GOOD SHEPHERD CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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General Information for Parents of Children in GSCS

RAM LAMB PREP HANDBOOK

Pre-Kindergarten for 2, 3 and 4-years olds

"Good Shepherd Catholic School is a child care facility operating under an exemption pursuant to the laws of the State of Florida and is not subject to licensure or regulation by the Department of Children and Families."

Ram Lamb Prep Handbook

Welcome and Philosophy

Our Early Childhood Program reflects the belief that every child is created in God's image and likeness, with unique gifts and abilities. We nurture spiritual, social-emotional, physical, and cognitive growth through developmentally appropriate, play-based learning in a Catholic environment. Families are partners in this journey, and together we build the foundation for lifelong faith and learning.

Vision Statement

Our vision for the Early Childhood Program at Good Shepherd Catholic School is to nurture joyful, confident, compassionate, and faith-filled children who develop a love for learning, grow in their relationship with God and others, and are prepared to flourish as they continue their educational journey. Through a strong partnership with families, we strive to build a foundation of faith, character, and lifelong learning.

Curriculum and Learning Approach

We align our curriculum with:

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards

Florida Catholic Conference Early Education Program Standards

NAEYC best practices

Our curriculum weaves Catholic values, daily prayer, and Gospel teachings into play-based, child-led learning experiences. Teachers thoughtfully design environments filled with opportunities for literacy, numeracy, science, and hands-on exploration to inspire curiosity and a sense of wonder in God's creation. Using ongoing, research-based assessments, learning experiences are continually tailored to support the unique needs and growth of every child in our care.

Daily Schedules and Routines

Consistent routines help children feel secure. A typical day includes:

-Morning welcome and prayer

-Center-based learning and outdoor play

-Snack and mealtimes

-Rest/nap time

-Closing prayer and dismissal

Arrival at School

Ram Lamb Prep will be open at 7:30 a.m. We ask that all the students get to school no later than 8:00 a.m. Parents will not be allowed in the classrooms/building at this time. This will help the children grow accustomed to a routine/schedule and save any unnecessary interruptions to the class. Long good-byes are hard on both you and your child. Please we ask that you do not linger. Give your child a big hug and smile and then depart promptly. Make sure your child is well rested.

VPK

The gate opens at 7:30 a.m.

Instruction time will begin promptly at 7:45 a.m.

Please arrive on time as the VPK program instruction time is a very important part of your child's learning progress. Please ensure that your child walks in the classroom with time to transition to the class, take out their folder, put their bookbags, lunchboxes, and water bottles in their correct place. Routine is crucial at this time in their lives. Help us make this process seamless for them by arriving 15 minutes before our VPK teachers begin teaching their lessons at 7:45 a.m.

Daily Dismissal

Dismissal is at 2:30 p.m. Children staying for the after-care program will wait in the classroom until the after-care teacher arrives at 3:00 p.m. Any child not picked up by 3:00 will be considered late pick-up and will be taken to after-care. If there is any change in the dismissal of your child, please call our office and let us know.

Early Dismissal

During early dismissal days, the dismissal will be at 11:30 a.m. We will follow the same dismissal procedure as regular days. Early dismissal days are noted on our weekly newsletter, the monthly school calendar, on the parent portal, and our school webpage.

Authorization for Pick Up

Children will only be released to their parents and those persons listed on the registration/authorization form as emergency contact/alternate pick up. A photo ID will be required of someone whom we do not know. A signed note must be given to the school office prior to releasing your child to someone who is not listed on your child's registration/authorization form and emailed to our office before the child is released. No phone calls will be accepted.

Changes of address, telephone numbers, and emergency contact

The school records must be kept up to date so parents can be reached in an emergency. If you move or change your home, work, or cell phone numbers, please notify the school office immediately. Please also keep your emergency contact information up to date.

Absences

If your child is absent, please provide us with a note explaining his/her absence, date and signed by the parent. If your child is absent for three consecutive days a doctor's note is required upon arrival. This is required by the school office upon returning to class.

Assessments

Portfolios are used for assessments. A sample of your child's work, checklist, and notes on their progress are saved and put in the portfolio throughout the school year.

