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Lake Forest, Illinois 60045
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Licensed by the State of Illinois

Member of the National Association of
Episcopal Schools

Parent Handbook and Guide
2025-2026

Welcome to The Episcopal Preschool

Welcome to The Episcopal Preschool (EPS) -- a place known for its nurturing environment and broad, enriching curriculum. We have been serving the Lake Forest community for over 50 years and, today, are one of the most well-regarded early learning programs in the area. We offer a strong curriculum, a safe, nurturing environment and enrichment programs in language, literature and socialization.

Our mission is to develop each child to his or her fullest potential – spiritually, intellectually, and socially. Our guiding principles:

- inspire a love of learning
- promote independence
- honor individuality
- build community
- cultivate independence
- instill integrity
- encourage personal best behaviors

The Episcopal Preschool is part of The Church of the Holy Spirit (CHS). EPS operates under the direction of Melanie Upfold and is overseen by a board of directors. It is licensed by the state of Illinois and is a member of the National Association of Episcopal Schools. It operates as a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit corporation.

Programs

The Episcopal Preschool offers three programs, which meet September through May.

The Twos

Tuesday, Thursday

9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Children must be 2 years old before September 1.

Staff: 1 Teacher 2 Assistants

Class size: 12

The Threes

Monday, Wednesday, Friday

9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Children must be 3 years old before September 1.

Staff: 1 Teacher and 2 Assistants

Class size: 20

Pre-K

Monday through Friday

8:50 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Children must be 4 years old before September 1.

Staff: 1 Teacher and 2 Assistants

Class size: 20

Enrichment Programs

Lunch Bunch

Children may participate in Lunch Bunch (LB) for additional socialization or as a bridge to other enrichment classes, when offered. LB is open to children aged 3 and older. Younger children must be fully toilet-learned (please no pull-ups), and socially and emotionally ready to participate. Participants bring their own lunch (nut free), drink and utensils.

Monday through Friday: 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Cost: \$10 per day. Reservations and payment are required in advance. Unless your child is sick, reservations must be cancelled (24) hours in advance or you will be charged the fee of \$10.00.

Hands on Music

Research shows that music nurtures a child's emotional, social, cognitive and language development. We follow a music and movement preschool curriculum that allows children to express themselves to the fullest with active listening, singing, and playing simple instruments. This class is open to Threes and Pre-K. There is an additional charge for the class.

Sporty Sprouts

Sporty Sprouts is the perfect blend of fun and fitness for preschoolers. Through engaging, age-appropriate games and activities, students will enhance their motor skills, balance, and coordination while learning the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship. This class is open to Threes and Pre-K. There is an additional charge for this class.

Once Upon a Story

This class is designed to help your child build critical thinking skills while developing reading readiness, writing and oral expression. Each week a new book is presented, and students engage in an exploration of literary terminology, make predictions about the story and develop new vocabulary. Instructors use art, drama, cooking, and math or science activities to explore themes further. There is an additional charge for this class and open to the students in The Threes and Pre-K classes.

Hola Amigos!

Our Spanish program is designed especially for Pre-K students, using songs, games, stories and hands-on activities to build their early language skills. Children will learn everyday vocabulary and begin to understand basic conversational phrases in a warm, encouraging environment. Children will build confidence in communication, enhance listening and memory skills, and begin to form a foundation for bilingual learning – all while having fun! There is an additional charge for this class and open to the students in Pre-K only.

PreK Medley: Art & Nature, Tasty Tales, Science Wizardry, The Masters

During the year this assortment of classes is designed to provide: a variety of hands-on art activities inspired by nature, real life applications for learning through experiencing simple cooking projects, an opportunity to learn basic science concepts through experimentation or examine and/or recreate the works of great art masters of the past. There is an additional charge for each of these classes and open to the students in Pre-K only.

Enrollment

Admission Policy

Applications for admittance for the next school year are accepted beginning the second Monday in January. To be eligible for The Twos, The Threes or Pre-K classes in the coming school year, children must be age 2, 3 or 4, respectively, before September 1. Admission to any program is on a first-come, first served basis. The Episcopal Preschool reserves the right to balance the number of boys and girls within each class.

The Episcopal Preschool shall enroll only those children eligible under the center's written enrollment policies. The Episcopal Preschool shall not use eligibility criteria that screens out children with disabilities and shall make reasonable modifications in the program and procedures to accommodate



children with disabilities. The Episcopal Preschool admits students of any race to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities made available to students of the school, and does not discriminate on the basis of race in the administration of its educational and admissions policies.

Enrollment Priority

School admission begins in January for the upcoming school year. Registration applications from currently enrolled students and their siblings are accepted beginning the second Monday in January. Members of The Church of the Holy Spirit and siblings of children formerly enrolled at EPS are accepted beginning Thursday of that week. Registration applications are accepted from the general public beginning on the third Tuesday in January.

