

Little Ark Nursery & Pre-K
Childcare Program
1709 Hwy 50
Commerce, Texas 75428
(903)246-5650

Dear Little Ark Parents,

We are looking forward to having your child join us at Little Ark! Little Ark Nursery and Pre-K strives to provide children a safe, loving, Christian environment where they may grow to be Disciples of Christ. We provide learning experiences for children in social, academic, emotional, and spiritual development.

Enclosed you will find the Little Ark Parent Handbook (Operational Policies) and our admission Information forms. Please fill out and return:

- **Admission Information forms
- **Parent Handbook Acknowledgement
- **A copy of your child's Immunization Records
- **\$50.00 Registration Fee

Please return A.S.A.P.

Please make sure that all items on the Admission Information forms are completed. If something does not apply, please indicate that by putting N/A in that space. Every line must be completed (by state law). Please read each question carefully and answer thoroughly.

If your child will be 4 years old by September 1st, a Vision and Hearing Screening will need to be done before the first day of school. This can be done at your doctor's office. I must have the results of these tests in your child's file when school starts.

We are eager to meet and get to know your child, and we are confident that your experience with Little Ark will be a positive one. Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Knight

Enrollment

Enrollment at Little Ark is performed by completing an enrollment record (Admission Information) which includes personal information, immunization records, emergency authorization form, physician's statement of child's ability to participate, tuition contract, and policies/procedures information (Parent Handbook). A \$50.00 non-refundable registration fee is also due at this time.

Ages of Children

Little Ark provides care for infants-preschool age children throughout the year.

Times

Little Ark is open Monday-Friday from 6:30 a.m.-5:45 p.m. (beginning Sept. 5, 2023) year-round, unless noted on the school calendar.

Children can arrive no earlier than 6:30 a.m. each morning and class will start at 8:00 a.m. All children must be dropped off by 8:30 a.m. Children can be picked up no later than 5:45 p.m. A \$5.00 late pickup fee will be charged for each child picked up after 5:45 p.m. For every minute past 5:45 p.m., and an additional \$2.00 late fee will be charged.

Holidays/Closings

***Please see our annual calendar of important dates (back page of handbook). In cases of inclement weather, please listen to KETR for school closings. If Commerce ISD is closed, we will also be closed. In cases of closures, tuition will not be credited for the first two days Little Ark is closed due to inclement weather.

Tuition	Monday-Friday Tuesday/Thursday	Monday, Wednesday, Friday	
6 weeks-18months	\$605.00	\$430.00	\$310.00
Toddler 1	\$595.00	\$420.00	\$305.00
Toddler 2	\$585.00	\$420.00	\$305.00
Preschool/Pre-K	\$575.00	\$410.00	\$300.00

Fees and Tuition

Tuition payments are due by the 16th of each month. Tuition is to be placed in the box attached to the front reception desk or paid for through the brightwheel app. **After the 16th of the month, a \$25.00 late fee/ child will be added to that month's tuition.** You are paying for the space reserved, not your child's attendance. Little Ark reserves the right to terminate services if accounts are more than 30 days past due. Checks should be made out to Little Ark. A fee of \$25.00 will be charged on returned checks and future payments must be made with credit/debit card, cash, or cashier's check. **If you withdraw your child before the end of the school term, you must give a two-week paid notification. Your fees are used to pay salaries for teachers and staff hired based on the teacher/child ratio, so a paid two-week notice is necessary.

Immunizations

We must maintain complete immunization records for all children. Please assist us in keeping these records current by providing us with copies when your child receives a new immunization. Children may be excluded from attending if immunization requirements are not met.

Pick Up and Drop Off Procedures

To provide maximum security for our children, Little Ark Nursery uses the south parking lot entrance for pick up and drop off. All children must be signed in and out every day using the brightwheel app. Children must be escorted to and from class by an adult. Little Ark/FUMC-Commerce is not responsible for children left unattended during pick up/drop off.

