelings and needs in a constructive way.
- ❑ To encourage each child to learn appropriate times of cooperation with other children and the teacher while maintaining his or her sense of independence.
- ❑ That he or she can enjoy being in a group and can form friendships.
- ❑ That he or she is able to share and can accept modifications of his or her behavior when the group requires it.
- ❑ That he or she is one of God's children and can rely on His love, strength and support.

Staff Training

Staff members are trained in First Aid and CPR, Parenting with Love and Logic, child abuse detection/prevention and take a minimum of 24 hours of continuing education each year.

Programs

Mother's Day Out

We serve children 18 months of age up to 35 months two days a week. Children turning three by September 1st and are fully potty trained may enter our Preschool. Mother's Day Out is not a preschool, but is considered a playgroup for toddlers. Teachers do follow a thematic curriculum in which art activities, stories, songs, and finger plays relate to a particular theme. Children will attend Music and Chapel once a week, and have free play everyday on our large and well-equipped playground. Children will play in the gym with gross motor toys on inclement weather days. We provide a snack for each child. Lunch is followed by a nap in which children lay on a "nap mat." If a child does not sleep and disturbs other students during naptime, the child will need to be picked up at 12:30. Both the lunch and nap mat should be brought from home. Classes meet from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. A more specific curriculum overview is available on our web site at www.littlelambsecc.org.

Exceptions to the age requirements for student enrollment in a particular class(es) may be made with Little Lambs School Board approval, provided all applicable state licensing guidelines are followed. Exceptions will be considered only when necessary to meet staffing needs or to accommodate special circumstances in the best interest of both Little Lambs and the student(s).

Preschool for 3s, 4s, and 5s

Preschool classrooms are set up in learning centers that encourage children to socialize, experiment, explore, create and discover with the opportunity to make free choices and decisions. Learning centers include: home living, blocks, books and listening, creative art, math, language arts, science, and fine motor activities to strengthen the fingers and hands. Teachers plan together and follow a theme based curriculum in which art activities, stories, songs, and finger plays relate to a particular theme. Children will attend Music and Chapel once a week, and movement and motor skills for children in the three and four day program. Children have free play everyday on our large and well-equipped playground. We have a gym with gross motor toys for children to play with on inclement weather days. We provide each child a snack and ask parents to send a lunch for their child. The preschool program is more structured than our Mother's Day Out program and emphasizes following directions, working in groups and circle time, while still having individual activities, and socialization. Classes meet from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This program requires children to be fully potty-trained children. More specific curriculum overviews pertaining to each age level is listed on our web site at: www.littlelambsecc.org.

5s Bridging Program

This program is designed for children who have turned five by September 1st and are ready to attend school four days a week, Monday through Thursday. It is similar to our program for fours, without repeating the curriculum. It is not intended to replace the Kindergarten year. It emphasizes following directions and the opportunity to make free choices and decisions. It gives children a "year to grow" before entering Kindergarten. Classes meet from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. A more specific curriculum overview is available on our web site at www.littlelambsecc.org.

Religious Education

Little Lambs Early Childhood Center teachers are Christians dedicated to creating an environment through which all students will experience the love of Christ and the beauty and miracles of God's world. Bible stories will be read and Bible lessons taught; however, no church doctrine will be discussed. Chapel will be held once a week and prayers will be said before meals and snack.

Discipline Policy

We strive to maintain a warm, loving environment that nurtures children's development, including self-discipline. Each staff member is trained in "Parenting with Love and Logic." We attempt to make all our interactions with children positive, while maintaining the safety and well being of all children. We will first attempt to redirect children when problems arise. If this does not work, we will use a brief time-out, still striving to maintain a positive environment. If this approach is not effective, parents will be contacted and a conference set up to find a solution. Further discipline procedures have been established and may be utilized when appropriate. If the child becomes a danger to other students and/or staff members or disrupts the classroom learning environment, the child will be asked to stay home from school for period of time determined by the Director. In extreme circumstances, the child will be removed from the program.

