



# **Decatur Christian School Preschool Parent Handbook**

Little Warriors Grown Here

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**Introduction** This Preschool Parent Handbook provides students, parent(s)\*, and staff with a clear, concise statement of the basic policies, procedures, and philosophy of Decatur Christian School. It is our desire to enter into a covenant relationship with parents and to be of one accord in the matters of school policy. Although the Handbook is not intended as a definitive statement on all subjects, it is written to answer the most frequently asked questions about the policies and procedures of DCS. These policies and procedures are basic guidelines that should be viewed as one way we encourage and train students to recognize and assume responsibility for their actions. Commitment to and consistent support of these policies and procedures by students, parents and staff will enable DCS to run in a smooth, orderly manner and will produce even more significant and lasting accomplishments for our students. Therefore, the ultimate purpose of this Handbook is to allow parents, students, and teachers to be “of one mind” in the great privilege of training children to honor God with their whole lives.

\*Parent(s) refers to parent(s) or legal guardian(s) for the entire handbook.

**DCS Mission Statement** Decatur Christian seeks to fulfill the God-given potential of each student by teaching excellence in academics, character, leadership and responsibility through solid principles based upon scriptural truth in order to enable students to live out their faith as servant leaders in every area of society.

**History of DCS** “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.” Psalm 127:1 Decatur Christian School began in August, 1973, as a vision of Grace Baptist Church of Decatur, IL, with the desire to provide an outstanding academic program based upon scriptural truth. The first year enrollment was 175 students. Since that significant beginning, Decatur Christian has grown in enrollment, academic excellence, and ministry to the Decatur area community. In 1993, Glad Tidings Academy, a ministry of Glad Tidings Assembly of God, merged with Decatur Christian School. Following the merger, Decatur Christian became a single entity governed by a dedicated school board committed to serving the greater Decatur area and surrounding communities.

**Affiliation and Recognition** Decatur Christian School is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International. ACSI promotes the cause of Christian education, protects the freedoms of Christian schools, and aids and strengthens schools through its many services. The Association of Christian Schools International provides teacher workshops and conventions, monitors educational legislation, and provides for academic, athletics, and fine arts competition. DCS works with ACSI in the areas of teacher certification and standardized recognition of its school programs. DCS registers with the State of Illinois each year, confirming that it meets all the requirements of health, safety, number of school hours, and nondiscriminatory policies. Decatur Christian School has received recognition as a non-public school by the Illinois State Board of Education, providing for the transfer of all credits to qualified centers of higher education.

**Christian Philosophy of Education** We believe the following statements to be true for Christian education:

- The only foundation is the inerrant, infallible, authoritative Word of God. (II Peter 1:19-21)
- The concept of truth is based upon the absolute truths from the Word of God as opposed to philosophic relativism. (II Timothy 3:5-7, 3:16, Colossians 2:8)
- The content is based upon the world view from the Word of God that Jesus Christ is the center of all things, as opposed to humanism where man is the center of all things. (Colossians 2:8)
- The view of man's nature is considered to be sinful, as opposed to humanism, which sees mankind as essentially good. (Romans 3:23)
- The objective is Christ-likeness through God's Holy Spirit, as opposed to humanism where the objective is to become better only by being educated. (Ephesians 4:11-13, Galatians 2:20)
- The methodology is guided by the authority of the Word of God. (Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4)
- The agency is the home, which takes priority in importance over the school. (Deuteronomy 6:5-7, Joshua 24:15)

- The dynamic is the Holy Spirit working through the lives of Christian faculty, staff and volunteers. (Luke 6:40)

**DCS Philosophy** Decatur Christian School is a caring community of parents, faculty, staff, and students dedicated to living lives that are pleasing to Jesus Christ. We exist to serve the Lord by providing quality Christian education to the youth of Decatur and the surrounding area.

We believe that there is one God eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; that Jesus Christ, through His death on the cross, provided for the redemption of sin through His resurrection and life; and that Jesus Christ is the Lord of every Christian believer.

We believe that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God with God as the Creator and Author of all life. We believe that the Bible, God's Holy Word, serves as an infallible reference for Christian living and must be incorporated into the curricula as well as into the learning experiences in which our students participate.

We believe that the education of children is a process that occurs continuously within the home, the school and the church. Our goal is to help children to become "kingdom of God" seekers and to realize the admonition of Romans 8:29, "that we should be conformed to the image of Christ." To accomplish this goal, we provide academic preparation and intellectual stimulation and promote personal initiative in the learning process.