Children can only be released to those who are authorized by parents or guardians listed on the pick-up authorization form. Children will not be released to individuals not on this form. If we do not know the person picking up your child, they must present a picture ID. At the beginning of the school year parents may be asked to show ID until all staff members know the parents...this is to ensure the safety of your child

Dress/Outside Play

Dress your child in clothing appropriate for "PLAY". Select clothing that is comfortable, washable, sturdy, and free from complicated fastenings. When dressing your child please remember that classes are required to play outside when the temperature (with wind chill) is above 40 degrees. We will not go outside if it is raining or if the heat index is above 94. Each child needs to always have a LABELED change of clothes in their cubbies. This is in case of an accident. If your child doesn't have an extra set of clothes the parents will be contacted to bring the child's clothes. Please make sure the clothing in your child's cubby is seasonally appropriate.

Infants (6 weeks-17 months)

Parents will be responsible for providing diapers, wipes, bottles, clothes, bibs, formula, etc. for any child that is 0-17 months old. Every 30 days a Feeding Instruction Form must be updated; this update is mandatory. Parents who wish to breastfeed their infants can send breast milk to Little Ark or they may come during the day to breastfeed their child. A private place and comfortable seat will be provided to mothers who wish to breastfeed.

Lunches and Snacks

A morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack will be served daily. Little Ark will follow the guidelines set in place by U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service/Child Food Program. Snacks and lunch will be prepared in the kitchen, and then served family style in the classroom. A menu will be posted on brightwheel before the beginning of the month. We must have written documentation if a child requires a special diet or has any known food allergies.

Food Allergy

Little Ark must have a food allergy emergency plan for each child with a known food allergy that has been diagnosed by a health care professional. The child's health care professional and parent must sign and date the plan. We will post a list of food allergies in the child's class where food will be served.

Toilet Training

Little Ark will work with all children on toilet training needs. Parents will be responsible for providing pull-ups, diapers, and wipes for children who are not toilet trained or are working on toilet training. All children must be fully toilet trained before they can move up to the preschool classroom. If children are not toilet trained by the time they move up to preschool, they will be un-enrolled from our program. Once in preschool, if children have a poop accident, parents may be called to come and clean up their child.

Pacifiers

Children enrolled in the Toddler 2 class (and older) will no longer be permitted to have pacifiers while in our care.

Rest Time

A rest period is required daily for each child attending a full day program. Children are not required to sleep, but they must rest quietly, not disturbing the children who do sleep during this time. Children may bring **one** small blanket, stuffed animal, or security item with them for naptime. Any object brought must be soft and free from choking hazards and have your child's name on it. Little Ark is NOT responsible for personal items brought from home. Each Friday your child's blanket will be sent home. Please wash and return the blanket on Monday. ** If your child comes in late from an appointment, they may not return during nap time...they may return once nap time is over.

Staffing

Little Ark staff will always provide your child with a loving, caring environment. This may include hugs, pats on the back, and lots of verbal adoration. We want your child to feel loved and always accepted. Little Ark seeks qualified teachers who have a love and knowledge of young children; and who demonstrate their love for children by their willingness to plan and take part in appropriate learning activities.

Curriculum

Our teachers are dedicated to making the Little Ark program a positive learning experience. We have a well-planned curriculum, which provides age-appropriate learning and exploration. Our classes learn with theme-based learning. The daily schedule includes structured learning time and free play.

Transportation and Field Trips

Little Ark Pre-K and Preschool will be taking field trips throughout the school year. Little Ark will fully inform all parents of field trips, and a signed consent form for each child will be mandatory. Little Ark Nursery and Pre-K will provide transportation to and from Field Trips.

Special Events

Little Ark special events include Griddle Cakes with Grandparents, Pie with Parents, Muffins with Mom, and Donuts with Dad, Open House/Graduation, as well as other special days and holiday parties. Parents will be asked to sign up and help with holiday parties.

