



# *Little Acorn Preschool Parent Handbook*

*[www.littleacornpreschool.com](http://www.littleacornpreschool.com)*

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## Welcome to Little Acorn Preschool!

Little Acorn Preschool has put together this Parent's handbook for your benefit. It is our hope that it will answer most of your questions and provide information on matters of importance to you as a parent of one of our students. All previously issued handbooks and any inconsistent policy or benefit statements are superseded with this revision.

The handbook explains many of our policies and procedures, but it does not address every possible situation or question about the preschool's operations. The policies and procedures in this handbook are for general reference only and may not be applicable in all cases. Little Acorn Preschool management reserves the right to revise, modify, remove or add to any and all policies, procedures, or school rules stated in this handbook or in any document at any time.

### Who are we?

Little Acorn Preschool (LAPS) began in 1980, a result of the efforts of the First United Methodist Church (FUMC) and its members to provide an outreach service to the community. Since then, LAPS has separated from FUMC and is currently a separate entity. We continue to partner with FUMC in many ways, including the rental of our school space.

LAPS is a 501c3 organization and governed by a Board of Directors (Board) consisting of parent representatives and community members. Administration serves in a supervisory capacity to the Board. The Board is our governing body and, along with the director, guides the decision making of the preschool.

We present an individualized, self-paced program operated within the context of freedom of choice, active learning, respect for others, relevance, enthusiasm, and self-direction. We support each child's individuality and promote independence. LAPS believes that when children are given choices (should I paint, play blocks, or dress up?) they are able to develop the skills and abilities necessary for effective learning, autonomy and positive self-esteem.

### Statement of Philosophy:

Little Acorn preschool is a secular, nonprofit, play based preschool. We appreciate the opportunity to serve families during their children's early years and accept the responsibility of offering them the finest early childhood education. All children regardless of economic background, race, religion, or ethnic origin are welcomed. As a school, we place emphasis on universal values as defined by the following examples:

- Teach that all life is to be valued and respected
- Believe each child is unique and we respect each child's timetable for developmental growth

- We explore the meaning of living together and teach that each person has individual rights that are to be respected
- We teach children that the world is good and strive to develop in them an appreciation for its beauty and dependability by providing opportunities to explore, observe, ponder, and question
- Our goal is for each child to experience love, trust, and individual success, thus strengthening their self esteem
- We recognize the importance of adults as examples of behavior for children, as they see teachers displaying such attributes as gratefulness, sharing, patience, love, joy, fairness and enthusiasm.

We also believe the best way to learn is by DOING. We provide experiences where children learn on all levels: physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional. We offer a play-based curriculum; we value play as the essence of learning for children in social relations, initiative, language, creative representation, music, movement, classification, number, space, and time. Each child will experience love, trust, and individual success, thus strengthening their self-esteem.

## Admissions:

LAPS is open to any child, regardless of economic background, race, religion, sex or ethnic origin who:

1. Is emotionally ready to be separated from his/her parents, legal guardian, or family;
2. And is 2 1/2-6 years old

We accommodate children with special needs on a case by cases basis, providing we are able to meet the various requirements of the child.

Classes are filled according to order of application received and when specific openings are available. This is on a first come first served basis. Waitlists will be established for those classes which have reached capacity and future openings will be filled as they occur. Families will be contacted and given 24 hours to respond to the announcement of an opening. The first notice of openings for registration will be made to families currently enrolled in our program.

As a general policy, enrollment will be limited to an age-appropriate maximum number of students per classroom. Any adjustment to this capacity will be determined by staff and the Director.

## Enrollment Dates and Registration

### A. Our Registration is as follows:

1. Enrollment for current families is that last Wednesday in January. The Saturday prior families will use a google form to indicate their desired class and days/times.
2. Enrollment for the general public will be the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday in February and will on a first come, first served basis.
3. Completed registration form and payment are required at time of registration.
4. Additional supply fee will be due no later than August 15<sup>th</sup>.

