

**Allendale Christian School
Parent Handbook for
Nature Based Preschool**

Allendale Christian's Nature Based Preschool
11050 - 64th Avenue
Allendale, MI 49534
Office Phone: 616-895-5108

Welcome!

Allendale Christian's Nature Based Preschool is a program for four-year-old children that combines early childhood education with environmental education. Learning and exploration takes place outdoors each and every day - and in all seasons! We are excited to begin our first year of nature based preschool education at ACS for the 2018-2019 school year and are very happy to have you join our ACS family as we look forward to a year in God's great outdoors!

Mission

The Mission of Allendale Christian's Nature Based Preschool is to fulfill the mission of Allendale Christian School, which is to "equip students academically, spiritually, and socially to gratefully serve God in all aspects of life", by providing a quality early childhood experience that involves being immersed in God's natural world.

Philosophy

- Nature-Based Preschool (NBP) daily connects children to the natural world around them – to the natural features around the beautiful 20+ acre Allendale Christian campus. In order to connect with their natural surroundings, the activities and explorations center around what is happening in nature and seasonally. These will guide the curriculum, the design of the outdoor and indoor classrooms, the methods used, and the curriculum content.
- NBP at ACS is driven by best practices from research and in consultation with state and local environmental education resources. One example is that we consult with the Outdoor Discovery Center in Holland. We are committed to excellence in education, which is developmentally appropriate for preschool students.
- NBP provides a secure and loving environment that nurtures the social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual growth of the preschool child. With NBP, we have the opportunity to create these valuable experiences within the incredible creation that God has provided us.

Allendale Christian School's Contact Information

Allison Miedema, Nature Based Preschool Lead Teacher, amiedema@allendalechristian.com
Brian Koetje, Principal, bkoetje@allendalechristian.com
Sara Kuperus, Administrative Assistant, skuperus@allendalechristian.com

Facility

The nature-based preschool classroom is designed to provide space for active, age-appropriate play and includes open-ended equipment and materials to encourage creative and cooperative learning. The teacher and aides will lead activities and supervise a maximum of 18 students per class. Staff is trained in First Aid, CPR, blood-borne pathogens, and other health and safety procedures. A criminal and protective services background check is required of all staff members. A fenced, outdoor play area is located just outside the classroom. Additionally, the preschool class will have access to ACS's additional 20+ acres which includes woods, fields, and wetlands.

Admission Policy

Our preschool is open to children of any race, color, national and ethnic origin, and to children whose parents show evidence of a genuine interest in a Christian preschool program. Our school requires that only children of Christian parents (or guardians) will be admitted to the school. Parents are expected to be personally committed to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Children should be 4 years old by September 1 to attend the 4/5 year old class. Exceptions will be considered carefully by the school if requested by the parent. All children must be potty-trained prior to September 1; for this, there are no exceptions. Completed and current hearing, vision and physical information must be turned in at the school office before July 15. Students need to be up-to-date on all their immunizations before they are allowed to attend preschool or a waiver will need to be obtained from the Ottawa County Health Department.

Tuition Policy

A \$50.00 non-refundable deposit is required with the enrollment form. The deposit is refundable only if an application is made and the class has already filled up or if we decide that the child is not ready for our preschool. A late fee of \$20.00 will be assessed for payments not received by the scheduled dates. All payments should be paid directly to the school office rather than to the teacher.

School Year and Schedule

Each session has a minimum requirement of 10 students per class. There is an absolute maximum of 18 children allowed in each 4-year old class with a teacher and one aide. Morning and afternoon sessions are offered. The preschool program offered at Allendale Christian School is a 34 week program which is divided into two semesters. Our preschool program follows the ACS school calendar for holidays and breaks. A calendar of the year is attached.

We offer a morning and afternoon nature based preschool option for the 2018-2019 school year. The chart below lists the sessions offered.

Session/ages	Days	Times
4's Nature Based Preschool	T/TH mornings	8:35-11:20 a.m
4's Nature Based Preschool	T/TH afternoons	12:35-3:05 p.m.