We believe it is our God-given mission to encourage and help each child who passes through the halls of DCS to develop the spiritual, academic, physical, and social gifts and talents God has given him or her. It is our goal to help each young person to develop a reverence for God and loyalty to American principles of democracy. Our desire is to help young people develop sound morals, spiritual values, ethics, and attitudes that are necessary to having and maintaining a successful, meaningful, and growing Christian life.

We believe that a sound, well-rounded education should be available to each child regardless of sex, creed, or race.

## Core Values

**CHRIST-CENTERED ENVIRONMENT** I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 A Christ-centered environment means the lives of our staff, the culture of our campus, and our educational program will reflect the Lord's values as revealed in the Bible. At Decatur Christian School, Jesus Christ will be at the center of all decision-making and the truth of God's Word will be integrated into academics, athletics, fine arts, and human relationships.

**TRUTH** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. John 17:15-17 We believe that absolute truth exists and is revealed to believers by God through His Holy Spirit and the revelation of His inspired Word. At DCS, God's truth is taught through literature, art, music, history, mathematics, and science. Our hope is that our students will embrace a Christian world view, be critical thinkers and diligent truth seekers, strong in wisdom and able to discern falsehood.

**EXCELLENCE** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Philippians 4:8 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Colossians 3:23 Excellence is defined as, “being of the very best quality.” Our desire is to humbly pursue excellence to glorify and serve God in every dimension of our lives: spiritually, personally, professionally, academically, artistically, and athletically.

**VIRTUE** May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you. Psalm 25:21 We strive to develop observable virtue in the lives of our students that is manifested by wisdom, justice, courage, perseverance, responsibility, integrity, discipline, and encouragement. We will edify each other as we seek to imitate and conform to the image of Christ.

**COMMUNITY** The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts, and though all its parts are many, they form one body. I Corinthians 12:12 A new commandment I give to you: Love one another; as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love

one another. John 13:34-35 We are a united covenant partnership of family, school, and church, sharing fellowship, values, and brotherly love. Our desire is to provide a wholesome, Christian environment for our children, disciplining and encouraging them spiritually, academically, physically, emotionally and socially.

**STEWARDSHIP** If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? Luke 16:11 We are called to honor and glorify God, being wise managers of all He has entrusted to us: relationships, gifts, talents, time, finances, and facilities.

**SERVICE** For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. James 2:26 We seek to be Christian servants with compassionate heart attitudes of humility and obedience. Through our acts of service and servant leadership, we will present Christ, not only by word, but also by example. This attitude of service will be evident among us as we work and learn at Decatur Christian School and as we reach out to serve the greater Decatur area.

**Admission Policies** DCS does not discriminate on the basis of sex, nationality, race, color or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, the awarding of financial aid, or any of its other school-administered programs.

**Communication** We consider it a great privilege to serve covenant families in educating their children from a Christian perspective. We are committed to upholding and supporting each family's authority in the lives of their children. This kind of relationship requires clear communication. We recognize that in this relationship there lies a temptation to talk about a specific problem or person rather than take direct action to resolve conflicts in a manner consistent with Scripture. We have outlined the proper lines of communication between the school and home according to the Biblical principles found in Matthew 18 and James 3. We believe that Scripture teaches that conflicts should be handled discreetly and carefully, while believing and speaking the best about each individual involved toward the goal of restored fellowship. The procedure for student/parent to register a complaint and/or to discuss issues is as follows:

1. Teacher
2. Principal
3. Head of School
4. School Board

Any matter that involves a teacher should begin with the teacher. If it is a matter that involves the principal, it should begin with the principal, etc. Starting at a higher level in the chain of command will result in the matter being sent back to the area where the discussion needs to begin. If satisfaction is not achieved at that level, then the matter should be taken to the next step in the chain of command.

While Decatur Christian understands the importance of email and telephone communication, matters which cannot be properly addressed through those means should be addressed in a face-to-face meeting between the parties. Decatur Christian School Staff and Administration will abide by these same principles in communicating with parents and students.

**Emergency Closing** In the event of severe weather or some unforeseen problem that necessitates the closing of school, the announcement will be made through email, Facebook, decaturchristian.net website, and television station WAND. All efforts will be made to make the decision as early as possible.

**Financial Information** Annual tuition may be divided into installments unless other arrangements have been made through the finance office. Payments are due the 1st of each month, August through May. A registration fee is required for each student and is non-refundable due to processing costs. All fees are due prior to the school term unless arrangements have been made through the finance office. Specifics:

- All tuition/fees required by the school are expected to be paid on time. This includes fund raising, athletic, academic, lunch and extended care fees.
- No student whose account is delinquent will be permitted to participate in extracurricular activities, award ceremonies, or graduation ceremonies.
- All past-due accounts are to be paid in full by May 31 of the current school year.

