



GARDENS NOOK

PRE-SCHOOL

Handbook for Parents

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Welcome to the Gardens Nook Family

We are so pleased to welcome you into the Gardens Nook family and trust that the nurturing environment will be a blessing to your family, and a safe and happy place for your children to learn and grow. Gardens Nook is the Pre-School of Three Peaks Primary (affiliated with Ambleside Southern Africa) and caters for children in the Pre-Grade R and Grade R years.

At Gardens Nook we work hard to create an environment and atmosphere that nurtures

- a personal experience of acceptance and belonging –we want our children to know that they are secure and have great worth;
- a culture of love and respect - for God, one another, and our surroundings; and
- a spirit of curiosity and wonder - a growing desire for learning, exploring and discovering.

While the primary commitment of Three Peaks School is to the children and their families, its mission extends beyond that of simply being a local school. Three Peaks School, which includes Gardens Nook Pre-School, seeks to be a vehicle for the training and equipping of parents and teachers who seek to benefit from the insights of Charlotte Mason as they are given living expression at Three Peaks. To this end, Three Peaks School partners with Ambleside Southern Africa (ASA), and, as such, our education will conform to Ambleside's Fundamental Pedagogical Convictions, the Ambleside Commitment, Ambleside's Statement of Faith (the Nicene Creed and the Ambleside Charter), and the Ambleside Code of Personal Conduct (See Appendices).

Our Philosophy of Education

The education provided at Gardens Nook is based on a philosophy inspired by the pioneering educator, Charlotte Mason. Much about our approach is rooted in her writings, and reflects our attempt to apply them in a way that makes sense for children in Cape Town today.

As such, we embrace the following values as the basis of our teaching philosophy:

1. The child is a person

We believe that children are made in the image of God and, as such, are worthy of love and respect. They are created desiring to learn. They are not passive, merely waiting to be filled with information, but are active seekers, eager for knowledge, ideas and experience.

2. Relationships are at the heart of learning

True education is the growing experience and understanding of the interwoven relationships of life. As children are encouraged to see, hear, touch, smell and taste, they discover the world around them. They begin to understand themselves in relation to the present, the past, nature, literature, music, art, and human needs and aspirations.

3. Children deserve a rich curriculum

The intelligence of a child should not be underestimated. We believe in giving children opportunities to engage with knowledge from rich sources of literature, music and art; and the importance of first-hand interactions with the actual materials of nature and science.

4. Atmosphere nurtures education and character

At Gardens Nook Pre-School, we intentionally create an atmosphere that embodies peacefulness, an abundance of rich ideas, and an environment in which the child is respected as a person. We believe that growth is an ongoing process that develops character and therefore work intentionally towards that end.

Gardens Nook Pre-School Board

Board of Directors of Three Peaks School NPC

Trevor Skead (Chairman) - trevor.skead@threepeaks.org.za

Renaldi Prinsloo (Treasurer)

Sonia Hindes

Ongeziwe Cloete

Guiding Principles

Our Mission

Gardens Nook Pre-School exists to see children flourish in an ever-changing world by serving their growth in character, knowledge and competence.

Our definition of the word “flourish” has as its goal a life rich in relationship to God, self, others, ideas and all of creation, and values the necessity of the experiences of both struggle and delight in this journey of growth.

As we think about life, education, and formation, we look to the Bible for our

foundational ideas and then strive to apply these faithfully to our context.

On this basis, our goal is to support the formation of children and adults who:

- have a well-formed, balanced and biblically inspired understanding of their world
- relate well to God, themselves, others, creation, and ideas
- care to understand and engage their world
- know the joy and struggle of belonging to and participating in a diverse community
- possess a broad foundation of knowledge
- are motivated and equipped to pursue ongoing growth in knowledge and character throughout life

Core Commitments

In pursuit of our goals and a consistent expression of our identity and mission, Gardens Nook is committed to:

- an educational philosophy and pedagogy that is rooted in the assumptions of the Bible regarding truth (how we know) and human nature (how we grow).
- a curriculum of excellent standard and rigour that employs a Charlotte Mason methodology in the classroom.
- providing opportunities for rich exposure to the history, life, cultures and stories of our city and broader local context.
- our children being taught by a diverse group of excellent Christian teachers as their role-models
- the ongoing training and development of our teaching staff in skill and competency, as well as the integration of faith and work.
- creating practical avenues that allow our children to express Christian love in serving real needs outside of the walls of our school

Our Faith

While Gardens Nook Pre-School is neither affiliated with nor as an institution committed to any particular religious denomination, it is committed to bearing witness to the person and principles of Jesus Christ, as expressed in the New Testament, the Nicene Creed, and the Ambleside Charter. While Gardens Nook has a definite commitment to the person and principles of Jesus, it is not required that all Gardens Nook families fully share these beliefs, only that they agree to be respectful of the institutional commitment to them. Parents should expect that their children will be taught in accordance with these beliefs and teachings. Further, Gardens Nook does not seek to suppress the theological differences of her member families. Rather, it seeks to cultivate an atmosphere where mutual understanding and agreeable disagreement are cultivated, respectfully recognizing that the primary responsibility for the spiritual education of children lies with the parents.

The Ambleside Code of Conduct (See Appendices) defines some of our expectations for behaviour. Failure on the part of Board members or teaching staff to maintain the standards of conduct expressed in this document is grounds for dismissal. Failure on the part of a pupil will result in a disciplinary response with the possibility of the pupil being required to withdraw from the school. It is not the place of the School staff to “check up” on parents, but should a parent’s repeated violation of the Ambleside Code of Conduct have a negative effect on the wellbeing of children in the School or bring the School into disrepute, the parent may be required to withdraw his/her child/ren from the School.

Our Commitment to Diversity

The School will not unfairly discriminate against any pupil or family on grounds of race, culture, language, gender, age or disability in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, financial assistance and school-administered programs. However, we are committed to more than non-discrimination, in that we actively pursue diversity as an essential good. We affirm that there is nothing wrong with the powerful bonds that we share with our own “tribe”, where we can hear things in our home language and are familiar with cultural references. However, there is more opportunity for growth when we engage with people of diverse backgrounds, affirm traditions different from our own and seek to appreciate the beauty that God has chosen to express in others. Such engagement promotes deeper sensitivity, broader understanding and greater enlargement of heart and mind. These qualities are necessary for loving relationships across cultural, racial and socio-economic boundaries. Gardens Nook Pre-School seeks to be a united, diverse, reconciled community, as a testimony to the power of God and the nature of His Kingdom.

Dealing with Controversial Ideas

Parents and pupils will come from a variety of theological traditions, including non-Christian. Teachers should foster understanding by being respectful of different views and by focusing on an authoritative text. The focus should not be on what a teacher or pupil believes but rather on what an author states. In cases, where texts are open to varying interpretations (e.g. biblical passages on baptism) teachers should point out that committed followers of Jesus have, throughout the centuries, understood such texts differently.

Fundamental Pedagogical Convictions

“One more thing is of vital importance; children must have books, living books; the best are not too good for them; anything less than the best is not good enough; and if it is necessary to exercise economy, let go everything that belongs to soft and luxurious living before letting go the duty of

supplying the books, and the frequent changes of books, which are necessary for the constant stimulation of the child's intellectual life."

Charlotte Mason

A Non-Competitive, Stimulating Atmosphere

Administration, faculty and children are held to the highest standard in their way of relating to one another. In an atmosphere of sincerity and truth, children are free to learn for the pleasure of learning. Children do not compete with their peers for rank, grades or prizes. Learning is the focus, not besting a classmate. Great ideas, great works of literature, great works of art, the glory of the created world, and the common experiences of life are placed before the children to study and discuss. Children are stimulated to observe, explore and understand.