Curriculum

Allendale Christian's NBP will follow Michigan's Early Childhood Standards of Quality, which are approved by the Michigan State Board of Education. The specific curriculum components will come from the following:

- Creative Curriculum for Preschool
- "Growing up Wild" (Project Wild)
- Zoo Phonics
- Resources from the Outdoor Discovery Center and other sources that specialize in Nature-Based Education

Social skills will be taught and guided by Love and Logic, which is used school-wide. ACS will partner with the Outdoor Discovery Center as a resource for NBP. The Discovery Center also partners with the upper grades at ACS to help implement effective nature-based opportunities.

Within this curriculum framework, the emphasis at Allendale Christian's NBP is on nature-based learning and outdoor exploration. Each day, the preschoolers spend a significant amount of time outdoors involved in active learning, both structured and self directed. Recent research studies have affirmed the value to active outdoor exploration in building children's problem solving, self-regulation, organizational, language skills, spirituality, in addition to health benefits.

As an example of how nature-based learning is integrated within the preschool curriculum: In a typical lesson, children may find and explore animal tracks outdoors, then hear a story about animal tracks, explore books on the topic, use tracks to create patterns, to count, to recognize similarities and differences, or to measure lengths. Our program is designed to prepare children to be ready for school - socially, emotionally, physically, and academically, while also coming alongside them in their spiritual development.

Developmental Screening

At the start of the school year, all parents will receive the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to be filled out on their preschool child. The ASQ will be discussed between the parents and classroom teacher.

A Typical Day at Allendale Christian's Nature-Based Preschool

A predictable structure or schedule is important for young children, helping them to know “what is next.” This will be the order of most days at nature-based preschool, although times may vary, allowing opportunities to spend more time having discussions and participating in activities that are student driven.

8:30-8:35	Arrival and Sign-in
12:30-12:35	Children and Parents will hang up backpack, work together to complete sign-in, read arrival note, then parent walks child to the outdoor classroom.
8:35-9:30	Outdoor Play and Clean Up
12:35-1:15	Children and Teachers interact for choice time in the outdoor classroom. We start the day outside because the children are already dressed which reduces time spent in transitions throughout the day. Starting with outdoor play also keeps with research that indicates that children are better able to focus after outdoor play, suggesting that their indoor play is of higher quality after time outdoors.
9:30-10:00	Daily Excursion/Hike to the “Beyond”
1:15-1:45	Each day the group leaves the boundaries of the Creation Station to explore the Beyond space on ACS property. The group will meet briefly before heading out to explain the purpose of the day’s outing. This meeting might include a story, visit from a puppet, or some other activity to get the kids focused on the particular topic of the day. One day the excursion might be a visit to the woods in search of specific animal tracks and the next it might be gathering types of seeds for further exploration indoors. Some days it might not be related to a nature event at all - such as finding the missing letters of their names somewhere in the woods.
10:00-10:10	Bible Story, Songs, and Prayer
1:45-1:55	Each day, the preschoolers will be introduced to a new Bible story, prayer for and with one another, learn Bible verses, and sing songs to God.
10:10-10:20	Snack
1:55-2:05	Preschoolers eat a snack provided from home, while sitting down together with teachers and classmates. Self help skills, using basic table manners like <i>please</i> and

thank you, and having shared conversations are all part of this special bonding time together. Once children are finished eating they may excuse themselves, clean up their place, and begin choice time in the classroom.

10:20-10:50
2:05-2:35

Indoor Choice Time and Clean Up

This is time for child-directed play throughout the classroom. Children are free to move from center to center as they wish. During this time, teachers assist children to identify and solve any problems they might be having, but also engage and extend the level of children's play, through sharing and interaction.

10:50-11:10
2:35-2:55

Small Groups

Each teacher works with small groups of children to focus on a particular activity or skill and will have a nature-based aspect as often as possible. For example, if working on length as a term of measurement, a small group might use sticks to sort by length.

11:10-11:20
2:55-3:05

Closing Activities

Cinnamon Bear, farewell song and prayer

11:20
3:05

Go Home

Learning Through Play

Open-ended activities, hands-on experiences, and concrete learning lessons will be used to promote individual development. Although the activities listed below will be found in each of the classrooms, the details will vary due to the different developmental levels of the children and will vary with the different topics covered in the respective classes.