- A \$30 late fee is assessed for all accounts unpaid after the 10th of each month.
- A \$25 fee is charged for returned checks and/or ACH payments.
- In the event your account is past due 60 days, the student(s) may be subject to dismissal and a collection agency and/or attorney may be notified. Parents will be responsible for all costs and fees necessary for the collection of the delinquent account including, but not limited to, collection agency/attorney fees.
- A signed financial agreement including collection of late payment must be on file for every family enrolled at DCS. Any exception to the financial agreement must be approved by administration with a written agreement in place.

## **Medical Information**

1. Communicable Diseases: A health record is kept for each child. In order to keep this up to date, please inform the office when your child has any type of childhood illness or communicable disease.
2. Physical Exams: A physical examination is required for a student entering PreK, or enrolling for the first time in an Illinois school system.
3. Dental Exams: A dental examination is required for any student enrolling for the first time in an Illinois school system and is due by the first day of school.
4. Eye Exams: All children enrolling for the first time in an Illinois school system are required to have an eye examination by an optometrist.
5. Medicines: No medication will be given without written permission and instructions from the parents. Except for inhalers, students may not keep medications on their person or in their lockers. All medications are to be kept in the office.
6. Illnesses and/or Injury: If a student becomes ill or is injured at school, the parents will be notified and expected to be picked up as soon as possible. It is important that the school is notified of any change of address or phone number(s) (home, cell, or work), especially an unlisted number, so parents can be contacted immediately. An Emergency Medical Contact form must be on file for each student. This must include all current home, work and cell phone numbers.

7. Contagious Disease Policy: A student with a disease that is not contagious and not a threat to the student body will be allowed to attend regular classroom sessions and school functions. However, a student with a contagious disease that is a potential threat to the student body will not be allowed to attend school or school functions. Please do not bring your child if they are sick, running a temperature or vomiting. Your child may return when they are fever free without fever reducer for 24 hours or if diarrhea, vomiting or nausea has subsided for 24 hours. Please make sure a period of 24 hours has passed from the time the initial dose of antibiotic has been administered for any type of strep or bacterial infection.

8. School Wellness Policy: A school wellness policy, which sets goals for nutrition education and also goals for physical education, is available through the school office.

**Allergies** All allergies to medications and other substances including insect stings must be stated on the emergency and medical forms. Information about children with allergies will be posted in all classrooms, etc. to insure the safety of your child in all areas of the school.

**Accidents and Minor Injuries** Minor bumps and scrapes are an everyday part of your child exploring and learning through experience. Minor injuries sustained at school are reported to parents on an “accident” report. A copy of the report is given to the parent and one copy is retained in the child’s file. Parents are called immediately in the event of any serious or questionable injury, or a bump to the head.

**Office** The office is open from 7:50 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday during the regular school year. Official summer office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

**School Hours** Preschool classes (PreK3/PreK4) are from 8:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (half day) or 8:15 a.m. - 3:15 p.m. (full day), Wednesday dismissal 2:15 p.m. Preschool doors will be unlocked from 8:10 a.m. - 8:25 a.m. every morning for drop off. If drop off time happens before this time please take your child to extended care or if it happens after 8:25 a.m. please enter through the main doors. Doors will be open from 11:10 a.m. - 11:25 a.m. for half day student pick

up. If you come after 11:25 a.m. for half day pickup your child will be sent down to the office. Doors will be open from 3:10 p.m. - 3:25 p.m. or 2:10 p.m. - 2:25 p.m. on Wednesday for full day student pick up. After 3:25 (2:25 on Wednesdays) all students that have not been picked up will go to extended care. Please be sure that your child arrives to school on time. Because of the nature and design of our program, we value and reserve these times for the children and their experiences. Late arrival makes this difficult to maintain because of the disruption of the continuity and flow for the children in the classroom. However, we are aware that there are circumstances that may necessitate a late arrival. When that happens, we ask that you please call the office and let us know when to expect your child so we can prepare for and transition your child in the best possible manner to already occurring activities.

**Entering the Building** Please enter and pick-up through the preschool entrance on the southeast side of the building. There will be a sign-in/out sheet for you to sign each morning and afternoon. Please remember if your child arrives before 8:10 a.m. they will need to enter through the main doors and go to extended care. If your child is not picked up by the designated times they will be sent to the office or extended care.

