

HIGHLAND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PRESCHOOL

Family Handbook



2026-27

Dear Families,

Highland Preschool provides classes for children three through five years old, including children with special needs. The classrooms are staffed with wonderful early childhood professionals who provide an exciting and warm environment for young children.

Curriculum decisions are based on the Ohio Department Of Education Early Learning and Developmental Standards in the areas of Social-Emotional Development, Approaches Toward Learning, Cognitive Development and General Knowledge, Language and Literacy Development and Physical Well-Being and Motor Development. The standards are aligned to the Creative Curriculum that the teachers use to make learning developmentally appropriate and fun.

This Family Handbook provides families a description of policies and procedures to keep you as informed as possible about Highland Preschool. We have included information concerning the most common questions that families have asked in the past and guidelines for policies and procedures to help business run as smoothly as possible.

Please take a few minutes to review the Handbook and keep it in a safe place for future reference. If you find you have a question that is not answered in the handbook, please call Jessica Litzenberg, Preschool Director for the district, who can be contacted by calling Highland Elementary at 419-768-3040.

Best,

Jessica Litzenberg
Curriculum Director/Preschool Director
Highland Local Schools

HIGHLAND PRESCHOOL

CLASSES:

Monday – Thursday

A.M Session: 8:40 a.m. –11:30 a.m.

P.M Session: 12:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

ELEMENTARY/PRESCHOOL BUILDING:

1250 Twp. Rd. 16

Marengo, OH 43334

419-768-3040

Jessica Litzenberg, Curriculum Director/Preschool Director

419-768-3040

HIGHLAND ELEMENTARY:

419-768-3040

HIGHLAND DISTRICT OFFICE:

419-768-2206

MISSION STATEMENT

Personalizing learning for each student.

VISION STATEMENT

The students of Highland Local Schools will be well prepared, self-aware, and independent learners.

PHILOSOPHY

We believe that each child is a unique individual with an unlimited capacity for learning. We believe that young children learn optimally through interactions with peers, with adults, and with their physical environment. Since children learn through play experiences in which they connect past experiences to new experiences, our role as a preschool staff is to provide an environment that is responsive to the children. The focus in early childhood is on the process children use when learning within this environment. Knowledge gained is a result of participation in these processes and will vary according to their needs. Together, with parents and other community resources, the school coordinates the efforts for the optimal education of children.

PROGRAM

The preschool program provides both an integrated and general education early childhood setting in which children of various backgrounds and needs engage in developmentally appropriate activities and practices. Play serves as a vital learning activity. Self-esteem, socialization and appreciation of differences are valued outcomes.

Classrooms are divided into interest centers, such as art, dramatic play, block building, manipulatives, language, sensory motor, etc. The materials and activities at each interest center are individualized by staff for the children. Activities alternate, and time is set aside for the children to meet as a group with the teacher for planned circle activities. Self-help activities are also addressed. Through play and self-initiated learning, the children refine the social/emotional, motor, thinking and language skills necessary for success in school.

GOALS

Primary goals of the Early Childhood Program are:

- Provide an environment that respects children
- Foster the development of positive self-esteem
- Support and promote positive relationships with peers and adults
- Facilitate and encourage the construction of knowledge within an integrated curriculum
- Plan and implement a wide variety of multi-age, multi-level materials and activities
- Offer opportunities for children's active exploration of their environment through play
- Model and promote opportunities for large motor activities and healthy choices
- Maintain confidentiality surrounding children and their families
- Prepare children for kindergarten through academics, motor control and socialization

CURRICULUM

Our preschool program uses a thoughtfully selected curriculum to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning. We implement Scholastic PreK My Way, which provides engaging, research-based lessons that support the development of language, literacy, math, and social-emotional skills through hands-on exploration and purposeful play. In addition, we incorporate Heggerty to strengthen early literacy by focusing on phonemic awareness skills such as rhyming, segmenting, and blending sounds. Together, these programs allow us to meet children where they are developmentally while nurturing curiosity, confidence, and a love of learning in a structured yet flexible environment.. The curriculum aligns with the Ohio Department of Education's Early Learning and Developmental Standards. These standards provide the guidelines for what children should know and be able to do by the time they enter kindergarten. Modifications are made for special needs children based on their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Teachers will also use additional resources to guide their daily planning. They often select projects and topics based on the interest of the children. The day will include circle time for group learning activities, structured play time and large/ small motor development.