Bible stories
Recognize letters and numbers
Counting to 30
Creative Play
Recognizes color and shapes
Comparing likenesses and differences
Field trips
Sensory play
Daily Hike
Name Recognition

Science experiments and hands-on learning
Table and group games
Singing
Small and large muscle activities
Fingerplays, puppet play, and story acting
Changing of the seasons
Art Projects
Children's books
Block play/construction activities
Self help skills

General Rules of Behavior

- Keep your body to yourself.
- Use kind words and actions.
- Use toys and equipment safely.
- Children only leave the group with a staff member.
- Home toys stay at home.

Discipline

The atmosphere of the preschool classroom will promote love and respect for one another. Classroom rules are simple and specific; they are used to prevent a child from harming himself, others, and property. We attempt to encourage children to feel the desire within themselves to make a proper choice. Positive methods of discipline which encourage the child's own self-control, self-direction, self esteem, and cooperation will be emphasized. At times a child may be removed from the others for a quiet talk. There will never be corporal punishment in our preschool. If a problem persists, the teacher will arrange a conference with the child's parents, and the principal will be notified. If no satisfactory solution can be reached, it will be necessary for the child to be dismissed from preschool.

Our teachers will use High Scope's 6 Steps to Conflict Resolution with children during emotionally charged conflict situations.

1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.
2. Acknowledge children's feelings.
3. Gather information.
4. Restate the problem.
5. Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.
6. Be prepared to give follow-up support.

Birthdays

Each student will be celebrated on their birthday or half birthday. You are welcome to have your child bring in a treat that will be passed out at the end of the day, such as stickers or small wrapped candy (no nuts). They will also get to pick out a special seashell and sticker from our birthday box.

Snacks

Each child will bring their own healthy, nut-free snack and a labeled water bottle each day. ACS is a nut-free school. When eating snack, teachers and students sit and converse family style in the preschool classroom (and sometimes outdoors). Tables are washed, rinsed, and sanitized before and after they are used for snacks.

Drop off and pick up

Parents should drop off and pick up their children by entering the north side of the building at the preschool door. Children should arrive no more than five minutes before each session begins. Parents should see that their child is brought directly to the classroom and that an adult is aware of the child's presence before leaving.

At dismissal, each child is to remain inside the classroom until he is called for by his parent or carpool. For the children's protection, each child will only be released to the persons whose names appear on the Child Release Card. If there is any change in the person authorized to pick up a child, the parent must send a written note.

Although assistance can be provided, Allendale Christian Preschool is not responsible for carpools established among parents. To help the teacher during dismissal time, parents should inform the teacher of carpool arrangements with other classmates.

Clothing: Dress for Success!!

Nature based learning can be a messy and fun job! For this reason, it is important that your child come dressed for messy, outdoor play. Clothing that can be covered in mud, paint, clay, and other natural materials are a must everyday! Tight clothing, fancy dresses, costumes, or shoes will only get in the way of your child's play. Your child will need comfortable, closed toed, protective shoes that enable him/her to run, jump, and climb. *NOTE: Parents are responsible for any applying of sunscreen or bug spray before the children are dropped off at the preschool.*

Layers of clothing for the changing weather moving from outdoors to indoors are needed for your child to enjoy a variety of activities. Please expect your child to go outside every day. Each preschooler will need a backpack with spare clothes and inside shoes.

Clothing needs for each season include:

Fall	Winter	Spring
Rubber Boots	Snow Pants	Rubber Boots
Coat	Winter Coat	Coat
Rain Suit or Jacket and Pants	Waterproof Mittens	Rain Suit or Jacket and Pants
Sunglasses	Sunglasses	Sunglasses
	Scarf	
	Wool Socks	
	Hat	
	Boots	

Where can I buy a rain suit for my child?

