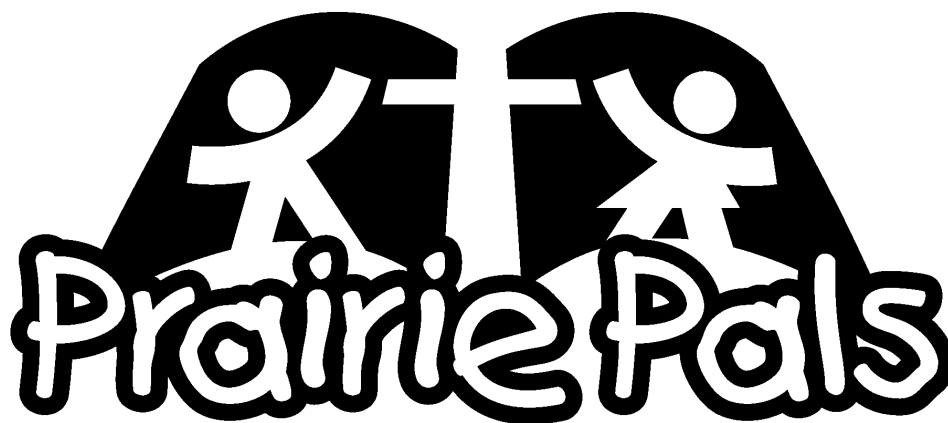




Prairie Pals Christian Preschool

Parent Handbook



Love of learning . . . Love of others . . . Love of God.

Prairie Pals Christian Preschool & Childcare
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Oswego, Illinois 60543

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Website: www.prairiepals.org

(Revised October 2017)

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

Welcome to Prairie Pals Christian Preschool! We are so excited to give your child a head start on his/her personal, social, academic, and spiritual growth.

This non-denominational Christian program emphasizes strong academics and age appropriate faith experiences. Our program offers a variety of learning experiences that will help develop your child's independence, social skills and much more. Our small class sizes are designed for optimal learning; we limit each classroom to a maximum of ten children, (eight in the two-year-old classes). The child to teacher ratios are kept small to provide the children with the attention that they need to effectively learn.

Prairie Pals is certified by The Department of Children and Family Services and follows all rules in accordance.

The staff at Prairie Pals aims to give your child the highest quality preschool experience. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Director at any time.

Your Prairie Pals Christian Preschool Staff

Mission Statement

Prairie Pals Christian Preschool provides an academic, social, and spiritual program that will help children develop physically, emotionally, and cognitively. We provide an atmosphere that is conducive to children's learning while building their faith, self-esteem, and a foundation for education.

Center Programs

Prairie Pals serves children from the age of two to five with a range of programs. Prairie Pals offers a two-year-old preschool, three-year-old preschool, four-year-old preschool, and a Pre-Kindergarten program. Our programs are designed for age appropriate learning that incorporates Christian concepts. All programs intend to give the children the highest academic experience.

Eligibility

In order for a child to be eligible to attend Prairie Pals Christian Preschool, (s)he must meet the following criteria:

- Must be the age of the class (s)he is registering for by the start date of school.
- A 4 or 5-year-old child must be fully potty trained and be able to take care of all bathroom needs independently. A child wearing Pull-Ups is not considered fully potty trained. 3-year-old children may wear Pull-Ups, but must be actively potty-training and independent in the bathroom. (Please see the section on Potty Time for specific bathroom independence expectations.) 2-year-old children may wear diapers or Pull-Ups. Please make sure (s)he has a dry one on when coming to school. Our 2-year-old children will only be changed if there is a bowel movement.
- A complete health record and medical statement signed by a physician must be provided. This includes a physical, TB test, and lead test (TB and lead test to be determined by doctor). This must be done within six months prior to the enrollment date.
- Parents / Guardians must complete all required forms.
- All children are eligible regardless of creed, sex, national, or ethnic origin.

Financial Information

A \$75 non-refundable registration fee is required for all programs to secure a place in the classroom for the school year.