**Exiting the Building** Students should exit the building immediately at dismissal time unless there is inclement weather. Extended care is available for pre-K through 5th grade students from dismissal until 5:30 p.m. for an additional charge.

**Release of Students** Children will only be released to persons who are authorized to pick up by their parents/guardians. Any authorized adult who is not known by the staff will be required to show a picture ID at time of pick up. It is imperative that parents/guardians list all potential individuals who will be picking up their child be listed as an authorized person on the pickup list.

**School Supplies** Refer to individual class lists for specific supplies.

**Visitors on Campus** All visitors must sign in at the office. Please do not go directly to any student areas. It is important that we know who is in our building at all times.

**Parent Visits** Parents, if you wish to speak with your child's teacher, please arrange for a private conference by calling the office. Teachers are happy to arrange conferences with parents at scheduled times. If you are bringing lunches, homework, books, and/or other items after 8:15 a.m., please leave them in the school office and DCS personnel will deliver them to your student.

Our administration is eager to be of help to you and has an open-door policy. Therefore, if you would like to visit the school, please check with the office and a time can be arranged for your visit. The school secretary will be glad to answer your questions and be of general help to you in many ways.

**Attendance Policies** Please email the school office when reporting an absence or tardiness.

Extended care is available for pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from 7:00-8:15 a.m. for an additional charge. Unless a student has specific responsibilities, which have been prearranged by the administrative staff, students may not enter the classrooms before 8:10 a.m. without permission and supervision.

**Adjustment Period** Starting school for the first time can cause anxiety in some children and in some parents as well. DCS will host a picnic and open house before the first day of school with your child, allowing him/her to meet the teacher and see the environment. Please check the school calendar for dates.

For those children entering our school mid-year, we suggest you visit the school with your child before leaving him/her for the day. We will make every effort to work with you to make this adjustment period a positive experience.

We recommend that you give your child at least one month to adjust to the preschool experience. Two months is recommended if your child attends a Tuesday-Thursday morning program. Remember, your child's teacher is experienced in this area and will help you with strategies to make this process a bit easier.

We have learned through the years that the most successful way to separate from your child is to tell them you love them and will be back soon-then leave immediately. You are entrusting us with the care and love of your child and we take this honor seriously.

**Redirection and Discipline** Redirection and discipline has an important place in an early childhood education program. Parents and teachers need to work together in order to be consistent and effective in training young children to make appropriate choices in a classroom setting. Questions or concerns should be addressed first with the appropriate teacher, then if further interaction is needed for resolution, with the Principal.

We want to be compassionate to our young children and their families knowing that the children bring into the classroom what they are familiar with from home. We believe our program provides a formula for discipline that is appropriate in shaping and encouraging responsible behavior. We strongly believe in and practice assertive discipline and prevention. Positive reinforcement, praise and modeling are the main methods used to maintain a child's behavior.

In cases where a child needs to regain self-control or is in danger of hurting themselves or others, the child may be momentarily separated from the group for a "time out." No child shall be shamed, humiliated or otherwise intimidated as a part of correction. We strive to facilitate conversation and communication among the children even in discipline issues.

Our goal is to be proactive in preventing potential problems by redirecting a child or helping children resolve conflicts by using their words to communicate their feelings and thoughts. It is important to remember that at times mildly aggressive feelings in young children are a normal part of the developmental process of growing. Each teacher has a goal to help the child develop self-control over those feelings while still helping to build positive self-esteem.

Most aggressive tendencies at preschool can be controlled using various techniques. Teachers are trained to be alert to potential areas of frustration both in the classroom and outdoors. When possible, teachers intervene before physical disruption takes place. However, biting, scratching, kicking, and hitting behaviors can jeopardize the safety of all children.

If aggressive behavior becomes excessive with a child in our care, the teacher will communicate with parents through verbal conversations or an "incident" report. We will also initiate a discussion with parents regarding the inappropriate

behavior, redirection that has been effective at home, and agreed upon procedures for when the child is at school.

Continued occurrences may necessitate picking up your child from school immediately following an incident. Also, we may request that the child stay home from school the following day. If, however, after efforts between home and school are exhausted and the pattern of behavior continues, we will require that you withdraw your child from the preschool. Discipline is designed to promote self-direction, self-control, understanding of choice and consequences, and respect of others. This is accomplished through consistency and fairness.

**Dress Code** Please dress your child in comfortable, easily washable play clothing. Young children can get messy and dirty in the course of activity and active learning. Play is their “work.”