Behavior/Discipline

The preschool years are a time of amazing development for your child. They are learning to share, take turns, follow instructions and how to problem solve with their peers. They are also developing a strong sense of self. We strive to recognize the positive accomplishments of your child, anticipate situations where conflict may arise, and use re-direction to keep children on course whenever possible. Classroom rules are few, fair, and consistent - we do not want them to fail, we want to rejoice with their successes! Discipline will be individualized, consistent and appropriate to the child's level of understanding. Little Ark staff must not use corporal punishment, threat of corporal punishment, punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training. We will not allow dangerous or hurtful offences from a child, including hitting, biting, kicking, etc. We are responsible for the emotional and physical safety of all children enrolled in Little Ark. Little Ark is always willing to work with you and your child concerning behavior and discipline. We must also consider what is best for the classroom as a whole. Toddler teachers use redirection and correction, and then time out, if needed. Time out lasts for one minute for every year old the child is (ex: a 4-year-old can only be in time out for 4 minutes.) Little Ark reserves the right to terminate the care of any child that we feel is disrupting the comfort and safety of other children in care.

Animals

Little Ark does not have any animals.

Teacher Conferences

Little Ark will hold three conference times/year for each family, one in the fall, one in the winter, and one in the spring. Parents may also request to have a teacher conference at any time. Open communication is encouraged and essential to a successful partnership between parents and teachers. If you would like to schedule a conference, please meet with the director, and set a date and time to meet with your child's teacher.

Illness Policy

Little Ark is not a licensed "get well" facility. We must not accept children for care who are sick as described by the following:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in childcare activities including outdoor play.
- The child has a temperature of 100 degrees or higher when taken under the arm or in the ear.
- The child has symptoms of possible severe illness such as diarrhea (3 times at school), vomiting (1 time at school), rash, sores, or other signs that the child may be seriously ill.
- A healthcare provider has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease such as chickenpox, measles, flu, etc.

If we observe any of the above symptoms, you will be called to pick up your child, and he/she may return once they are symptom free for 24 hours without the use of pain reliever. Parents must pick up their child within one hour of being notified their child is sick. Late pick up fees will be applied to accounts if children are here longer than that hour.

Medications

Our caregivers can administer medicine to your child if the following criteria are met:

- parents must sign an authorization and include times for child-care center employees to administer each medication according to label directions
- the medication must be in the original container labeled with your child's full name and the date brought to the center
- caregivers can only administer the medication in amounts according to the label directions
- children who take meds daily (inhalers, epi pen, etc.) must provide a doctor's note with written instructions.

Accident/Injury/Medical Emergencies

In the event of an injury or illness requiring immediate attention of a physician, we will: contact emergency medical services or take the child to the nearest emergency room, give the child first aid/CPR as needed, contact the physician noted in the child's record, contact the child's parent; and ensure supervision of other children in the group.

Parent notification

Parents will be notified if their child needs medical attention, has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from school, or has been involved in any situation that placed their child at risk.

Parents will be notified of less serious injuries such as scratches, minor cuts, or bites by writing the day the incident occurs. Parents will be notified in a Google form of any policy changes to the operational policies. Updated information must be signed by the parent and kept in the child's file.

Brightwheel: a free app that you can download onto your phone. Little Ark can send group or individual messages/reminders to you through this app.

Hearing/Vision Screening

The Special Senses and Communications Disorder Act requires a screening or a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems. Any child that is 4 years old by September 1st will be required to have this screening done. A licensed screener or a health care professional must conduct this screening. A copy of this screening must be kept in the child's file.

Playthings

Children may not bring toys from home unless it is show and tell day. Children cannot bring any toy that resembles a weapon such as guns, knives, etc. Little Ark is not responsible for toys, special items, or irreplaceable items that are brought to school.

Photos

At the time of enrollment, you will sign a photo permission slip giving/not giving permission to use photos of your child on Little Ark's/FUMC's website and social media pages.

Parent Visits

Parents are welcome to visit at any time. We extend an open invitation for parents to observe their child at play; have lunch with their child; and participate in classroom parties and other special activities. Please keep in mind the teacher must devote their time to the class schedule, and the entire class. Also, at some stages of development your child may be more upset than reassured by a parent's coming and going during the day. Little Ark does provide a comfortable place with adult-sized seating in our center that enables a mother to breastfeed her child. Mothers have the right to breastfeed and/or provide breastmilk for their child while in care.

Non-Discriminatory Policies

Little Ark does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, or other ethnic background, national origin, or religion. Previously enrolled students and their siblings receive the first notification of pre-registration.