Toileting and Self-Care Policies

We encourage and support toileting independence in alignment with Florida DCF and ADOM guidelines.

- **Developmentally appropriate support:** Toileting skills develop gradually from infancy through preschool. Teachers provide age-appropriate guidance, encouragement, and support at each stage of development.

- **Infants and toddlers:** Diapering and toileting routines are handled with care, consistency, and attention to hygiene. Families are encouraged to communicate toilet training readiness so we can partner in supporting this milestone.

- **PK2 children:** At this stage, many children are still developing toileting independence. Teachers will encourage self-help skills (pulling up/down clothing, washing hands) and support progress without pressure. Families should provide extra clothing and keep us informed about toilet training at home.

- **PK3 and older:** Children entering PK3 and PK4 programs are expected to be

Fully Potty Trained, and able to manage their toileting needs with minimal assistance. Occasional accidents are understood as part of development and will be handled calmly and respectfully.

Partnership with families

Open communication between home and school helps maintain consistency and supports your child's success.

Encouraging independence

At all ages, teachers gently guide children toward greater self-care skills, promoting confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

Bathroom Accidents

Please have an additional uniform (including socks) inside a gallon sized zip-lock bag in the child's book bag in case the child needs to be changed. We ask that you please label the uniform and bag with your child's full name. In the event of a bathroom accident or other situation requiring a change of clothes, we ask that all students have an extra set of clothing kept at school. If a student does not have a change of clothes available, or if the accident is too severe to be managed at school, parents or guardians will be contacted and must pick up their child as soon as possible

Birthdays

Birthdays are special for all of us, especially our children. This is to be pre-arranged with the teacher. You may bring cookies or donut holes (Store bought) to share with his/her classmates. Please check with your child's teacher regarding classroom allergies.

Field Trips

Field trips outside of the property are prohibited for children under five years of age, and programs cannot transport children via vehicles, per FCC and Archdiocese rules. (15:02)

Our preschool offers exciting in-house field trips that bring learning to life! These special experiences are designed to align with our curriculum and support the educational themes we explore in the classroom.

Biting

Although biting is a normal behavior that sometimes occurs with young children, it is always taken very seriously. A child may bite when he/she is angry, frustrated, or lacks the language skills necessary to express themselves. If biting does take place, it will be documented and both sets of parents will be notified immediately.

Discipline

Good discipline begins at home. School is where learning takes place. It is up to the parents to set the standards for their children. We are your partners in educating your child. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that your child has a good and safe learning environment. The teacher will redirect any child that is being disruptive and communicate how the problem can be solved. Redirecting quickly takes the focus of any unwanted behavior and refocuses the child's attention in a more positive direction. If the difficulty continues the child will be given personal space away from the other children. When the child rejoins the group, they will be welcomed back. If the child's behavior does not improve, a conference with the parents will be requested.

Positive Behavior Guidance and Social-Emotional Development

Our Approach:

● We use positive guidance strategies that reflect the dignity of each child and model Christ's love.

● Teachers encourage self-regulation, problem-solving, and making amends when needed.

● Clear and consistent limits are set with kindness and respect.

● Prohibited practices include corporal punishment, shaming, food withholding, and punitive toileting methods.

Positive Guidance Strategies:

● Redirecting children from inappropriate behavior toward positive choices.

● Teaching appropriate social-emotional skills to address challenges.

● Reassessing the environment, activities, and supervision to support positive behavior. ● Using positive language and celebrating appropriate behaviors.

● Maintaining consistent, age-appropriate consequences for classroom rules.

● Building and maintaining strong, supportive teacher-child relationships. **Expulsion & Suspension Policy**

Our program is committed to creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment where all children can grow, learn, and thrive. We align with the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Office of Early Learning's position on supporting children's social emotional and behavioral health through positive practices.

Our Commitment

○ Promote positive, developmentally appropriate classroom environments.

○ Prioritize the social-emotional well-being of all children.

○ Encourage developmental screenings and referrals for additional support as needed. ○ Support parent involvement and partnership in addressing their child's needs.

○ Provide professional development for staff on alternatives to expulsion and suspension.

○ Collaborate with early childhood mental health consultants and interventionists when appropriate.

