



Welcome to Acorn to Oaks!

Acorns to Oaks Preschool program offers age-appropriate curriculum and learning center-based classrooms in an interactive environment for exploring new horizons. We are a nine-month program offered Monday - Thursday to children ages 18 months through Pre-Kindergarten.

Our goal is to meet the needs of young children and their families by providing a program that addresses all areas of development—intellectual, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual. We strive to give children an early love for Jesus and the church while children learn to interact with their peers away from their parents. We know and believe God has handpicked you to be the amazing parents of your precious children and our goal is to support you and collaborate with you.

GENERAL INFORMATION

School Calendar: We will provide a school calendar. **Updates or changes are published in our monthly newsletters, and you will be notified by e-mail.** We look at many of the local school district calendars to determine and align the calendar and closings. We know that school closings may interfere with family schedules, and we apologize in advance for any inconvenience that this may cause.

Professional Development: Acorns to Oaks recognizes the need to provide quality education and care for all children and teachers involved in our program. Each teacher is required to participate in 24 hours of professional development on an annual basis, including 1 hour on the prevention and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

The Daily Program and Teaching Strategies: The administrators, teachers, and parents of the program share commitment to provide a top-quality Early Childhood Program that reflects knowledge of and respect for the unique learning styles of young children.

The following ideas are intrinsic to Acorns to Oaks:

- Young children thrive in a warm and loving environment. The staff's commitment is to provide an environment where children may become comfortable, happy, relaxed, and involved in classroom activities.
- The daily schedule provides for a balance of individual/group activities, active/quiet play, large/small exercises, and indoor/outdoor learning experiences. Activities at each age-level are carefully planned to be developmentally appropriate.
- Young children expend vast amounts of energy, time, and effort exploring and making sense of their immediate environment. The staff supports and encourages this spontaneous learning by providing a meaningful classroom setting and by taking advantage of teachable moments.
- The staff respects the concept that young children learn by doing and therefore provide hands-on learning experiences. Many sensory experiences are also planned so that children will have opportunities to touch, hear, see, smell, and taste as their perceptual abilities are developing.
- Classrooms are busy, noisy, happy, creative places where play is valued as a vehicle for learning and advancement in all areas of development.
- Young children learn through self-initiated and staff-initiated activities. Learning centers are provided to give children opportunities to make choices, solve problems, and experiment with autonomy. Circle Times and group activities are also an important part of each day. Here the children learn how to participate in a group setting while listening to stories, singing songs, or sharing ideas.
- Good health, cleanliness, and nutrition are emphasized.
- The teachers and staff strive to implement these and other good practices of Early Childhood Education in a positive atmosphere.

Christian Education: Christian Education is seen as a vital part of the daily program. Children will pray before meals, sing songs to God, celebrate major holidays of the Church year, and hear stories suitable for their age. Christian values will be honored in our curriculum and modeled in our behavior.

Our children will enjoy a Children's Chapel once a week during the school year. The children will sing songs and hear stories from the Bible.

Guidance and Discipline Policies: We are committed to helping children learn to express and manage their feelings, cooperate with other children, and negotiate their own conflicts.

We believe discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child.
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements
- Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age

Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L, Discipline and Guidance

The goal of guidance at Acorns to Oaks is to teach the child acceptable behavior while helping him/her to become self-guided/self-disciplined. Early childhood is a time of both emotional and cognitive growth. During this time children are just beginning to learn how to resolve conflicts in their daily lives. In the younger end, many children do not have the verbal skills to resolve these conflicts and will resort to physical means to get their point across. This is considered developmentally appropriate and in these situations the teachers and parents must work together to teach/model correct behavior.

TUITION

Tuition: Tuition rates are established by Austin Oaks Church and vary depending upon the child/teacher ratios required for each age-level. These rates may be adjusted on an annual basis as determined by the church. Tuition is figured on an equal monthly basis and will not be reduced due to student absences, vacations, weather-related closures, or school holidays.

September 1st rates are as follows:

- **Registration Fee** \$200 due at registration to guarantee child's spot.
- **Supply Fee (Due at registration)** \$200 a year for 2 days a week
\$300 a year for 4 days a week
- **Monthly Tuition** (One month tuition will be due at time of registration)
 - **18 month –3 years** \$320/month (2 days M/W)
\$350/month (2 days T/TH)
\$525/month (4 days M-TH)
 - **4+ years** \$525/month (4 days M-TH)
 - **Sibling discount** \$20 off per month per child

>
PARENTS

Tuition Payment Policy:

Regular Payment Plan Schedule:

- Tuition is to be paid on the 1st of each month.
- Tuition will be paid by Tuition Express and will be automatically withdrawn on the 3rd of the month or the next business day.
- Late fees will be assessed beginning on the 5th of the month if fees are not paid.
- The initial late fee will be \$25.