Biting Policy

Unfortunately, at some time during the year, your toddler may come home with "teeth marks" on his/ her body. Biting can be a scary incident and every effort is made by

teachers to watch children carefully so that biting does not occur. However, when young children do not have the verbal skills necessary to communicate their feelings, they often lash out at the nearest person, whether that person is the cause of the frustration or not. Fortunately, this should be a short, passing phase and only warrants concern if it continues.

When a biting incident occurs in a room of children younger than 4 years of age, both children are dealt with by the teachers and the following steps are taken:

1. The biter is told firmly, "No biting, that hurts" and is separated from the other child. The victim is consoled and any medical attention needed is given. Any biting incident will be reported in writing and verbally to the parents of both children.
2. If a second bite occurs, a social story about not biting will be sent home for the parents to read with the child and reinforce at home.
3. If a third bite occurs, there will be a parent meeting with teachers and a plan of action will be established.
4. If the behavior continues, the parents will be asked for the child to take a "short break" from school (usually 2-3 weeks) to see if time away can solve the problem.
5. If biting continues after the break, the family will be asked to leave our school.

Any biting incidents by children 4 years of age and above will be immediately referred to the school director and result in a parent conference. If the behavior occurs again, the child will be asked to leave our school.

Payment of Tuition

Tuition is calculated for the entire year and split into nine equal payments from September through May. It is the same each month, regardless of how many school days or holidays are in each month. Please make checks payable to Little Lambs and place child's full name in the memo area of your check. Payment envelopes will be available to serve as a reminder of tuition and to make payment convenient. Payments are accepted Monday through Friday only. Cash payments can be made directly to the Little Lambs accountant only.

Tuition is due by the first day of class in September and payable the first of each month thereafter beginning in October. A late fee of \$20.00 will be charged for payment not received by the **10th of the month** unless you have made prior arrangements with our office. Students are subject to dismissal from enrollment after the **16th of the month** unless prior arrangements have been made.

The Little Lambs program has limited funds available for short-term scholarships when families face a sudden financial hardship due to job loss or severe illness. If the need arises, please explain in writing to the Director and School Board.

Withdrawal

Withdrawals prior to the end of the school year require a one month prepaid notification. Failure to do so will cause your account to be in arrears and make you ineligible for future registrations.

Reservation and Registration

The registration fee helps cover the start-up costs for the year and reserves a place for your child in the program. Registration is on a first come basis. Church members whose children have attended Little Lambs will receive the highest priority in enrollment followed by currently enrolled students and siblings, and then church members and

previously enrolled families. After these groups have been served, enrollment will be opened to the public. A waiting list will be kept of children wishing to enter the program. Openings will be filled in the order the names are placed on the list with respect to age and boy/girl ratio. A child will be considered enrolled when the registration form is completed and turned in and the registration fee is paid in full. A supply fee, a Health and Immunization Form, and an All About My Child Form will be due at a date after the initial enrollment.

Little Lambs admits children of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities made available to children in the program. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color national and ethnic origin in administration of its policies or programs.

Children Who Need Special Accommodations

It is the desire of The School to welcome all children into our midst, to the best of our ability. In order to do that, we ask that parents inform the school if/when their child has been diagnosed with a condition or impairment that may impact the child's successful participation in the normal activities of the school. For children who have needs we feel we may not be meeting adequately, we may make recommendations for professional evaluations which could result in suggestions for personalized, supplemental, educational counseling and therapy, or as a last resort, alternate schooling. If an educational consultant or therapist needs access to a child during school hours, arrangements will be made through the Director and the child's teachers.

For children three years and older, the local public school can provide services for children living in its attendance area at no cost to the family. Parents should contact CFISD at 281-897-6400 to learn about the referral process. For children younger than three, services are provided by Early Childhood Intervention at 1-800-628-5115.

Arrival and Dismissal

For children enrolled in our MDO:

Arrival: Please arrive as close to 9:00 as possible. Teachers cannot accept children before 8:55 as they will be in a staff meeting until then. Late arrivals upset the routine of the class, and it is hard on the child to arrive when everyone else is already involved and he or she has missed some activities or instructions. Children enrolled in the MDO must be accompanied to their doors by adults. Parking for 2's parents is in the parking lots off of Fairfield Meadow.