○ Track and analyze data on expulsions, suspensions, and dismissals to ensure fair, thoughtful decision-making.

When Enrollment May Be Terminated?

While every resort is made to avoid expulsion or suspension, the program reserves the right to discontinue a child's enrollment for reasons including, but not limited to:

○ Failure to follow the policies and procedures outlined in the Parent Handbook.

○ A child's needs exceed what the program can safely and selectively support within current staffing and resources.

○ Behavior that poses a serious risk to the health and safety of the child, other children, or property.

○ Parent or guardian behavior that is disruptive, unsafe, or violates childcare licensing regulations (e.g., vulgarity, intimidation, harassment, or interference with program operations).

We strive to work closely with families to address challenges and seek solutions before reaching this point. Every decision to terminate enrollment is made thoughtfully, with the best interests of all children in mind.

Dress Code

The children are expected to be in full uniform everyday school is in session unless otherwise notified. The students are expected to be well groomed. Their hair and general appearance must be neat and tidy. Long fingernails or unkept hair is not allowed. Bracelets, rings, watches, or any other jewelry that will be a distraction to the students is not allowed. If they

come to school wearing these items they will be removed, put in a zip lock bag and sent home in their book bags. A message will be sent home notifying the parent/guardian.

Girls (PK-2, PK-3, PK4)

Dress: Navy Polo Dress or Baby Doll Plaid Dress (Shorts must be worn under) Mass Uniform: Baby Doll Plaid Dress (only for PK-3, PK-4) (once a week) Socks: White Socks with Logo are Required

P.E Uniform: Gold Good Shepherd p.e shirt, navy blue Good Shepherd p.e shorts, white socks with school logo, black, navy blue, or white sneakers are allowed. NO colorful sneakers with designs or lights.

Boys (PK-2, PK-3, PK-4)

Shirt: Gold Polo with Logo

Mass: White Oxford shirt with Logo (once a week)

Pants: Elastic Waist Pants with Logo

Shorts: Elastic Waist Shorts with Logo

Socks: White Socks with Logo are Required

P.E Uniform: Gold Good Shepherd p.e shirt, navy blue Good Shepherd p.e shorts, white socks with school logo, black, navy blue, or white sneakers are allowed. NO colorful sneakers with designs or lights.

All Students

Sweater: must be a school sweater with Logo. Sold at Gama Uniform

Jacket: must be school jacket with Logo. Sold at Gama Uniform

Shoe Requirements

(PK-2, PK-3, PK-4)

Girls: Black Mary Jane

Boys: Black Brighton Sneaker or Black Gavin Loafer

P.E: Black, navy blue, grey, or white sneakers are allowed. NO colorful sneakers with designs or lights. (No colored laces or soles)

Cold Weather

During cold weather, students may wear a GSCS sweatshirt or GSCS jacket over the uniform while in the classroom. Your child may wear a long sleeve white shirt under their uniform. They may also wear sweatpants (Black or Navy Blue). In extreme cold weather, any outerwear may be worn, but

must be removed in the classroom.

Enrollment policy

Ram Lamb Prep enrolls students who turn **2 years old on or before September 1st** of the school year for our PreK-2 program.

For our **PreK-3 program**, students must turn **3 years old on or before September 1st** of the school year.

These age requirements are based on the child's age as of September 1st of the applicable school year.

Registration of new students adheres to the schedule of Good Shepherd Catholic School. Re-registration will open in February of each year. Spaces are very limited so please register as soon as you are notified. Birth and Baptismal certificates must be present at the time of initial registration.

The Florida Department of Health requires that no student be permitted in the school without his or her up-to-date immunization record. New students are required to have a medical examination before entering the school.

Fees and Tuition

The fees and tuition applicable for each student can be found on our school website.

Hours of Operation

Ram Lamb Prep hours are from Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and follows the Good Shepherd Catholic School academic year. VPK is from 7:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Our preschool gate will open at 7:30 a.m. For Holidays observed please check our School Calendar.

In-House Field Trips

Pre-K students enjoy in-house field trips. Parents will receive a field trip permission form with a cover page explaining the field trip and its cost. Parents must fill it out and sign the permission form.

