



**MESSIAH**

LUTHERAN SCHOOL

EARLY CHILDHOOD HANDBOOK

2023-2024



Dear Family,

We wish to extend a warm welcome to you and your family! We plan to make this school year a positive experience for you and your child. We hope and pray that God will bless your child's experience here at Messiah Lutheran School.

We view our program as a Christian outreach to children and families. You have been, and continue to be, your child's first and most important teacher. Our intent is to support, encourage, and provide opportunities that continue the educational and spiritual development already started by you – the parent! We provide an environment where young children can explore and learn about Jesus, themselves, others, and the world around them – all in an atmosphere of Christian love and acceptance.

Your involvement in your child's classroom experience is important. Please feel free to talk with your child's teacher or director at any time. We are here to listen, help, and encourage.

Again, THANK YOU for being a part of our school family!

Blessings,

Mrs. Sarah Kelly  
Director of Admissions and Early Childhood  
Phone: 636-329-1096  
Email: [skelly@mlslions.org](mailto:skelly@mlslions.org)

## **Early Childhood Faculty and Staff**

Please feel free to contact your child's teacher any time you have a question, concern, or fun story to share! We do not have landline telephones in the classroom, so many teachers will contact you via Brightwheel, or via email.

**School Office Phone:** 636-329-1096

**Website:** [www.mslions.org](http://www.mslions.org)

## **Teacher Contacts**

Sarah Kelly, Director of Admissions and Early Childhood  
[skelly@mslions.org](mailto:skelly@mslions.org)

Katy Kraus, Early Preschool Teacher  
[kkraus@mslions.org](mailto:kkraus@mslions.org)

Valerie Hart, Early Preschool Teacher  
[vhart@mslions.org](mailto:vhart@mslions.org)

Sara Civili, Preschool Teacher  
[scivili@mslions.org](mailto:scivili@mslions.org)

Stephanie Bohn, Preschool Teacher  
[sbohn@mslions.org](mailto:sbohn@mslions.org)

Mary Schlie, Pre-Kindergarten Teacher  
[mschlie@mslions.org](mailto:mschlie@mslions.org)

Laura Watson, Pre-Kindergarten Teacher  
[lwatson@mslions.org](mailto:lwatson@mslions.org)

## **Absences and Tardies**

Regular attendance is vital to a student's educational progress. Parents are encouraged to limit vacations, medical/dental appointments, and any other unnecessary absences that impact regular school attendance. If absences are planned, please notify the student's teacher. If your child is ill and unable to attend, please notify your child's teacher or the school office.

## **Admission Policy**

Children entering Early Preschool must be 2 by August 1. Children entering Preschool must be 3 by August 1 and potty-trained. Children entering Pre-Kindergarten must be 4 by August 1 and potty-trained. For Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten, Pull-ups and diapers are not allowed. Contact the director or school office for complete admissions information. A non-refundable deposit is required to secure a spot in the program.

## **Arrival and Departure**

School Hours are 8:20-3:10. School officially begins at 8:20. Parents may begin dropping off students at 8:00 a.m. doors until 8:20 a.m.

School officially ends at 3:10 p.m. Parents may begin picking up students at 2:45 until 3:05 p.m.

Extended Care Hours are from 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. and 3:10 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Parents should plan their arrivals and departures during this time. Parents who arrive after this time, should use the call box to alert the staff of their arrival.

## **Birthdays**

We love to celebrate our students and their special day. Parents may send in individually wrapped store purchased treats. Please check with your child's teacher regarding any allergy guidelines.

## **Biting Policy**

### **Ages 1-2 years:**

Biting is a common age-appropriate behavior during this developmental stage because children do not have the language skills to communicate with one another and may also be getting teeth. Therefore, the following procedure will be followed:

- Teacher/assistant will comfort the child who has been bitten, providing him/her with a great deal of attention.
- Teacher/assistant will apply ice to the bite area and clean it with soap and water.
- If the skin is broken, we recommend the parent contact a physician to determine if the physician wants to see the child or prescribe an antibiotic.
- Both sets of parents will be advised of the incident at dismissal, or sooner if the bite was severe.
- The child who has bitten will not be identified to the family of the child bitten.
- Other staff will be alerted to the situation so they can make every effort to prevent it from happening again.
- **IF** biting continues the director, teacher and parents will meet to decide on a plan of action to correct the situation.
- After three episodes, the Administrative Team will meet to determine whether the next step will be time at home, or removal from the program for the remainder of the year.