If the account is not paid in full by the end of the month, the student's enrollment may be discontinued. Payment in full on the overdue account will reinstate the student only if space is available. If the payment is not made in full, the account will be turned over to a collection agency for recovery of funds.

*Please read and fill out the Tuition Express Form to allow for automated payment.

>
PARENTS

30-Day Notice: A 30-Day written notice is required when you are leaving the program. You can send an email to the director or assistant director or give a written statement to the receptionist. Failure to notify of the withdrawal may result in additional tuition charges.

>
PARENTS

Late Pick-Up: Pick-up time is **12:45 p.m.-1:00 p.m.** Please arrive on time to pick up your child or call to report that you may be late. Any child picked up after 1:00 p.m. will be charged a late fee of \$25.00 per offense. After 1:05 p.m. you will be assessed **\$1.00 per minute**. This will be assessed at next month's tuition due date. If you have two or more children, please plan to arrive early so that all your children are picked up on time.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Enrollment Procedures: Acorns to Oaks is open to all children regardless of race, ethnic origin, or religious preference. Parents of prospective students are encouraged to make an appointment to visit and observe the Preschool in session and to discuss any questions they might have with the Director.

To register a new or returning student into the program a completed Registration Packet is required, and the **non-refundable Supply Fee** must be paid at the time of registration.

*The children enrolled in our program must meet the applicable immunization requirements and vision/hearing screening requirements as outlined in: *Minimum Standards for Childcare - Sections 746.613–746.629*.

*Parents are responsible for providing any updated information.

Placement: Children are placed in classes according to their age as of September 1 of the current school year. Children entering the 18-month program must be able to walk. Children entering the 3-year-old program must be potty trained.

Promotion Policy: It is the policy of the program to promote children at the beginning of each school year.

Class Sizes:

18-24 mos. (8-10 children)
2+ years (10-12 children)
3+ year (12-15 children)
4+ years (14-16 children)

CURRICULUM

Acorns to Oaks Approach: The curriculum-based Preschool program is designed to address the cognitive, physical, social, and language development needs of the students. The environment is child-centered and one in which children learn through experience and discovery.

Curriculum Guides: The curriculum and lesson plans are based primarily on the Wee Learn series published by Lifeway in Nashville, TN. It is a Bible based curriculum that:

- Offers children choices in learning activities
- Provides hands-on learning experiences
- Provides opportunities for children to think and solve problems
- Provides foundational faith steps as well as foundational steps toward a love and eagerness for learning
- Gives children opportunity to grow, develop, and enjoy success

Specialty Areas:

Chapel - Children will attend chapel in the Bible room. This is a special time of praise and worship for the children that will include Bible stories, memory verses, prayer, songs and movement.

Gym Day/Scooter Day – Occasionally during inclement weather, classes will have Gym Time in lieu of outdoor play. Helmets are required for riding any type of scooter or tricycle. ATO will provide helmets for Gym Time. Additionally, ATO sometimes plans a special Scooter Day which is held outside. Helmets are required and should be supplied by the child for this particular day.

Water Activity – On occasion we will have special water activity play days.

My child CAN SWIM without assistance: **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

>
PARENTS

I give consent for my child to participate in the following water activities: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Water Table
- ☐ Sprinkler
- ☐ Splash Pad
- ☐ Small Wading Pool

Class Schedule: The teacher will prepare a daily schedule indicating when each circle time, academics period, or required subjects are taught. Copies are kept at the reception desk and posted in each classroom.

Homework: Preschool children will occasionally have homework, such as bringing an item in or wearing a certain color. Parents are encouraged to read to their child daily. Parent support and involvement in their child's education is vital to the child's success.

Nap: Children 18 months and older will not take a nap.

STUDENT LIFE

Adjustments to School: Adjustment to school is smoothest when preceded by an informal visit to the school. Children entering later in the year should also have an opportunity to visit the class with a parent before being left for a full day.

Always tell your child goodbye, even when he/she may have become involved in an activity. If there is a separation problem, teacher and parent may cue each other as to when the parent may leave. Generally, once the parent has exited, a child is easier to calm and integrate into the daily activities. **Please limit your drop-off to 5min.**

When a child is new, he/she may not readily participate in the class activities. Be aware of the activities on the weekly lesson plans posted outside each classroom so that you can ask relevant questions about your child's day.

Belongings from Home: Children are allowed and encouraged to bring items from home **to be shared at special times.**

Children are encouraged to bring items that they have made, found, or experienced.