Families enrolling multiple children will receive a 10% tuition discount for the second and subsequent children. The discount will be applied to the lowest tuition rate(s). All discounts are based on full price tuition. If the family qualifies for more than one type of discount, only one discount may be applied per subsequent child.

Prairie Pals offers a Referral Incentive to families who refer friends to our preschool program. When a new family enrolls and lists your name as the referring family, you will receive a \$25 credit towards your tuition AFTER the new family has paid their first month's tuition. The referring family must be enrolled at Prairie Pals when the new family begins classes to qualify for the tuition credit.

Preschool Tuition

Our Preschool program operates on a 9-month payment schedule with payments beginning September 1st. A security deposit, half of one month's tuition payment, is due in August. For those who complete the school year, the security deposit will be credited towards May's tuition. For those who do not complete the school year, the security deposit is non-refundable. If you wish to withdraw your child from the program, please submit a signed letter to the Director. Please include the final date that your child will attend. Upon withdrawal, the security deposit and any tuition will be forfeited. Please reference the paragraph below for the tuition policy. If your child is withdrawn prior to the start of the school year, the security deposit will only be refunded if we are notified of the withdrawal prior to the first day of the school year.

Tuition payments are due on the first day of each month from September through May. Payments received after the 7th of the month will incur a \$15.00 late fee, which accrues weekly until payment is made. Checks are to be made payable to OCF. Payments may be brought to the school, mailed, or payment may be made with a credit card on PayPal through our website, www.prairiepals.org. We do not process credit card payments in the building. Payment is necessary regardless of attendance or days off (this includes preschool holidays). A \$10 service fee will be incurred on any returned checks. Payment received in excess of your child's monthly tuition plan will not be refunded.

If there is an outstanding balance of one month and payment arrangements have not been made with the preschool, your child may be removed from the program. If you are having difficulties making payments, please contact the Director or Bookkeeper to discuss possible payment arrangements.

Birth Certificate

For first time students, parents must provide a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age of the child within 30 days of their start date. We will make a copy of the certificate and return the original to you. If a certified copy of the birth certificate is not available, you must submit a passport, visa or other governmental documentation as proof of the child's identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate. We are required by law to notify the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement agency if you fail to provide the documentation within 30 days.

Arrival and Dismissal

If your child will not be attending, please notify the school by phone prior to the start of class. For the Health Department, if your child is ill please make the office aware of your child's symptoms.

On your second and subsequent late pick-up you will be charged a late pick up fee of \$1.00 per minute after five minutes of tardiness. After ten minutes of tardiness, parents will be called. If parents are unable to be reached, staff will call those on the authorized pick-up list. If unable to reach those on the authorized pick-up list, the emergency contacts will be called. The Center will attempt a minimum of 2 calls to each parent. If unable to reach any parents, 1 call to each person on the authorized pick-up list or emergency contact list will be made. After 45

minutes, the police department will be contacted. A staff member will stay with the child until someone authorized or a police officer comes to pick up the child.

Please call if you are going to be late. This does not waive the fee; however, it does allow us to reassure your child that you are on your way. Staff members will not hold the child responsible for late pick-up and will discuss the issue only with the parent and never with the child.

We will have staff outside during arrival and departure for your convenience. A staff member will come out to the vehicle and have you initial/sign your child in and out. The child will then be escorted to or from the passenger side of the vehicle for their safety. For late drop-off or pick-up, please escort your child into the building using the main entrance at door 33E.

We will only allow your child to depart with those authorized. Any other arrangements must be given in writing by the parent or caregiver by use of the Transportation Authorization form found on our website. A photo ID will be requested from anyone who is unfamiliar to the staff. Anyone picking up your child must be at least 18 years old.

Drop-Off/Pick-Up Line Procedures

The following procedures have been put in place to ensure your child's safety. Please help us keep everyone safe by following these procedures. Please make sure your child is ready to exit the car as soon as it is your turn to do so.

