

# Ashton Christian Preschool Parent Handbook

Ashton United Methodist Church  
17314 New Hampshire Avenue  
Ashton, MD 20861  
301-774-7113

## **Welcome!**

We are delighted that you have entrusted the early childhood education of your child to Ashton Christian Preschool. We feel confident that this marks the beginning of a rewarding, supportive relationship between your family and ours.

We are providing this handbook to give you information about our school and the philosophy behind our program.

## **Mission Statement**

Ashton Christian Preschool is a non-profit, nondenominational preschool which believes that all children are gifts from God. We welcome all children regardless of race, sex, religion, or national origin. We believe all children should have an opportunity to participate in a preschool program and will make accommodations to include children with different levels of ability and development.

Ashton Christian Preschool has been founded to provide the community with a top quality developmental program for 2 ½, three and four year olds prior to their entry into Kindergarten. Our program is designed to nurture the development pertaining to all aspects of our children's growth: cognitive, physical, emotional and spiritual.

Our commitment is to create a happy, positive first school experience and an environment in which our children can succeed. Personal success is basic to the growth of self esteem and a positive self-image. Our goal is to instill a sense of pride and accomplishment which follows our children into elementary school and beyond.

Children have a broad curiosity, and an inner need to try things for themselves. Our job is to provide these discovery opportunities. Under the guidance of our teachers, our children choose from a large and changing variety of developmentally appropriate hands on learning activities.

As a church school, we tend to the spiritual needs of our children through songs, Bible stories, prayer before snack and Chapel Time with our Pastors.

## **Curriculum**

Our primary goal at Ashton Christian Preschool is to create a special environment of unconditional love, support and respect for the children. Our programs incorporate circle time, learning centers, story time, art projects, games, singing, music, outdoor play, field trips and cooking that incorporate and build on a theme or topic. Knowing that children learn through exploration, activities are planned that include all five senses.

Our daily routines include both quiet and active times, as well as free play and teacher directed activities. Subjects covered will include language and literacy, mathematics and scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, physical development and health, and personal and social development.

We use The Creative Curriculum by: Diane Trister Dodge. It is one of six curriculums approved by the Maryland Model for School Readiness.

## **Curriculum Goals**

### Language and Literacy Development

- To develop ability to observe and listen
- To increase receptive and expressive vocabulary
- To develop ability to use words and to combine them into appropriate phrases and sentences
- To develop the ability to follow verbal directions
- To improve articulation
- To develop the ability to give appropriate responses to questions
- To develop reading readiness skills through:
  - Auditory discrimination
  - Visual discrimination
  - Recognition of letters of the alphabet
  - Awareness of phonetics
  - Awareness of the printed word
  - Sequencing of stories
- To value books and other text and seek them as a source of enjoyment

### Mathematical and Scientific Thinking

- To teach rote counting
- To learn one-to-one correspondence
- To develop number concepts
- To develop quantitative concepts
- To become familiar with various forms of measurement

- To develop time concepts
- To recognize and develop patterns
- To identify and label objects, pictures and shapes
- To classify and categorize objects
- To explore, understand and appreciate the natural environment
- To establish concepts of seasons and the calendar year
- To develop an awareness of the weather
- To explore cause and effect
- To apply knowledge and personal experiences to new situations

## Social Studies

- To learn about family members
- To learn about community workers
- To learn about transportation
- To develop concepts about world geography
- To understand individual differences

## Personal and Social development

- To develop trust in adult caregivers
- To develop a positive self image
- To develop an ability to express feeling appropriately
- To develop reasonable control of behavior
- To develop responsibility for own and other's property
- To grow individually and gradually toward independence
- To develop the ability to work compatibly with others
- To develop the ability to follow classroom routines
- To develop the ability to accept rules and authority
- To adapt to new situations and changes in routine
- To recognize own and others feelings
- To understand and respect the rights of others
- To experience Christianity and a love of God through music, bible stories, prayer and Chapel Time with our pastors.