ELIGIBILITY

Children are eligible for enrollment in the program if they will be three years of age. All children will go through a screening process prior to entering the program. Eligibility for children with special needs will be determined by the rule for Education of Preschool Children with Disabilities Served by Public Schools (Chapter 3301-31).

ENROLLMENT/ATTENDANCE/WITHDRAWAL

To be considered for enrollment in the Preschool Program, parents need to complete an application found or on our website <https://highland.k12.oh.us/schools/preschool/>. Students are placed on the waiting list in the order they are received. Priority may be given to students who are four or five years old to ensure they have a preschool experience prior to entering Kindergarten.

ENROLLMENT AND MEDICAL POLICY

The Ohio Department of Education Rules for Preschool Programs require that each child have the following on file:

1. Application to the program (completed upon initial enrollment)
2. Background Information (completed and updated yearly)
3. Child Release Information (completed yearly)
4. Parent permission for pictures, field trips and a parent roster (completed yearly)
5. Emergency Medical Form (completed yearly)
6. Copy of Birth Certificate (completed upon initial enrollment)
7. Copy of Custody Papers, if applicable (upon initial enrollment or when changes occur)
8. A medical form completed by a licensed physician prior to the date of admission or not later than thirty days after admission thirteen months from the date of examination thereafter.
9. Physicians and dentist authorization and written instructions to administer prescription, and over the counter medication to a child enrolled in the program if needed.
10. Immunization records showing all immunizations are current. A copy is due to the teacher on the first day of school.

CUSTODY AGREEMENTS/GUARDIANS

Under the law of the State of Ohio, both parents have the right to pick up their child from preschool unless a court document restricts that right.

All enrolled students whose parents operate under the guidance of a custody agreement directed by the courts must provide custody papers to the school. Students who live with guardians or in foster care are required to provide school with court documents also. These court documents will remain in the student's file for documentation purposes. If at any time a question arises regarding transportation, enrollment, medical issues, etc., the staff will operate under the guidance of custody papers provided to the school. The custodial parent will be communicated with by the school. It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to communicate with the non-custodial parent regarding items affecting the enrolled child. If a non-custodial parent would like information sent directly to them, they must provide a written request to the teacher providing what information they would like and contact information.

ABSENCES

If your child is absent from school, you must call the school to report absence and send a note with the child the next day that includes the date he/she was absent, reason and a parent signature.

PRESCHOOL STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance by all students is very important and is strongly encouraged. Please refer to the school calendar. In keeping with compliance with the Missing Child Act, please call to report your child's absence and the reason why. In many cases, irregular attendance is the major reason for poor achievement.

If irregular attendance occurs, the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be contacted and/or counseled. If the child's lack of attendance is the result of an accident/injury or illness, then please contact the preschool and arrangements will be made for your child. If irregular attendance continues and is at 50 percent (%) or less for two consecutive months, then the child may be removed from the program. Our preschool program has a waiting list. It is unfair to have children on a waiting list when an enrolled child is not attending.

WITHDRAWAL

Parents are asked to notify the Preschool Director at 419-768-3040 or preschool@hlsd.us, if they intend to withdraw from class. Parents/Guardians will be responsible for tuition for that current month. If the withdrawal is due to moving to another preschool program, records will be transferred as outlined in the transition section.

WAITING LIST

A student is placed on the waiting list when the classrooms are at capacity. The students are placed according to the date received. The parents will be contacted if an opening becomes available during the school year. Parents can choose not to place their child in the program during the current school year and ask to keep their child's name on the waiting list until the next school year.

