



*La Plata United Methodist Church
Weekday Childcare Programs*

BLESSED LAMBS PRESCHOOL

FAMILY HANDBOOK

**3 Port Tobacco Road
La Plata, MD 20646
301-934-2289**

Revised 3/2023

PROGRAM

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Blessed Lambs Preschool believes each child is a child of God, and as such should have every opportunity to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually to his/her fullest potential.

OUR VISION

All children deserve loving, dedicated and educated teachers committed to providing quality care in a safe Christian environment that meets the needs of every individual. All children deserve the most current developmentally appropriate curriculum that encompasses all cultural and diverse backgrounds while continuing to integrate changing technological advances.

All families deserve respect, consistent communication, opportunities for involvement in their child's education and access to information within the school and local community.

Our staff deserve to be part of a close-knit community of professionals with the preschool administration as well as the La Plata United Methodist Church. Our staff deserve opportunities to receive training and the availability of current materials and equipment in order to foster a successful learning environment for the children in their care.

OUR MISSION

Blessed Lambs Preschool is a ministry of La Plata United Methodist Church serving the children, parents, families and surrounding community. It is our goal to offer:

- Quality child care by providing two-, three-, and four-year-old preschool classes which are Christian in nature.
- Highly trained and credentialed staff using the best practices in the field as well as current equipment and materials.
- Opportunities for children to grow in a safe, Christian environment while encouraging independence, exploration, and play.
- Support, education, and acceptance of parents and families into a loving Christian preschool family.
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum and programs that provide experiences, which foster intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and physical growth.
- Open communication between family and staff, staff and administration, and school community and church.

OUR PRIMARY GOALS

- To provide opportunities for children to grow in a Christian environment which will include Bible stories, verses, and songs
- To encourage independence in a variety of activities and situations
- To learn appropriate behavior for a variety of situations, which will include individual as well as group activities
- To help children find acceptable outlets for their emotions
- To learn and practice fine and gross motor skills through encouragement and supervision
- To expose children to developmentally appropriate literature in order to promote communication of ideas, thinking, imagination, language development, and stimulate listening skills
- To encourage the exploration of the world around us through science, social studies and math activities
- To encourage math skills through sorting, classifying, and measuring during both structured and unstructured activities
- To explore and create with a variety of art materials
- To provide opportunities to hear many kinds of music and to sing, move, relax, and respond in other ways to music
- To promote awareness of colors, shapes, letters, and numbers
- To encourage and monitor appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skill

LICENSE & ACCREDITATION

The Office of Child Care of the Maryland State Department of Education licenses Blessed Lambs Preschool. The license number is 124839. In addition, Blessed Lambs Preschool is accredited through MSDE and has a Maryland EXCELS highest check rating of 5. You can find out more about the Maryland EXCELS program at www.marylandexcels.org and about the MSDE Accreditation program at www.marylandpublicschools.org.

DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

2 yr. Old Program – Monday/Tuesday OR Wednesday/Thursday 9:00am –12:00pm

3 yr. Old Program - Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00am – 1:00pm

4 yr. Old Program - Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:00am – 1:00pm.

The center will follow the Charles County Public School system for any holidays or special closings.

DAILY ACTIVITY PLAN 2 YEAR OLDS

9:00 – 9:30 Free Play & Bathroom

9:30 – 9:40 Starting the Day (Safe Keeper Box, Jobs, Good Morning song, Who is here?, Bible)

9:40 – 10:00 Music (Monday / Wed.)

Gross & Fine Motor / Physical Development (Tues / Thurs.)

10:00 – 10:15 Snack

10:15 – 10:20 Transition to outdoors

10:20 – 10:50 Outdoor play

10:50 – 11:15 Transition to indoors, bathroom, hands washed

11:15 – 11:30 Circle/Book & Literacy

Monday / Wed. – Frog Street book (Lang. Dev. & Cog. Dev.)

Tuesday / Thurs. – Teacher choice book (Lang. Dev. & Soc. Dev.)

11:30 – 11:45 Related Activity (Language Development, Cognitive Development, Social Emotional Development, Physical Development)

Monday / Wed. – Fine Motor

Tuesday / Thurs. – Project or Extension act. (Science, songs, etc.)