## The Arts

- To learn proper use of art materials
- To explore a variety of art materials
- To use art materials creatively
- To use arts as an expression of self
- To become acquainted with musical sounds
- To develop rhythmic response to music
- To respond to music with body movements
- To respond to music dramatically
- To become familiar with various types of musical instruments

- To listen appreciatively to music
- To take on roles and create situations to retell a story
- To value and enjoy art

## Physical Development and Health

- To develop and improve basic motor skills
- To develop balance and good posture
- To develop the ability to motor plan
- To develop an awareness of position in space
- To develop control of small muscles
- To develop hand-eye coordination
- To use tools for writing and drawing
- To identify and label body parts and understand their function
- To understand how our bodies grow and change
- To understand how to use the five senses to make discoveries
- To understand how to stay safe and healthy

## Our Learning Environment and Teaching Methods

Young children learn through the interplay of their total experience. Each day the children move comfortably at a pace acceptable to each as they explore the classroom environment. They have a balance between self-chosen activities that are always available (center areas: blocks, family corner, books, art exploration, fine motor toys, etc.) and teacher planned activities that may relate to a theme or recent experiences of the class. The curriculum includes recognition of individual children who may be ready for specific activities and others who may need encouragement in skills that are still developing.

The teachers recognize and provide for the children's total development in terms of physical (gross motor and fine motor), emotional, social, creative, and intellectual growth.

### Areas of Development:

#### Physical Development (gross motor and fine motor)

The children will learn to use their bodies in many kinds of movements using climbers, bikes, tire swing, parachute, obstacle courses and other such equipment inside and outside of the classroom. They move freely, frequently in response to music, or from role play and simple games. A balanced day provides freedom and space for vigorous activities as well as opportunities to use small muscles and less active play. Fine motor skills, which are a prerequisite for writing, will be developed using activities such as cutting, gluing, painting, and drawing, manipulating play dough & clay and using fine motor learning materials (peg boards, puzzles, and small manipulatives). Throughout, there is guidance by skilled teachers so that children may learn to play safely while being physically active with a group of children. Outdoor experiences complement and extend the learning of the classroom with

opportunities in all areas of development as children play together and explore the world of nature.

### Health

Children will learn about their body and the importance of keeping it healthy. They will see changes in their own growth and development as well as living plants and animals. Eating healthy snacks and cooking activities will help the children explore the role food plays in their development. Children will follow daily schedules which establish classroom routines and assist the children in learning self-regulation, proper hand washing and staying safe.

### Emotional Development

Emotional development is fostered by loving professionals who understand young children and can help them cope with their feelings. This is done by being sensitive to each child's emotional needs and reassuring them that they are an important individual in the classroom. Children will be respected and reassured whether they are sad, happy, angry, scared or unsure. In all emotionally based situations the teacher is on hand to offer reassurance, redirection and a calming influence for individual children or the group.

Maintaining routines help children remain comfortable as their needs are met. The children will develop an acceptable routine as he/she learns to follow the schedule of activities within their pre-school day. Gradually each child will learn flexibility as those routines may shift and change over the school year. Through free play the children learn much about the world they live in and how best to find their place in it. They will try on many roles and experiment with many kinds of interactions with children and teachers.

### Social Development

Social development grows through group interactions that build friendships and understandings; through freedom from rigid group divisions; through direction from adults and through encouragement of social and dramatic play. In day to day experiences with other children and adults, the children are taught the ability to share, take turns and consider another person's feelings. Through successful social, emotional, intellectual, and physical experiences the children develop confidence and competency. There are continuing efforts to help children deal with frustration and conflicts through role play, teacher aided discussion and modeling, and redirection. Children learn to interact with peers in positive and effective ways through opportunities for playing and learning in a large group, small group and one to one activities with the guidance of early childhood professionals. These teachers model acceptable behavior for the children. Learning to accept the necessary rules that must be a part of learning together is another important foundation for the years of school to come.

### Creative Expression

Creative self expression is essential to the development of each child's positive self concept. It has been recognized that creative and mental growth go hand-in-hand. Ashton Christian Preschool provides time, space, materials and experiences to enable creative expression by each child. Becoming familiar with different types of instruments, taking on dramatic roles to retell stories, and developing rhythmic responses to music assist the children in developing an appreciation and love of the arts. Drawing, painting (many kinds), cutting, gluing,

manipulating play dough, block building, singing, rhythms, moving to music, poetry, books, occur both spontaneously and in direct relation to other experiences.