### B. The enrollment package can be downloaded from the preschool's website [www.littleacornpreschool.com](http://www.littleacornpreschool.com). We ask that all required forms be completed and on file at LAPS on or before the child's first day of attendance. The forms (listed below) and school calendar can be found on our web site at [www.littleacornpreschool.com](http://www.littleacornpreschool.com). Open menu & click on the "about" page. Immunization recommended but not required.

1. Registration form (signed & dated)
2. A medical release form (for each child enrolled)
3. A field trip release form (for each child enrolled)
4. An emergency contact information form (for each child enrolled)
5. A consent form (video, photographs, blog, assessment, Facebook)
6. Family background
7. The Parent's Handbook (this is provided for your use)

### C. Withdrawal from preschool:

Filling the opening left by your child's withdrawal usually takes us at least two weeks, even when we have a waiting list. Therefore, we require a two week written notice if you intend to withdraw your child from the program. If you do not provide a 2 week notice, you will be liable for payment for the 2 weeks.

To help us operate effectively we ask that Parents honor LAPS policies and procedures as stated in the most current handbook.

## Preschool Hours of Operation – daily & yearly

The preschool term starts in September and ends June (start and end dates are determined annually by the Director). The school day has two class periods, morning and afternoon.

The **morning class** begins at 9:00 am and ends at 12:00 am. M-F.  
The **afternoon class** begins at 12:30 pm and ends at 3:30 pm. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

LAPS follows a schedule *similar* to the Vancouver School District for holidays and vacations.

Please ensure that your child arrives for class on time and should it become necessary to keep your child out of class, we ask that you notify the teacher or Director no later than 8:30 am, or as soon as possible, that your child will miss class. Be specific regarding the reason or illness for the absence. It is very important to pick-up your child on time so that they do not become anxious and worry. Please allow for extra time when running errands during school hours for amount of traffic, road construction, or other traffic issues which may make you late. If you are more than 5 min. late, your child will be waiting in the Director's office. There is a \$1.00/minute late pick up fee which is due when your child attends the next class.

In the event of extreme weather conditions, the preschool operates on the same schedule as Vancouver Public Schools. School closings are typically available online the morning of or evening before a closure. In addition, the information will be posted on the school parent app and social media pages. If you have questions, please call us before starting out to make sure we are open or message your teacher or the director on the parent communication app. Should school be closed for more than 3 days, the time will be made up towards the end of the current school year.

### Tuition/Billing

Tuition shall be determined by the Board and be divided into nine and one half (9 1/2) monthly payments, with one half (1/2) monthly payment due in June.

We require an \$100.00 non-refundable registration fee for the first child and \$25.00 per additional child due at the time of enrollment. In addition there is also a \$200 supply fee (\$150.00 if paid by June 1<sup>st</sup>) due by August 15<sup>th</sup>. This supply fill covers the school provided snack, classroom supplies, many of our school wide events, and field trips for the school year.

Monthly tuition is due no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Tuition may always be paid in advance and either placed in the tuition boxes outside the classroom, mailed to LAPS, paid online via our website or given to the Director. We provide a 15% reduction of monthly tuition for enrollment of additional children in the same family.

Should you wish to pay for the entire school year we offer a 5% discount which is due by September 10<sup>th</sup> of the current school year. Tuition must be paid in full by September 10<sup>th</sup> in order to qualify for this discount. All major credit cards are accepted and will be charged a convenience fee of 3% for "swiped".

***A \$50.00 late fee will be charged for payments made after the tenth (10) of the month and a \$35.00 fee will be charged on any returned checks.***

Children entering the program after the opening of the school year will be charged a pro-rated amount for the month in which the child enters, i.e. child enters the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the month, you will pay for 3 weeks of that month and if your child enters on the last

week of the month, you will pay for that week only. Regular tuition begins on the first full month following enrollment.

Because the school budget is determined by enrollment and student tuition, special adjustments (credits) cannot be made on the basis of illness, vacation, or any other absence. To obtain a receipt, please contact the preschool Director.

