

## Preschool Search Questions

Looking for a quality preschool can be a challenge. It is helpful to make a list of some specific things you are looking for before touring preschools. The following is a list of questions that may help you prepare for your preschool search.

**Basic information:** Most basic information will be available in the school's literature and on their website. A well run school will anticipate that parents want this information and make it available.

- Does the school have a valid and current license and is it posted where parents can see it?
- What are the school's accreditations?
- How long has the school been in business?
- What programs are offered and what is the cost? Are there any additional fees?
- What are the hours of operation?
- Does the school have a calendar showing holidays and special events? If not, how is this information communicated?
- What ages does the school accept? Do children have to be toilet trained to attend the school?
- How many children are in each classroom? How are they grouped? (Age or program)
- What is the adult to child ratio? How many of the adults in the classroom are qualified teachers?
- What credentials and experience do the teachers, assistant teachers, and teacher aides have?
- Does the school provide ongoing training for teaching staff?
- Does the school have a lot of staff turnover?
- Does the school have space for my child?
- Does the school keep a waiting list?
- Does the school provide any meals? (Snack, breakfast, lunch)
- How are nap/rest periods handled? Are children required to sleep?

**Health and Safety:** This area should be of primary concern for parents and for schools. Some of the information will be evident as you view the school, some will be available in school literature, and some will need to be requested.

- Are employees background checked prior to employment?
- Does the school use volunteers? Are they supervised? Are they ever alone with children?
- Are the classrooms, toys, and equipment cleaned and disinfected regularly?
- Do the staff and children practice regular hand washing before food prep, eating and after toileting?
- Does the school practice safe food handling procedures?
- How does the school handle the illness of children and staff?
- Does the school have a medication policy?
- Does the school keep records of children's allergies? How are allergies handled?
- Does the school have a bathroom policy? If not, how does the school protect children from inappropriate contact while using the bathroom or changing wet or soiled clothing?
- How does the school prepare for emergencies? (Drills, supplies, training)
- Are the classrooms and playgrounds in good condition? (Furniture, equipment, toys)
- Is the school property fenced and gated? Do unauthorized individuals have access to children?
- Are children ever unsupervised? Are adults ever alone with a child?
- Does the school provide parents with documents listing children's and parent's rights?
- Does the school keep emergency information for each child; including, but not limited to work and cell phone numbers where parents can be reached immediately?
- How does the school handle accidents or injury to children? How is this communicated?
- Are the school employees trained in first aid and CPR?
- Are chemicals or other hazardous materials ever accessible to children?

**Classroom management and discipline:** If the school does not have a written discipline policy, ask for examples of how discipline is handled. Observe adult/child interactions to see if the expectations are reasonable and the language used is respectful.

Is there adequate space and equipment for the number of children in the classroom?  
Is there a schedule? How structured is the class time and play time?  
Does the school have a discipline policy? Does the staff ever use physical punishment with children?  
How does the staff respond to children's misbehavior, aggressive behavior, or biting behavior?  
How does the staff communicate with parents regarding discipline?

**Curriculum:** Curriculum should be appropriate for the age and development level of the individual children in the classroom. If the school uses a prepared curriculum ask how it is adapted for the needs and ability levels of the specific children. If the school does not use a prepared curriculum, ask who determines what the children learn and how it is developed.

Are lesson plans posted in the classroom where parents can see them?  
Does the curriculum address all areas of children's development? (Physical, cognitive, language, social, emotional)  
Does the school prepare children academically?  
Does the curriculum promote phonemic awareness and concepts of print?  
Do the teachers read to children on a daily basis?  
Is creative art exploration a regular part of the curriculum? (Daily / Weekly)  
Do children have daily opportunities to express themselves through music and movement?  
How much time do children spend in free choice and "hands on" activities within the classroom?  
Does the school provide enrichment activities such as field trips or special visitors?  
Is diversity represented in the classroom and curriculum?

**Home / school relations:** Parents have an important place in their child's preschool experience. If the school does not welcome parent involvement, it would be important to understand why.

Are parents required to participate in the classroom? Are parents welcome to participate?  
How does the school handle communication with parents?  
Are parents allowed to observe or visit the classroom? Do they have to make an appointment?  
Does the school communicate with parents about children's progress and kindergarten readiness?  
Does the school provide any special resources for parents?  
Does the school offer any special events for families?

**Environment:** This information can only be gained through first hand observation. It is important to visit a school and observe the classroom, preferably during class time when children and teachers are present.

Is the environment pleasant and inviting?  
Do the children appear to be engaged and involved in a variety of activities?  
Is children's artwork prominently displayed in the classroom?  
Do the teachers appear to enjoy working with the children?  
Are the teachers friendly and actively involved with the children?  
Did the staff smile and greet you when you entered the classroom or office?  
How did you feel while visiting the school?  
Would you feel comfortable leaving your child in this environment?