11:45 – 12:00 End of Day Wrap-up

DAILY ACTIVITY PLAN 3 YEAR OLDS

- 9:00 – 9:20 Welcome / Free Play
- 9:20 – 9:25 Greeting Circle Time
- 9:25 – 9:30 Moving and Learning
- 9:30 – 9:45 Morning Message & Read-Aloud (*math, lang. arts, social studies, question of the day, shared and interactive writing*)
- 9:45 – 10:00 Snack
- 10:00 – 10:45 Learning Centers & Bathroom
(3 small groups rotate every 10 min.) –*Tues. Small groups; Thurs.--Art (Reading & Writing, Construction, Dramatic Play, Creative Art, Discovery, Manipulative)*
- 10:45 – 11:05 Art – Tues.
Music – Thurs.
- 11:05 – 11:35 Outside
- 11:35– 11:50 STEAM—Tues.
Social Studies—Thurs.
- 11:50 – 12:20 Lunch
- 12:20 – 12:55 Math & Learning Centers
(3 small groups rotate every 10 min.)
- 12:55 – 1:00 Closing Circle

DAILY ACTIVITY PLAN 4-YEAR OLDS

- 9:00 – 9:10 Arrival / Centers
- 9:10 – 9:25 Greeting Circle (*math, language arts, read-aloud, social studies, question of the day, shared and interactive writing, etc.*)
- 9:25 – 9:30 Moving & Learning
- 9:30 – 9:45 Read-Aloud Time
- 9:45 – 10:00 Snack
- 10:00 – 10:45 Literacy Lesson & Centers (3 small groups—rotate every 15 min.)
(*Reading & Writing, Construction, Dramatic Play, Creative Art, Discovery-(Science/Math), Manipulatives*)
- 10:45 – 11:00 Art (*Monday 10:45 – 11:15*)
Science (*Wednesday*)
Music (*Friday 10:45 – 11:15*)
- 11:00 – 11:15 Bible Time (*Wednesday*)
- 11:15 – 11:45 Outside
- 11:45 – 12:00 Math (*Monday, Wednesday & Friday*)
- 12:00 – 12:30 Lunch (independent reading as finished)
- 12:30 – 12:45 Social Studies/Conscious Discipline (*Monday & Wednesday*) Read Aloud Club (*Friday*)
- 12:45 – 1:00 Closing Circle

POLICIES

A PARENTS GUIDE TO REGULATED CHILD CARE

Maryland State Department of Education has an informational pamphlet about regulated child care in the state of Maryland. A copy of this document is displayed in the main preschool hallway outside the office. You can also download a copy at:

www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/licensing_branch/index.html.

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORTS

There are times when a child will have an accident or an incident will occur between your child and another child. If the incident requires “more than a hug”, the staff will complete a report for you detailing what happened, the nature of the injury and any first aid administered. You, or whoever picks up your child, will be required to sign this document as well as the staff member in charge at the time of the incident and the classroom teacher. You will receive a copy of this Incident Report and a copy will be kept in your child’s folder in the office.

ARRIVAL/EARLY DEPARTURE

Please sign your child in on the SIGN IN SHEET daily which is located on the clipboard hanging outside the classroom. Please initial this sheet upon departing with your child. If someone else, other than the authorized person on the child’s emergency form, will be picking up your child, please notify your child's teacher or the Director as soon as possible. Staff will ask for identification if someone unknown to them is picking up your child. A child will not be released without verbal or written permission from the parent.

Please do not arrive more than 5 minutes prior to starting time. The teachers need time to prepare for the day's activities. We also ask that you be prompt in picking up your child at the end of the day. Children will be picked up in their classrooms.

ASSESSMENTS

Blessed Lambs Preschool asks that each family complete a developmental screening for each child in the center. Parents will complete the Ages & Stages Questionnaire® (ASQ-3™) and Ages & Stages: Social Emotional Questionnaire® (ASQ: SE™) at the beginning of the school year. A formal assessment based on observations and anecdotal notes will be completed by the teacher twice a year for each child. Parents will receive a copy of this assessment. Family Conferences for all children will be scheduled twice a year. Parents can schedule a conference upon request at any time.

BIRTHDAYS

Parents are welcome to send in a special snack on or near your child’s birthday. We only ask that you refrain from cupcakes. Please coordinate this date and special snack with your child’s teacher prior to the event due to possible food allergies.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Blessed Lambs Preschool staff will communicate with you in a variety of ways; through our monthly center newsletter, your child’s classroom newsletter, flyers, emails, phone calls and reminder apps. In addition, please visit our website which contains this Family Handbook as well as the monthly center newsletters and other information.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Student records are open only to the particular child's teacher, the Director, Assistant Director, an authorized employee of the Office of Child Care, or the child's parent or legal guardian. Each employee is required to sign a Confidentiality agreement annually, certifying their respect for the confidentiality of each child in our program.