Labeling

Please label everything that your child brings to school including lunch boxes, bags, zip lock bags, sweaters, jackets, and WATER BOTTLES (Required by DCF)

Preschool Food Policies & Mealtime Guidelines

At Good Shepherd Catholic School Preschool, we are committed to providing children with nutritious meals and snacks while encouraging healthy eating habits, independence, and age-appropriate self-help skills. Families are encouraged to follow the USDA meal pattern guidance and **MyPlate** recommendations when preparing meals and snacks so that children have balanced and nutritious food options throughout the day.

General Food & Mealtime Guidelines

-All food brought from home must arrive **ready for the child to eat**. School staff will not cut, peel, or otherwise prepare food brought from home.

-Foods that may present a choking hazard **must be prepared appropriately before arriving at school**. This applies to **all foods, including food brought from home by parents and families**.

Examples of foods that require special preparation include, but are not limited to:

- Hot dogs and sausages
- Grapes
- Raw carrots and peas
- Cherry or grape tomatoes
- Chunks of meat
- Popcorn
- Hard pretzels
- Nuts
- Sticky foods, such as marshmallows
- Globs of peanut butter

Foods must be **cut into appropriately small pieces and prepared in a manner that reduces the risk of choking**. Food should be small enough that a child could safely swallow it if they do not chew it thoroughly.

Parents and families are responsible for ensuring that food brought to school is prepared appropriately before it arrives at school. This safety requirement applies to **all food served to preschool students, regardless of whether it is provided by the school or brought from home.**

-Foods such as hot dogs, sausages should be **cut lengthwise into quarters** (creating 4 long, thin strips).

Then **cut those strips crosswise into small pieces no larger than ½ inch**.

grapes, cherry tomatoes and similar foods must **be cut lengthwise into quarters** (not just in half).

-For younger preschool children, especially **PreK-2**, quarter them lengthwise and make sure the pieces are small enough to manage easily.

-If food is not prepared in an age-appropriate manner, staff will return the item home and notify the family. Families should ensure that their child has enough other appropriate food to complete the meal or snack.

-All snacks should be **clearly labeled and separated from the child's lunch** to avoid confusion and to help children independently identify what they may choose for snack and what is reserved for lunch.

-Preschool staff will record children's feeding times and the amount of food consumed. This information is available to parents upon request.

-Safe drinking water is available to children **at all times**, including during outdoor play.

-Special food restrictions, including food allergies, must be communicated to child care personnel and will be posted in a conspicuous location as appropriate.

-Meals and snacks provided by the facility are planned to meet children's daily nutritional needs according to USDA/MyPlate guidance.

PreK-2 Food & Snack Schedule

PreK-2 students will have:

- **Morning Snack**
- **Lunch**
- **Afternoon Snack following nap time**

Snack & Water Time

PreK-2 students will have approximately **30 minutes** for handwashing, snack, and water time.

Snack Choices

PreK-2 students will be provided with a **choice of two snacks**.

Teachers will assist PreK-2 students with opening packages, containers, and setting up their snacks. This support is intended to ensure that children can comfortably participate in mealtime while developing age-appropriate eating and self-help skills.

PreK-3 Food & Snack Schedule

PreK-3 students will have:

- **Morning Snack**
- **Lunch**

Snack & Water Time

PreK-3 students will have approximately **20–25 minutes** for handwashing, snack, and water time.

Snack Choices

PreK-3 students will be provided with a **choice of one snack**.

As children progress through PreK-3, teachers will encourage them to begin opening

their own snacks and containers whenever developmentally appropriate. This helps children strengthen their fine-motor skills and develop a sense of independence.

PreK-4 Food & Snack Schedule

Daily Food Schedule

PreK-4 students will have:

- **Lunch**
- **Afternoon Snack following nap time**

Morning Breakfast Reminder

Because our VPK Instructional Program does not allow us to provide a snack period during instructional hours between 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. PreK-4 families are asked to please ensure that their child eats a balanced and nutritious breakfast before arriving at school.

A balanced breakfast helps provide children with the energy and nutrients they need to participate successfully in their morning instructional activities.

Afternoon Snack & Water Time

PreK-4 students will have approximately **15 minutes** for handwashing, afternoon snack, and water time.