### **Ages 3-5 years:**

Biting is **not** age-appropriate behavior during this developmental stage. Therefore, the following procedure will be followed:

- Teacher/assistant will comfort the child who has been bitten, providing him/her with a great deal of attention.
- Teacher/assistant will apply ice to the bite area and clean with soap and water.
- If the skin is broken, we recommend the parent contact a physician to determine if the physician wants to see the child or prescribe an antibiotic.

- Both sets of parents will be advised of the incident at dismissal, or sooner if the bite was severe.
- The child who has bitten will not be identified to the family of the child bitten.
- Other staff will be alerted to the situation so they can make every effort to prevent it from happening again.
- **IF** biting continues the director, teacher and parents will meet to decide on a plan of action to correct the situation.
- The Administrative Team may meet to determine whether the next step will be time at home or removal from the program for the remainder of the year.

### **Brightwheel**

To enhance communication with parents, we use Brightwheel, a tool that significantly helps teachers manage their classrooms, observe and track the children, communicate with you, and share photos and videos. Parents also may also use this to communicate to the staff in their child's classroom.

### **Church Information**

Messiah Lutheran School is owned and operated by Messiah Lutheran Church. We are a Christian school serving the entire community. Families are always welcome to worship at Messiah! Check with the director, your child's teacher, or the Office for specific worship times and opportunities.

### **Childcare Licensure**

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is not required to license or inspect the program. This exception is established in 210.201(10), 210.201(11)(a)-(b), and 210.211.1(14) RSMo, which exempts Religious Schools from such requirements. However, it's important to note that even though we are exempt, the Messiah adheres to these regulations voluntarily and exceeds the requirements, ensuring a higher standard of education and safety for all our students.

### **Classes Offered**

Messiah offers Early Preschool for children that are 2 by August 1. Messiah Lutheran School offers early childhood program classes for children ages 3-5. Children must be 3 by August 1 to attend Preschool, and 4 by August 1 to attend Pre-Kindergarten. Students must be 5 by August 1 to attend Kindergarten at Messiah Lutheran.

### **Clothing and Dress Code**

When helping your child choose clothing for the day, make sure the clothes are comfortable and free of complicated buttons, snaps, and zippers. Play-clothes and tennis shoes are most appropriate for school. Socks are necessary. When we paint or do other art projects, we will do our best to keep your child clean, but paint spots are typical. The paints we use are washable. No flip-flops or crocs are allowed, as all shoes must have a secure backing. School policy also prohibits boys from wearing earrings.

Please supply an extra set of clothes in your child's backpack in case of accidents or other spills. If your child uses a piece of the extra set of clothing, be sure to immediately replace it. Also, check the clothes with the changing of the seasons.

### **Communication with Families**

Teacher communication with families is very important. Be sure to provide teachers with valid email addresses and phone numbers. Teachers will typically send home weekly printed newsletters and a variety of regular emails. Newsletters will typically be posted on the school website. Feel free to contact your child's teacher at any time. We are here to partner with you!

### **Conferences**

A required Parent/Teacher Conference will be held each fall, after the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. Preschool and Pre-kindergarten students will receive a quarterly Progress Report. Conferences at any other school year period may be requested by either the director, teacher, or parent. Progress Reports will be returned to the teacher at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters. At the end of the school year, the Progress Report will be yours to keep.

### **Discipline**

Many of you are aware that the word "discipline" means "to teach." Teachers do their best to try and prevent problems from arising in the classroom. Whether a problem arises with a teacher or another student, there is always an opportunity for learning. We "disciple" by modeling correct behavior and dialoguing with children when situations arise. Behavioral expectations are shared regularly with all students and are very age-appropriate. We utilize a developmentally appropriate strategy of "Love and Logic" principles for discipline. Be sure to check with your child's teacher or the early childhood director should you have any questions or concerns.