All items from home must be labeled with the child's name. Items strictly prohibited include pretend weapons, make-up, candy, and gum. **Such items will be secured by the teacher and returned to the parent at the end of the day.**

Clothing: Children will be having fun exploring with a variety of materials. Children will play outside, use art materials and foods to learn. They should wear comfortable and washable clothing, as well as comfortable shoes. Please send your child in closed toe shoes every school day. Please provide a complete change of clothes each school day for your child including shirt, shorts/pants, undergarments and socks. Please make sure all items are labeled.

Potty Training: Acorns to Oaks teachers will support and encourage families during the potty-training process; however, it is not the teacher's responsibility alone to teach this essential life skill—it can only be achieved through a partnership with the parent.

>
PARENTS

Three's Class - It is required that all children in the three-year-old classes be toilet trained. Toilet trained means that the child can go to the restroom unassisted and be able to pull up his/her own pants. **Parents of a child who consistently soil his/her underwear will be asked to remove the child from the program.**

Birth-2 years - Children should remain in pull-ups or diapers until they have been successfully trained at home. Please notify the teachers when your child begins to wear underwear. Your child needs to be able to verbally communicate the need to use the restroom. There will be scheduled restroom breaks every two hours during the day, as well as reminders throughout.

We understand accidents happen and are to be expected. Children often show readiness and success at home before they are successful at school. There may be a time when your child does well at home but has many accidents at school. This is normal and seen quite often. Please send pull-ups and wipes during the training process and three sets of extra clothing. If there are two consecutive accidents in a day, we will use the pull-ups and try again another day.

Outdoor Participation: Outdoor play is an integral part of the child's day. Except in extreme weather, all children will participate in both inside and outside activities. Administration will determine outdoor activities based on several factors: temperature, wind chill, heat index, and age of the children. A written medical excuse from the child's physician must be provided if the child's outdoor play must be restricted.

Playground Rules:

- State Standards mandate that children be supervised at all times by an adult while on the playground.
- Children must wear closed-toed shoes on the playground.
- Signed permission slips are required to apply sunscreen and insect repellent that is supplied by the parent.

Attendance: Parents are responsible for children arriving to school on time. The early portion of the morning involves some of the most challenging activities of the day, at a time when children are most responsive. Punctual arrival allows the program to meet the children's needs more effectively.

- Children will be considered late at 9:15a.m. After 9:30a.m. they **WILL NOT** be allowed to join their class without advanced permission.
- If you have a scheduled reason your child will be late arriving to school, notify the director or front desk at least one day in advance to schedule a late arrival.
- Children **WILL NOT BE ALLOWED** to begin their day past 11:00a.m. regardless of reason.

Arrival and Departure: Because of our concern for the physical and emotional well-being of your children, we have established the following rules:

- Please remember to slow down and be cautious when driving through the parking lot. The speed limit is 5mph. The fire lane needs to remain open at all times, including inclement weather.
- For the safety of Acorns to Oaks children and staff, all students must enter through the assigned doors:
 - CEC – Courtyard door or playground door

- **Parents should closely accompany children from the minute they exit their car until they reach the entrance to their classroom. Please do not allow them to exit the car and run freely through the parking lot into the building. Please do not allow your children to run in the school hallways.**
- No child may be left unattended in a car for any length of time on the property.
- Children must be escorted into their classrooms and left with their teachers. Parents are required to check their child in and out each day at the receptionist desk.
- Children will only be released to the person(s) listed on the Release Form. Please see the receptionist if any addition or deletion needs to be made.
- **Once you check your child out for the day, we ask that you leave the building.** Children may not play in the classrooms as they have been sanitized and made ready for the next day.
- All glass doors will remain locked until 9:00 each morning—Classroom doors will be open at 9:00 a.m. Early arrivals will need to remain outdoors or in the lobby until the doors are opened.

Please alert your child's teacher to any change in your child's schedule and any unusual event or situation that might affect his/her day at school. We ask that you notify us if your child will not be attending due to vacation or illness.

Please keep in mind we do not pro-rate fees due to illness, vacation, or closings.

Parking Lot Safety Precautions: Normal traffic guidelines apply, but there are additional traffic rules which must be observed if we are to keep all the children safe.

- The speed limit in the parking lot is **5 MPH**.
- Do not double-park. Park only in designated spaces.
- The **"red zone"** is reserved for Emergency Vehicles **AT ALL TIMES**.
- Never leave children in the car unattended.
- Be aware of entrance and exit signs.
- **DO NOT PARK IN HANDICAP UNLESS AUTHORIZED. YOU COULD BE TOWED**

Pick-Up Authorization: Children are allowed to leave only with individuals on the Pick-up Authorization List. The parent/guardian must make arrangements with the office for additional individuals to take the child. Verbal permission is not acceptable. The parent must add the person to the list or send a written request specifying dates and times. Everyone picking up must provide a picture ID.

