



HANDBOOK

2025 – 2026



Dear Parent,

Welcome to **Tender Shepherd Preschool**. Great care has gone into designing a unique preschool experience for the children in our community.

At **Tender Shepherd**, your child will find an atmosphere of love, security, and community. Our preschool community provides a healthy, strong, and positive foundation for your child's development. Together we want to make your child's first experience in school one that will build character and instill a positive interest in lifelong learning.

Your child will love our caring, experienced, and professionally educated staff. We value your partnership and encourage parental involvement in the classroom.

We invite you to come and experience the **Tender Shepherd** community for yourself.

Sincerely,

The Tender Shepherd Preschool Staff

Mission Statement

Tender Shepherd Preschool exists to provide a Christian, developmentally appropriate preschool program for the young children of our church family and the community, and to provide for parent fellowship and education in relation to young children.

Philosophy

We believe children are a gift from God. They are each uniquely designed and develop at an individual rate. Optimum learning and enrichment take place when children are provided with a developmentally appropriate environment where each is actively involved in a variety of hands-on learning experiences.

We believe parents are a child's first and foremost teachers. Therefore, we offer a professionally designed parent education component to inform parents on a variety of topics.

Understanding How Preschoolers Learn

Preschoolers are perpetual learners. They are active, involved learners, propelled by a desire for discovery. They learn by examining, exploring, and experimenting. They learn what they are ready to learn and disregard what is beyond their grasp. They do not respond well to forced learning, however, when readiness for learning certain concepts or skills exists, preschoolers pursue an activity or experience with persistence. For a child, learning is not in isolation from, but in association with everyday activities. Preschoolers learn "on the go" through an interweaving and combination of the following means.

Curiosity - it triggers interest, involvement and action.

When preschoolers are allowed and encouraged to express curiosity, they become tomorrow's problem solvers.

Senses - learning always occurs through the senses.

Sensory learning is full-blown during the preschool years.

First-hand Experiences - go along with the expression of curiosity and use of senses.

Preschoolers need direct contact with objects and immediate application of ideas if learning is to take place and become individualized.

Repetition - practice makes perfect; practice or repetition brings satisfaction and success.

Preschoolers learn by doing something over and over.

Imitation - much imitation is required for a child to learn new skills.

Preschoolers are social in nature and they imitate what they see other people doing. Learning tasks such as using scissors, putting on shoes, or even language skills requires much imitation.

Satisfaction - learning is forestalled when enjoyment is not present for a child.

Preschoolers need to experience joy and delight in an activity for optimum learning to occur. Success brings satisfaction. A child's satisfaction in learning helps feed the motivation for more learning.

Play - is the primary arena for learning.

Preschoolers bring into operation all other means for learning as they enjoy activities on their level of interest and skill. Play is not frivolous recreation for a preschooler. Whatever the stage of play for the child – imitative, independent, parallel, cooperative or imaginative – play is serious business and results in serious learning.

As a Christian preschool, we believe in the value of integrating biblical truths into everyday learning experiences. Our desire is to help each child become all God wants him to be. Therefore, the curriculum includes stories and verses from the Bible with each unit of study to promote Godly values and application.

Goals

Reflecting our philosophy, our goals provide opportunities to learn and grow.

Physically - to encourage the acquisition of small and large muscle control.

Spiritually - to encourage an understanding of who God is and His love for us through Jesus Christ.

Socially and Emotionally - to support the efforts of separating from home into a group experience and to encourage the understanding of being a friend and making friends.

Cognitively - to develop thinking and problem-solving skills, and the courage to try out new ideas.

Language - to encourage verbal expression of feelings, ideas and questions, to use music and stories as means of expression and language development.

Self Help - to encourage skills necessary for personal care and hygiene, such as buttoning, zipping, using utensils, and hand washing.

Curriculum

Our curriculum reflects our philosophy and goals, offering opportunities to achieve through learning centers that include child-initiated play, and through activities that are teacher-directed, such as circle time, music and story time. The curriculum offers a specific topic or unit of study for a two-week period of time. The sequence of units is developmental in emphasis as teachers build foundations and plan seasonal activities. Teachers will share songs, stories, teaching pictures, Bible truths, and conversation as they provide activities in the various learning centers. Units of study can include: Starting School; Learning About Me; My Family; Taking Time To Be Thankful; Sharing Christmas Joy; Discovering Winter; My Five Senses; Farm Life; Learning About Day and Night.