Concerns

If you have any concerns about the program, staff, or policy, please contact Jennifer Knight, Director of Little Ark Nursery and Pre-K (903)246-5650 or littlearkcenter@gmail.com. We ask that you do not slander our program on social media sites. Doing so could result in your child being un-enrolled from our program.

The safety and well-being of all children in our care is paramount.

In accordance with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Minimum Standards for Childcare Centers, Little Ark Nursery and Pre-K has created an Emergency Preparedness Plan. A copy of the Emergency Preparedness Plan is in every classroom. Parents can obtain a copy of the plan by making a request to Director, Jennifer Knight.

Employees of Little Ark are not required to have any vaccinations. It is up to the employees of Little Ark to have a Tdap, Hep A, annual flu shot, and/or other vaccines that the CDC recommends for adults.

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a childcare center is a Gang Free Zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

All of our teachers are required to undergo annual training in recognition of, prevention of, and responding to suspected child abuse or neglect. Please see attached handouts, "Keeping Children Safe", and "Child Abuse Prevention" for more information.

To learn more about the common signs of abuse and/or neglect please see the laminated booklet on the Parent Board titled: "Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect: Signs and Symptoms". State law requires that all childcare professionals be on the lookout for, and report to the State, any and all *suspected* cases of abuse to a child.

Little Ark is, therefore, obligated to report to Child Protective Services any *suspected* cases of child abuse and/or neglect. Determination of abuse or neglect is then up to the State.

TO REPORT SUSPECTED ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT CALL: (214) 583-4253; OR VISIT WEBSITE: txchildcaresearch.org.

You may also call Child protective Services at 903-455-7636. Their office is located on 2500 Stonewall Street in Greenville. Another resource is the Hunt County Children's Advocacy Center located in Greenville. They partner with Commerce and Texas A&M Police departments. The phone number is 903-454-9998.

Additionally, parents can obtain a copy of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Minimum Standards for Childcare Centers by visiting the website:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/documents/Child_Care/Child_Care_Standards_and_Regulations/746_Centers.pdf (If you do not have access to a computer or internet, please speak to the Director who will be happy to assist you.)

Little Ark Nursery and Pre-K is licensed by the Department of Family and Protective Services. Copies of most recent licensing inspections can be viewed on our Parent Board or obtained through DFPS.

Contact information for our local DFPS licensing office is as follows:

8700 Stemmons Freeway North

Dallas, TX

75247

(210)583-

4253

www.DFPS.state.tx.us or www.txchildcaresearch.org

Child Abuse Prevention

One in three girls and one in six boys experience an unwanted sexual act. Ninety-five percent of the time, the child knows the abuser. Prevention is possible and works.

The town is small and quaint with a strong downtown core and idyllic look and feel. However, child sexual abuse happens here as it does everywhere. When a local art therapist brought Little Warriors, a child sexual abuse prevention and advocacy group to town, they needed two full workshops to train interested professionals in child sexual abuse prevention techniques.

Abusers are Not Strangers

According to Darkness to Light, an advocacy group, 95% of child sexual abuse occurs between the child and someone the child knows but only 30% of parents ever talk about child sexual abuse with their children, and then usually fail to mention that the abuser may be family or a friend. Often potential abusers will get to know the family and the child and establish trust before abuse starts, according to Little Warriors.

Healing Abuse Through Exposure

Traditionally, public health prevention measures start by routing out the noxious agent and removing it or immobilizing it. When the noxious agent is contaminated drinking water, for example, the water is purified and the noxious agent removed. When the agent is child sexual abuse, exposure immobilizes it.

Talk Openly About Abuse

Parents can talk openly to adults involved with their children about their awareness of child sexual abuse. If a child is going to be left alone with an adult, parents should slip it into the conversation that they talk openly with their child about sexual abuse. According to TAALK and Little Warriors, most children do not tell about their abuse, even when asked. Darkness to Light notes that one half of one percent (½%) of children makes up stories about abuse.