The Discipline of Habit

While recognizing that children have various levels of gifting, it is the expectation of the Gardens Nook administration and faculty that every child will develop the habits necessary for producing work of the highest quality and that all Gardens Nook children will grow to the fullness of their God-given potential. At Gardens Nook, we consider the process of student work to be as important as the end product. We believe school is not just an institution to get through, but rather a place to develop habits that will serve children the rest of their lives.

Education as Vital, Dynamic, Living

Real learning occurs when the learner wonders, asks why and how. Thus, it is essential that the teacher cultivates an atmosphere that is rich in great ideas, thus stimulating thought. We seek to place the very best books before our children, books rich in content and ideas, putting them into relationship with the finest authors. Even at this young age, through the use of "living books" our children interact with scientists, mathematicians, philosophers, historians, artists, poets, and explorers in meaningful ways.

The Infinite Dignity and Potential of Each Child

Because children are created in God's image, they are born with a great potential for a fruitful life full of varied interests and relationships. At Gardens Nook, children are not identified or limited by their strengths or weaknesses. All children participate in a broad, rigorous curriculum—all children calculate, solve, attend, explore, ponder, recite, paint and sing. The expectation that prevails within the school is that all children will learn and grow to their full potential as persons and attain their vast inheritance.

The Priority of the Relational Life

Children live in relationship with God, self, others, creation, and the world of ideas. These relationships are cultivated in the educational process through a broad,

balanced curriculum and a teaching staff that seeks to relate to children, parents, and one another in accordance with the principles of Jesus Christ.

The Importance of Delight and of Struggle

Children will naturally delight in the feast of great ideas set before them. They will savour them and grow in the ability to enjoy and celebrate their relations with persons, ideas, and creation. But they will also at times struggle. Struggle is as essential to the learning process as the delight. Children must learn to labour with problems not yet grasped, to remain on task when uncertain of the outcome, to struggle to completion when mind and hand are tired, to experience the rewards and negative consequences of their actions. There will be no growth in character without the struggle. Children are to be continuously engaged with inspirational ideas and meaningful work. The classroom is not a place for entertainment and indulgence, any more than it is a place for meaningless drudgery. Such practices encourage passivity and detract from the deep satisfactions that come with growing knowledge and fruitful labour.

The Reality of the Fall

All children have inherited a rebellious, sinful nature and are legally regarded as guilty. Disordered desires and a broken world affect every aspect of education, including thoughts, feelings and actions so that every child will have to contend with indwelling sin.

Effort Required to Develop Christ-like Character

Although salvation can never be earned by human effort, hard work and personal sacrifice are requirements for a productive, effective Christian life. Gardens Nook Pre-School urges teachers and pupils to make every effort to add goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love to their Christian faith.

“Whatever the natural gifts of the child, it is only so far as the habit of attention is cultivated in him that he is able to make use of them.”

Charlotte Mason

The Ambleside Commitment

Based upon its mission, faith, and pedagogical convictions, as an Ambleside Member School, Gardens Nook Pre-School makes the following commitments to its children and their parents:

To maintain an optimal atmosphere for the cultivating of the hearts and minds of children.

- Gardens Nook Pre-School will be characterized by:

- Reverence for God, confidence in His loving presence, and a commitment to obedience, according to the principles of Jesus Christ.
- Kindness and respect for all with the proper submission to authority.
- Learning and growth in a multitude of spheres, intellectual, spiritual, physical and relational.
- Ideas that engage the mind.
- Work that is fruitful, satisfying, and harmonizes into a daily rhythm.
- Neatness, beauty, and general good order.
- Gardens Nook Pre-School will not be characterized by:
 - Exclusive relationships or cliques
 - Sarcasm, base humour, or demeaning language
 - Artificial incentives (stars, sweets, grades, awards, etc.) and manipulative techniques (shame, wrongly expressed anger, excessive praise, and other forms of emotional manipulation)
 - Labelling children in a way that limits or creates a false sense of inferiority or superiority
 - Trivial work, meaningless tasks, or superficial amusements

To foster good habits in regards to work, thought, self, and others.