Online from oakiwear: www.oakiwear.com

Stores: Walmart and sporting goods stores will sell rain suits. Frogg Toggs is another quality brand of rain suits. *If you need assistance obtaining these items, please contact program director.*

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is very important to the development of young children. Formal opportunities such as parent teacher conferences and preschool graduation as well as informal opportunities (i.e field trips, classroom help, helping from home) will be provided to each family.

Ways that Parents are encouraged to participate:

- * Attend the Parent Information Session at the beginning of September. This is a meeting for parents only, to provide an opportunity to meet the staff and learn what to expect during the school year. The Parent Handbook with details about the day-to-day preschool expectations and procedures will be gone over at that time.
- * Volunteer during the school year, if possible.
- * Attend field trips when possible.
- * Attend parent and family activities.
- * Read newsletters and flyers sent home with your child.
- * Attend parent/teacher conferences held in the later winter.
- * Encourage your child's independence, especially at drop off time when preschool begins.

Volunteers

Parents and other family members are welcome to volunteer in the classroom or with support activities (ex. materials preparation, book order organization). Volunteers will be supervised by preschool staff at all times and will not be alone with individual children, unless it's the volunteer's own child.

Closings, Delays, and Crisis Management Procedures

It is possible for Allendale Christian School to be closed or delayed during any day because of bad weather (fog, ice, snow) or when the condition of the roads would make it unsafe for the buses to travel. Because most of our older students are transported by Allendale Public School buses, the decision to delay or close school will be made in conjunction with the decisions of the Allendale Public School administrators. If there is a 2 hour delay, AM Preschool will be canceled and the afternoon session will run as scheduled. If the school is closed, Preschool will be closed as well. Parents who suspect that school may be canceled or have a delayed opening on a given day should listen to one of the local radio or television stations. Please do not call the school.

Severe Weather

In case of severe thunderstorms, tornado watches, and warnings, the following policy is in effect: Parents may pick up their own child any time during these circumstances. If you choose to pick up your children, please pick them up from their individual classrooms. Please do not call the school during a tornado watch or warning except in a most serious emergency. In the event of a tornado watch, school will continue and dismiss as normal. No after school activities will be convened during a watch. If a TORNADO WATCH is in effect at the site of an evening activity one hour before the beginning of that activity, the activity will be cancelled.

In the event of a tornado warning, students will be directed by their teacher to the safest area in the building and will be detained in the safest place until the warning is lifted, even if it's after the usual dismissal time.

Crisis Management Drills

Fire drills, both announced and unannounced, will be held periodically. Each classroom is to leave by their designated emergency exit. Our primary concern is that the buildings are vacated quietly and safely. Severe Weather drills will be held periodically. Students will be led by the teacher to the safest place in the school and will wait there until a signal is given.

School lockdown procedures will also be practiced at least twice a year. The classroom is equipped with a summary sheet that explains the major drills and the actions that need to be taken by teachers and students to remain safe.

School Crisis Plan

A copy of the ACS Crisis Plan is available upon request.

Weather Conditions

Parents/guardians should see that their children are dressed appropriately for changing "Michigan weather." Children will play outside each day, unless there are high winds or thunderstorms, and will follow a windchill chart for amounts of time outdoors in the winter time. The staff will determine the location of play, based on the current conditions.

Hiking to the Beyond (Allendale Christian's wooded acreage)

The Allendale Christian School's 20+ acre campus is considered part of our learning environment. When we go on a hike, we will take a two-way radio or cell phones with us on these excursions to allow contact with the office in case of an emergency.

Pest Management Plan

State of Michigan law requires that schools and day care centers that may apply pesticides on school or day care property must provide an annual advisory to parents or guardians of students attending the facility.

Please be advised that the Allendale Christian School / day care center utilizes an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to control pests. IPM is a pest management system that utilizes all suitable techniques in a total pest management system with the intent of preventing pests from reaching unacceptable levels or to reduce an existing population to an acceptable level. Pest Management techniques emphasize sanitation, pest exclusion, and biological controls. One of the objectives of using an IPM approach is to reduce or eliminate the need for chemical applications of pesticides. However, certain situations may require the need for pesticides to be utilized.