### **Emergencies and Lock-Down Plans**

Messiah Lutheran School is a secure-entrance building. Main doors are only open during specific times. Please honor these times and the safety of all when dropping off and picking up your child. Should you need to arrive at a time not in the "window" of typical open-door times, please use the main school entrance where the school office can buzz you in.

Proper safety procedures are in place for special emergencies. Regular review of such procedures takes place, as well as specific practice drills with students.

### **Extended Care**

An Extended Care Program is available to all families. This service is additional to a child's enrollment and may be used as needed. Rates are determined annually. Families may use the call box outside of the Extended Care entrance. Extended Care is staffed by some early childhood staff and other screened personnel.

### Field Trips

Field Trips are important aspects of a child's education. Field trips are connected to specific learning currently happening in a classroom. For our Preschool classrooms, many field trips actually come to the classroom.

### Fire Drills

Practice fire drills are held regularly throughout the school year. Teachers practice these with students so they know what to expect during such times.

### Head Lice

A child found to have head lice will be sent home from school. Treatment with an FDA-approved medicated shampoo or one prescribed by a doctor must be completed before they will be readmitted to school. The child may be reexamined and a significant reduction of head lice needs to be noted before they are allowed to return to the classroom.

### Should I send my child to school? (Department of Human Services)

Fever	Normal temperature w/o medication for 24 hours
Diarrhea/Vomiting	Follow recommendations stated above to satisfy recommendations of the CDC
Chicken Pox	6 days after last crop of blisters
Common Cold/Flu	Follow recommendations stated above to satisfy recommendations of the CDC
Giardia	Written release by physician
Head Lice/ nits	After treatment and no sign of nits (see Head Lice)
Impetigo	Written release by physician
Infection Hepatitis	Written release by physician
Meningitis	Written release by physician
Pink eye (bacterial conjunctivitis)	Written release by physician
Poliomyelitis	Written release by physician
Rubella (German Measles)	Written release by physician
Streptococcal infections (Scarlet Fever)	Written release by physician
Viral Hepatitis	Written release by physician

### Injuries

Minor injuries will be cared for by the teacher and teacher aides. Ice packs, soap and water, and band-aids will be the extent of first-aid given. Such injuries will be shared with you when your child is picked up from school or via the Brightwheel app.

All parents are required to complete emergency contact information in ParentsWeb/FACTS. Every effort will be made to reach the parent in cases of accident or injury. If the parent or designated individual cannot be reached, emergency medical treatment will be sought at the administrator's discretion.

### **Insurance**

Messiah Lutheran School does not provide accident insurance for your child while he/she is attending our program. Any medical claims must be first filed with your own family health or accident insurance company.

### **Lunches from Home**

Children can bring their lunch from home or purchase a school lunch. Lunch should be brought when students arrive in the morning. Lunch boxes can be placed by his/her cubby. Be sure to include a drink for your child too. Water may be available. All utensils should be supplied from home. There is no refrigeration for lunches, so ice packs come in handy. Be sure to provide your child with food items that are easy to open. Teachers certainly provide assistance, but children should make their own efforts first.

### **School Lunch**

Lunches will be offered five days a week by Food Service Consultants (FSC), a local company that operates the cafeterias at over 65 private schools in the St. Louis area, as well as several other businesses. Preschool children have a separate menu with items selected for their age. School lunch can be ordered for your child before school during Extended Care or classroom check-in. If a child does not have a lunch, a school lunch will be ordered for him/her.

### **Lunch Payment**

Parents can use ParentsWeb/FACTS to check lunch balances and add money to the account. There is one lunch account per family. You can check your itemized lunch bill via the FACTS site. It will show which student purchased each item. Login to RenWeb here: <https://ml-mo.client.renweb.com/pw/> or Get the RenWeb Home App via the buttons below.



### **Medication**

Teachers are not able to administer any medications to students. Should your child need medicine during the day, it can be administered via the school office with special notification from a doctor.

### **Naps/Rest Time**

All students are given the opportunity for a daily afternoon nap or rest time. Children are not required to sleep, but they must remain quiet so as not to disrupt those children



who are sleeping. Teachers may vary the length of nap and rest times based on the needs of the class, or for other reasons deemed necessary. Nap cots are provided. Children who stay all day should supply a small pillow and blanket, which can be kept in either a school cubby or bin. Teachers will have more details on their specific Nap/Rest Time procedures.