CURRICULUM

Blessed Lambs uses curriculums that are approved by the Maryland State Department of Education. The following curriculums are used:

2 yr old program -- Frog Street Toddlers

3 yr old program – Frog Street Threes

4 yr old program – Frog Street Pre-K (Frog Street Press)

Using this curriculum, monthly lesson plans are created and reviewed. Developmentally appropriate learning materials are available in each classroom.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

At Blessed Lambs Preschool we strive to teach self-control and Christian attitudes which foster a love for others. Teachers will always specify or model acceptable and positive behavior. Blessed Lambs Preschool staff practice Conscious Discipline techniques which are embedded in the curriculum. For more information about Conscious Discipline visit www.consciousdiscipline.com. The following policy has been adopted for handling situations when a child is having difficulty functioning in a group setting:

1. The child will be redirected towards another activity when displaying inappropriate or undesirable behaviors.
2. If the child continues to display inappropriate behaviors, the child will be given a verbal warning that he/she will be removed from the situation.
3. The child will be removed from the situation or conflict and will be given a brief quiet time that is developmentally appropriate. During this time the teacher will discuss the appropriate and acceptable behavior with the child.
4. The teacher will make contact with the parents at the end of the day via direct conversation, email or phone call alerting them to behavior that has required an incident report OR when an inappropriate or undesirable behavior has become more frequent.
5. If the child is unable to rejoin appropriately with the group or activity, the child will be given additional time to gain control with the Director/Assistant Director in the preschool office.
6. The teacher or Director will contact the parents to discuss a more detailed behavior management plan after three visits to the preschool office. This behavior management plan could involve resources outside of the preschool if needed. If a behavior situation cannot be resolved, or if a child requires one-on-one supervision, the Director, along with the advice of the Preschool Board of Advisors, may make the decision that the program is not the right fit for the child/family.

At all times, employees will never use corporal punishment or techniques which are humiliating or frightening, such as physical punishment, verbal abuse, or forcing or withholding food.

DRESS CODE

Please dress your child in comfortable and appropriate clothing. The Preschool children will be doing arts and crafts as well as playing outdoors daily. Shoes should be closed toed and have non-skid soles. Please label any removable clothing. **A tote bag will be provided for each child which you are encouraged to use.** Please have your child wear the BLP t-shirt or sweatshirt on all field trips. A change of clothes, provided by the family, is kept at school for each child. Any diapers, pull-ups and wipes must be provided each day the child attends school by the family.

DRILLS

Fire drills for each program are conducted monthly. Additionally, severe weather drills are practiced twice a year.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The preschool has a written Emergency Preparedness Plan, which is part of an overall Risk Management Plan for the center. If you would like to view it, please stop by the Preschool Office. The plan is reviewed on a monthly basis by the staff.

ENROLLMENT

Children must be 4 years of age on or before September 1 for the 4 yr. old program, 3 years of age on or before September 1 for the 3 yr. old program and 2 years of age on or before Sept. 1 for the 2 yr. old program, unless special arrangements are made by the Director. The Office of Child Care (MSDE) requires the following forms for registration:

1. EMERGENCY INFORMATION CARD
2. HEALTH INVENTORY FORM (completed by physician)

Note: Your child will NOT be allowed to begin school unless this completed form has been turned in!

Blessed Lambs Preschool requires a non-refundable registration and materials fee and one months' tuition deposit at the time of official registration. Classes are filled on a first come, first served basis, in accordance with licensing regulations.

FIELD TRIPS

Children are encouraged to wear their red BLP t-shirt or sweatshirt on any field trips away from the school. Permission slips are required for each child prior to the field trip and will be distributed by the preschool office. Field trip costs are non-refundable for any reason.

GRIEVANCES

Any grievance about any aspect of the program should be addressed in writing to the Director. If the Director cannot resolve the concern, then the Director shall present the issue in writing to the Weekday Childcare Board of Advisors (WCBA) President. A copy of both the Director's written communication and any Board action will be sent to the affected family. In those instances, where the Board requires additional input from the affected parties, a meeting will be scheduled to review all pertinent information and resolve the matter as quickly as possible.

ILLNESS

If your child has a cold or fever, please keep him/her at home. We want to provide the healthiest environment possible at the preschool. If your child becomes ill during the preschool day, we are required to isolate him/her and we will telephone you so you can arrange to pick your child up.