Snack Choices

PreK-4 students will be provided with a **choice of one snack**.

-Please note water breaks are open to students throughout the day as requested.

-Children will always receive assistance from a teacher if they are unable to open their snack independently.

Encouraging Independence at Mealtimes

Mealtimes are an important opportunity for children to practice independence, develop fine-motor skills, make appropriate choices, and learn healthy eating habits. Teachers will encourage children to participate in age-appropriate self-help tasks while providing assistance whenever needed.

Families are encouraged to send food in containers and packaging that their child can reasonably manage independently based on their developmental level.

Thank you for partnering with us to provide our preschoolers with safe, nutritious, and positive mealtime experiences. Your support in preparing age-appropriate foods and providing balanced meals and snacks helps us create a healthy and successful environment for every child.

Medications

Students are not permitted to carry or distribute any prescription or non-prescription drugs or treatments, including aspirin, on school grounds or at any school function. The administering of medicine to a child is a parental responsibility and should not be delegated to school personnel except under unusual circumstances. Parents should ask their physician if it is possible to prescribe medication so that it can be administered at home. Only when absolutely necessary is the school willing to accept responsibility for administering medications, and under the following guidelines:

1. An “Authorization for Medication” form must be completed and submitted by a parent or legal guardian of the student. The name of the medication and dosage should be indicated on the form.

2. Medication to be taken by the student must be personally brought by the parent or guardian to the school office. (DO NOT SEND ANY MEDICATION IN YOUR CHILDS BOOKBAG) Medications to be dispensed at school must be labeled with the child’s name and exact dosage. The name and telephone number of the physician should also be on the label. Students may not bring the medication to school alone.

3. If a student must take any medication during the school day, the medication must be kept with the school office and the student will be taken to the office to have the medication administered there.

4. Parents are responsible for picking up any remaining medication at the end of the school year.

Sick Child Policy

Children will inevitably be exposed to germs and things that can make them ill. We cannot prevent illness but measures will be taken to reduce the spread of disease whenever possible.

Please make arrangements to keep ill children home so they may rest and recover fully before returning to our active center. Illnesses such as not limited to:

-fever (Temp 100 or above)

- vomiting

-diarrhea

- rash (undiagnosed, other than diaper rash)

- conjunctivitis (pink eye)

-lice

-contagious viruses' etc.

If your child shows any signs of illness as stated above you will be called to pick up the child as soon

as possible. Children may return to school 24 hours after no fever is indicated without the use of medication.

● **Health & Safety Practices**

○ Frequent handwashing is practiced daily.

○ Monthly emergency drills are conducted to ensure preparedness.

● **Exposure Notifications**

If a child in the program is diagnosed with a communicable illness, parents will be notified with the illness name and symptoms for awareness.

We need to work together. This is a courtesy to other parents and will ensure the good health of everyone. On the days that your child is ill and will not be attending school, please notify the school before 9:00 am or with an email to our Prekindergarten Director Mrs. Quesada.

nquesada@gscsrams.org

Parent Appointments

The teachers are truly your partners in preparing your child in his/her life's work. Sometimes it becomes necessary for both of you to meet. If you wish to see a teacher, please feel free to call the office or send a note and an appointment that is mutually agreed upon will be set up for you. For the student's safety teachers cannot meet with any parents during drop off or dismissal time.

Parent/Teacher Communications

A monthly school calendar and weekly newsletter will be posted. Also check the parent portal on our website for other important information. You can also contact us via email: office@gscsrams.org

Your child will be provided a home folder to send work and notes to and from school. Anything you send to school (notes, checks, etc.) need to be in the folder. Email is also a great way to communicate with your child's teacher. Do not put notes inside the lunch box or loose in the child's book bag. Please check the home folder every day.

Please inform us of any special situations, which may affect your child's behavior or health. Sometimes even the smallest change in a child's life may affect him/her in a very large way. We want to be sensitive to each child and their individual needs.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Your child will receive a progress report at the end of each quarter. Parent/Teacher conferences will be at the end of the first and third quarter, During the second quarter the progress report will be sent home.