As required by State of Michigan law, you will receive advance notice regarding the non-emergency application of a pesticide such as an insecticide, fungicide or herbicide, other than a bait or gel formulation, that is made to the school or day care grounds or buildings during this school year. Please note that notification is not given for the use of sanitizers, germicides, disinfectants or anti-microbial cleaners. In certain emergencies, such as an infestation of sting insects, pesticides may be applied without prior notice to prevent injury to students, but you will be notified following any such applications.

Advance notification of pesticide applications, other than a bait or gel formulation, will be given by at least two methods. The first method will be by posting at the main entrance to the school/day care center, which is located at the west side main doors. The second method will be by the method(s) checked below:

- * Posting in a public, common area of the school or day care center, other than an entrance. We will post in the preschool entry on north side of school.
- * Email
- * A telephone call by which direct contact is made with a parent or guardian of a student of the school/day care center or a message is recorded on an answering machine.
- * Providing the students of the school or children of the day care center with a written notice to be delivered to their parents or guardians.
- * Posting the information on the school or day care center's website.

Please be advised that parents or guardians of children attending the school or day care center are entitled to receive the advance notice of a pesticide application, other than a bait or gel formulation, by first class US mail postmarked at least 3 days before the pesticide application if they so request. If you prefer to receive the notification by first class mail, please notify the school's office.

Please be advised that parents or guardians of children attending the school may review the school's Integrated Pest Management program and records of any pesticide application upon request.

Attendance, Health Care Plan and Illness

If your child will be absent, parents are asked to email the teacher or call the school office at 895-5108 before the beginning of the session.

Health Care

A healthy environment protects both children and staff, makes children feel cared for and encourages the development of healthy habits for a lifetime. It is a cornerstone of good child care and a priority at Allendale Christian Preschool. Our established practices are intended to ensure such an environment and include:

Handwashing

Proper and frequent handwashing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infection and must be done throughout the day at the following times:

Staff must wash their hands:

- When arriving at school if the day begins with indoor activities
- Before preparing or serving food or drink
- After handling animals or insects
- After sneezing or blowing nose
- When hands are dirty
- Before administering medication
- Before and after giving first aid
- After using the restroom

After washing hands, it is important not to touch anything (such as a child, chair, doorknob, etc.) before handling food. If you are using gloves to prepare food, you still wash your hands before putting on the gloves. After any contact with a child's bodily fluids: including blood, vomit, snot, you hands must be washed.

Children must wash their hands:

- When arriving at school if the day begins with indoor activities
- Before eating
- After toileting
- After sneezing or blowing the nose
- After outdoor activities
- After handling animals or insects
- When hands appear dirty

How Hands should be washed:

- Wet both hands
- Apply a small amount of liquid soap
- Rub hands together for at least 15 seconds to work up a good lather
- Be sure to wash between fingers, under nails, and all hand surfaces from the tips of the nails to beyond the wrists
- Rinse hands well under a stream of warm running water
- Leave water running while you dry your hands. You do not want to turn off the "dirty" faucet with your now clean hands.
- Dry your hands well.
- Use the towel to turn off the faucet.

- Dispose of the towel in the trash.

Teaching the Children:

Time should be taken to teach children the correct hand washing technique as described above.

- When to wash hands.
- How to wash hands (demonstrate correct hand washing).
- Observe the child hand washing.
- Correct his/her technique as necessary.

Illness and Communicable Disease

Medical and emergency information forms must be on file before a child can enter preschool. All immunizations must be current. There is a concern about the health of every child in our program. To maintain the health of all children, parents are asked to keep a child at home if there are any signs of:

- fever – 100 degrees or higher
- diarrhea
- ringworm
- scabies
- vomiting or upset stomach
- conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- chicken pox
- strep throat
- excessive nasal discharge
- lice
- impetigo
- coughing non-stop

Children who complain of or display symptoms of illness will be separated from the rest of the children. Parents will be notified and they or an authorized person must take the child home. You will be notified if a child, staff member, or volunteer has contracted a contagious disease. Notification will include the name and symptoms of the communicable disease. It is also requested that you inform the preschool staff if your child has been exposed to or contracts a contagious disease. Please take into consideration your child's classmates and teachers. Please call (895-5108) or email the lead teacher when your child will not be in school.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Equipment and Toys

Tables are cleaned before and after each snack time with a cleaner, followed by water, and then a weak bleach solution is applied. Toys are cleaned monthly with a bleach solution.