## Scholarship

Little Acorn strives to meet the needs of all children in attendance. We have scholarships available for those who are in need of financial assistance. A limited number of scholarships are available each year and are not guaranteed from one year to the next. Scholarship applications are available from the Director.

- Families receiving tuition assistance are required to provide additional volunteer hours per month. Volunteer activities and schedule are decided with input from the Director.
- Scholarships are determined based on family income and need, using the state income guides to direct qualification.
- Families granted tuition assistance are required to pay 1/2 the scholarship tuition rate for the month of June. The Director will be able to provide you the specific amount.

## Confidentiality

All the information regarding your child and family is treated with the utmost confidentiality. Family and children records are maintained either within the classroom or the Director's office. When there is an incident involving two children, the teacher will of course contact both parents to inform you of the issue without disclosing the identity of the other child.

## Health Policy

When determining if a child should be present in the classroom with a health issue, we must keep in mind the effect on the other children in the classroom. Therefore, if a child displays any of the following symptoms, they must be kept home, or they will be sent home.

- A temperature of 100 degrees or above
- Diarrhea of an unknown origin
- Vomiting
- Skin rash of unknown origin (until diagnosed by a doctor as not contagious)
- Continuous cough/pain to the degree that it prevents normal play
- Conjunctivitis (pink-eye) at least 24 hrs. after medication is started and eyes are no longer crusted/oozing
- Runny nose or green mucus

When a child is obviously sick, there is a general agreement between parents and staff that the child should not be at school. With less clear symptoms, many factors are considered before making the decision. Staff and the preschool Director will consider

the needs of your child and their ability to participate comfortably in normal activities as well as taking symptoms into account.

Before a child may return to the classroom, they must be free of fever, vomit or diarrhea for a period of 24 hrs.

The county Health Department requires us to report significant drops in program attendance (more than 10% of our daily population). In the event more than 10% of our population is absent with the same illness for more than 2 days, we are required to close the school for cleaning and sanitizing purposes.

## Covid-19 Policy & Procedures:

Little Acorn Preschool follows the guidance of the Vancouver School District for our COVID policies. At this time, we are requesting children with any of the following symptoms are tested for COVID:

- Had a temperature at or above 100.4° or reason to be concerned you may be developing a fever. If you don't have a thermometer, additional fever signs and symptoms may include: sweating, chills and shivering, headache, muscle aches, loss of appetite, irritability, dehydration, or general weakness.
- Experienced a new cough that you cannot attribute to another health condition
- Experienced a new shortness of breath that you cannot attribute to another health condition
- Experienced a new sore throat that you cannot attribute to another health condition
- Experienced new muscle aches that you cannot attribute to another health condition or a specific activity such as physical exercise
- Experienced any chills that you cannot attribute to another health condition
- Experienced a new loss of taste or smell that you cannot attribute to another health condition

If the child's symptoms are mild and they have received a negative COVID test they may attend class with a mask.

If your child has been exposed to COVID they may attend school, but we request children with a COVID case in their home wear a mask while at school to limit exposure in the classroom.

Preschool staff are taking extra steps to reduce exposure to the best of our ability through enhanced cleaning measures & cleaning products, increased hand washing/sanitization, and clear communication with families.

We are asking that parents are diligent about monitoring any symptoms that their child presents and errs on the side of caution. Do not send your child to school if they are not feeling well. We will call parents and send students home if we notice a student is not feeling well or presenting with concerning symptoms.

**Little Acorn preschool is unable to refund tuition for missed schooling due to illness.**



## **Locked Doors**

For security purposes the main doors in the lobby will remain locked during both morning and afternoon school sessions. Please message your teacher on the parent app or call the preschool office if you need to enter the building outside of pick up/drop off time.

### **Unlocked entrance times:**

	<b>8:50 -9:10 Monday-Friday AM Drop-off</b>
	<b>11:50-12:10 Monday and Friday AM Pick-up</b>
	<b>12:20-12:35 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday PM</b>
<b>Drop-off</b>	
	<b>3:20-3:40 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday PM Pick-up</b>

\*\*Please exit the building in a timely manner. While we love the social aspect of drop off and pick up times for our families, the church is also conducting business during preschool hours. Please be respectful of conversation volume, strollers and other family members while in the Church.

