

# **Zion Christian Preschool & Kindergarten Parent Handbook**

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## **Welcome**

Welcome to Zion Christian Preschool and Kindergarten. We look forward to working with your children, and to partnering with you, to support your child's growth and development in our early childhood education program. We understand that attending preschool is a big step for most children, and that you may have many questions. This handbook will be helpful in not only answering your questions, but in providing you with an overview of our program. For additional information about our program, please contact the preschool Director.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Zion Lutheran Preschool is to provide a high quality early childhood education program, based on biblical values, that prioritize the central importance of relationship with God, and others. We do this in the context of a Christian learning environment where children are nurtured, physically, emotionally, socially, cognitively, and spiritually.

### **What Makes Zion Christian Preschool Special?**

We are committed to teaching God's Word, systematically, beginning with creation and other prominent Old Testament stories, and moving through the New Testament to share the good news about Jesus Christ, and His plan for salvation. This sets us apart from other preschools in our community. We devote one week to teaching each selected Bible story, retelling and reviewing it, in different ways to make it fun and memorable. Our children meet for junior chapel weekly.

### **History**

Zion Lutheran Preschool is an extension of the ministry of Zion Lutheran Church. The preschool was established in 1985. As a ministry of Zion Lutheran Church, the preschool serves the community, by providing a quality early childhood education program in a Christian environment. We are excited about partnering with you to prepare your children for their educational future, and eternal life.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

We celebrate cultural diversity, and treasure the God-given uniqueness of each child in our care, asserting the rights of all to be treated with dignity and respect. We admit and embrace students of any race, religion, national or ethnic origin, without prejudice or partiality, and extend to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded, or made available to students at the school.

### **Philosophy**

- We believe that every child is worthy of respect and is a capable learner.
- We believe that each child has a unique path to learning, (learning style), and that each child grows and develops at his or her own pace.
- We believe that the early years in a child's life are foundational to the development of character, self-image, and attitudes about learning and school.
- We believe that play is the important work of children, and that children learn best through developmentally appropriate, hands on (sensory) experiences. Authentic learning takes place when children make discoveries on their own, with the guidance and support of an enthusiastic teacher. To that end, we provide play-based experiences that foster creative expression and the joy of discovery.
- We believe that young children need ample time for unstructured free play outside. Physical exercise benefits bodies and brains.
- We believe that teachers are role models that provide guidance to children in the context of warm nurturing relationships.

### **Program Goals/Objectives**

1. To provide a safe, high quality, early childhood education that supports the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development of each child.

2. To inspire children to be lifelong learners, providing a stimulating environment that facilitates a balance of planned experiences and play, in order to prepare children for kindergarten.
3. To establish partnerships with families, providing opportunities for parent feedback and input, as well as opportunities to volunteer and actively participate in the program.
4. To facilitate opportunities to build relationships between all members of the preschool community (parents, teachers, and children).
5. To invest in our staff by identifying and providing training and professional development opportunities.

### **Staff**

All staff meet or exceed licensing educational requirements in terms of child development classes. We exceed state licensing requirements for child-to-teacher ratios, of 12-1, and typically have a child-to-teacher ratio of 8-1. All staff are certified in CPR and First Aid, which is updated every 2 years. All staff are fingerprinted, and undergo a background check conducted by the California Department of Justice and The Child Abuse Central Index.

### **Hours of Operation**

Our preschool is currently licensed for 124 children, ages 2-5. We offer a flexible 2, 3, or 5 days per week schedule to meet the needs of our families. Preschool hours are from 8:30-12:30.

### **Daycare Enrichment Before/After Preschool**

We also offer full day childcare for families who need care for children outside of official preschool hours. Full day care hours are from 7:00-8:30 am, and from 12:30 - 5:30 pm. See description below of Zion Zookeepers class.