### Intellectual Development

Intellectual development takes place through opportunities and stimulation to explore experiment, discover, think creatively, solve problems and discuss ideas. There are many opportunities each day for the development of language, social science, natural science, and math concepts offered in the context of developmentally appropriate programming, while always recognizing individual differences. The experiences planned by the teachers are constantly balanced by and often drawn from those that arise in everyday life situations. The newly discovered spring flowers are a springboard for discussion about the change of the seasons, about life cycles, color, taking care of living things, etc. Circle time discussions about the weather and calendar help develop awareness to the seasons as well as time concepts. Children's intellectual growth is nurtured through exposure to a variety of cognitive areas throughout the school year. Words, letters, numbers, shapes, pictures, books are available in a variety of mediums every day to stimulate development of knowledge about all areas of intellectual growth. The child's attention span will gradually increase through a variety of activities. At circle time the child listens to a story and participates in songs, finger plays, and discussion.

### Language and Literacy Development

Communication, both written and spoken, is essential to success in school and our everyday lives. Signs and labels throughout the classroom help children begin to connect the written word with familiar objects. Discussions, book look time, and the use of various types of writing instruments (markers, pencils, chalk, etc) are examples of daily opportunities the children have to explore the important role language plays in their world. Listening to a story at circle time, playing name rhyming games at dismissal, pointing to the days of the week on a calendar are all steps towards the goal of reading and writing. The children will also have exposure to learning the letters of the alphabet and how these come together to form sounds and words, especially the most important to the child, their own name.

## **Attendance**

If your child is going to be absent, please call the school at 301-774-7113. If your child is absent more than three days a written note from the parent is required to return to school.

## **Arrival and Departure**

Please try to be prompt for both arrival and dismissal. Arrival time should not be earlier than 5 minutes before school starts. Please accompany your child to the classroom and wait until he or she is greeted by one of the teachers. If you are going to purchase Grocery Certificates or socialize with other parents (a good thing), please do it in the hallway away from your child's classroom (they can hear you). These activities can be very disruptive to a smooth transition for the children.

Check your child's folder (in rolling cart near the door of your classroom) everyday for notices and art work.

If you are having someone other than the parents pick-up a child, a Child Release Form needs to be filled out and given to the Teacher. The person designated to pick-up your child must provide identification, preferably a driver's license.

There will be a \$5.00 charge if you are 10 minutes late:

11:55 for the half-day and 2:00 for the full day.

Every minute you are late after that is \$1.00 a minute. Please respect our staff and your child by picking them up from school on time.

For pick-up please use the driveway just south of the school on New Hampshire Ave. This prevents traffic from going by the driveway in front of the playground where children are crossing back and forth from the school at this time of the day.

## **Bathroom Needs**

All children are encouraged to be potty trained. We will have a scheduled bathroom time every day around mid morning. Every child will be encouraged to use the bathroom and wash his/her hands. Being young children, and school being a new experience we expect some accidents. If your child consistently wets his/her pants, please send them in pull-ups. When a child has a bowel movement in his/her pants or pull-up, the parent will be called to come and change their child's pants. The time it takes to change pants impacts the safety and well being of all of the children in the classroom. If your child has any health issues that relate to their ability to stay dry and clean please set up a conference with the teacher.

## **Behavior Management**

The Teachers and staff are committed to promoting appropriate behaviors in children through the use of positive instruction, positive reinforcement, role modeling and encouragement of self-control and expected behaviors. To support social development the teachers provide many opportunities to foster cooperation and negotiating skills. The children are guided to solve problems through discussion.

If a child exhibits inappropriate behaviors, methods used to diminish these behaviors include:

- Setting clear, consistent limits for the child
- Praising the child for positive behaviors
- Helping the child verbalize feelings and recognize other children's feelings
- Redirecting inappropriate behaviors to appropriate behaviors
- Determining if there are environmental or physical reasons for a child's behavior

If a behavior persists and jeopardizes the safety and well being of the child or others, the staff will meet with the parents to develop a positive plan to address ways to help the child succeed at school.

## **Clothing, Toys, etc.**

Please dress your child in washable, comfortable play clothes and play shoes. Since many of our activities will include paint, glue, and other messy mediums it is best for the child to feel free about participating without worrying about clothing.

Please check the weather daily and dress your child accordingly. Outdoor activities will be planned daily in most weather. Please label all coats, mittens, hats, and boots with the child's name.

Send in a change of clothing in a zip-lock bag that is labeled with your child's name. If you receive soiled clothing please remember we will need a replacement the next day.