Lunches/Snacks: **Snacks, lunches and drinks will be provided daily by parents.** Food should be prepared in advance by parents and ready to serve. Microwaving will not be available. Children in the nursery classes will need to bring finger foods and spill proof cups. Children 2 and older must be able to feed themselves. Only infant rooms will be fed bottles or baby food where they will have access to a refrigerator. **NO GLASS CONTAINERS PLEASE.**

***Children should have breakfast before arriving. Please do not send your child to school with their breakfast. This applies to children of all ages.**

Morning snack time is on the daily schedule for every class, but this is NOT breakfast. Any child that is not present during this timeframe will miss the morning snack.

Acorns to Oaks is a Nut AWARE environment.

- **ATO is NOT a nut free environment.** You must notify the director and indicate on the admission information form if your child has a nut allergy.

Birthdays: Birthdays are an exciting time! If you would like to send a snack for your child's class on his/her birthday, please check with the teacher in advance. If you would like to pass out birthday invitations, you may do so if all of the children in the class are invited.

School Pictures: School pictures will be taken during the fall or spring. The pictures will be taken during the regular school day. You are under no obligation to purchase the pictures.

Water Activities: Children do not participate in water activities other than water tables in the classroom or outside in the courtyard.

Animals: All animals placed in classrooms as pets must follow the *Minimum Standards and Guidelines of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services - Sections 746.3901, 746.3903, and 746.3905.*

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Role of Parents: Quality Early Childhood Education occurs when parents, teachers, administrators, and the Congregation work together as a team. Your suggestions, comments, and goals are important. Parents are welcome to visit the office and discuss any questions or concerns with the Director.

Communicating with Teachers: If you need to contact a teacher, please call the office. Teachers are highly discouraged from answering texts, emails, or phone calls from parents on their private cell phones during the school-work day. Unauthorized use of a cell phone during work hours can result in dismissal.

Communication and Notification: The school uses email, bulletin boards, and other postings to notify parents of upcoming events and closings.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Custody Cases: Acorns to Oaks shall protect the safety and right of the child according to the court order. The school will not assume any legal responsibility or liability if such a document is not on file. Parents in these circumstances are advised to notify the Director or Assistant Director.

Licensing: Acorns to Oaks is currently not state licensed but adheres to the state of Texas' minimum standards. A copy of Minimum Standards is available for you to review in the Office and online at <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>. For other information call the childcare information hotline at (800)862-5252 or our local Licensing office at (512)908-9585.

Gang-Free Zone: Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of Austin Oaks Church and Acorns to Oaks is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

Breastfeeding: Parents who are breastfeeding may use the church's nursing mom's room. Parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child while in care.

Pest Control: As part of our commitment to provide your child with a safe, pest-free learning environment, Austin Oaks Church and Acorns to Oaks may periodically apply pesticides to help manage insects, weeds or pathogens. Pesticide applications are part of our integrated pest management (IPM) program, which relies largely on non-chemical forms of pest control. Pesticide applications on Austin Oaks Church property are made only by trained and

licensed technicians. Should you have any questions about the school's pest management program or wish to be notified in advance of pesticide applications, you may contact the school.

Child Abuse Prevention: We are invested in keeping children safe. If you suspect your child has been abused or neglected, report the situation immediately. Call the Abuse/Neglect Hotline at (800) 252-5400 or make a report through the DFPS's secure website: www.txabusehotline.org. Acorns to Oaks is obligated to report any evidence of child abuse or neglect, our staff receives annual training in the identification and prevention of child abuse.

Weather Related School Closing: You can watch local news for information about this or check our GroupMe page. If adverse weather conditions necessitate closing the school once classes have commenced our GroupMe page will be updated, and all parents will be notified that children are to be picked up immediately.

*If AISD is out of school for inclement weather, or they have a late start, ATO will be closed.

Emergency Preparedness Plan: (To receive or review detailed safety procedures please see the ATO director)

In Case of Fire: Staff will escort students outside via a predetermined route as posted in each classroom. All classes will meet in the south parking lot await further instruction.

In Case of Severe Weather: Staff will escort students to a predetermined room in the interior of the building posted in each classroom. Once sheltered, classes will await further instruction.

School Evacuation: In the event of the need to evacuate our building, the school staff will exit our building as they would during a fire drill and lead the children to the designated area. Upon arrival, staff will contact parents to inform them of the evacuation and of our location.