## **Visitor/Volunteer Sign-In Policy**

All visitors and volunteers must sign-in at the preschool office and pick-up the appropriate badge to wear during your time in the building. When you are ready to leave, please return your badge and sign out.

## **Take Note:**

**Weather:** Local school district closures will guide the closing of the preschool. If the local school district is closed or adjusts its hours of operation due to hazardous weather or other conditions, the preschool will also close or adjust hours to match.

Please listen to the news or check the website for information.

- School closings are broadcast on the radio stations KEX (1190) and KXL (750).
- The Director will post information regarding closures on the parent communication app and closures will be posted on social media sites.
- [www.Flashalert.net](http://www.Flashalert.net) under Private/Charter schools for SW Washington

**Bullying:** We have a ZERO tolerance policy for bullying and/or coercion. Children who engage in bullying will be redirected, and if the problem persists the preschool Director and parents will be contacted. If the behavior continues, the child will be referred to a specialist outside the program, at your expense. If the behavior continues beyond this point you will be asked to withdraw the child from the program.

**Weapons:** We have a ZERO tolerance policy for weapons. We prohibit weapons of any kind on the premises, regardless of the type of “carry” permission you may have. We do understand that pretend play with weapons is developmentally appropriate, and, sometimes can make other children uncomfortable. Children engaging in this type of play will be redirected.

Parking: We ask that you park in the angled lots on the north and south sides of the building, as well as the narrow parking lot between our building and 32<sup>nd</sup> St. ***Never park along the building where placards clearly read “Pastor”, “Secretary”, “Church Staff”, etc.*** Please refrain from parking in the disabled parking spots unless you have a legally issued permit.  
**\*\*Please watch your speed when driving through the parking lot!!! We have very young, excited children who don’t know to look for cars.**

## Volunteering

Volunteers are among our most treasured assets and an integral part of creating community at Little Acorn. When you decide to volunteer, please see the preschool Director to complete the necessary forms. Additionally, you must pass a background check prior to being scheduled to work in a classroom.

### Parent Volunteering & Involvement

We require all families to volunteer 3 hours a year per enrolled child. Opportunities to volunteer include: Car Bingo, Bake Sale, Santa Breakfast, Book Fairs, Spring Auction, playground and playroom clean-up, and specific classroom projects.

In addition, if you have a special talent or family tradition that includes music, foods, cultural celebration, foreign language, etc., we invite you to enrich our program by sharing with our students.

Parents may opt out of the annual volunteering commitment by donating \$150.00 per enrolled child to the school.

***Parent involvement is always appreciated!***

## Fundraising

Through fundraising efforts, we are able to provide additional resources to the classrooms, library, playground and students within our LAPS family. We appreciate your support in purchasing extra materials to enhance our program. If you own or know of a business who would like to sponsor an event, scholarship, or donate to our program, please reach out to the Director!

## About our Teachers

We are proud to have enthusiastic and well-trained staff to teach your children. Our Teachers will have completed the following criteria during the hiring process and prior to their first day in class.

- Obtain 1st Aid CPR card and complete a Blood Borne Pathogens (including HIV) training. (Renewed every 2 years.)
- Obtain Food Handler's Card (renewed every 2 years)
- Pass a Washington State Patrol background check

## Scope of Teacher Responsibilities

Our Teachers are responsible for planning and implementing a developmentally age appropriate program to meet the individual needs of children. Our curriculum includes but is not limited to the following:

- Arrange a safe, stimulating, and interesting learning environment.
- Create a classroom atmosphere that is safe, relaxed, inviting, and welcoming. Where uniqueness is encouraged and competition of ANY kind is discouraged.
- Provide a classroom that is multi-cultural and anti-biased.
- Teacher will engage and be available to students at all times in the classroom, on the playground and in the playroom.
- Complete a yearly check in report in January.
- Teachers work in cooperation with the child's family to develop an individualized Education Plan for children with special needs, including the Director as needed.
- Fill out accident reports in writing for accidents of note as well as explain verbally to the parent or guardian via telephone, parent app or face to face.
- Our teachers have a legal responsibility to report any signs of child abuse. If a teacher suspects abuse, they are required to document and report the circumstances to Child Protective Services and the Director. The Director will file the documentation in the child's confidential file and assist the teacher in reporting the incident to the CPS.