Parent letters will be sent home at the conclusion of each unit giving details about the topic and a home activity to reinforce the unit.

The Learning Centers

Art Center - the process of creative art is emphasized rather than a more product-oriented craft.

Book and Listening Center - stimulates interest in the language development unit of study.

Author's Corner - books are read to children upon request, authors are highlighted and children have materials available to "create" their own books with teachers writing the child's dictation.

Block Center - math concepts and simple physics are played out as well as creative and dramatic play.

Home Living Center - opportunities for creative and dramatic play about family, nurturing, caring, and household tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and repairing.

Music Center - opportunities in movement and music, singing, playing instruments, and auditory discrimination with listening skill games.

Nature and Science Centers - observing objects from nature, growing plants, experimenting with weights and measures, and more.

Puzzles and Manipulative Center - sorting, matching, attribute skills and classification, exploring same/different, opposites, colors, shapes, developing hand/eye coordination.

Circle Time - whole group experience with story and songs, conversation, finger plays, games, Bible verses, and unit themes.

Daily Schedule

The day's schedule has been planned to include a balance of individual, small group, and whole group experiences. Care has been taken to alternate vigorous and quiet activities, as well as, both indoor and outdoor experiences. Teachers are flexible and sensitive to the children's ages and needs in planning activities. Sample schedules for morning/afternoon sessions:

9:15 a.m./12:30 p.m. - Learning Center Activities
Children may choose activities at the learning centers as previously described.

10:15 a.m./1:30 p.m. - Clean Up
Proper care of materials, equipment, and the use of housekeeping skills are stressed as we all work together to clean up.

10:30 a.m. /1:45 p.m. - Prayer and Snack
Hand washing and snack preparation as children take turns setting the table, acting as prayer leader, and serving the snack.

10:45 a.m./2:00 p.m. - Music and Movement
Singing, finger plays, music movement, and rhythm instruments.

11:00 a.m./2:15 p.m. - Story Time
Story, Bible truths, verses, puppets, poetry, calendar, and weather.

11:15 a.m./2:30 p.m. - Large Muscle Time
Outdoors or indoors in the gym, to work on skills such as balance, judging distance, stopping on cue, and ball handling.

11:40 a.m./2:55 p.m. - Review of the Day
In the classroom to provide closure to the day's activities.

11:45 a.m./3:00 p.m. - Dismissal

Program Information

Operating Schedule

The school year is nine months, September through May. The yearly calendar is given to each parent and should be kept at home for easy reference.

Class sessions are offered Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday 9:15-11:45 a.m. and 12:30-3:00 p.m. for 3, 4 and 5-year-olds.

A 4-day, 5-year-old Transition Class is offered on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9:15 – 11:45 a.m. and 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

Arrival and Dismissal

Children are to arrive no sooner than five minutes before the beginning of class time and should be picked up promptly at 11:45 a.m. or 3:00 p.m. This allows teachers to be fully prepared for the day to begin and allows time at the close of the session for evaluation and clean up.

Children are to be accompanied to the classroom or designated church drop-off/pick-up location upon arrival and will not be released for dismissal to any unauthorized person without permission in writing from parents before the start of class. In the event of an emergency, please call the church office at (724) 941-8990 immediately so that the child's teacher can be notified before dismissal.

Enrollment and Fees

Classes are provided for children three through five years of age. Children who are potty trained and three years old by September 1 of the school year may be enrolled, as well as children four and five years of age by September 1 but who will not be attending Kindergarten that year.

A non-refundable \$50 fee is due upon registration. A \$15 activity fee is due with the first tuition payment. Tuition is due on or before the first of each month. All tuition payments must be made online; links are available on our website.

There are three options for payment: yearly, bi-yearly or monthly.

- All payments must be made online via credit card or ACH debit to a bank account.
- Monthly payments (the total divided into nine equal payments) are due September through April. Your first one-time payment is due on May 1st or at time of

registration. A \$25.00 late fee will be charged for any payment received after the tenth of the month.