- Gardens Nook Pre-School will hold children to a high standard in their work.
 - All children will be supported in the habit of doing good work.
 - If a child's work indicates lack of carefulness, focus, or effort, then teachers will use inspirational ideas and natural consequences to motivate the child towards the formation of the necessary habits.
 - If a child's work indicates lack of comprehension, then teachers will work to proactively and gently support a growing understanding of the subject matter.
- Gardens Nook Pre-School will hold children to a high standard of self-management and inter-personal relationships.
 - All children will be supported in mastering the habits of:
 - Focused attention
 - Self-control of speech, hands, and posture
 - Kindness and respect towards others
 - Appropriate submission to authority (teachers, administrators, and school policies)
 - If any child fails in one of the above, then Gardens Nook staff will use inspirational ideas and natural consequences as the primary means for promoting child growth.
 - If a severe lapse or a persistent pattern of lesser failures occurs, then the teacher and administration will work with child and parents to develop and implement a plan to foster the necessary personal and interpersonal habits.

To engage and nurture the childrens' minds through a rigorous and rich curriculum:

- Gardens Nook Pre-School’s curriculum consists of “living books”, great books, written in fine literary style by great minds and provides a broad array of “food” for the mind, including: Bible, maths, literature, music, art, nature study, picture study, composer study, poetry, handwork, and physical exercise.
- At Gardens Nook, children are given the opportunity to grow in knowledge and skill through worthy work and worthy thought.

“An observant child should be put in the way of things worth observing.”

Charlotte Mason

Curriculum

We partner with the Ambleside Schools of Southern Africa in terms of curriculum and learning methodology. Here are the subjects your children will be exposed to:

Inspirational Subjects:

- **Bible** - The Bible is read every day, in recognition that the Word is full of vital force, capable of applying itself. A seed, light as thistledown, wafted into the child's soul will take root downwards and bear fruit upwards.
- **Read Aloud** - Ideas of God, of virtue, of truth and of beauty are present in the literature chosen for read aloud. These inspirational ideas are the treasures taken home at the end of a day.
- **Fairy Tales, Tales and Fables** – Children are given the opportunity to delight in tales of make-believe. As Charlotte Mason says, “Let us be glad and rejoice that all things are possible to the children, recognising, in this condition of theirs, their fitness to receive and believe and understand, as, alas! we cannot do, the things of the kingdom of God. The age of faith is a great sowing time, doubtless designed, in the Divine scheme of things, especially that parents may make their children at home in the things of the Spirit before contact with the world shall have materialised them.”
- **Seasonal Reading** - The child is acquainted with nature when carefully observing the environmental changes taking place throughout the year. These would include the change in temperature, light and the disappearing and reappearing fauna and flora. Well chosen books that beautifully portray these changes cultivate careful observations, stir the imagination and aid the child in developing a high regard for that which is true.
- **Music Appreciation** - The study of beautiful music brings nourishment to the soul through a wondrous form of communication. An introduction to a variety of compositions that display unique rhythms, melodies and

instruments. Varying composers bring their own element of tradition and personality to their music that is portrayed in varying ways.

- **Picture Study** - The study and observation of a variety of work produced by artists around the world, looking specifically at places and people in art. Children should be able to see the work in their minds as well as see the work from the minds of the artists.
- **Nature Study** - Observing specimens from our local South African flora and fauna and the practice of representing this detail through careful journaling and water colour paintings.
- **Play** - Play is an important time for the child to develop skills of self-regulation, imagination, non-directed speech, and fairness. Children should most often play out of doors.
- **Movement** – Children are outdoors and encouraged to move as much as possible, whether on a swing or in response to music.
- **Poetry** – The exploration of ideas through well chosen text. Memorization and recitation follow, providing children the opportunity to explore clear pronunciation and emphasis as to convey meaning.
- **Home Narration** – All children are called upon to tell back (oral narration) to the teacher what they have heard presented to them in class. This develops their listening skills. In the second term of Grade R, parents record their children retelling texts heard in class.