Toys brought from home can cause many problems. We will provide a time during the school year for the children to bring things from home. If your child comes to school with a toy, the teacher will lovingly assist the child to put the toy in the cubby where it will spend the day.

## **Emergency Plans**

There is a battery powered emergency radio in the Office, we will listen to this radio for instructions during any emergency situation, and keep in contact with local authorities. In the event of no electricity there will be flash light in the first aid kit in every classroom. There is an emergency generator for our building that will provide minimum lighting and heat for a period of time.

In the event of an Emergency where the **building will need to be evacuated:**

The lead teacher will collect the daily enrollment book and safety backpack with the children's emergency cards and assist children in exiting the classroom through the main door of the classroom and through the back door of the building. They will proceed away from the building across the parking lot to the grassy area. The Teacher will take roll of the children and report the results to the Director. If unable to enter the building after the evacuation the teachers and children will proceed to 17400 New Hampshire Ave. Ashton, Maryland. This is the church's home for the Youth Minister which is on the Church grounds. This is an appropriate shelter for the children and teachers and there is a telephone at this location. Parents will be called once we arrive at the youth minister's house.

In the event of an Emergency where **we are required to leave the area:**

We will drive children in our personal vehicles to a safe area or walk the children to the nearest recommended shelter, as directed by emergency personnel. Each classroom's lead teacher will take the emergency backpack with the children's phone numbers. Assigned staff members will be in charge of collecting and distributing water, food and blankets. If walking we will only take what items the staff and children can safely carry. We will try to reach parents by phone when we arrive at the designated destination.

In the event of an Emergency that **prevents us from going outside or from leaving the building:**

We will secure all doors, close all blinds and maintain contact with local authorities. Children will remain at the school until a parent, family member or other approved adult can pick them up at school. We will not take the children from this building unless required by local emergency personnel (police or firemen). The students are our responsibility until a parent, family member or approved adult takes over the care of the child.

If there are children whose families are unable to pick them up they will stay at school with the Director or staff. If it becomes very late, these responsible staff members may take the students to the staff member's home until the parents can come and get their child. Messages will be left on the school door and on the parent's phones telling them where their child can be picked up.

In event of an Emergency where **NO ONE can leave the building and/or no one can come to pick up their children:**

Teachers will stay with their class and provide the best care possible until the emergency has passed or other assistance arrives. There will be food in the food pantry and water stored in the Preschool storage closet. Also, blankets will be provided by the families for each child in case of an overnight emergency. Children will be released to parents as soon as the emergency is over or other emergency personnel come to provide assistance.

**No one can provide for every eventuality, this is a beginning guideline of how we will try to handle certain situations. As the emergency progresses we may need to change our procedures.**

## **Evaluation and Parent/Teacher Conferences**

The evaluation process is two-fold, each based on objectives: the preschool curriculum and each individual child's developmental progress. The program evaluation is based on how well each child is progressing in reaching his/her maximum potential in all areas of development: physical, social, emotional and intellectual. Throughout the year teachers will evaluate goals, objectives, and progress. Progress of each child is assessed by each teacher through observation, recorded behavior, collected work done by the child through the school year and a short formal assessment done in the spring. Parent/Teacher conferences are held twice a year in the fall and the spring. The fall conference is designed to enable teachers and parents to communicate about the student and their adjustment to school, in the spring the conference will concentrate on progress made during the school year. The parent receives a written report at the spring conference. Parents are encouraged to feel free to communicate frequently with their child's teacher and to report new situations which may clarify new or different behaviors observed at school.

## Health Information

All children **must** have a Health Inventory Form, Emergency Card and Immunization Record and Health Addendum on file before the first day of school.

If your child is ill from a cold, fever, diarrhea or any other symptoms you must keep your child home. Sickness can be easily spread and we must safeguard everyone's health.

- A child with a new cold should **stay home at least three days**.
- Keep your child home for **at least 24 hours** after being free of fever, diarrhea or throwing-up.
- If a rash appears you need to take your child to the doctor. Your child may return to school with a **note** from the physician.

If your child cannot participate in all activities (i.e.: going outside on a cold day) they are too sick to attend school.

In the event of sickness, emergency or accident, parents will be notified immediately. Make sure to inform us if any of your emergency numbers change. If your child is on medication at home, let us know because it often can affect behavior at school.