1. We will begin to get children out of their cars 10 minutes before their scheduled start times and will be closing the door at the scheduled start times of each class, to begin learning. The time is determined according to our synced school phones. If you arrive after your child's scheduled start time please pull around front to door 33E, walk your child in and sign the clipboard. If the teachers from the later class are letting their students in, we still need you to pull around front since your class has already started.
2. Once the line starts moving, please refrain from using a cell phone.
3. Place your vehicle in PARK whenever your child is exiting or entering the vehicle.
4. Wait until your child and/or the staff has completely moved away from your vehicle prior to pulling away.
5. For the safety and convenience of all concerned, all children must exit and enter the vehicle on the passenger side. Should you have to have your child exit or enter on the driver's side, place your vehicle in park, exit your vehicle, and assist your child around the FRONT of your vehicle. Please do not walk between the back of your vehicle and the car behind you as we cannot ensure that vehicle is in PARK. Your child's hand must be held at all times. Please do not release your child until the teacher or aide has taken his or her hand.
6. Remember we are a school zone, please drop your speed to 10 mph and stay to the right of the double driveway.
7. Do not block the front entrance to the parking lot.

By following these procedures, you are helping us to keep your children safe, and to keep the line moving in a timely fashion.

Days Off

Prairie Pals Preschool follows the School District #308 school calendar as closely as possible. School closures include all full day breaks and holidays. School will be in session at Prairie Pals on days where District #308 has partial days.

If District #308 is closed due to snowfall or other weather emergencies, Prairie Pals will also be closed. For up to date information on school closings, listen to local radio and television stations, refer to the District #308 website or the Prairie Pals website. The Preschool calendar will NOT be extended to accommodate weather related closings and tuition will not be refunded for any missed days.

Medical Procedures & Emergencies

Our program requires permission to treat children with basic first aid when necessary. If there is an incident that requires more than basic first aid, the following procedures will apply:

1. Paramedics will be called to the Center by a staff member using 911.
2. A parent/guardian will be called. If he/she cannot be reached, the emergency contacts will be called.
3. We will make emergency personnel aware of your desire if you request a certified practitioner for a child exempt from medical care on religious grounds. If this is the case, you will need to make us aware of this in writing.
4. If contacts cannot be reached, the child will be taken to the emergency room with a staff member. That person will remain with the child until a contact arrives.

Parents are responsible for keeping all information updated in the child's file and for all medical bills incurred. The preschool does not provide medical insurance for the children. The preschool is not responsible for anything that may happen as a result of false information given on any forms completed.

Potty Time

Please have your child use the bathroom prior to arriving at school. Teachers typically take the entire class to 3 scheduled bathroom breaks. If your child needs to use the bathroom at any other time during class, he/she will need to let the teacher know and a Preschool staff member will take him/her to the bathroom.

Our 3s, 4s & PreK programs require that your child be independent in the bathroom which includes:

- Using the toilet without assistance
- Changing clothing without assistance
- Pulling up and down his/her own clothes
- Washing and drying his/her hands

You will be contacted if your child should have a bowel movement accident at school, as the Preschool staff **cannot** change your child's clothing.

Please pack a spare change of clothes, including underwear and socks, in a clear plastic bag and label it you're your child's name. The bag will stay in your child's book bag and be available if needed. Choose comfortable, loose fitting clothing that your child can easily get on and off quickly. This helps make trips to the bathroom easy for children.

Incident Reports

A member of our staff is required to fill out an incident report if any incident or injury occurs. Parents are asked to read the incident report and then sign accordingly. Parents will receive a copy. The original will be kept by the preschool in your child's file.

Medication

Medication should be administered prior to or following preschool. If medication is required during preschool hours, please contact the Director.

Sick Policy

For the children's protection, if a child has any of these symptoms, they are not to attend preschool:

- Fever of 100.5 (oral) or 99.5 (armpit) degrees Fahrenheit or higher (without the aid of fever reducing medication)
- Undiagnosed rash
- Vomiting

- Diarrhea
- Severe cold
- Contagious illness

Children who have been absent or sent home should not return to the Center until the temperature has been normal for 24 hours or a consecutive school day without the aid of fever reducing medication. Children who have had any of the above symptoms or illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities should not return for 24 hours after the last incident or consecutive school day. We may require a doctor's note to return to the Center.