Photos/Videos

Good Shepherd Catholic School reserves the right to use student or parent photos in any school publication and on the school's website. Occasionally photos are sent to the media or the media is invited to the school to celebrate student accomplishments and activities. Any parent who does not wish his or her child's picture or video to be used accordingly must notify the school's principal in writing prior to the beginning of the school year.

Parents, by executing this acknowledgement of receipt of this handbook, Herby release the school, the Archdiocese of Miami, and their corporate members, employees, and agents, from any claims or liabilities that allegedly arise from or are related to the use of student or parent photos.

Possessions from home Jewelry/ Hair Accessories

Please be very careful with small hair accessories for the girls. Jewelry can be dangerous if it breaks and could end up in a child's mouth. Girls must wear post earrings.

Toys from home are not allowed to be brought to school. Your child's teacher will let you know if they are having a special day for the children to bring something to share. Guns, Knives, and other war type toys may **NEVER** be brought to school.

School Sponsored Events

The school does not sponsor, oversee, or in any way control parties or social functions at private residences. School-sanctioned events are specifically identified in this Handbook or are identified as such in written notices generated and distributed by the school.

Parents, by executing this acknowledgement of receipt of this Handbook, HERBEY RELEASE the school, the Archdiocese of Miami, and their corporate members, employees, and agents, from any claims or liabilities that allegedly arise from or are related to attendance at parties or social functions at private residences or from attendance at functions not sponsored by the school. Students engaged in conduct that is contrary to the mission and philosophy of the school may be subject to disciplinary action regardless of whether the conduct occurred at a school sponsored function.

Severe Weather Policies

In the event of severe weather conditions, we will follow the Dade County Public School System. The Archdiocese may supersede decisions if they decide to. Always stay tuned to the news broadcast stations to remain advised of the opening and closing of schools.

Emergency Closure Communication Plan

In the event of an emergency, designated Crisis Response Team personnel will contact parents and guardians through Power Schools.

Testifying in Divorce or Custody Proceedings

The Catholic Church recognizes marriage as a Sacrament. In the Union of Christian spouses, the sacrament of Matrimony celebrates the relationship of Christ to the Church. Therefore, the school strongly supports the Sacrament of Matrimony as the foundation of family life and of the domestic Church. In recognition of the importance of the matrimonial sacrament to the Catholic faith, Parents agree not to compel the attendance, testimony, or deposition of any school or church employee in any divorce, custody, or other legal proceedings, which may in any way involve the dissolution of marriage or the determination of parental/custody rights.

In the event that a parent or legal guardian breaches this policy, any school or church personnel who are required to attend legal proceedings may be represented by an attorney. In addition, any and all legal fees and costs incurred by the school will be charged and become the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.

School Supplies

Besides the materials that are provided in the school, your child will need the items requested by your child's teacher. Please label everything with your child's full name.

Nap Sac

Attached is the Link to purchase the Nap Sac for you Pre-K Student. The NAP SAC is a package that contains the following items: 1 Custom-made sheet for Cot, 1 Pillow with pillowcase, 1 White thermal blanket, 1 Bag to carry all items. This is a MANDATORY item. NO PERSONAL BEDDING, ACCESSORIES, OR STUFFED ANIMALS ARE ALLOWED! https://form.jotform.com/241764107797163

Ram Lamb Prep Contact Information:

Melissa Hernandez, Proud Principal: m.hernandez@gscsrams.org

Nicole Quesada, Director of Ram Lamb Prep: nquesada@gscsrams.org

Mrs. Rebeca Briceno, PK-2 Teacher: PK2@gscsrams.org

Mrs. Luz Zapata Cardona, PK-2 Teacher Aide: lzapata@gscsrams.org

Mrs. Gaby Sanchez, PK-3 Teacher: PK3@gscsrams.org

Mrs. Rossmarit Guissepe, PK-3 Teacher Aide: rguiseppe@gscsrams.org

Mrs. Luisa Kennedy, PK-4 Teacher: vpk@gscsrams.org

Mrs. Dany Mora PK-4 Teacher Aide: dmora@gscsrams.org

School Office: (305)385-7002

Email: office@gscsrams.org

Follow us on Instagram: @good_Shepherd_cs

The School/Principal retains the right to amend the handbook for just cause. Parents will be notified through the school Portal if changes are made.