For safety reasons, flip-flop or plastic type footwear is not permitted. Please send your child in sturdy play shoes with non-slick soles.

Please be certain that all items are clearly labeled with your child’s name. We ask that children not wear clothing representing violence, sorcery, etc.

Please wear shorts or leggings under dresses or skirts.

Students need to dress appropriately for the weather. Outside play will be conducted unless it is raining, snowing or colder than 32 degrees.

Remember to bring a jacket or dress in layers as we go outside to play as often as possible.

**Curriculum** “Curriculum” is a term used to describe all of the components or elements used in our early education program. Curriculum includes directed activities, play and exploration centers, outdoor physical development, thematic activities, instructional materials, and texts.

Bible is integrated throughout the day. We will use Bible stories, character building stories, music, and prayer as part of our curriculum. We want the children to know God loves us, Jesus is our friend, the Bible is God’s Word, and prayer is our time to talk to God.

Doctrine from any particular denomination is not taught.

Development of the whole child is a team effort, from instruction and experience in the classroom being supported and reinforced at home. You can help your child get the most out of his/her learning opportunities as well as continue the learning experience at home by talking with your child about class activities. Ask your child's teacher for suggestions or activities to reinforce what is being stressed in the classroom. Your child's teacher will also provide a weekly or monthly newsletter describing class activities.

**Student Placement and Progress** Students may be enrolled in DCS preschool once they turn three years of age. Students in preschool need to be potty trained.

We view each child placement very seriously. When deciding in which class to place a child, we review numerous criteria and evaluate what is best for the individual child and for the group as a whole. Criteria include but are not limited to age of the child, developmental readiness, schedule and social development. Parent feedback is welcomed and considered but is not necessarily a determining factor. As advocates for young children, our main goal is to provide placement that is best for the individual child in the preschool setting.

Classroom teachers do observations of the children throughout the year. A progress report will be provided to you and will address a variety of aspects of your child's development. Progress reports are given half way through the school year and at the end of the school year. Parent-Teacher Conferences are not scheduled for preschool. If you would like to meet with your child's teacher please check with your child's teacher. It is our desire to keep the lines of communication open at all times, so please feel free to talk with your child's teacher or the Principal. Please be mindful that when children are present, the teacher's primary responsibility is the safety and wellbeing of the children. Please make conversations brief or schedule an appointment to talk at a later time.

**Toileting Requirements** Children enrolled in preschool are required to be fully potty trained. Children should also be maturing in responsibility for own toileting needs (able to pull down pants, wipe with direction, etc.) as well as be able to tell an adult that they need to use the restroom. Please make sure your child wears clothing that will allow them to use the restroom successfully and independently. All children are required to wear underwear under their clothing. Pull-ups are considered diapers and are not allowed. Staff will speak to a parent if the child is

coming to school in pull-ups or without the appropriate underwear. While we take into consideration that young children have accidents, if toileting difficulties arise and/or persist, parents will be asked to make other arrangements until success in this area is achieved. Please take your child to the restroom upon arriving to school, even if they have already used the restroom at home. We do not have bathrooms in the classrooms and it makes it difficult for us to leave to check on them when so many children need our assistance in the classroom.

**Snack and Lunch Information** Children who attend full day programs are provided two snacks on a daily basis, one in the morning and one in the afternoon after rest or naptime. Children who attend half days are provided one snack. Snacks are supplied by the parents which is included in your supply list. Your child will be given water with their snack. Lunch is provided for all day students. You may send in a lunch if your child does not like or is allergic to what is being served. All children will be served milk with their lunch unless otherwise arranged by parents and/or if the child has an allergy to milk. Please make sure we are aware of any allergies. We encourage the children to try the foods they are provided. During lunch time self-help skills are fostered, and good nutrition habits are promoted. Menus for lunch are posted and available through the office.

**Celebrations** Each classroom will hold special theme or holiday celebrations throughout the school year such as but not limited to Grandparents Day, Harvest Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentines Day, Easter and birthday celebrations. Classroom party dates and info will be communicated by the classroom teacher. You are always welcome to send in treats for birthdays. If bringing in cupcakes, we ask that you bring in mini-size, please and to let your classroom teacher know prior to the date and always check for allergies of classmates.

**Toy Policy** Please do not allow your child to bring toys to school except on designated days. A snuggle toy, special blanket or security item is permitted for rest time, but will only be used at that designated time. Any snuggle toy, special blanket or security item will need to be put away during class time and only allowed out at the designated rest time.