Pesticide Application Registry

Prairie Pals practices Integrated Pest Management, a program that combines preventative techniques, non-chemical pest control methods and the appropriate use of pesticides with a preference for the products that are least harmful to human health and the environment. Applications are only made when deemed necessary to control a pest problem. We will establish a registry of people who wish to be notified prior to pesticide applications. To be included in the registry please notify us in writing. Please state "Notification Registry", your name, your child's name and the date.

Confidentiality

Family history and children's personal information will not be released without written consent. All information is kept confidential and is used for program purposes only. A consent is in the application authorizing the school to give the child's name and phone number to current parents as a class roster for the purpose of birthday parties or special events. This policy may only be broken in the case of abuse or neglect. **Federal law mandates all preschool employees to report any suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Family Services. It is the responsibility of the staff to comply with this law.**

Personal Property

Students should come to school with a full sized backpack that does not have wheels. The backpack should contain a complete change of weather appropriate clothing in a re-sealable plastic bag, including underwear and socks with his/her name on it. Please do not allow children to bring any toys to school unless requested for show and tell. Also be sure to check your child's backpack for important papers and messages from the school. Please ensure your child's name is on his/her belongings.

Discipline Policies

Our program implements a behavioral program that is based on natural consequences. The classrooms have a stop light system; green, yellow, and red. All children will begin on green each day. A warning is given for inappropriate behavior. A second warning will result in movement to yellow and a third to red. Physical confrontations such as hitting and kicking will result in immediate movement to yellow. Children remaining on green for the day will receive a sticker for positive behavior. They can then earn prizes when they have earned enough stickers. We want to reward the children for their good behavior and correct the inappropriate.

Prairie Pals operates under the following policies:

1. No corporal punishment, including spanking, will ever be used.
2. No child shall be subjected to cruel or severe punishment or verbal abuse, including those that are shaming, frightening or humiliating.
3. No child shall be denied food, toileting, or rest as punishments.
4. No harsh or profane language or implied threats of physical punishment shall be used.
5. No child shall be punished for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.

We recognize and praise appropriate and positive behaviors. A teacher's response to inappropriate or negative behaviors may include redirecting the child's activity, reasonably discussing the problem, or reinforcing positive

behavior options. When necessary, the child may be separated from the group and ongoing activity for a brief period within sight of the staff. This also involves a teacher-child discussion of the behavior.

Should a child be moved to red during the day, a phone call may be made to the parent to discuss the behavior. If a behavior becomes an ongoing issue, we will work with you to address it. If the behavior involves danger to other children or staff, we reserve the right to remove the child from the program after reasonable attempts have been made to correct the behavior.

We are not equipped for one on one care at our Center. If a child requires this attention, we will make reasonable modifications to our program as long as they do not cause undue hardship for the Center.

Communication

We offer many tools to keep our families informed of current/upcoming events and information. We hope you will take advantage of all the following resources:

- Email - we will send a monthly newsletter and regular reminders for upcoming events and important dates. Please be sure to save frontdesk@o-c-f.org to your contact list or other list of approved accounts to ensure our emails don't land in your spam folder.
- Facebook - follow us on Facebook for quick reminders and a peek inside our classroom activities.
- PrairiePals.org - our school website will have important dates and reminders on the homepage. You can also find links to the calendars and information sheets that are distributed in this orientation packet on the Preschool / Classrooms page.
- Remind - we will send an abbreviated version of any email communications through Remind. Download the Remind app to your smartphone and join our school community (instructions available on the Preschool / Classrooms page of our website). It is a great quick reference tool to access recent reminders and links to the newsletter each month.

Curriculum

Prairie Pals strives to provide a positive environment that will ready children for Kindergarten. Our teachers give children the academic tools they need while nurturing their emotional and developmental needs. We also seek to provide the children with an age appropriate spiritual basis. The children will have a daily Bible Story, weekly Chapel Chat, and weekly Bible themed lesson.