Withdrawals

The staff must be notified in writing one month in advance if a child is to be withdrawn from the school for the remainder of the year. Temporary withdrawals for vacations, short illnesses or holidays are not refunded. Failure to pay tuition is reason for dismissal.

Extended Absence Policy

Discounts will not be applied to students with extended leaves of absence during the school year, except in cases of extreme medical circumstances. Tuition payments will only cease upon formal withdrawal. Please note that a formal withdrawal will result in the forfeiture of the child's enrollment in the program, and there is no guarantee of available space should you wish to re-enroll your child at a later time during the current academic year.

Classes and Staff

The age ranges of children in each classroom will depend upon the enrollment population and the number of children enrolled. Developmental age and personality factors are considered for each child. Therefore, children may be grouped in multi-aged or age-specific classes.

We offer an excellent teacher-child ratio of 1:6, with a maximum of 12 children per classroom and 15 children maximum in the Transition Class. A teacher and assistant are present in each classroom. Great care goes into planning the most appropriate population of children and adults for each class.

Weather Related School Closings

In the event of hazardous weather conditions, **Tender**

Shepherd will promptly notify families of any delay or closures through a group text and email. **Tender Shepherd** Preschool will utilize a Modified Morning and Afternoon Session schedule. Modified Morning session will have a 10:45 a.m. start time with a 12:30 p.m. dismissal. Modified Afternoon session will have a 1:15 p.m. start time with the usual 3:00 p.m. dismissal. Please note **Tender Shepherd does not** base school closure on the decisions made by the surrounding school districts. **Tender Shepherd** will remain open during periods of cold weather without hazardous road conditions. Parents we respect your decision if you choose to keep your preschoolers home because of cold temperatures.

Nutrition

Snack time is important for young children as their bodies are growing and energy levels are running high. It is **Tender Shepherd's** desire to provide a nutritious snack halfway through our class session. With this in mind, we will provide a list of snack items that parents will supply. Your child's teacher will inform you when it is your turn to bring snack. The children will help prepare snack each day and they will serve themselves water to drink.

Birthdays

Your child's birthday is very special and we want to help celebrate by making a birthday crown for your child and having a "fake" cake with candles for your child to blow out. You may send a special treat to school that day for snack time.

We also ask that no take-home favors are sent in or private party invitations brought in, unless the entire class is invited. Your class roster provides all of the necessary mailing information. The teachers are not responsible for handling this.

If your child has a summer birthday, it will be celebrated in May. We will contact you about the day.

Clothing

Please dress your children in play clothes and shoes (sneakers are safest) appropriate for vigorous and sometimes messy activities, which will occur indoors and outdoors. We encourage the children to do as much for themselves as they can. With this in mind, clothes with simple fasteners and/or pull up pants for younger children are helpful. Also, a set of extra "old" clothes is suggested (especially underwear and pants) in case of accidents or even wetness due to water play. Extra clothes will remain at school until needed. Teachers will also dress appropriately, as we will be right in the thick of things.

Toys From Home

We allow the children to bring science and nature items at any time and these are always welcome. Also, if your child has a special item needed for security during the transitional period, they may bring that. We ask that all other toys be left at home as they can be lost or broken and can cause conflict between children. Occasionally, teachers will ask parents to help children bring certain items for show and tell, nature activities, or special days.

Please check with teachers first before bringing pets, insects, or other animals.

Health and Safety Plan

Tender Shepherd Preschool desires to ensure the health and well-being of each child in the school. Therefore, children should not come to school if they are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Taken medication that would mask symptoms

- Started taking antibiotics within the past 48 hours
- An acute cold
- Constant cough or sneezing
- Ear ache or sore throat
- Red or running eyes
- Infectious mucous drainage
- Rash or skin eruptions
- Fever, vomiting or diarrhea

Children should be free of these symptoms for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Those who have had any symptoms of a communicable illness within the past 72 hours should not attend preschool.

