



Parents' Handbook

Grace Preschool

a ministry of Advent Lutheran Church

Grace Preschool
1805 Oak Street
Melbourne Beach, FL 32951

Director - Debbie Hogan

Preschool phone: (321) 728-4709

Grace Preschool Parents Handbook

Welcome to Grace!

At Grace Preschool we believe that childhood is a vibrant period of life in which curiosity, inquiry, and the quest for information about the world are primary motivators for children. Nothing can quite match the excitement of discovery and learning at an early age.

Research has shown that the first six years are the most significant in the development of a child. A strong partnership between a professionally organized preschool program, the child's household, and the community within which a child lives is essential in helping a young child reach his or her full potential. Grace Preschool is committed to enriching and supporting this vital phase of each student's life and development.

Thank you for choosing Grace Preschool for your child. We look forward to a wonderful and exciting year participating in your child's growth.

Program Mission and Philosophy

The mission of Grace Preschool is to promote the development of the whole child in learning the social and academic skills needed to prepare for kindergarten. We offer this in a positive and fun atmosphere, which encourages social, emotional, intellectual and physical development and growth.

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Developmentally appropriate instruction is provided in a safe, non-competitive environment that nurtures a love of learning.

Our preschool programs focus on the whole child, with a strong emphasis on socialization and learning through play. Classrooms are equipped with creative, interactive resources that promote team-work and positive learning in all areas of intelligence. The thematic units are suitable to the developmental level of the children and in line with current early childhood education philosophies. Through their preschool experience, the children learn to interact positively with both adults and children, develop social skills, and learn the fundamentals of caring, sharing, and communicating ideas and feelings.

Play is the primary vehicle of learning for young children. Play allows children to experiment, explore and manipulate their environment, while developing imagination and creativity. Teachers guide, direct, and support this learning with questions to engage curiosity and instruction. Lessons and activities are planned around a balance of independent and group learning, with ample time given to exploration and child-directed learning.

Our curriculum incorporates a variety of learning activities including art, music, creative movement, dramatic play, math, science, environmental awareness, and group discussions. These activities are designed to promote problem solving, creativity, self-expression, and social skills. A typical classroom routine includes a mix of direct instruction and opportunities for children to choose their own activities. Children will work

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individually, in small groups, and as part of a large group, both inside and outside.

Partnership between Grace Preschool and Advent Lutheran Church

Grace Preschool is licensed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and is subject to its mandates. Our state license number is C18BR0126. Grace Preschool continuously meets or exceeds all child care licensure standards.

Grace Preschool does not discriminate against anyone (adult or child, staff member or parent) based on sex, age, religion, national origin, color, race, marital status, or physical or mental disability.

Grace Preschool (GLP) is also a ministry of Advent Lutheran Church. As such, the partnership between the church and the preschool enhances the capacity for the preschool to support all levels of a child's development, including the spiritual development. Occasional, optional spiritual enrichment programs offered by the church are available for parents, students, and staff of the preschool. Communication and invitation to participate in these optional enrichment programs will be clear. Weekly preschool chapel intentionally supports a diversity of religious understanding, but also provides a basic introduction to the Christian understanding of God. The pastor and staff of Advent Lutheran Church are available to all families of the preschool, regardless of religious background.

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Grace Preschool does not restrict admission of any student based on that student's religious background.

Board of Directors

A Board of Directors, consisting of the Preschool Director, the Director of Faith Formation from Advent Lutheran Church, and two to four representatives of both the preschool and the congregation, provides administrative oversight to the preschool. The pastor(s) of Advent Lutheran Church are available to the Board of Directors as needed, but hold a 'voice, no vote' position on the Board. Setting the schedule of Board meeting times, the terms of service for Board members, and the roles and duties of the Board is the responsibility of the Preschool Director.

Religious Philosophy

At Grace we believe life is a gift of God. For us, the development of this gift is a religious matter. We strive to make it possible for children to explore the wonder of this gift of life, as they develop both academically and emotionally. Preschool experiences lay the groundwork for future service throughout youth and adulthood, in whatever ways students choose to make the world a better place. We understand such service to others as a key reason for which we were created, which is why this is an issue of religion.