Waiting lists

The Episcopal Preschool does not keep a waiting list prior to registration in January. Once classes are filled, a list of interested persons is kept to fill any vacancies that may occur.

Fees and support

The Episcopal Preschool is a self-supporting school. Operational funds come from tuition and registration fees. A non-refundable registration fee of \$250 is due when submitting an application. If your child is put on a waiting list, your registration fee will be returned to you. Parents of children withdrawn from enrollment after acceptance will not be refunded the registration fee. Tuition paid will not be refunded unless the family moves out of the state of Illinois and then tuition paid or due will be prorated. Tuition is non-refundable for a family that remains in Lake County, Illinois but withdraws their child from The Episcopal Preschool (EPS).

Faculty

EPS faculty is selected for their experience and expertise in the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE). Teachers, specifically, are selected for their degrees in ECE and/or related fields. The Director and faculty participate in on-going training and education in child development and teaching methods as well as First Aid, CPR and safety procedures. All faculty members meet the requirements of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), including educational requirements, fingerprinting, background check, TB test, and physical exam.



Health and Safety

When to keep your child home from school

Please do not send your child to school with any of the following symptoms:

- If your child has had a fever of 101* orally, without medication, within the last 24 hours
- If your child has a constant cough that is not asthma/allergy related (confirmed with a doctor's note)
- If your child has an uncontrolled cold, and/or a constant yellow-green nasal discharge
- If your child has a sore throat, rash, stomachache, vomiting or diarrhea
- If your child has symptoms of a communicable disease

Please notify the Director if your child develops a communicable disease, such as COVID-19, chicken pox, strep throat, pink eye (conjunctivitis) or fifth disease.

If in doubt about whether to send a child to school, please err on the side of caution and keep the child home. If a child becomes sick while at school, the Director will isolate the child from the group and call a designated guardian to retrieve the child as soon as possible. Please keep emergency names and phone numbers up to date. We will all have a healthier year if everyone follows these simple guidelines.

Emergency Evacuation

In the event of an emergency building evacuation, the Preschool will evacuate to the Rectory located at 370 E. Westminster Road, and parents will be notified. Your child will be cared for by faculty until you or an authorized individual arrives to pick him/her up.

Allergies

The Episcopal Preschool must be informed of any allergies a child has. Allergies are to be listed on the registration form, emergency card, and health form, and discussed with the Director. Specific health problems, such as epilepsy or asthma, must also be noted and discussed with the Director.

Due to allergies and other restrictions, just as with peanut products and nuts, household pets may not visit the classroom for any reason.



Snacks

A mid-morning snack is provided by the Preschool for your child. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) mandates that only store-bought food in sealed containers may be served. Your child may be engaged in a cooking project at snack time. All ingredients will meet DCFS requirements. If your child has any food allergies, please let us know immediately. We will do our best to provide a snack for your child, however, in extreme cases you may be asked to provide an appropriate snack.

Due to the increasing number of children with various allergies, all of the classrooms at The Episcopal Preschool will remain **NUT FREE**. Other allergies will be evaluated and special needs provided for at the beginning of each school year. We appreciate your cooperation in helping to keep all of our school children safe and healthy.

Outside food or candy is not allowed unless approved by the Director.

Comings and Goings

Pre-K students should be dropped off at their classroom starting at 8:50 a.m. The Twos and Threes students should be dropped off at their classroom starting at 9:00 a.m. Please sign in your child prior to entering their room. If you are staying, please assist your child in washing his/her hands and yours according to the posted instructions, as required by DCFS.

When arriving at school, please park your car in a regular parking space and not in the circle. This entrance is used by many groups and needs to remain clear.

At the end of the class day, the children in The Twos and The Threes programs will be dismissed from the classroom. The children in the Pre-K program will be dismissed from the playground (the north exit door by the big wooden cross). Please park your car and come into the building to collect your child and/or carpool. The classroom teachers will have the sign-out sheet available for you to sign out your child and any others you may be driving. We would also appreciate your explaining this procedure to any substitute driver who may be picking up your child for you.

PLEASE DO NOT USE CELL PHONES AND WATCH CAREFULLY FOR CHILDREN AND OTHER CARS WHEN PULLING INTO THE CHS PARKING LOT.



Late Pick-Up

Reminder: Promptness in picking up your child at the conclusion of the school day is important!

Parents or guardians arriving late for pick up may be charged a fee. Those arriving late must complete and sign a "Late Pick-Up Slip". EPS realizes that there may be emergency situations; therefore, the first late slip is excused. Thereafter there will be a fee of \$10 for each (10) minutes of overtime, payable to The Episcopal Preschool.