TOILETING

Unless indicated on a child's Individual Education Plan (IEP), your child must be toilet trained to attend preschool. Your child may still need assistance with buttons or snaps and the teacher will assist them in these areas. The child must be able to recognize when they need to use the restroom and be able to take care of their toileting needs, such as wiping.

The teachers recognize accidents do happen and request that an extra change of clothes be sent to school. If accidents continue on a regular basis, parents will be notified and a meeting will be arranged to discuss concerns. The child may not be ready to be *independent in toileting and may need to wait to continue preschool.*

Behavior Management/ Discipline Policy

Purpose:

The behavior policy of Highland Preschool is to consistently reinforce social behavior and encourage a spirit of learning. We encourage parents to take an interest in children's efforts to learn in an environment of respect and cooperation. We believe that children expect and want limits. The purpose of behavior support is to promote a safe and healthy environment for the protection of the students and staff. The overall goal is to provide the students with an environment conducive for learning.

General Intervention Strategies:

Within the school environment, the preschool program uses a variety of teaching strategies throughout the day which act to increase or decrease behaviors. The staff's first goal is to prevent inappropriate behaviors from occurring by giving the child more choices in his/her setting and by providing interesting and meaningful activities in their learning environment. Secondly, the preschool staff wants to develop and maintain appropriate behaviors by using positive approaches.

The preschool program's actual methods of discipline shall apply to all persons on the premises and shall be restricted as follows:

1. There shall be no cruel, harsh, corporal punishment or any unusual punishment such as, but not limited to, punching, pinching, shaking, spanking or biting.
2. No discipline shall be delegated to any other child.
3. No physical restraints shall be used to confine a child by any means other than holding a child for a short period of time, such as a protective hold, so the child may regain control.
4. No child shall be placed in a locked room or confined in an enclosed area such as a closet, a box or a similar cubicle.
5. No child shall be subjected to profane language, threats, derogatory remarks about himself or his family or other verbal abuse.
6. Discipline shall not be imposed on a child for failure to eat or toileting accidents.
7. Techniques of discipline shall not humiliate, shame or frighten a child.
8. Discipline shall not include withholding food, rest or toilet use.
9. Separation, when used as discipline, shall be brief in duration and appropriate to the child's age and developmental ability and the child shall be within sight and hearing of a preschool staff member in a safe, lighted and well ventilated space.
10. The center shall not abuse or neglect children and shall protect children from abuse and neglect while in attendance in the preschool program.

When inappropriate/disruptive behaviors continue they may require additional intervention strategies. The purpose of these intervention strategies is to decrease inappropriate behaviors. Sometimes problem behaviors may require highly restrictive procedures because the behavior is a danger to the child or others. These strategies will only be used when other techniques have been ineffective. Some of these strategies include:

1. Time outs in which a staff member has to move the child to another area or room.
2. Withholding of routinely given activities.
3. Protective hold.

If any of these three strategies are used consistently, the parent will be contacted and a behavior plan will be developed. If you have any questions or concerns about the preschool behavior management guidelines, please consult with the classroom teacher or preschool director.

SAFETY OF CHILDREN

- Children will be supervised by a staff member at all times throughout the day.
- A monthly fire drill, tornado drills (during required months), and yearly lockdown drill will be held.
- Emergency plans are posted in the classrooms in the event of a tornado or fire. A staff member trained in first aid, CPR and recognition of communicable diseases is available at all times. A first aid kit is always on site.

ILLNESS AND EMERGENCIES

If a child becomes sick, runs a temperature at school or shows signs of a communicable disease or illness, the parent or legal guardian will be called immediately so the child can be picked up and health needs properly met. We do not have the facilities to care for a sick child at school.

If your child is absent because of a contagious illness, please contact the Preschool Director or Highland School Nurse. A doctor's excuse is required for your child to return to school. We request that you not bring your child to school if he/she is running a temperature or has any condition to which you would not want your own child exposed. Students are not to return to school until at least 24 hours after a fever has ended.