Your Teacher will communicate with parents in the following ways:

- They will be available for informal sessions with parents before and after school hours.
- They will provide parents with written observations of the children for the mid year check in and any other time deemed helpful to the parent. The Director will be informed or included as needed.
- They will respond to parent messages in a 48 hour time frame.

- A classroom newsletter is published and posted weekly. You can find it with other pertinent information on the bulletin board by classroom door as well as on the parent app.

## In The Classroom

### Curriculum:

Our curriculum is developmentally appropriate (DAP). Our definition of “DAP” is honoring each child’s timetable for growth, whether it is social, academic, physical or emotional. While we never coerce children to participate we do observe and adapt the environment and curriculum to fit their needs.

The schedule includes Free Choice Time, Group Time, Outside Time, Snack, and Circle (which includes music, stories, sharing, etc.). We use “emergent” curriculum in all our classrooms. The curriculum is based on child interest, ability, assessment information, as well as a balance of teacher and child directed activities. The curriculum covers the areas of Creative Art, Music, Language/Literacy, Math, Science, Health, Social/Emotional and Fine/Gross motor skills. The developmental areas are incorporated into weekly themes and provide a way of unifying the experience for the children.

Self-help skills flourish when children take responsibility for their own actions. Following simple directions, employing negotiating skills, exploration opportunities and communication of feelings all foster self-help skills. Cognitive development achieved by measuring, weighing, observing, mixing, adding and taking away (in the natural environment).

### Bike Helmets

LAPS follows the City of Vancouver Bike Helmet law. We require any child wishing to ride a wheeled vehicle, scooter or tricycle, to wear a helmet. Students will supply their own helmet. Helmets should be well fitting and labeled with the child’s name. We do not allow children to share helmets.

### Birthdays

LAPS is happy to help children celebrate their special day. Birthday celebrations need to be approved by classroom teacher ahead of time. Acceptable birthday items include store bought fruit, frozen juice bars, cupcakes, cake, ice cream bars, stickers or a small toy. If parents wish to hold private parties outside of school hours, we ask that you contact the other parents directly outside of school.

### Class Pets

Our classrooms may have a “furry friend”. The pets will be healthy and disease free. The following stipulations apply to all pets - pets may only be held by the teacher for children to pet. Pets can go home with students on the weekends and during long breaks (Winter, Spring, and Summer). Teachers will have a sign-up sheet available for families

to take pets home. Food & supplies will be provided by your teacher, donations of food and supplies are always welcome.

In the event that a classroom pet become lost, sick or injured, please contact your teacher immediately. If a pet must be replaced while under your care, all costs incurred will be parent's responsibility.

### Medications

Medications of any type will only be given with written permission and instructions from the child's doctor. Medication will be administered based on the prescription written by the doctor in original container. Medication is kept locked in the classroom. The school maintains a record of all medications which have been administered. Unused portions will be returned to the parent at the end of the school year. Medication not claimed by the parent will be disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations.

### Head Lice

Children will be checked for lice by the teacher, or assistant, in the event of an occurrence in the classroom. When lice are found at home, please report it to your teacher and to the Director. If head lice are found at school, we will take the child to the Director's office and contact the parents to pick up the child. The classroom will be cleaned and sanitized in every event of head lice. We will send a notice home to all families in that classroom with pertinent information attached. The child will not be re-admitted to the classroom until verified he/she is "nit free", a Doctor's note is strongly suggested.