## **Brightwheel**

All preschool/kindergarten children who are enrolled will be entered into our Brightwheel account, and parents will receive an invitation to join Brightwheel. We use Brightwheel for:

- Check in & attendance
- Parent invoicing & online bill pay
- Photo & video - sharing memorable moments with parents/family during the preschool day right to your phone
- Messaging (including reminders and emergency alerts)

## **Class Descriptions**

### **Loveable Lambs (2 years old) class**

The Loveable Lambs meet in room 8, on Monday- Friday from 8:30-12:30. This is our youngest group of children. In this class, we focus mainly on language development and social skills. Children are given daily opportunities to explore the use of different art materials and mediums, participate in music, hear stories, eat snacks together, and learn from sensory experiences as they explore the environment inside and outside during free play time. Children in this class do not need to be potty trained. Teachers' will work with parents on potty training at school.

### **Friendly Frogs (3 year old) class**

The Friendly Frogs meet in room 1, Monday-Friday, from 8:30-12:30. Activities for this group of children are designed to inspire a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around them, within the context of a structured school day. Children in this class will enjoy daily circle times, art and craft activities, puppets, story time, music and fingerplays. Unstructured play both inside and outdoors are planned in the daily schedule. Social skills are a primary focus. Children need to be potty trained before enrollment.

### **Kind Koalas (3 year olds) class**

The Kind Koalas meet in room 7, Monday-Friday, from 8:30-12:30. Like Friendly Frogs, activities for this group of children are designed to inspire a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around them, within the context of a structured school day. Children in this class will

enjoy daily circle times, art and craft activities, puppets, story time, music and fingerplays. Unstructured play both inside and outdoors are planned in the daily schedule. Social skills are a primary focus. Children need to be potty trained before enrollment.

### **Playful Pandas (4 year olds/pre-K) class**

The Playful Pandas meet in room 3, Monday-Friday from 8:30-12:30. This class offers a blend of hands-on learning experiences with Kindergarten readiness activities, to prepare children for Kindergarten. Children in this class will enjoy enrichment activities in music, arts and drama, as well as curriculum activities that focus on pre-literacy, math concepts and science. Children in this class have a more structured schedule, and also benefit from free play time, and continuing opportunities to grow in social and communication skills.

### **Busy Bugs (4 year olds/pre-K) class**

The Busy Bugs meet in room 4 Monday-Friday, from 8:30-12:30. Like the Playful Pandas, this class offers a blend of hands-on learning experiences with Kindergarten readiness activities, to prepare children for school. Children in this class will enjoy enrichment activities in music, arts and drama, as well as curriculum activities that focus on pre-literacy, math concepts and science. Children in this class have a more structured schedule, and also benefit from free play time, and continuing opportunities to grow in social and communication skills.

### **Kindergarten**

The Kindergarten class meets in room 5 from 8:30-2:30 Monday-Friday. Hands on learning continues, as children gain reading and writing skills, and exposure to STEM curriculum, (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math). Project based learning is incorporated and driven in part by student interest to explore specific areas, fostering curiosity and the joy of discovery, with the ultimate goal of creating lifelong learners. Enrichment experiences in Art, Music and Drama continue, and children benefit from the individualization that goes with smaller class size. This class is limited to 12 students.

### **Zion Zookeepers (2 yrs-Kindergarten) Daycare Enrichment Program**

The Zion Zookeepers meet in room 2 from 7-8:30 am and from 1:30-5:30 pm Monday-Friday. Children who are staying after preschool closing time at 12:30 have an hour to play outside, then move to the Zookeeper Room for a rest time. We ask all parents of children who nap to bring a sleeping bag/pillow for their child on their first attendance day of the week, and take them home on the last attendance day of the week for washing. Children who do not nap will be taken to the Friendly Frogs room next door (room 1) to play. Enrichment activities are planned incorporating music, art, science and engineering.

### **Daily Schedule**

All classes have time for unstructured free play inside and outdoors, daily circle time(s), snack, and opportunities to creatively explore art, music, and drama. Each class has its own routine, and class schedule, (posted on the bulletin board outside of the class entrance), as well as a specified time for using the play yard.

### **Enrollment & Tuition**

#### **Registration & Materials Fee/Enrollment Packet**

A registration fee of \$125 and a supply fee of \$75 totalling \$200 are due at the time of enrollment to hold a child's place in class. The Registration fee for a second child (sibling) in the family is reduced to \$75, and a third child is not charged a registration fee. The supply fee of \$75 remains the same for each student.