### **Outdoor Recess**

Whenever possible, students will have the opportunity to attend recess outdoors. Outdoor playtime is essential for a child's development. Large and fine motor opportunities exist during these outdoor recess times. Specific rules and expectations are shared with students and must be followed for safety reasons. Play guns and play weapons will not be permitted for any reason during recess times.

### **Photos**

Pictures of students may be used on occasions for school and church communications and/or marketing purposes. If you do not wish your child to have his/her picture included in these instances, please mark the appropriate box on the Student Enrollment Form, or notify the school office.

### **Secure Entrance**

Messiah Lutheran School is a secure-entrance facility. For safety and security reasons, all doors are locked throughout the day. Doors are open for a specified time for morning drop-off and end-of-the-day pick-up. Persons arriving at school during other times may need to come to The Timbers entrance and buzz in via the school office.

### **Snacks**

Mid-day snacks for children are provided and included as part of your annual tuition. Water or juice is provided during snack times as well.

### **Supplies**

Students receive a basic school supply list each summer. These items will be brought to school before the first day of classes, often during individual family visits with the classroom teacher. Please bring only the items listed. All other supplies are furnished.

### **Teachers and Staff**

We are very pleased to have such wonderful, qualified teachers on our staff. We strive to have educators trained in early childhood and/or elementary education and those who are synodically trained through the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. All teachers meet the expectations set before them by Messiah Lutheran School. Classroom aides are also highly qualified individuals. Professional development and updated training are ongoing for all teachers and staff.

### **Toileting**

For our Early Preschool/2's students, diaper changing and toilet training is an ongoing process and is done as needed throughout the day. It is important that both teachers and parents work closely so a consistent routine is established. Per sanitation requirements,

accidents in underwear need to be kept at a minimum. If a child has more than an occasional accident, Pull-Ups will be required. We ask that you begin toilet training at home during the weekend or days off of school before bringing the child to the center as a new trainee. We will follow through and encourage your child while in our care. Toilet training will be done in a relaxed manner with the cooperation of the family.

Parents need to supply Pull-Ups, flushable wipes, and a couple of extra outfits including socks and shoes. Children should be dressed in “user friendly” clothing as much as possible. The best items are shorts and pants with elastic waists or dresses. Try to avoid tight clothing, pants with snaps or zippers, and overalls. These are difficult for children to remove in a hurry and/or independently.

Children enrolled in our Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten program are required to be able to toilet independently when school starts. If the child is not toilet-trained, we may give a 2-week grace period of trying to remind the child to use the restroom throughout the day. Children should wear underwear. No Pull-ups or diapers are allowed. Children should keep an extra set of clean clothes in his/her backpack should an accident occur. If the teacher/director believes the child is trained or at least making progress at the end of the 2 weeks, he/she may stay enrolled in the program. If the child is not making any progress, he/she may need to stop attending until fully toilet-trained. Should this happen, tuition charges will not occur during this period.

### **Toys From Home**

We discourage bringing toys from home to school unless it is for something specific that the teacher has allowed. Personal toys from home may cause sharing problems with other children and may become lost or broken. The early childhood staff cannot be responsible for these toys

As a quality early childhood program, we have our own toys and materials for the children to use. These materials have been carefully chosen for the age-level and curricular experiences of the children.

### **Tuition**

Tuition is charged based on the enrollment option chosen by the family. Tuition is due monthly and is collected via bank drafts. Messiah Lutheran School partners with FACTS/RenWeb to administer tuition payments. If you ever have a question related to tuition and/or payments, be sure to contact the School Office.

### **Weather-Related Closings**

School closings (typically weather-related) will be announced on local TV stations: (2 – FOX), (4 – CBS), and (5 – NBC). Be sure to look for MESSIAH – WELDON SPRING. Decisions made by the Francis-Howell School District and other St. Charles County area Lutheran schools may affect Messiah’s decision to cancel, but not always. A School-Reach phone call to all families may also be used, as well as email communications. Rarely will Messiah close during the school day, however, parents are encouraged to use their own judgment when inclement weather does happen.