Teach Children to Respect Their Bodies

The second step in traditional public health prevention is to strengthen the resistance of the host. When the host is a child, and the noxious agent a potential child molester, parents can teach children about appropriate touching, respect for their bodies, and how to talk to adults about their needs. This strengthens the resistance of the host. Child abuse cannot thrive under exposure to light. It can only thrive in secrecy.

Supervise Children Well

The last step reduces transmission of the noxious agent to the host. Traditionally, this means things like mosquito netting to reduce transmission of malaria. When preventing child abuse, reducing transmission means making certain that the child is well supervised at all times. Ensure that all organizations in the community have a well thought out plan for one-to-one contact with adults.

Child Advocacy

Educating parents, care givers and all adults in contact with children about what to ask children, about limiting time with one-to-one contact between adults and children, and about being very explicit and direct with adults and children about child sexual abuse can greatly decrease its occurrence, according to Darkness to Light.

References

Little Warriors. Statistics and Resources. Retrieved on September 25, 2009.

Keeping Children Safe



Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Texas law requires caregivers to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or law enforcement. Call **1-800-252-5400** to make confidential reports. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is a crime. Employers are prohibited from retaliating against caregivers who make reports in good faith.

Protecting Children

Shaken Baby Syndrome is the result of violently shaking young children. Injuries can include brain swelling and damage, subdural hemorrhaging, mental retardation and death. **NEVER SHAKE A BABY!**

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS, is the unexplained death of a sleeping baby. Always place infants to sleep on their backs on a firm surface, free from soft items such as quilts, pillows or toys.



Unsafe Children's Products

Recalls of unsafe consumer products, including children's products, are available. It is easy and free to find out. Just go to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission web site at www.cpsc.gov or you may access the recall information at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services web site at www.dfps.state.tx.us.

Keeping Children Healthy

Protect children from illness and disease:

- Wash your hands and children's hands often.
- Immunize children.
- Keep ill children at home.
- Learn CPR and First Aid.
- Make sure that children drink plenty of water.
- Discuss special-care needs with caregivers.
- Learn more about childhood diabetes, which impairs a body's ability to regulate blood sugar levels, and other medical conditions from your child's health-care provider.



Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
www.dfps.state.tx.us

* Texas Family Code, Title 5. The Parent-Child Relationship and the Suit Affecting the Parent-Child Relationship, Subtitle E. Protection of the Child, Chapter 261. Investigation of Report of Child Abuse or Neglect, Subchapter B. Report of Abuse or Neglect; Immunities

F2958-0000

I have received and read Little Ark's Operational Policies:

Child's Name _____

Date _____

Parent Signature _____

Top 3 ways to get in touch with you in case of emergency/illness (if you listed a phone number, do we call or text?)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Permission to Photograph

Little Ark **HAS/DOES NOT HAVE** (please circle correct response) permission to place photos of my child participating in classroom activities and their work on our Facebook page and website, and/or The First United Methodist Church Facebook page and website.

Child's Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

-----Cut here to keep calendar-----

2023-2024 Little Ark Important Dates

September 4 th	Center Closed for Labor Day
September 5 th	Classroom move up/1 st Day of School
September 8 th	Griddlecakes with Grandparents
October 18 th	Halloween Family Night
October 23 rd	Decorated Pumpkin Auction Fundraiser begins
October 27 th	Halloween Parties for Toddler 1-Pre-K and last day of Auction
October 31 st	Pizza and Pajama Day for all classes
November 9 th	Thanksgiving Celebration for all classes
November 22 nd	Center Closing at 3:00
November 23 rd & 24 th	Center Closed for Thanksgiving Break
December 15 th	Christmas Parties for Toddler 1-Pre-K classes
December 25 th -26 th	Center Closed for Christmas Break
January 1 st	Center Closed for New Year's Day
January 15 th	Center Closed for MLK, Jr. Day
February 16 th	Valentine's Day Party for Toddler 1-Pre-K classes
March 15 th	Center Closed for Spring Break
March 28 th	Easter Parties for Toddler 1-Pre-K classes
March 29 th	Center Closed for Good Friday
May 10 th	Muffins with Mom
May 17 th	Little Ark Open House and Pre-K Graduation
June 3 rd	Summer Program begins

June 14th

Donuts with Dad