### Discipline

LAPS recognizes that children will display challenging behaviors from time to time. We DO NOT administer any type of corporal punishment (spanking, retaliation, withholding food, etc.) we believe in natural consequence. All disciplinary issues will be discussed with the parent and teacher. Disciplinary actions will be discussed with the Director if the situation escalates.

Our preferred style of addressing behavior are:

- Children having a behavioral issue, are encouraged to use their words to communicate with peers and adults.
- Children will be redirected when a difficulty occurs (positive praise, model appropriate behavior, help children problem solve solutions to the situation).
- If inappropriate behavior continues and various interventions are unsuccessful we will work with parents to determine if it is necessary to develop and implement a behavior plan.

### Play Clothes & Potty Training

Children who are not yet potty trained will need to bring a change of clothes to leave in the classroom. Bring extra wipes, diapers or underpants in a plastic zip-loc bag. Make sure your child's extra change of clothes is labeled with their name. When dressing young children for school, clothing must be easy for them to remove when using the

toilet (elastic waist for example). Tights and jumpsuits are sometimes frustrating for young and anxious fingers to manipulate quickly. Children should be brought to school with clothing appropriate for playing in outside weather. WE recommend layering clothing for easy removal is best. During colder and wetter months please provide a pair of boots, or warm shoes, and a hat and mittens. It is important to a child's health to spend a good amount of time outdoors to receive fresh air and a varied environment for large muscle activity. Proper clothing is essential for the enjoyment of these activities. Our goal is for your child to be free to enjoy! Please bring your child in clothes you don't mind them painting in, or playing and exploring outside. All of the paint we purchase and use says it is "washable", however, certain fabrics are easier to get paint out than others. It is much easier to just bring your child in "play clothes" that can get a little dirty or messy.

### Emergencies (Accidents/injuries & lockdowns)

All classrooms are equipped with emergency essentials such as crackers, a water supply and flashlight is stored for "just in case". Fire and earthquake drills are conducted monthly to ensure the children are familiar with this routine.

In the event your child suffers an accident, or other illness during class, the teacher will tend to the child and then contact you as quickly as possible to explain the events and what action was taken.

Should the occurrence be serious (a child is rendered unconscious for any reason, or excessive bleeding, etc.) the teacher will call 911 and contact the Director. The Director will contact the parent and notify them of the problem and report that 911 has been called. If the situation warrants, the Teacher (or qualified staff) may start CPR. Preschool staff will wait for emergency help and direct them to the child's location; additionally the other children will be removed from the situation.

### Fire Drills

Fire drills are held on a monthly basis. Children and teachers practice the safest and quickest way to exit the building within 2 minutes or under for the drill to be viable.

### Lock Down Drills are conducted periodically.

*Lock Down will occur for three reasons:*

- Lost child – Staff are required to contact the Director in the event a lost child is reported. The outside doors will be locked and no one will be allowed in or out of the building until the child is located. Church staff will assist with lock down as needed.
- External Threat – In the event of an external threat, or we have been instructed to implement protocol by the Vancouver Police Department, the external doors will be locked. Signs will be posted on the doors indicating the building is in LOCK DOWN. Teachers will lock classroom doors and close the blinds if applicable. The fire doors in the outer hallways will be closed and locked. Teachers & school staff will follow established protocol to ensure the children and staff are secure

until authorities release them. Parents will be allowed to pick-up children, but may be asked to use a specific entrance and or show ID.

- Internal Threat/Intruder in the building – Teachers will lock classroom doors upon notification. The fire doors in the outer hallways will also be closed and locked. Children are to remain with teachers until the all clear is given by the Director, facility managers, or authorities. Parents will be allowed to pick-up children, but may be asked to use a specific entrance and/or show ID.

### Grievance Process:

You are encouraged to resolve the issues you have directly with the teacher. If you feel you are unable to reach a resolution, you may contact the Director to make an appointment and ask for assistance. If you and the Director are unable to agree on a resolution, you may contact the Board President. Please put your issue in writing and give to the Board President prior to your appointment.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please contact your child's Teacher or the Preschool Director at 360-693-5614. We look forward to the opportunity to teach and care for your child during this school year.

*The End*