Carpooling

The Episcopal Preschool must be informed of any regular carpool arrangements. Please complete and sign a Pick-Up Authorization Form, which is required by the State of Illinois. If your child is going home in any way other than usual, you must notify The Episcopal Preschool in writing. Pick-Up Authorization Forms need to be signed and on file in the preschool office before a child will be released to a relative, friend or neighbor. No child will be sent home with another person unless written notice has been given. The State of Illinois requires all drivers to sign for any children that they drive home. Photo identification will be requested of any driver not known to the faculty.

Child Custody

Please notify the Director if there is a special custody arrangement for your child of which we should be aware. This information will be kept confidential; however, it is necessary for staff to be prepared in the event of a conflict. Illinois law requires us to release a child to either parent unless we have a copy of the court document specifically prohibiting it on file.

Tote Bags

The Episcopal Preschool will provide a tote bag to each student for use during the school year. Please check your child's bag daily after school for important information and for your child's artwork and projects. A school activity calendar/newsletter will be sent home in tote bags near the first of the month from the Director to keep parents informed about upcoming school events and educational topics related to child development.

What to wear

Children at school are active and involved. Students should be comfortably dressed in simple, washable, and easy to manage clothing suitable for tumbling, climbing, and crawling on the floor. Teachers provide smocks for messy play, but often a "good outfit" makes it difficult to really enjoy the activity.



Students should wear rubber-soled shoes that will stay on and not slip. **No Crocs or open-toed shoes (flip flops or sandals) are permitted.** Please put your child's name in each shoe, since we encounter many look-alikes.

Although we are available to help your child with the toileting procedure, clothing that helps your child be independent in this activity is best. Classrooms are generally warm, and the children are active, so dressing in layers is ideal.

Students will have outdoor playtime even in cold and snowy weather, so please send outdoor clothing with your child. **ALL OUTDOOR CLOTHING, ESPECIALLY BOOTS, MITTENS, AND HATS SHOULD BE LABELED OR MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.**

When providing outdoor winter clothing, please keep in mind that children should be able to dress themselves as much as possible. Self-dressing is an important objective at school, and we encourage children to dress and undress themselves to the best of their ability.

At the beginning of the school year, parents of children in all EPS classes **must** provide the school with a Ziploc bag, labeled with their child's name, containing long pants, shirt, underwear and socks that might be used in the event of a bathroom accident or excessive water table play.

The Episcopal Preschool **policy is that no jewelry of any kind (earrings, rings, bracelets or necklaces) should be brought or worn to school.** The Preschool space is shared by multiple age groups during the week, so safety is of the utmost concern.

Parent/School Communication and Conferences

Because communication between parents and teachers is such an important part of a positive preschool experience, EPS faculty welcomes your phone calls and notes. We will respond to any concerns you have about your experience with the preschool. So that we may better understand and work with your child, please keep us informed of significant developments in his/her life that may affect behavior at school. This may include business trips that you are taking, visitors to your home, or a new family member.

Throughout the school year, EPS parents will receive, via BLOOMZ, a bi-monthly newsletter from their child's teacher which will keep them informed of themes, activities and projects in their child's class. Please be sure to read newsletters thoroughly. This information will assist you in discussing the day's events and lessons learned with your child.

Parents and teachers meet for two face-to-face conferences during the school year. The first meeting in the fall allows for the sharing of information and observations, and establishment of goals. A second conference in the spring provides follow up information and a progress report. If we need to speak with you outside of the formal conference time, we will call you. If you have a concern you would like to discuss, please call the preschool at any time.

Toys from Home

Students are generally discouraged from bringing toys from home. Toys from home often cause conflict, and The Episcopal Preschool faculty cannot be responsible for their safekeeping or whereabouts. We realize, however, that bringing a “piece of home” to school may be important to children. Therefore children may be able to bring a special toy from home if that item remains in his or her tote bag.

In recognition that showing and telling about something from home is an important skill that children enjoy, each classroom has established a sharing opportunity:

- **The Twos:** Beginning in late February, during circle time, children may bring two toys or other objects from home on their scheduled show & tell day. Children will be encouraged to tell their classmates something about their chosen objects.
- **The Threes:** A Star Sharer bag will be sent home starting in January, on a rotating basis, with each child to be returned the next class session. Children should select three of his/her favorite things from home to show to classmates. There are also opportunities during the school year to bring items from home relating to the week's theme: i.e. fairy tales or reptiles.
- **Pre-K:** Starting at the beginning of the school year, each child will be given a turn to be the special person of the week. They may create a personal poster that tells all about them, e.g., hobbies, photographs, collections. Please check newsletters for additional sharing opportunities throughout the year.