Dismissal: Please return to pick up your child promptly at 2:00 and sign them out. A child becomes worried and upset when he or she is left after other children are picked up. After 2:10, a child not picked up will be brought to the administrative office.

For children enrolled in the Preschool

Arrival: Car line is available and is strongly recommended. We unload children from 8:55-9:10. Parents will not be allowed to park and walk through traffic to pick up their Preschoolers. If you prefer to walk your child in, please park in the parking lots off of Fairfield Trace and walk your child to their class. Children that arrive after the 9:10 end of car line need to be walked in by the parents and checked in to their teachers.

Dismissal: Please return to pick up your child promptly at 2:00 and sign them out at the classroom. A child becomes worried and upset when he or she is left after other children

are picked up. After 2:10 a child not picked up will be brought to the administrative office.

A late charge will be assessed in the amount of \$10.00 for the first five minutes late and \$5.00 for each additional five minutes after that.

School Closure

In times of natural disaster, flooding, or icy conditions, the school may be closed. In addition, when CFISD closes due to bad weather, Little Lambs will close also. For notification of CFISD closings, please watch the news, or check CFISD website at www.cfisd.net. If a building evacuation is needed due to unsafe conditions, students will be taken to Kids R Kids Childcare Center or Keith Elementary pending the problem. Parents will be contacted after the children's safety is secured if the building is evacuated. There will not be make-up days for those missed due to inclement weather. There will be no reimbursement of tuition for inclement weather days.

Parent Communication

There will be a sign-in sheet at the front of the church or by the classroom doors for parents of children in the MDO (i.e. 18 months – 2 years). We will only release the child to the person listed on the sign-in sheet or a person listed on the authorized release form.

Teachers will communicate to parents a variety of ways including a monthly calendar, or weekly summaries. A parent teacher conference will be held for all four's and bridge classes in both the fall and spring. A phone conference will be held for all three's classes in the spring.

All parents will receive monthly newsletters indicating school-wide information and events. Any policy changes will be communicated by a school memo to the parents.

We welcome your feedback. Please feel comfortable to discuss any praises or concerns with staff at any time. Parents may contact the Director for any questions or concerns about the policies or procedures of the child care center.

Little Lambs ECC is a Texas state licensed Childcare center. A copy of the state's minimum standards is available to be reviewed at any time. The current inspection is posted and available for your review. Childcare licensing can be reached at 2221 West Loop South P.O. Box 16017 Houston, TX 77027 or at 713-940-5277. You can reach PRS child abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or go to the website at WWW.TDPRS.state.Tx.us.

Gang-Free Zone

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is considered a gang-free zone. Criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to a harsher penalty.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

In case of an emergency and the building needs to be evacuated, the staff will walk the children to Kids R Kids (building next to Good Shepherd UMC) at 20151 Cypresswood Drive. Student records will be transported to the Kids R Kids facility. Parents will be notified by a phone text alert to pick up children immediately.

If the area surrounding the church buildings becomes unsafe and area needs to be evacuated, the staff will transport children and records in personal automobiles to Keith Elementary at 20550 Fairfield Green. Parents will be notified by a phone text alert to pick up children immediately.

Child Abuse Detection and Reporting

State laws govern reports of suspected child abuse; therefore, it is the responsibility of all staff members to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect. However, staff members who are required to make such notification are not liable in either civil damage or criminal prosecution cases as a result of making a report. All LLECC employees receive the required annual training on detecting child abuse.

If a professional has cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected or may be abused or neglected, or that a child is a victim of an offense, and the professional has cause to believe that the child has been abused, the professional shall make a report not later than the 48th hour after the hour the professional first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected or is victim of an offense. A professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report. To make a report to the Department of Family and Protective Services call: 1-800-252-5400 or visit www.dfps.state.tx.us/Contact_Us/report_abuse.asp.