In case of a sudden illness or serious accident, a parent or legal guardian will be notified immediately. Be sure the emergency contact number is current at all times. **A child may not be allowed to attend preschool without at least two current emergency numbers.** If a parent, legal guardian or family doctor cannot be located when a severe emergency develops, the child will be taken to the hospital emergency room by ambulance. The Highland Preschool will not assume responsibility for the payment of hospital, doctor or ambulance fees. **Please inform staff if your phone number changes anytime during the year.**

CURRENT HEALTH PHYSICAL

All students must have on file with the preschool a current Health Physical. The physical may not be more than a year old. If your child's physical comes due in the middle of the year- you will need to provide us with a current physical. This is a state law for preschools. Please keep this up to date with the preschool, you can get a form for your doctor to fill out from your preschool teacher. If your child's physical is not up to date, you will be asked to keep your child at home until we get a current physical.

MEDICATION

The Highland Preschool Program discourages the dispensing of medication to students while at school. In those cases where medications must be administered during the school day, the following restrictions apply:

Prescription medications:

By Ohio Law, prescription medicine can only be administered when a physician's order is on file at the school. This form must be signed by both the physician and the parent/guardian. **New medication forms, available from the Elementary School office, must be submitted each school year, as well as any changes in medication orders.** Please note that inhaled medications, such as those used in the treatment of asthma, are considered prescription medicines and therefore also require a signed form.

Also remember that:

- Students are not allowed to administer medications to themselves. The school nurse or their designee will perform this task in accordance with the physician's instructions.
- Medication must be in the original container with the student's name and directions for administration clearly visible.

Non-prescription medications:

The use of over-the-counter medications is discouraged in the preschool and will only be dispensed by the school nurse or their designee when a physician's written request is on file in the preschool office. All other requirements outlined under Prescription Medication above also apply.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

- oral temperature of 99 degrees or over
- skin rash
- vomiting two or more times in the same day
- evidence of lice
- sore throat
- swollen glands
- abdominal pain
- watery eyes
- cough
- runny nose
- ear aches
- diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool within a 24 hour period)
- severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or make a whooping sound
- difficult or rapid breathing
- yellowish skin or eyes
- conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- untreated infected skin patches
- unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
- stiff neck

A physician's statement may be required to verify that an illness or condition is not or is no longer contagious.

LICE POLICY

Periodic head checks are made in the classroom throughout the year. If it is found that your child has live head lice then you will need to pick him/her up at the school immediately (Please make sure to have current emergency contact numbers on file at all times). Your child will need to be treated with the appropriate shampoo and all of the nits (eggs) removed from his/her hair. Before your child may return to school, he/she must be brought in and checked by the nurse or designated personnel and found to be lice free.

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

According to Ohio Law, persons whose duties bring them into contact with children are expressly required to report immediately instances of suspected child abuse or neglect. Some of those people are teachers, school employees and school administrators.

ARRIVAL TO PRESCHOOL

School supervision begins at 8:40 a.m. for the morning class and at 12:15 p.m. for the afternoon class. The Highland Preschool doors will open at 8:35 am and at 12:10 pm for dropping off your child. Staff members are not available to monitor students before drop-off time. **Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.**

FOR YOUR CHILD'S PROTECTION

When not riding the school bus, we will only release your child to you or persons who are designated by you on your child's enrollment form. If you desire someone other than these designated persons to pick up your child, you must notify the school in advance in writing. Please have that person present a photo I.D. to the teacher. Morning session begins at 8:40 a.m. and is over at 11:30 a.m. Afternoon session begins at 12:15 p.m. and is over at 3:00 p.m. Please do not bring children early and please pick up promptly, as we have no facilities for taking care of children beyond the designated times. If your child is not picked up in a timely fashion, then Children's Services may be contacted. Parents/Guardians must enter Highland Elementary with their child when arriving for class. Children arriving or departing to/from class are to be signed in/out by the adult bringing them/picking them up.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

The Highland Preschool encourages family visitors and volunteers. Family members are always welcome to share their time, hobbies or talents in the classroom; and assist on advisory boards (Highland PAC). Parent conferences, family workshops and socials may be planned throughout the year. When you spend time with your children at school, you are demonstrating your interest and commitment to their education.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

Any parent of a child enrolled in the program will be permitted access to the school during its hours of operation to contact his/her child, to evaluate the program environment or for other purposes approved by the Preschool Director. Upon entering the premises, please sign in.