Many forms in the enrollment packet are required by Community Care Licensing and must be filled out completely. Additional requirements for enrollment include: copy of child's birth certificate, proof of up to date immunizations, and a Physician's report signed by the child's doctor. Once all enrollment documents are turned in and the child's file is verified to be complete, the child may start his/her first day of preschool *after 24 hours*. This gives the teacher time to prepare for the child.

### Preschool Tuition

Days per week	Annual	Bi-annual	Monthly -10 mo
2 days/wk	\$2600	\$1300	\$260
3 days/wk	\$3500	\$1750	\$350
5 days/wk	\$5000	\$2500	\$500

### Preschool Tuition with Daycare - Full Day Flat Rate (7am-5:30 pm)

Days per week	Annual	Bi-annual	Monthly-10 mo
5 days/wk	\$9,000	\$4,500	\$900

### Kindergarten Tuition

Days per week	Annual	Bi-annual	Monthly-10 mo
5 days/wk	\$5,500	\$2,750	\$550

### Before Preschool/After Preschool Daycare & Enrichment Program

Daycare is available from 7:00 - 8:30 am and from 12:30-5:30 pm.

Daycare charges (for those families who did not choose the full day flat rate option) are billed at the rate of **\$7.50 hourly**. Daycare charges will be added in arrears each Monday for the previous week.

### Parent Co-op Program

Any parent can exchange a limited number of volunteer hours for financial credit on the following months tuition statement.

Volunteer hours are limited according to the number of days the child attends preschool. For example: if the child attends 2 days per week, 2 volunteer hours per month are permitted, if 3 days - 3 hours per month are permitted, if 5 days - 5 hours per month are permitted. Volunteer hours must be documented on the Preschool Coop Credit form, and signed by a Preschool Staff member for verification, then turned in to the office on the last day of the month to receive credit for the following month. Credit will be issued at the rate of **\$12 per volunteer hour**. To find out about

specific opportunities to volunteer, contact your child's teacher or inquire in the front office.

## **TUITION POLICIES**

Preschool tuition consists of an annual amount. For your convenience, tuition charges can be paid annually, bi-annually or spread out over 10 months. When enrollment occurs after the school year has begun, tuition will be prorated. Tuition holds a child's place in class and is not refundable based on absence. ***No credit is issued for illness or other absences. Contract days cannot be traded.***

### **Tuition Discounts**

Zion offers the following discounts to qualified families. Discounts cannot be combined.

*Sibling Discount:* 20% off tuition for a second, third, fourth... child, ½ price registration fee for second child, and registration fee is waived for additional siblings.

*Military Discount:* 20% off tuition

*First Responders Discount:(Police, Firefighter):* 20%

*Clergy Discount:* 50%

Proof of qualification for discount must be provided (i.e. military id card etc.

### **Late Charges - Tuition**

Tuition payments are due and payable on the first day of each month, with a grace period until the 7th. ***A \$35 late charge will be automatically assessed every time a payment is more than 7 days in arrears of the tuition date.*** Zion sends out automatic reminders to families with past due accounts. Families who become delinquent in their tuition payments (over 30 days) face possible removal of their children from preschool. The late fee is established annually by the Board of Education.

The Board of Education reserves the right to handle each delinquent case on an individual basis. Every effort will be made to deal with the families in the context of a Christian community. It must be clear, however, that the Board of Education has an overriding obligation to ensure the financial viability of the preschool, and as such, must

enforce delinquent tuition policies fairly and consistently. Families who demonstrate a pattern of delinquent payments may be required at the discretion of the Board of Education, to prepay tuition as a condition for continued enrollment.

### **Late Pick-Up Charges**

Late pick-up charges after 5:30 pm will be assessed at the rate of \$2/per minute.

### **Withdrawal**

Without exception, two-weeks written notice must be given when a child is withdrawn. Tuition charged for the current month will not be refunded.

### **Pick-Up**

It is assumed that both parents may pick up their child at school. If a non-custodial parent is not allowed access to the child, you must provide the official documentation, (court order), stating this to our office. Only parents, and those listed by the parent on the child's authorized pick-up list, with photo id, will be able to sign the child out. When you sign your child in, put the full name of the person who is going to pick your child up because we check ID's and "Grandma's" ID doesn't say "grandma."