## Medical procedures for illness or accident

In case of a simple injury: abrasion, skinned knee, splinters, minor bumps or bruises: the staff will perform hygienic measures of washing with soap and water, Applying ice and/or a band-aid. No topical medications or removal of splinters are allowed by Child Care licensing.

In case of a medical emergency: Parents will be called immediately and emergency personnel if necessary. The school staff will respond with first-aid until the rescue arrives. There is a First-aid/CPR trained staff member on site at all times.

In the event that a hospitalization is required the child will be taken to the closest hospital and will be accompanied by the teacher. Parents will assume financial responsibility for such services.

In the event that medication needs to be given to a child: an original prescription or over the counter bottle must be supplied with the dosage amount and times of the day the medications are to be given. Also a written form from the parent giving permission to administer the medication to their child (medication forms are available from your child's teacher)

In the event of an accident: an accident report will be filled out by the teachers and given to the parent at the end of the day; please sign and return the accident report to your child's teacher.

## Program

Our Preschool program consists of the following classes:

Half-Day: 9:15 - 11:45

Full Day: 9:15 - 1:50

- 2 day 2 ½ year olds meet on Tuesday and Thursday  
Birds & Ducks (children must be 3 by March 1, 2009)
- 2 day 3 year olds meet on Tuesday and Thursday  
Apples & Frogs (children must be 3 by September 1)
- 3 day 3 year olds meet on Monday, Wednesday and Friday  
Bumblebees & Turtles (children must be 3 by September 1)
- 3 day Pre-K program for 4 year olds meet on Monday, Wednesday and Friday  
Bears & Fishes (children must be 4 by September 1)
- 4 day Pre-K program for 4 year olds meet Monday through Thursday  
Butterflies (children must be 4 by September 1)

Every aspect of our program is geared toward developing an environment within which our children are encouraged to explore, problem solve, discover and practice newly emerging skills.

## Snack Time

We ask that parents provide a nutritional snack on a rotational basis. A snack calendar will be distributed at the beginning of each month. The snacks will be integrated into our theme as much as possible and will offer a variety of nutritional snacks for the children. If your child would like to bring in something special for a Birthday Celebration, make arrangements with your child's teacher. We are a nut free school. **Please be sure to alert the teachers to any food allergies or diet restrictions of your child. We require the parents of children with severe food allergies to bring their child's individual snack to school.**

## Tuition and Fees

Our school operates on a non-profit basis. The tuition and registration fees fund school maintenance, teaching staff, school supplies, and equipment and special activities.

A registration fee is required by all families at the time of registration.

There are 9 tuition payments, the first payment is due at registration and continues through April 1. Tuition is calculated by what the costs are for the entire school year, including days when teachers are working and students are not at school.

**Checks should be made to Ashton Christian Preschool.**

**Please write your child's name on the memo section of your check.** There will be a beige box outside of the Director's Office for tuition and other payments. Please put all checks in the box without an envelope. **Do not hand your check to a staff member.** The teachers are very busy taking care of the children's needs and can easily misplace a check.

Refunds cannot be made for absences due to illness, travel, or inclement weather.

A \$10.00 late fee will be assessed if no check is received by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month.

A \$25.00 fee will be assessed for all returned checks. If a check is returned for the second time, payment must be made in cash or money order. If you are experiencing financial difficulties, please contact our director as soon as possible and we will work out a plan.

## **Withdrawals**

A child may be withdrawn from the Preschool at any time. If a problem exists involving the program, we will make every attempt to resolve the situation and meet everyone's needs. Ashton Christian Preschool reserves the right to request the withdrawal of a child for good and just cause, as determined by the director, staff and the involved parties. Refunds will be decided by the Preschool Committee, on an individual basis, when a child is withdrawn.

## **Weather or other School Closures**

Please listen to local radio and TV news stations with information about delays and closures:

If Montgomery County Public Schools are closed:

Ashton Christian Preschool will be **closed for all students**

If Montgomery County Public School is delayed 2 hours:

**No school** for 2 ½ year old classes, the Birds and Ducks.

All other students (½ day and full day) arrive at 11:15 (please bring their lunch) and are dismissed at 1:50

If M.C.P.S. or if Ashton Christian Preschool determines to close early we will dismiss **all children** at 11:45. We will inform parents by phone in the event of an early closure.