Grace Preschool does not use a religious curriculum, but we are committed to an environment and procedures that support Godly community, boundaries, and manners with other children and adults. Occasional *optional* enrichment activities

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sponsored by the church may be offered to the preschool students, which parents can choose to participate in or not. The weekly chapel, conducted one morning a week, combines music, story-telling and prayers in inviting but not insistent ways. Community celebrations, such as Christmas, Easter, graduation, are shaped within a Christian perspective.

Our Preschool Staff

We are fortunate to have a team of dedicated, experienced, professional staff members who have the welfare and best interest of your child as their top priority. All of our staff have been fingerprinted and screened on the local, state, and federal levels. Our staff members have earned their staff credentials and work on continuing education each year.

Developmentally Appropriate Instruction

Play is the primary vehicle of learning for young children. Play allows children to experiment, explore and manipulate their environment, while developing imagination and creativity. Our curriculum incorporates a variety of learning activities including art, music, creative movement, yoga, dramatic play, math, science, and group discussions. These activities are designed to promote problem solving, creativity, self-expression, and social skills. A typical classroom routine includes a mix of direct instruction and opportunities for children to choose their own activities. Children will work individually, in small groups, and as part of a large group.

Over the years, we have created a curriculum using several well-respected childhood educational resources, in conjunction with the Florida School Readiness Performance Standards, Florida Children’s Forum, and the VPK Educational Standards.

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We blend the standards into our thematic units of study such as oceanography or community helpers. Our teachers are masters at combining skill instruction, thematic concepts and best teaching practices to create developmentally appropriate, exciting, and enriching classroom experiences.

License Standards

Grace Preschool is licensed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and is subject to its mandates. Our state license number is C18BR0126. Grace Preschool continuously meets or exceeds all child care licensure standards.

Department of Children and Family Requirements (DCF)

Every child has a required DCF file that must be complete and up to date at all times. All paperwork for students must be completed before the children are admitted to school in August. This paperwork includes two very important health forms:

- 1) HRS 680, Part B. This is your child's documented immunization record. If your child receives any immunizations during the school year or this form expires during the school year, a new form must be on file. These forms are provided by your physician.
- 2) Florida Physical Exam Form. This form documents that your child has had a complete physical exam within the last two years.

During the school year, you will be given written notification if your child's immunization form or physical exam form reaches the expiration date. In compliance with DCF standards, no

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child can be admitted to school if their immunization or physical forms are over thirty (30) days beyond the expiration date.

POLICIES

Open Door Policy

Grace Preschool maintains an “open door” policy and encourages parents to participate in your child’s preschool program. You do not need to make an appointment in advance to visit the school, playground, or your child’s classroom.

In a continuing effort to keep our school a safe environment, we do ask that you come to the Preschool Office first and sign-in. You will be escorted to your child’s classroom.

All campus doors remain locked throughout the preschool day.

Discipline Policy

Learning respect for others and their property is an integral part of the preschool experience. We strive to use positive methods and modeling to encourage proper behaviors. We do not subject children to discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening.

Positive statements and redirection of behaviors are used to help children learn self-control, negotiation, problem solving and to assume responsibility for their actions.

Children are given quiet time to reflect on their behavior and to talk about how to handle situations in the future. Children may be removed from the group while they regain control.

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Parents will always be informed of problems involving their children. If the behavior persists, a meeting between the teacher and parents will be scheduled. Any additional resources that will help bring resolution or progress to a child's behavior will be consulted.

Who Is Allowed to Pick up My Child?

Grace Preschool has the utmost concern for the safety of our students. Parents fill out a registration form that indicate the persons (other than the parents) who have permission to pick up your child, and this is kept on file.

If your child will be picked up by someone other than you or someone listed on your registration form, a written note must be given to the child's teacher and/or the director. In the case of an emergency the parent may call the school to grant permission.

The school must be notified immediately, in writing, of any changes to who may pick up your child from school.

If your child is not allowed to be picked up by a parent due to court order, it is your responsibility to notify the director in writing so that the forms on file may be updated. If there are any conditions or changes, it is the parent's responsibility to provide written documentation to the preschool.