If you are picking your child up at 12:00, he/she will most likely be in his/her classroom. After 12:00, your child will be either in his/her class, or on the playground.

## **Health & Illness Policy**

### **Immunizations/Physical**

All immunizations must be up-to-date before a child starts his/her first day of preschool. According to California law, the only possible exemption from this requirement is medical in nature. To obtain a medical exemption from the immunization requirement, a parent must submit a written statement from a doctor which states the physical/medical condition of the child that warrants exemption, which

specific vaccine(s) is exempted, whether the exemption is permanent or temporary, and the expiration date of a temporary exemption. A Physician's report must be completed and signed by a physician before a child starts his/her first day of school.

## **Illness**

A child who is sick, other than a mild cold, must be kept home in order to prevent the spread of illness and infection to other children or staff. If your child exhibits any of the following symptoms, please keep them at home for at least 24 hours:

- Fever 100.4 or higher
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Chronic cough
- Lethargy
- Pink-eye
- Any other contagious disease

If a child exhibits lethargy, and is not well enough to participate in class activities, or if he/she is complaining about pain or discomfort, the child will be sent home.

Please notify the school immediately, if your child has contracted a common childhood disease such as: measles, chicken pox, mumps, head lice, pink eye, streptococcal infections, sore throat, scarlet fever, or whooping cough. We will alert other parents about symptoms to watch for in their children without disclosing the identity of the ill child.

## **Safety Protocols/Precautions related to the Coronavirus Pandemic:**

The County of San Diego has issued specific protocols for reopening schools and preschools. These protocols will be followed and include:

- All staff will receive a temperature scan before beginning work - if a fever of 100.4 or higher occurs, staff will not be permitted to work
- All students/parents will receive a temperature scan before entering gates to Zion's campus - if a fever of 100.4 or higher occurs, children will not be permitted to attend preschool

- We will try to keep stocked with hand sanitizer to be used outside the gates before entering
- Frequent hand washing will take place, as has been our practice before the pandemic: hands will be washed upon entering the preschool grounds, before and after using sensory bins, before and after eating snack or lunch, after using art materials, after playing outside, after using the bathroom etc.
- Class sizes will be limited to a maximum of 12 students, in a stable group (attending the same days each week - no trading days)
- Classes will not mix on the playground.

## **Accidents**

Minor injuries will be documented by your child's teacher on an "Ouch" Report, and given to you when you pick up your child.

Because head injuries can be very serious, we will notify you immediately, by phone, if any injury above the shoulders occur.

If an injury is determined by staff to deem medical intervention, but is not severe or life-threatening, we will notify you, and the child must be picked up within 30 minutes. If you are not available, we will notify the next person authorized to pick up your child.

In the unusual circumstance of a serious injury, we will call 911, then parents, and your child's Teacher or the program Director will accompany the child via ambulance to the hospital, meeting you there.

## **Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an emergency, your child's teacher will contact you through the Brighwheel app which will alert your phone. You should always monitor your phone, when your child is out of your care. Parents should have a plan in place that enables either themselves, or a designated person who is authorized to pick-up on the child's emergency form, to pick-up the child within 30 minutes or less.

We regularly practice fire drills and earthquake drills.

## **Discipline Policy**

### **Discipline Goals & Techniques**

Our overall goal is to provide developmentally and age appropriate discipline/guidance, in order to help each child learn self-control, and maintain a safe learning environment. We use positive discipline and redirection techniques, as well as natural logical consequences, to teach children to take responsibility for their own behavior. Teachers work with children to help them identify and solve problems, and find alternative solutions to negative/ harmful behavior in stressful situations. When conflicts arise between two children, teachers guide children in using words to resolve the problem, teaching important social skills, and facilitating reconciliation.

### **Reasonable Limits**

The following reasonable limits ensure safety, and provide a smooth running program:

- We use walking feet in the classroom.
- Talking, singing, whispering, and laughing voices are used in our indoor spaces.
- Sand must not be thrown in the sandbox.
- Climbing equipment is safe for climbing, railings and fences are not.
- We do not allow children to hurt other children, adults, or themselves.