Disciplinary Subjects:

- **Phonics for Reading and Spelling** – Phonics begins in Grade R, with reading and spelling starting in the second semester. However, in Pre-Grade R, the children are trained to develop phonological awareness in various texts, with specific focus on initial and final phonemes (sounds) heard and seen in familiar words. The skill of clear phoneme pronunciation is explored through a sensory integrated approach of identifying the position of the tongue, the formation of the lips, as well as the vibrations in the voice box.
- **Froebel's Gifts** – Friedrich Froebel, the founder of the Kindergarten movement, designed ten beautifully crafted gifts. Children are introduced to them when they are around 4-6 years of age. Playing with these toys helps them to distinguish form, colour and movement, and exercise eye-hand coordination and gross motor control. They also allow young children to discover aspects of mathematics, science, engineering and architecture by exploring the relationships between colour, form, motion, and structure.
- **Mathematics** - Becoming familiar with and using the language of mathematics in everyday life, number sense taught through counting objects,

number recognition and sequence observed through the use of number lines and rote counting.

- **Handwriting** – Pre-Grade Rs pay special attention to pencil grip, learning to trace letters and numbers in sand, on whiteboards and paper. Grade Rs build on this adding focus to the handwriting position and the direction of each letter or number.
- **Sports Hub** (Grade R) – Weekly specialised sports coaching for the Foundation Phase. Children are coached in six popular sporting disciplines - tag rugby, soccer, cricket, hockey, netball and tennis..
- **Handwork** – Children engage in a variety of handwork, from weaving to working with clay.
- **Afrikaans** - Taught in a conversational manner in Grade R.
- **isiXhosa** - Taught in a conversational manner in Grade R.

A distinctive learning methodology at Gardens Nook is that of narration. Children are expected to pay attention and to develop increasing capacity to tell back what they have heard. This method helps children to assimilate what has been presented to them, which then sets them up to engage with the ideas in the lesson and move onto higher order thinking. Narration is usually oral, however, children may be directed to express what they have heard through movement or drawing etc.

Character Formation

We affirm:

- That disposition and intellect are innate, given by God, and not to be viewed as achievements;
- That character is an achievement for which we may take responsibility;
- That all real advance, in the individual, family or nation, is along the lines of character;
- That, therefore, to direct and assist the development of character is the chief purpose of education;
- That the Holy Spirit is the one true educator.

The two great privileges of an Ambleside teacher are:

- To cultivate a rich, relational and disciplined mind, grounded in the mind of Christ Jesus;
- To cultivate pupil character (the cognitive, emotional and relational habits of a well-lived life), grounded in the love of Christ Jesus.

A High Standard of Attitude and Behaviour

Whether conscious or unconscious, all behaviour flows from heart attitudes and character is established as a result of habitual behaviour. Thus, the formation of character may be addressed not only by maintaining certain standards of behaviour, but by engaging the underlying ideas and attitudes that lead to behaviour. Gardens Nook is committed to forming the heart and mind but cannot succeed without the cooperation of parents and pupils.

It is particularly important that teachers and parents expect pupils to consistently display the habits of respectful submission to appropriate authority and diligent effort in completing assigned tasks.

Pupils are expected to submit to school policy and teacher authority. At all times, pupils are to be respectful of teachers and other learners. Any pupil who does not submit to authority or respect others shall be engaged in a wise, supportive manner that maintains a high standard and maximizes the possibility of healthy compliance (not neurotic nor merely external compliance). Teachers shall also engage parents' assistance in these areas.

The expectations for pupils at Gardens Nook are thoughtfully determined in order to create an optimal environment for each child's growth. While there will be much delight, each child will, and should, experience some degree of discomfort during the school year. Comfort is not the foremost goal, for growth is highly correlated with struggle. Allowing the child to experience discomfort, not as a thing to be avoided, but as an opportunity for growth, will result in a more productive and fruitful year.

Respect for Persons

All pupils are to treat others with kindness, respect and generosity. This is to manifest itself not only in the classroom, but also on the playground, traveling to school and anywhere else the pupils find themselves relating to one another. Pupils are to be sensitive to each other's uniqueness, respecting differences.