The identity of those professionals making reports is confidential. Due to the confidential nature of such reports, no information concerning the incident can be shared with other staff members or parents. However, staff members who make a report of child abuse or neglect must immediately report it to the Director. This is for notification purposes only and to protect the best interest of Little Lambs.

Physical Health

Your child's health is a matter of major importance to us. Precautions are taken at times to safeguard the health of the group. This includes refusing to admit sick children into the class and isolating children who become ill during school hours.

Please keep your child at home if he/she:

- Has a fever or has had a fever in the past 24 hours.
- Has diarrhea or has had diarrhea in the previous 24 hours.
- Has a heavy nasal discharge.
- Has a constant cough.
- Is cranky, irritable, or not acting like him/her self.
- Have symptoms of a possible communicable disease.
- Vomiting in the previous 24 hours

If your child becomes ill at school, he/she will be removed from the others, and you will be called immediately. We will keep your child as comfortable as possible until you arrive. Please make sure all phone numbers are up to date and cell phones are turned on in the event we need to reach you.

If your child has allergies that are constant, you may bring a note form his or her doctor stating that the child is not contagious. However, please be sure your child is feeling well. Children who do not feel well are much more comfortable at home.

Little Lambs maintains a no nit policy in respect to lice. Children will not be allowed to be at school or return to school with live lice or nits. Please contact the school immediately if you discover your child has live lice or nits. Little Lambs will notify the students in the class via email notification and will take precautions to prevent the spreading of lice.

If your child has special needs including but not limited to allergies, existing illness, previous serious illnesses or injuries, or hospitalizations during the past 12 months, a doctor's statement of the child's special needs is required.

Little Lambs does not permit the administration of medications. Medications include: sunscreen, insect repellent, diaper creams, any other type of lotions, over-the-counter and prescription medications. Medications necessary for a life threatening medical situation will be allowed. A medical authorization signed and dated by the doctor and parents must be submitted. The authorization must include symptoms to watch for and an allergy action plan. Medical authorizations are only valid for six months and will need to be resubmitted with a current date after the six month period. Medication must be brought to the Little Lambs office in the original container with the child's full name on it and the dosage instructions.

Notify the school immediately if the child has a communicable disease so that other parents may be notified that their children may have been exposed.

A Health form signed by your child's physician must be on file stating the child is able to participate in an early childhood program. The Health Form must be on file within one week from the first day of attendance. In addition, a current copy of your child's shot records must be on file. Immunization requirements specified by the Texas department of State Health Services in 25 TAC 97, Subchapter B (relating to Immunization Requirements in Texas Elementary and Secondary schools and Institutions of Higher Education). Exemptions for immunization requirements must meet criteria specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services rules in 25 TAC Section 97.62 (relating to Exclusions from Compliance). TB testing is not required.

A vision and hearing test (individual visual activity and sweep check results) must be done for all children who turn four by September 1st. This service will be provided at Little Lambs by an outside screener for a fee. Parents may choose to have their child's physician perform the test instead and then submit a copy to the office.

In the event of a medical emergency, when neither the parents nor the emergency contacts can be reached, the child will be taken to the hospital/doctor authorized on the registration form. In the event of a life threatening medical emergency, 911 will be called immediately and then the parents notified.

Release of Children

A child will not be released to anyone other than a parent, unless **written authorization by a parent** is presented to the teacher or is listed on the Registration form. If someone new is picking up your child, they will be required to show a driver's license to verify their identity. A change in transportation requires written instructions from the parents so that authorization can be verified. If the office staff/teacher does not have written authorization for the change in transportation then administrative staff will contact the legal guardians for authorization.

Policy Regarding Child Custody Matters

All parents (whether biological or adopted) and legal guardians have the rights enumerated in the Texas Family code, 153.071. Where there is no Order modifying the parental rights, both parents share the same rights and responsibilities with respect to their child/children. If there are court orders, they must be kept on file and school staff will comply with the terms of the order in respect to visitation and release of children.