Handling Bodily Fluids

Disposable gloves will be used to for direct contact with and bodily fluids. A dry material will be applied to areas that contain these fluids. It will then be vacuumed or swept up, the content will be placed in specialized bags and the area will be disinfected. Any broom and dustpans that are used will also be disinfected.

Removing Children from School

Only adults authorized (i.e. listed as approved on the Child Information Record) may be given permission to pick a child up from school. If you must have someone else pick up your child, please send a note to school. We will require photo identification from that adult when they arrive to pick up your child.

Community Resources

Health Resources in Ottawa County

Call 2-1-1 to get information about resources closest to where you live, 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Medical Resources

City on a Hill Ministries Health Clinic – www.coahmhealthclinic.blogspot.com
100 S. Pine St, Zeeland; (616) 748-6009.

Cherry St. Health Center - 550 Cherry St, Grand Rapids; (616) 235-7272.

Love INC Tricities Free Health Clinic – www.loveinctricities.org
16290 Ferris St, Grand Haven; (616) 502-2658

InterCare Clinic – www.intercare.org
285 James St, Holland; (616) 399-0200.

Holland Community Health Center
336 South River, Holland; (616) 394-3788

Ottawa County Health Department – www.miottawa.org/health
Three locations: Holland – 12251 James; (616) 396-5266;
Hudsonville - 3100 Port Sheldon; (616) 669-0040;
Grand Haven - 16920 Ferris (616) 846-8360.

Dental Resources

Holland Free Health Clinic – www.hfhclinic.org
99 W 26th St, off Michigan Ave. (by Holland Hospital); (616) 392-3610

InterCare Clinic
285 James St, Holland; (616) 399-0200.

Ottawa County Health Department
12251 James St, Holland; (616) 393-5694.

Love, INC Tri-Cities
1106 Fulton St, Grand Haven; (616) 846-2701

Grand Valley Dental Care
2064 Baldwin, Jenison; (616) 457-2299.

Grand Rapids Community College

143 Bostwick Ave. NE, Grand Rapids; (616) 234-4237.

Prescription Resources

Meijer, Target, Walmart, K-Mart, Sam's Club, D&W, Family Fare – most large chain pharmacies offer free or low cost medications which vary by location. Call or visit their websites for an updated list.

Holland Free Health Clinic

99 W. 26th St, Holland; (616) 392-3610.

InterCare Clinic

285 James St, Holland; (616) 399-0200.

Love, INC Tri-Cities

1106 Fulton, Grand Haven; (616) 846-2701.

Ottawa Prescription Discount Card - miottawa.org/health

Mental Health Resources

Ottawa County Community Mental Health - (616) 393-5681 or (877) 588-4357.

Vision/Hearing

Holland Free Health Clinic

99 W 26th St, off Michigan Ave (by Holland Hospital); (616) 392-3610.

Goodwill Optical

393 E. Lakewood Blvd, Holland; (616) 848-3300

Health Coverage

Ottawa County Health Department - www.miottawa.org/health

12251 James St., Holland; (616) 393-5758.

Department of Human Services (DHS)

(616) 394-7200.

FOOD ASSISTANCE RESOURCES IN OTTAWA COUNTY

Call 2-1-1 anytime for information on local and upcoming mobile food pantries other resources.

The Ottawa County Health Department cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information contained in this list and is not affiliated with any of the following organizations.

Women, Infants, Children (WIC)

A Federal food program which supplies basic supplemental food and formula to eligible pregnant

women and women with infants and children up to 5 years old.

WIC Holland - 285 James St, Holland; (616)399-0202

WIC Allendale - 6189 Lake Michigan Dr, Allendale; (616)895-1375

WIC Grand Haven - 1705 Beacon Blvd, Grand Haven; (616)844-0097