We ask that you report any communicable disease (i.e. impetigo, strep, chicken pox, pinkeye, head lice, etc.) to the preschool. Please call the preschool to find out when your child may return to school.

We plan to go outdoors to play every day unless it is raining or extremely windy. If your child cannot be outside because of an illness we ask that you keep the child at home until he/she is recovered enough to join us outside. We do not have enough staff to have anyone stay inside while still providing adequate supervision while outside.

Medication, whether prescription or non-prescription, may not be administered to a child in care unless:

- a. Parental permission to administer the medication is documented on a completed, signed and dated Medication Authorization Form, provided by the office, that is received by the center before the medication is administered; AND
- b. A licensed health practitioner has approved the administration of the medication and the medication dosage.

A child may return to the center after an illness if they have not had a fever of 100.4 or higher (without medication), vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours, and are considered to be no longer contagious.

A child may not be readmitted to care after an absence of 3 days or more due to an illness without a written statement from the parent or physician that the child may return to a regular schedule.

All staff are CPR and First Aid certified. In addition, there is a staff member trained in Medication Administration available at all times during center hours.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

We will follow the Charles County Public School System inclement weather policy. If the Charles County Public School System issues a two-hour delay then all morning programs will begin at 11am and will end at the regularly scheduled time, with the exception of the 2-year-old program, which will be cancelled. If the public schools are closed, then preschool will be closed. There will be a message on the phone as to what the status of opening and closing will be. In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances that result in an extraordinary number of school closings, the school year may be adjusted at the discretion of the Weekday Childcare Board of Advisors.

INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Blessed Lambs will try to make special accommodations for children who require such adaptations, provided it is within our power and authority to do so. Accommodation can be a specific treatment prescribed by a professional or a parent, or a modification of equipment, or removal of physical barriers. The accommodation shall be recorded in the child's folder.

INFORMATION CHANGE

Parents are to notify the center of any changes in home or work phone numbers and addresses. Please give the Preschool office written notice of the change as soon as possible.

ITEMS NOT ALLOWED AT PRESCHOOL

Jewelry, guns or weapons, candy or gum, personal money, sharp or breakable objects, toys (unless specified by the teacher)

LATE PICK UP AT THE END OF SCHOOL DAY

Children are expected to be promptly picked up at the conclusion of the school day, at 12 noon or 1:00, depending on the program. You will be given two warnings, that you will need to sign, if you are later than 10 minutes picking your child up. At the time of the third late pick up, you will be charged \$50. And then \$50 every 15 minutes after that per late incident.

MEDIA POLICY

Screen time at the childcare center (video, computer, DVD, etc.) will be confined to times that are directly related to learning experiences in all of our programs.

NEWSLETTERS/CALENDAR

A monthly newsletter, from both the office and classroom teacher, will be sent home outlining the month's theme and detailing any planned activities as well as any pertinent information.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Blessed Lambs Preschool admits students of any race, color, national & ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on race, color, national & ethnic origin, gender orientation, religion or disabling condition in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

“It is the policy of the State of Maryland that all public and publicly funded schools and school programs operate in compliance with:

(1) Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

(2) Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, which states that public and publicly funded schools and programs may not:

- i. Discriminate against a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;
- ii. Refuse enrollment of a prospective student, expel a current student, or withhold privileges from a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of an individual's race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; or
- iii. Discipline, invoke a penalty against, or take any other retaliatory action against a student or parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint alleging that the program or school discriminated against the student, regardless of the outcome of the complaint.”

PARKING LOT SAFETY

Parents must park in designated areas for drop-off and pick-up of children. All vehicles must be turned off while children are brought into the center. Parents/Staff should supervise children carefully while walking on the parking lot and use designated sidewalks when at all possible. Other children may not be left in the vehicle without adult supervision. All visitors should use caution and reduce their speed in the parking lot at all times.

PETS

Due to the many allergic conditions of the children attending our program, we do not have pets of any type in the classrooms.

PHOTO RELEASE

As part of your initial registration, you were asked to sign a *Photo Release Form* as we may be taking photos of your child during the school year.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

It is the center's philosophy to promote physical fitness, so the children will go outside for gross motor activities as long as the weather permits. In addition to the playground equipment available, there is a monthly schedule which promotes daily gross motor emphases to encourage the children to develop and become proficient at a variety of gross motor skills. The teachers formally assess these skills.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

In the event of a state of emergency, pandemic, or other catastrophic event our program may be forced to or choose to temporarily close to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our children, families, staff and community. In all cases, we will follow the guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as well as those outlined in the executive orders of the Governor of the State of Maryland and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Current policies and procedures (including tuition payments) may be modified due to MSDE, and/or the CDC regulations and requirements. These changes would be specified and shared as an addendum to the current handbook, as well as, the Risk Management Plan.