Parents will be asked to pick their child up early should symptoms of illness occur during the day. A sick child will be isolated from other children until the parent arrives. The Registration Form (with the names and phone numbers of two other persons to contact if you cannot be reached) must be on file in the classroom the first day of school.

The teachers are not permitted to administer medication to children. Teachers will notify parents if their child has any form of accident during the session.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled in the fall and spring. Teachers will provide a sign-up sheet for the time most convenient for you. Parents and/or teachers may request additional conferences if either feels there is a need. Please refrain from discussing your child at arrival or dismissal. If you have a concern, request a phone conference at a mutually agreed upon time. All conferences will be treated with confidentiality.

Developmental Concerns

If a concern regarding a developmental delay or other special need is identified, this information will be communicated to families in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner. The teacher and director will meet with the parent(s) to provide an explanation and documentation of the concern, suggested next steps, and information about resources for assessment. Resources will include a pediatrician recommended specialist qualified to conduct an evaluation of the child regarding the concern. In some cases, it may be determined that pending the results of the evaluation it is best for the child to remain at home. Following the evaluation, the specialist should provide a report that includes parental input and specific recommendations on the types of interventions needed to address the needs of the child. The parent(s) will discuss the evaluation with the teacher and director. If possible, an agreed upon trial period using new classroom strategies will be implemented. If TSP is unable to meet these specific needs of the child specified by the specialist's report, the parent will be directed to find an appropriate program where the specific needs of the child can be met.

Parent Involvement

We welcome and encourage parents to participate in the overall preschool program. There will be opportunities to volunteer at school parties, cooking and science experiences during class, field trips and many others. A parent interest survey at the beginning of the school year will give you an opportunity to choose areas for which you wish to volunteer. We value your involvement.

Parent Protocol

Parents, we love to hear from you, and we encourage you to

reach out if you have a concern regarding your child at TSP. Our team abides by an open-door policy. If you want to talk with your Teacher or Preschool Director, please reach out and a time will be scheduled. We are here to come alongside you as you raise your children.

We ask that you respect our communication guidelines we have in place. Posting a negative message on social media about our preschool shouldn't be a first step. Please, be responsible. It's certainly okay to disagree with others, but posting emotions on social media is not the most effective way to resolve a potential issue and only leads to additional complications and hurt.

We respect you as your child's parent, and we ask that you respect us by discussing any issues with us first. Please, be responsible with your use of social media, respectful towards our staff at Tender Shepherd Preschool and the Bible Chapel, and respect the privacy of families at TSP.

Indoor Playground – South Hills Campus

Families are welcome to enjoy TBC's indoor playground. Please remind your children to use inside voices while they play. Due to the open floor plan of the play area, voices do carry, and if too loud, neighboring TBC staff/office spaces are impacted. Also, the play area is designed for enjoyment – not the entire first level. Please have your children refrain from playing and running outside the designated area. TBC's office entrance is a busy place with guests and deliveries. Please do your part to keep your child safe.

Mother's Coffee and Educational Seminars

Tender Shepherd Preschool offers periodic parent meetings to provide opportunities for parent education and fellowship. Relevant topics such as "Reading Readiness," "Spiritual Development in Preschoolers," "The Impact of Screen time on Young Children" and "How to Provide a Creative Environment for Your Child" are some topics. The "Coffees" will take place during preschool hours.

The Bible Chapel is an independent church serving the South Hills since 1964. For information about the beliefs, practices, worship services, and ministries for children, teens and adults visit us at biblechapel.org or call 724-941-8990.

South Hills Campus

Saturday, 5:00 p.m. Worship Service
Sunday, 9:00 and 10:45 a.m. Worship Service
300 Gallery Drive, McMurray, PA 15317

Robinson Campus

Sunday, 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Worship Service
175 McMichael Road, Carnegie, PA 15106

Washington Campus

Sunday, 9:00 and 10:45 a.m. Worship Service
34 West Wheeling Street, Washington, PA 15301

Wilkinsburg Campus

Sunday, 9:30 a.m. Worship Service
754 Ross Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15221

Rostraver Campus

Sunday, 10:45 a.m. Worship Service

*“Train a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn from it.”*
Proverbs 22:6



300 Gallery Drive
McMurray, PA 15317
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biblechapel.org