* 18-mos and 2's classes will walk using a rope, 3+ years will walk in line *

Medical Emergencies: In the case of illness or injury during school hours, the following procedures will be followed:

- Staff will attempt to contact one or both parents.
- If parents cannot be reached, designated individuals in the child's file will be contacted.

When a child needs immediate medical attention and a parent cannot be reached, a staff member will contact the child's Doctor and upon their recommendation will take the child to the doctor's office or the nearest emergency room. All expenses incurred are the responsibility of the parent.

In an extreme medical emergency, 911 will be called, EMS will determine which hospital is best equipped to handle emergency care required.

Allergy Awareness:

If your child has been diagnosed with a food allergy, additional medical paperwork is required.

Please contact the School Office to obtain the required forms.

**Parents should also verbally discuss their child's allergies with the teachers in the class.*

Special Needs: If your child has any special problems such as existing illnesses, previous serious illnesses, injuries and hospitalizations during the past 12 months, or any medication prescribed for long-term continuous use, please contact the School Office to provide additional details. Child daycare operations are public accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title III. If you believe that such an operation may be practicing discrimination in violation of Title III, you may call the ADA Information Line at (800) 514- 0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Biting Policy: Biting is often a misread and misunderstood action. Biting is a behavior that is often linked to a child's developmental age. Biting has been described as a form of sensory exploration and communication. The act of biting is most often experienced in the Toddlers and Twos' stages of development.

Biting Policy for Ages 18-months and Two

- 1st bite-anonymous incident reports to both families
- 2nd bite- Incident reports and Teacher/Director decide on a plan of redirection
- 3rd bite-Parent conference with Teacher and Director
- Failure to work with the school on changes could result in dismissal

Biting Policy for Ages Three, Four, and Five

- 1st bite-anonymous incident reports to both families
- 2nd bite-Parent/Teacher/Director meeting to discuss the biting behavior
- 3rd bite—Child will be sent home for the remainder of the day
- 4th bite—conference with parents that may result in dismissal from the school

>
PREVIOUS

Illness Policy: A child who is ill, belongs at home. In order to protect the health of all children attending Acorns to Oaks, we have the right to refuse a child who we think is not well enough to participate or might be contagious to other children and staff members.

Please notify the school at once if your child has a communicable disease or has been exposed to one. If a child has a contagious disease a plan of action is posted on the door, and a letter is sent home.

Fever, Vomiting, or Diarrhea - a child must be free of fever, vomiting or diarrhea without the use of medication for 24 hours before they can return to school.

If your child has had a fever during the night, please do not medicate them and send them to school. By the time the medication wears off and the fever returns, you have exposed the class and the teacher. Please take responsibility for your child when they are ill.

As stated in *Minimum Standards and Guidelines of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services – Section 746.3601*:

An ill child must not be admitted for care if one or more of the following exists:

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child-care center activities including outdoor play;
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than the caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in care;
3. The child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that you can include the child in the child-care center's activities:
 - a. Oral temperature of 100 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
 - b. Ear temperature of 100 degrees or greater; accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness; or
 - c. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill; or

4. A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

Illness and Exclusion: When a child becomes ill at school, the welfare of the child and consideration of others is our first concern. The child will be separated from the other children and given staff supervision until they can be picked up. Fever, diarrhea, and vomiting are common symptoms necessitating a child's removal from the Preschool. While some symptoms are not a result of a contagious disease, they are not conducive to group care. In these instances, you will be required to pick up your child.

Children are to be kept at home when they show any of the following symptoms:

Sore throat	Toothache	Runny nose w/discoloration
Upset Stomach	Rash	Cough and congestion
Fever	Impetigo	Discharge from eyes, ears, or nose
Earache	Inflamed eyes	Headache
Lethargy	Mouth Sores	Abnormal Breathing
Diarrhea	Ringworm	Any Communicable Disease

In general, a child who is too ill to participate in outdoor activity should remain at home until they are able to participate.

>

PARENTS

Medications: Medications and homeopathic remedies (including essential oils) will not be administered by the staff. Acorns to Oaks does not have a nurse on site and it will be up to the parent to administer medications before or after school. Diaper rash ointments may be applied but written permission must be given to your child's teacher and kept in your child's file.

Parental Notification: Parents will be notified in writing when there are any changes in Policy



Parent Handbook Contract

I _____ have read the 2025-2026 Acorns to Oaks Handbook
(Print parent name)

and agree to it and will abide by it during the school year.

Parent Signature

Date

Child name

Child DOB

Child name

Child DOB

Child name

Child DOB