NUTRITION (SNACK)

Snack is a time of practicing social, fine motor and many other skills at preschool. Children engage in conversation, manners, helping others and serving themselves to name a few. All families will be asked to provide snacks for the class at some point. Please bring in snacks that are simple and nutritious. You will need to bring a snack that meets **two of the five food groups**. The food groups are: dairy, vegetable, protein, fruits, bread. We will be cautious about your child's food allergies. If the allergy is severe, we will share the information with the class or school.

Some snack suggestions are (please pick 2 of the food groups):

Dairy Cheese/low fat string cheese Yogurt Cottage Cheese	Fruit Applesauce, Raisins Strawberries, Oranges, Grapes Bananas	Bread Animal Crackers Mini Bagels Crackers (saltine/graham) Pretzels Popcorn
Protein Peanut Butter on celery/crackers Trail Mix (w/nuts) sliced/cubed deli meats	Vegetable Carrots, Celery Broccoli Cauliflower, Cucumbers	

PARENT CONFERENCES

Conferences with parents about their child's educational growth and social development will be held during the fall and spring. If you require a special time for a conference, please contact your child's teacher. Additional conferences may be scheduled at the request of the parent or teacher. Annual IEP meetings will be scheduled for children on an IEP.

NOTICES SENT HOME

Sending a backpack or book bag (with your child's name written on it) each day will help ensure that children's work and important messages from the teacher get to you safely.

FIELD TRIPS

Preschool classes may take educational field trips throughout the year. If so, your child's teacher will send permission forms home with your child at that time. Transportation may or may not be provided.

CLOTHING

Please dress children appropriately for school and label all clothing to be worn outdoors. Clothing should be comfortable and suitable for playing. It is helpful to the staff and best for your child to have clothing he/she can manage on his/her own. During the day, the child will be running, painting, climbing, etc. Please send your child in play clothes. If you send your child in a dress, please make sure she wears shorts underneath. Your cooperation is asked in making sure your child comes to school with proper footwear. Tennis shoes are best. Please no flip flops. Accidents do happen and therefore parents need to provide a complete extra set of clothing, including pants, shirt, underwear and socks that are suitable for the season.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

All children will be expected to participate in outdoor play during the school year. The decision to remain indoors when the weather is inclement will be based on temperature, wind chill factor and precipitation. In cold weather, please dress students appropriately. Students will not be permitted to remain in the classroom unsupervised.

TUITION PAYMENT

There is no fee for children under an IEP, whose admission is determined by state and local criteria. Typically developing children pay tuition to Highland Local Schools. The preschool tuition amount during the 2026-27 school year will be **\$225** per month.

1. The monthly fee is **DUE** on the **5th of the month** September-May. (or the start of school)
2. If a financial difficulty arises, you are responsible for contacting the Preschool Director for other arrangements for your child to be able to continue to attend our preschool. If tuition becomes one month behind, the family will be notified. A payment arrangement should be made at that time. If parents fail to make the arrangements, the child may be asked not to return to the program until payment is made in full or special arrangements have been made. **Parents who pay tuition are required to sign a service contract.**
3. There will be no refunds of tuition for early withdrawals or for calamity delays/closures.
4. After **FIVE** calamity days, the preschool class missed will be made up on the following Friday(s). Specific information will be communicated via email to parents/families by the Preschool Director.

EMERGENCY PRESCHOOL CLOSINGS:

When Highland Local Schools are closed or delayed, then the preschool is also closed or delayed. You will not see a separate listing for the preschool. . You can sign up for alerts on district closure at:

<https://go.schoolmessenger.com/#/home>

It is important to keep your phone number up to date so the alert system can notify you of any closing or delay.