Birthdays

Birthdays are considered a special event at EPS, with each class celebrating in a unique way. Parents are welcome to join the birthday child at school on their special day. A snack will be provided by EPS. Parents are welcome to read a book to the class during rug time. You may bring a book from home or consider purchasing a book from the class wish list to donate in your child's honor. Additional information will be provided by classroom teachers.



Parents should note that distribution of outside party invitations and thank you notes at the Preschool is prohibited.

Book Donations

As a not-for-profit organization, there is often not a lot of room in the budget to keep book shelves up to date. For that reason, EPS encourages parents to consider donating an age-appropriate book to the preschool in honor of your child. You may donate your favorite or consult your classroom teachers for suggestions as each keeps a wish list. A book plaque is placed in every donated book. Donations are greatly appreciated!

Visitors

EPS welcomes parents to spend time in the classroom. Occasionally teachers will ask for parent helpers for special events or projects. All visitors to the classroom will be asked to wash their hands prior to engaging with the children.

As a courtesy, please notify the teachers in advance of your visit so they will be expecting you and can inform the children in the class.

Prior to registration, we encourage potential new families to come and observe in the appropriate classroom. Appointments must be made for pre-registration visits. Please remember not to involve the teachers in conversation during these visits. Their first responsibility is to the class. Following your visit, the director or one of the teachers will be happy to talk with you and answer any questions you may have.

Donations and Volunteering

Parent donations of time and materials are key to helping create a positive play environment. The following is a list of suggestions for the kinds of volunteering and donations The Episcopal Preschool puts to use and which are always appreciated:

- Donations of supplies (i.e., books, puzzles, wood scraps, pinecones)
- Volunteer for a special classroom project or field trip
- Volunteer to be a class room parent
- Host a coffee for your classroom parents at the church, or in your home
- Serve on The Episcopal Preschool Board

School Pictures

Group pictures of all classes will be taken by a professional photographer in the fall. You may also request an individual photograph be taken of your child on this day. Parents are under no obligation to purchase photos.



Program Participation

Behavior Management

The EPS faculty utilizes positive reinforcement and modeling to encourage acceptable behavior among students. Limits and consequences shall be made clear and understandable to students, consistently enforced, and explained to a child before and after any incident as part of disciplinary action.

Students will have reasonable opportunity to resolve their own conflicts. On occasion, when the above disciplinary techniques have been exhausted or the behavior is harmful to others, removal from the group may be necessary.

Removal from the group to help a child gain control will not exceed one minute per year of the child's age. Continuation of the inappropriate or harmful behavior may result in removal from the classroom and a conference with parents. Teachers will note challenging behaviors and work together to form an individualized plan for the child. Parents will be informed of both the behaviors that are inappropriate as well as the developmentally appropriate interventions the teachers have agreed to implement. The Director may become involved through classroom observations, teacher consultations and/or parent communication at any time. If an outside behaviorist/intervention is needed, and both EPS and the parents agree, EPS will help find outside resources. Our goal is to ensure the safety and enjoyment of the entire class.

The Episcopal Preschool will make reasonable accommodations to meet the needs and challenges of all children. At such a point when efforts to meet these needs have become unreasonable because it changes the essential nature of our program or endangers the safety of all involved, a transition plan will be developed and The Episcopal Preschool shall assist the family in finding services more appropriate to the child's needs, including referrals to other agencies or facilities. DCFS will be notified of any transition plans.

All documentation (observations, resources/services/interventions contacted and used, parent communication, and transition plans) will be placed in the child's file. Files are maintained for 5 years after the last day of enrollment per DCFS.

We encourage children to:

- Respect others
- Play peacefully
- Share
- Pick up after themselves
- Respect the property of The Episcopal Preschool



Emergency School Closings

On rare occasion, severe weather conditions (extreme cold, excessive amounts of snow) or unsafe building conditions (no power or water) necessitate the closing of preschool. If EPS has an emergency school closing, you will receive notification via BLOOMZ, from the Director/EPS office. EPS will follow Lake Forest District 67's emergency closing for severe weather. If you are in doubt of the Preschool closing due to weather, check District 67's website, www.lakeforestschools.org. Days missed due to weather or unsafe building conditions will not be made up at the end of the school year.

Parent Grievances

In case of a grievance between a parent and a teacher, a hierarchy of steps has been put in place. It is recommended that a parent or family follow this course of action until satisfaction between parties is reached:

- Meet with the teacher to discuss the difficulty or difference of opinion
- Meet with the Director to communicate the quandary
- Arrange a joint meeting with the Director and the President of The Episcopal Preschool Board (CHS Reverend)

If the grievance is between the parent and the Director, the first step shall be skipped.

Director Information

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www.theepiscopalpreschool.org