RELIGION

Children from all religious backgrounds are welcome and each belief is respected. The curriculum will reflect and teach the views of the Christian faith. Bible stories, verses, songs, dramatic activities, and games of the Christian faith will be used during the school year.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

A calendar of days the preschool is closed is given to each family at orientation. Blessed Lambs Preschool follows the Charles County Public School System (CCPS) for holidays.

SMOKING POLICY

There is a “no smoking” policy in place at the preschool. Smoking is not allowed anywhere on the preschool site and grounds.

SNACK

A healthy snack and drink will be provided each day by the preschool and you will need to provide a lunch each day that is ready to eat (3’s & 4’s programs only). The center creates a monthly snack schedule that promotes healthy nutrition and encourages the children to try a variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains on a daily basis. The snack calendar is posted outside the preschool office.

SOCIAL MEDIA

BLP recognizes the importance of social media but asks that you, as a parent, protect the safety of our children. There are families that have asked that no photos be taken of their child as per the Photo Release. We also recognize that we have no control of social media, and therefore ask that all families be conscious of this preference when sharing or posting on social media.

STAFF

All staff members have met the necessary licensing requirements from the Office of Child Care and participate in the MSDE Credentialing Program. In addition, the staff continues to attend and acquire additional training and knowledge from workshops and classes.

TOILET TRAINING

Children are not required to be toilet trained to attend any program. The staff will work with you and your child wherever your child may be in the toilet training process. Above all, the staff will make an effort to respect the dignity and privacy of all children. All diapers, pull-ups and wipes must be provided by the family of the child attending. ***Children attending the 3-year-old program who are not toilet trained will need to use/supply pull ups with Velcro on the sides, since there is not changing table in those classrooms.***

TUITION INFORMATION

Tuition is due on the first of each month **for** the current month. All checks should be made out to *Blessed Lambs Preschool*. Any payment in cash will need to be in the **exact amount**. Any payment after the 15th of the month will be considered late and will be subject to a late fee of \$25. If the current month's tuition has not been paid by the 1st of the next month, your child cannot attend school until it is paid. After 60 days of nonpayment, a complaint will be filed with the Small Claims Court.

In the case of a check being returned from the bank for insufficient funds, a \$25 fee will be charged **in addition to any fees required from the bank**. If a problem arises and prompt payment cannot be made, you should notify the preschool director immediately. There is a \$5 surcharge on all credit card transactions.

There may be additional activities fees throughout the school year, such as field trips, etc., that are not included in tuition costs.

VISITORS

Any visitors to the preschool must first check-in at the preschool office. Visitors will only include parents, potential new families, and personnel associated with school related activities.

VOLUNTEERS

While we have an "open door" policy, we also wish to maintain the continuity of care for the children in our programs. We therefore do not have volunteers on a regular basis in the classroom, but do ask for assistance with special programs and events. The teachers also often have things that need cutting out or assembling that they may send home.

WEEKDAY CHILDCARE BOARD OF ADVISORS

All Child Care programs are governed by a Board of Advisors, which is made up of five church members and four parents and/or various professionals. The Board meets quarterly. More information about this Board is available upon request.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM

As stated in the Enrollment Contract, if you need to withdraw your child from this school year prior to the end of the term, **the initial tuition deposit will not be refunded nor will it be applied to any outstanding amounts due**. If for any reason it is necessary to withdrawal your child from the program, you will need to give 30-day written notice or pay one month's tuition in lieu thereof.

~The Director and Assistant Director are always available to answer any questions you have regarding the policies stated in this handbook or any other questions you may have about the preschool programs. ~

Resources:

- Blessed Lambs Preschool: www.blessedlambs.org
- Maryland State Department of Education: www.marylandpublicschools.org
- Office of Child Care: www.earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/region-10southern.maryland.office
- Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov
- Promise Resource Center: www.thepromisecenter.org
- Charles County Health Department: www.charlescountyhealth.org
- Charles County Public Library: www.ccplonline.org
- Charles County Public Schools: www.ccboe.com
- Charles County Public School Hotline: 301-934-7410