### **Partnering with Parents**

We recognize that acting out with physical aggression or disruptive behavior is part of a child's normal development process, and that there are times when parents and teachers need to form an alliance to deal with inappropriate behavior. Parents are asked to reinforce appropriate behavior at home.

If a child is doing something that could harm others, themselves, or destroy property, teachers will intervene immediately. Immediate or natural consequences, including removal of the child from an activity or project, or a loss of privilege will occur. Teachers will review expectations with the child.

### **Intervention**

If a child's behavior continues to be disruptive and unmanageable in the group setting, we will work with parents to develop and implement an individual behavior plan for the child. The plan will include agreement about the desired change in behavior, a time frame for behavioral change, and steps both parents and teachers will take to meet these goals. A consultation with a specialist, such as a child or family therapist, may be suggested or required.

If intervention is required frequently, to prevent the child from hurting him or herself, or the child needs to be separated from the group often, or is unable to adjust, compromising the fundamental nature of our program, one or more of the following options will be implemented:

- A parent will be called to pick up the child when behavior is out of control (unsafe for the child, staff, or other children)
- A shorter day in the class may be implemented
- The parent may be asked to attend preschool with the child
- In the event that none of these options resolve the issue, we will discuss termination of enrollment in the program in order to safeguard all of the children.

### **Practical Matters**

#### **Parent/Community Involvement**

Building relationships with families and creating community is very important to us, so we plan several social events throughout the year

for whole families. These events, and opportunities to socialize will be announced through the monthly Parent Newsletter, and via email. We welcome parents to share specialized knowledge, skills, or interests with the children - this can be coordinated with your child's teacher.

### **Communication**

Parent Conferences are scheduled twice annually. Your child's teacher and the Director are always available to meet with you informally or formally, to listen to and/or address any concerns you have, regarding your child or any matter related to preschool - simply request an ap

### **Clothing**

Zion requires a complete change of clothes, (including socks and underwear), to be on hand in the classroom at all times. Please send a change of clothes in a large ziplock bag, to be kept in the child's cubby. Children should wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing that is easily manipulated by the child. Belts are discouraged. Tennis shoes (or other closed-toe shoes) are preferred, but not required. Children who enjoy hands-on experiences and free play outside, often get messy, so please don't send your child in fancy clothes.

### **Items from Home**

There is no need to bring toys from home. A transitional item, or nap item may be brought, if your child is enrolled in full day care and takes a nap. Sometimes teachers ask children to bring something from home for sharing at circle time. Children are not allowed to bring war toys, or materials that demonstrate violence (i.e. toy guns, knives, etc.). Zion cannot be responsible for lost or damaged items brought to preschool.

### **Separation Anxiety**

Separation anxiety is normal for all preschool age children. Children exhibiting separation anxiety may cry, scream, tug at the parent's arms

and legs, or run after the parent. The staff is trained to deal with children who are anxious, and these behaviors will diminish over time.

To ease the transition before a child attends preschool, we encourage parents to bring their child to visit his or her class at least once, if possible, before the first day of school. Children will benefit by becoming familiar with the teacher, environment, and other students, with the security of having a parent present. On the first day of school, parents may linger and stay with the child for a time, to encourage a smooth transition.

### **Food/Nutrition**

Each child will bring his/her own snack and lunch to preschool daily. For convenience, we suggest putting the snack in a baggie or container separate from the child's lunch, labeled with his or her name, and placing the snack in the child's cubby. Your child's teacher will let you know where to put lunch boxes. Children eat lunch at noon.

### **Celebrating Birthdays**

We enjoy celebrating children's birthdays and welcome you to come join in the party! Please talk to your child's teacher a week in advance if you would like to provide a special treat for your child's classroom. Please refrain from handing out party favors, and reserve these for private parties at home.

If you would like to distribute party invitations to the class, place invitations in each child's classroom cubby.

### **Reporting Obligation**

In accordance with California State law, all of our teachers and aides are classified as mandated reporters, and obligated to report suspicion of physical or emotional abuse or neglect.