Photo ID is required for individuals who are not known to the Grace staff.

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Tuition and Program Fees

Preschool tuition and program fees for all programs are due in accordance with the Fee Schedule, which is distributed before school begins each year. Monthly tuition and program fees may be paid by cash, check made out to *Grace Preschool*, or the automatic on-line payment service. Tuition is due the first school day of the month. Checks and cash should be dropped off in the Preschool Office. Please do not give checks or cash to your child's teacher. Receipts are available upon request.

Additional paperwork is available to register for the automatic on-line payment service.

Grace Preschool is a non-profit school. Our expenses determine the annual tuition and fees. This annual amount is then divided into equal monthly payments. Consequently, no deductions are made in tuition or other program fees for days a child does not attend school whether for illness, vacation or school holidays as operational expenses remain constant.

A Late Payment fee of \$10.00 will be charged if the payment for tuition and fees has not been received within 10 days past the due date. Notify the director in the event of a special circumstance which prevents payment from being made on time. In order for a child to continue to attend preschool and participate in before- and after-care programs, all tuition must be paid by the end of the monthly period.

There is a \$20.00 fee for all returned checks.

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Illness

If your child becomes ill at school, he/she will be isolated from the other children in compliance with DCF guidelines. The parent or emergency contact person will be immediately telephoned and requested to pick the child up. GLP does not dispense any medications, either prescription or non-prescription.

If your child is not well enough to fully participate in an active day of preschool, please do not send your child to school. A sick child risks worsening his or her own condition and exposing other students to the illness.

Dismissing a Child from Grace Preschool

Grace Preschool reserves the right to dismiss a student from our programs at any point during the school year. Reasons for dismissing a student may include:

- Non-payment of tuition and fees
- Non-compliance with VPK attendance policies
- Non-compliance with Department of Children and Families regulations including proper documentation of current physical exam and required immunizations
- When Grace Preschool cannot adequately provide for a student's educational/behavioral needs appropriately in our preschool setting.

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PROGRAMS

Grace Preschool offers classes from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, meeting either two, three or five days a week depending on the age of the student. Generally, students are placed in classes according to their age as of September 1, following the Brevard County School procedures.

We operate on the Brevard County Public School schedule. GLP is in session when the public schools are in session.

Two-Year-Old Classes: Two-year-olds experience a huge growth in both receptive and expressive language. We support language development in our very busy two-year-old classrooms with plenty of opportunities to speak, listen, and sing. We encourage learning through both teacher- and student-led activities, parallel play and cooperative play as skills develop. We work with parents on developing independent life skills such as hand washing and potty training. There are six to eight children in a two-year-old classroom.

Parents have the option of registering for two-day, three-day or five-day classes at the two-year-old level.

Three-Year-Old Classes: The three-year-old class is for students who are three years of age by September 1. The three-year-old classes look more “school-like” in classroom arrangement and schedule. The children are exposed to concepts such as one-to-one correspondence, sets, and number concepts. We explore fine motor work and development in preparation for learning to write. The children begin to transition from parallel play to

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cooperative play, and we see the formation of real friendships. There are up to ten children in a three-year-old classroom.

Parents have the option of registering for three- or five-day classes at the three-year-old level.

VPK (Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Education Program): Children must be at least 4 years of age by September 1 to participate in the Florida State-funded VPK program. At this level, the window of school readiness opens wide. The children explore beginning writing skills, experiences with letter and the sound/symbol connection, sorting, patterning, and basic addition skills. GLP uses the Creative Curriculum, and all lessons meet the requirements of the Florida State Standards. At this age the development of social skills accelerate, and the children learn about cooperation, fairness, and responsibility. There are up to 10 children in a VPK classroom.

Children must attend school five days a week to participate in VPK.

Before and After Care Programs

Early Bird - The Early Bird program is available from 8:00 to 9:00 am Monday through Friday for those who desire an earlier drop-off time. You may choose the days you wish to participate. Drop-in days are available as enrollment permits. There is an additional fee for this program.