Snacks/Birthday Treats

Children will have a mid-morning snack that we will provide each day. A monthly calendar is posted detailing the daily snacks. Your preschool child will be selected to be the "special helper" of the week twice a year. As the special helper, they get to be line leader, the teacher's helper, and help pass out snacks. We ask that you let your child bring his/her favorite snack food (no candy, please) to share with the class. We will do our best to schedule your child as the helper as close to his/her birthday or "half birthday" for summer birthdays as possible. For your child's birthday, parties at lunch are not allowed. Please do not send lunch food for the class, party favors, candles, presents, or games. Teachers will not distribute party invitations, even if everyone in the class is invited. We will provide each parent with a class roster that will include addresses and phone numbers.

Food Allergies

Occasionally a classmate will have severe allergies that will require no nut products in the classroom. The decision on making this policy for a particular classroom will be at the discretion of the Director and will depend on the age of the child and the severity of the allergy. All efforts will be made to make the environment safe for the child, but Little Lambs can not ensure a completely safe nut free zone as we are a multi-use facility and share space with other programs.

Holiday Parties and Special Events

Parties and special events are listed on the Little Lambs calendar found at www.littlelambsecc.org. Some events do include food and that is communicated on the snack calendar. For the Thanksgiving feast, children are asked to bring a food item to share with the class in lieu of a packed lunch. Newsletters and teacher notices will advise you of these activities ahead of time.

Potty Training

Preschool children (children three years of age and older) must be potty trained to attend Little Lambs. Preschool classroom schedules, equipment, and activities do not allow the teacher to change diapers or pull-ups. Potty training includes the ability to communicate their needs, be independent in the bathroom, pulling up and down clothes, clean themselves and wash their hands.

Parent Participation

Parents are welcome to visit classes at any time. Please stop by the Little Lambs office first so that we always know who is in the building. Remember that we are trying to help the children achieve a certain amount of independence from parents, and that you may upset your child if you come and then leave again. If you are ever concerned about how your child is doing at school, you may call the Little Lambs office at 281-373-0052. We will be glad to check on your child for you or have the teacher call you during school hours.

We do want to encourage parent involvement in our program. Parents are provided with a form at the beginning of the school year that lists specific ways to volunteer.

Substitute Teachers

Parents may apply to be added to our substitute list. Please complete the section for substitutes on the application for employment (available on our web site). Applications, and background checks will be processed and training will be scheduled as the need arises. This is a paid position and a great way to help offset your tuition!

What to Bring to School

*All children should come to school dressed in play clothes. There are many messy activities, and although we do our best to protect children's clothing, kids will inevitably get paint and other messy things on their clothing. All belongings should be labeled with your child's name.

*Be sure your child comes with tennis shoes or another similar type of closed toe shoe. This is for the child's safety as they play in school and on the playground. Children will not be unloaded from cars wearing flip-flops, etc.

*All children need to bring a complete change of clothes (including socks and shoes), even older children. They sometimes have accidents, spill food or juice on themselves; get in a mud puddle, etc.

*All children need a well-balanced lunch, including a non-carbonated drink. Please send foods that are healthy (no candy, please) and that your child will eat. In addition, please try to include foods containing Vitamins A and C in your child's lunch.

* Each child should have a bag or backpack for his/her belongings and lunch box.

A few words about one and two-year-old children's needs:

*These children will also need to bring a nap pad and blanket for naptime. Toys should be left at home except for "security" items like a blanket, pacifier, or stuffed animal. As with all items, please be sure they are labeled with your child's name.

*These children will need two spill-proof cups of milk or water to drink during the day in addition to what is in their lunch.

*Please send children wearing diapers in clothes that will be easy for changing diapers. In particular, if a child wears a one-piece outfit, it must have snaps in the legs that come completely apart with no solid cuff that the child's foot must be pulled through.

Checklist of Items to Bring:

- Complete change of clothes
- Well-balanced lunch with necessary utensils
- Diapers (4 per day)
- Nap pad and blanket
- Drinks in addition to drink in lunch
- Bib for lunch (optional)
- Love or comfort item (if desired)

PLEASE LABEL EVERY ITEM YOUR CHILD BRINGS TO SCHOOL!

What not to bring to school: Absolutely no guns, war toys or other toys of destruction. It is best to leave all toys at home.