Two-Hour Delay

In the event of a two-hour delay, our preschool schedule will be adjusted to ensure a safe and smooth start to the day.

Morning preschool will begin at 10:40 a.m. and dismiss at 12:00 p.m.

Afternoon preschool will run from 12:35 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Families should plan for the later start time and adjusted transitions. This modified schedule allows us to maintain a consistent routine for students while accommodating weather or other delays.

Calamity Days

If more than **five** calamity days are used during the school year, any additional missed preschool days will be made up on the following Friday. Families will be notified of these make-up days through email communication from the Preschool Director. This approach helps ensure that students receive the full benefit of instructional time while keeping families informed and able to plan accordingly. No refunds will be issued for calamity days.

TOYS AND NOVELTIES

Students are not to bring balls, toys and novelties to school unless the teacher permits it for a specific activity. Such playthings can create classroom disruptions and/or cause serious injury to other students. No toy guns, knives, swords, etc. are permitted at school. All items brought to school are the sole responsibility of the student and will be confiscated if not allowed or misused. We provide all equipment necessary for your child's enjoyment at outdoor play. Please remind your child to leave his/her toys at home.

TRANSITIONS/ TRANSFER OF RECORDS

Transitions happen everyday in a child's life. Children transition from one activity to another in the classroom. A few major transitions happen when a family moves from one school district to another or when a preschooler is ready to go to kindergarten in the fall. We believe in making the transition as smooth as possible. When a family moves from one school district to another the director or teacher will assist in the transition process. New students will be introduced to the classroom, students and staff members. The teacher will share information and routines with the family. Parents will need to provide enrollment paperwork prior to attending. If the child is enrolling from another school a records release request will need to be filled out.

Transitions to kindergarten will begin in January before the child is kindergarten eligible. Parents of students who are not on an IEP will meet with the classroom teacher during parent teacher conferences to discuss transition and readiness for kindergarten. Preschoolers with special needs will follow the Ohio Department of Education rules. The team, which includes the parents, teacher, therapists, school district representative and preschool coordinator will meet and discuss progress and readiness for kindergarten. A re-evaluation and or IEP may be required to ensure that a smooth and seamless transition to school aged services is achieved.

Students who move to another district are asked to inform the preschool coordinator. Transfer of school records will be made upon request of parents and the new school district.

The permanent records for preschoolers transitioning to kindergarten will be transferred at the end of the year to the home school of the prospective kindergartener.

NO WEAPONS POLICY

Pursuant to Ohio's Revised Code, no person shall knowingly possess, have under the person's control, convey or attempt to convey a deadly weapon or dangerous ordinance onto the premises. A valid license does not authorize the licensee to carry a weapon onto the premises.

BUSSED STUDENTS: (Bussing is ONLY offered/provided for students on an IEP)

The times of pick up and drop off are very important in maintaining a schedule convenient for all participants. Please have your child ready 15 minutes before his/her scheduled pick up and make sure you are available 15 minutes prior to his/her scheduled drop off. In the event that there is no response at a designated pick up, drivers have been instructed to sound the horn twice (2), wait (1) minute and then proceed with the route. You may call the bus office directly to cancel the bus in the event of illness or absence of another sort. Do not tell or call the driver asking them to relay messages regarding your child. Call the Elementary Office 419-768-3040. Highland Bus Garage: 419-768-7631

OMBUDSMAN:

An ombudsman is a public official appointed to investigate parent's complaints or serious concerns with policy at the school level. The following is the Highland Preschool plan for parent's concerns:

- 1) Classroom Teacher
- 2) Preschool Coordinator/Elementary Office, 419-768-3040
- 3) Highland District Office, 419-768-2206
- 4) Ohio Department of Education, 614-466-0224

**VERIFICATION THAT THE PRESCHOOL PARENT HAS RECEIVED AND REVIEWED
THE CONTENTS OF THIS HANDBOOK.**

I acknowledge that I have received the current Preschool Parent Handbook, have reviewed its contents, and my questions have been answered.

Name of Student

Signature of Parent

Date