Lunch Bunch – Grace Preschool also offers an extended day program from 12:00 to 1:30 or 12:00 to 3:00, Monday through

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Friday. You may choose the days you wish to participate. Drop-in days are available as enrollment permits.

Children participating in Lunch Bunch should bring a lunch to school, including a drink. If you send in a reusable drink bottle or cup, the bottle must be labeled with your child's first and last name. The preschool does not have the resources to heat, chill, or prepare a child's lunch.

Children who participate in the Lunch Bunch program must be potty-trained.

There is an additional fee for this program.

Educational Assessments

All VPK students will be given a pre- and post-VPK assessment as well as an observational assessment in accordance with the ELC VPK guidelines.

You or your child's teacher may have concerns regarding a child's development. Appropriate assessment tools are available at Grace Preschool. All teachers and the director have been trained on the use of these assessment tools.

A conference may be scheduled at any time to discuss your child's progress or any areas of concern.

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PROCEDURES

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Regular day school opens at 8:55. Dismissal begins at 11:55.

Children must be walked to their classrooms and signed in and out each day.

A Late Dismissal fee of \$5.00 per child will be charged for every 10 minutes of tardiness. This fee applies to 12:00 dismissal.

Emergency Cards

Emergency cards must be filled out completely. Each card should contain the name and telephone number of an emergency contact person who will be called when parents are unavailable.

Please notify the school of any change in your home, cell, or work phone or that of your emergency contact.

Parent/School Communication

At GLP we believe that the communication between home and school is a vital component to a preschooler's well being. Communication needs to be an ongoing process. We invite parents to keep us abreast of events and changes in the home which may affect your child's performance or behavior at school. Likewise, we will be in contact with you to discuss any observations or concerns that may arise during the school year.

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Parents and teachers are encouraged to get together as needed throughout the year. Your child's teacher will be happy to discuss your child's adjustment to preschool or other issues, and a convenient meeting can be set up at school.

Advent Lutheran Church and Grace Preschool send out a weekly newsletter, *The Causeway*, via email. If you are not able to receive email, notify the school so that a copy can be printed for you.

Your child's teacher will share classroom news with you through a classroom newsletter, either by print or electronically.

Special notes or information may be sent home in your child's Take Home folder in his/her backpack. Your child's school work and other information are usually sent home each Friday in the Take Home folder.

Clothing and Footwear

Play is the work of children and play clothes are best for preschool. Many indoor and outdoor activities involve getting messy. Outdoor play is planned for each day as the weather permits. Comfortable play clothes and sturdy rubber soled shoes are best for our busy students. The safety of your child is our utmost concern and any clothing or footwear deemed unsafe for outdoor running and climbing is not permitted.

Birthdays

Grace Preschool recognizes each child's birthday in a fun, relaxed manner. A special snack may be sent to school for the entire class. Parents are welcome to participate in snack time

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with your child. Arrangements must be made in advance with your child's teacher to coordinate the birthday snack.

Holiday Parties

There will be special party days at preschool to celebrate holidays throughout the year. The teacher and classroom moms will coordinate these events and ask for parents' help in donating special treats or volunteering their time.

Volunteers

There are many opportunities for volunteers at Grace Preschool, and we encourage this relationship with your child and their school.

No volunteer will be allowed to remain alone with a child or a group of children in the classroom, playground, or bathroom per DCF regulations and Grace policies.

Any volunteer who wishes to participate in school activities more than 10 hours per month must undergo a Level 2 Background Screening and fill out the appropriate paperwork which will be kept on file in the Grace Preschool office. Volunteers who have undergone a Level 2 Background Screening may be left alone with a group of children per the discretion of the teacher and/or director.

Special Events

Open Houses, Parent Coffees and other special events will be scheduled throughout the year.

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Toys at School

A child's personal toys, pacifiers and special blankets should remain at home. These items can be easily lost or broken at school.

Toy weapons are never appropriate for preschool.

School Directory

A school directory of all students, parents, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses will be created and distributed to Grace families in the fall. If you do not wish to be listed in this directory, please notify the director.

Emergency Plan and Drills

You will be given a handout which details GLP's emergency plan. We are required by law to practice a fire drill once a month and a severe weather drill once a year.