Our program also includes the goals of the state of **Illinois Early Learning Project**. These are goals created by the Illinois Early Learning Council to coordinate Pre-Kindergarten and Head Start programs. We also strive to coordinate with School District #308 Kindergarten curriculum.

During the school year we will have fall and spring parent/teacher conferences. You may schedule a conference at any time if there are any concerns or questions.

Reading is fundamental in the development of language and listening skills. It expands language and develops vocabulary. We include reading and story time daily in our activities within our program. We strive to help the children develop an appreciation and love for books. Our math and science curriculum encourages experimentation and exploration with a variety of materials. As children experiment and play, they develop skills in problem solving. Many activities are used to promote cognitive growth in this area.

Children express themselves in a variety of ways. Using art, the children have the opportunity to be creative and show who they are. This area is important to develop independence and self-esteem. This also develops fine motor skills and cognitive learning.

Dramatic play promotes imaginative growth and problem solving. The children also develop social skills as they role-play and communicate with one another.

The children will be given time each day for large motor activities. These activities promote the use of coordination and aids in developing muscle mass for balance and strength.

Christian Program

Prairie Pals is a non-denominational preschool program that is Christian based. The program involves prayer, Bible stories, Chapel Chat, weekly Bible themes and observance of Christian holidays.

Daily Schedule

A schedule of the daily activities is posted in each classroom. If you would like a copy please contact your child's teacher.

Fundraisers

We have two main fundraisers throughout the school year. The money raised goes towards providing the preschool with new materials, equipment and improvements. We appreciate your help in developing these efforts.

Field Trips

Field trips are scheduled to further develop your child's educational growth. Parents are responsible for transportation, an adult chaperone for the field trip, and any costs incurred.

Summer Classes

Summer classes may be offered through Prairie Pals. The summer programs are times of fun and faith building that are always a wonderful experience which introduces children to their new school or renews old friendships. More information regarding summer classes will be available towards the end of the school year.

Parental Involvement / Volunteers

Parents are essential in our preschool program! They are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom to get a hands on experience. Please prearrange volunteer time with your child's teacher. Parents are welcome to visit at any time.

Our program offers many events throughout the school year in which parents can be involved. Prairie Pals hosts a Halloween party, Christmas party, Christmas program, Easter party and a Promotion ceremony (4's and PreK classes). Parents are encouraged to volunteer to help. It provides a great chance to be involved and see how much the children accomplish!

Snacks - (We are an Allergy Smart School)

Prairie Pals follows the requirements set by the Department of Children and Family Services. We provide a drink and food item each class. Drinks may be milk or 100% juice. Food items may include fruits, vegetables, cheese, or items with the main ingredient as flour.

To help make school a fun and safe place for our increasing number of peanut and tree nut allergic students, we are an allergy smart school. We follow the guidelines on the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act. If any of the top 8 allergens are present they will be listed on the packaging.

Home-made items and items not in their original packaging/not displaying allergy information will not be accepted; we cannot ensure allergy information.

If you choose to provide a birthday treat, we suggest Wal-Mart bakery and their mini cupcakes; however, to ensure the safety of our students we suggest you provide items of a non-food nature (pencils, erasers, stickers, etc.). If you have questions about an item, please ask before bringing them to school.

We also ask that you please clean your child's hands and mouth before entering school, to avoid the potential exposure to any of these allergens that may have been consumed at home.

Product Recall Information

For a comprehensive list of unsafe children's products visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission website at www.cpsc.gov.

Oswego Christian Foundation

Prairie Pals Christian Preschool and Childcare is a ministry of The Oswego Christian Foundation (OCF). This foundation has a board that governs the preschool. You may reach the Foundation President and Preschool Director at the Center office if there are any concerns or questions regarding the program.

OCF is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation dedicated to assisting churches in establishing and maintaining preschools and childcare centers. If you know of a church that would benefit from the Foundation's services, please contact the Foundation at (630) 551-7143. We accept donations, which are tax deductible. Oswego Christian Foundation's tax ID# is 32-0091574.



Thank you for joining our program! We look forward to getting to know you and your child!