Cliques, favouritism, "best friends" and other forms of exclusivity at school are to be avoided. There is plenty of time outside of the school day when more intimate relationships may be nurtured. Our aim is to be inclusive rather than exclusive in our relationships. Good manners, courtesy and gracious treatment should be maintained at all times among the school family. As with academic behaviour, if these instructions are not followed action will be taken in an optimal, growth-inducing manner, soliciting parent support when necessary.

In respecting other school families, it is important that parents communicate with each other regarding television, movies and video/computer games when children are invited into the home. There are varying levels of discretion concerning these media. What some parents deem graphic or inappropriate with respect to violence, relationships, language or humour, others do not. Therefore, please talk to one another and respect one another's choices.

Respect for Property

Pupils are expected to show appropriate regard for all school property. The building belongs to the Holy Trinity Church and some of the furnishings are on loan. The School wishes to care for and maintain the playground, books, desks and other physical property so that a pleasant environment is maintained.

What is our approach to discipline?

“The man who can make himself do what he wills has the world before him, and it rests with parents to give their children this self-compelling power as a mere matter of habit.”

Charlotte Mason

Charlotte Mason observed that if given the right kind of emotional-relational atmosphere, the discipline of intentional habit training, and the provision of a life-giving curriculum, then children are ready and eager to pursue knowledge and we will be surprised at what they accomplish.

At Gardens Nook, teachers seek to be proactive in nurturing growth and working to support weaknesses before failure. This involves developing a good relationship that acknowledges the precious person that each child is, and the need to **consistently train them in habits** that will serve them well for life.

When young children start school, it may take a while for them to settle and understand what is expected of them. If an incident occurs, the teacher considers:

- Does the child know or understand what I have asked of them? If not, let me tell them.
- Does the child know, but struggles to action what has been requested due to their personal weakness? If so, how can I offer proactive support to the child so that they can strengthen through practice.
- Does the child know and have the capability to act but is deliberately not cooperating? If so, let me ensure natural consequences to support the learning process. This means the natural pain is experienced as a result of a poor choice - but does not venture into punishing the child.

Teachers are also constantly ‘**sowing ideas**’ that help children to do what they ought. Children are taught Charlotte Mason’s famous quote “I am, I can, I ought, I will”, which helps to strengthen the will to do what they ought to do, based on who they are. This is done in order to shape the motivations of why children do something, instead of aiming for mere external compliance.

Responsibility for Responding to Pupils’ Weakness or Disobedience

With the goal of seeing growth, teachers have a responsibility to respond to children’s weaknesses or disobedience at school. The vast majority of discipline problems are dealt with in the classroom. The teacher is in authority and is expected to maintain a classroom atmosphere where each pupil can learn and grow in an

optimal way. The Principal supports the teacher in his/her role and becomes involved in the following cases:

- A serious offense
- A pupil becomes so disruptive, uncooperative or emotionally distressed that the attention of another authority is needed
- A lesser offense has become habitual and the added authority of the Principal would be helpful in facilitating pupil growth.

A teacher typically does not report to parents any correction that is a part of dealing with routine weakness at school, unless the offense is very serious, highly disruptive to the class or habitual. In these cases, the teacher will contact the parents by telephone, and if necessary a meeting will be arranged with the parents to gain additional support for the pupil's growth.

Above all, the School needs parental support when confronting pupil weakness or disobedience. The parental relationship is essential in bringing up the child to be self-governed and positive in his/her relationships with himself, others and authority. Parents are asked to assist in this process by peacefully but firmly confronting the child's weakness, developing a strategy to replace bad habits with good, and consistently applying the strategy.

Level of Offense

For purposes of clarity, Gardens Nook Pre-School classifies negative behaviour as follows:

- Level One Offenses include a series of occurrences displaying defiant or disruptive behaviour including disrespectful speech, physical harm or resisting co-operation.
- Level Two Offenses include patterns of disobedience continues, despite intentional intervention by both parent/s and teacher.
- Level Three Offenses include a unrepentant attitude and resistance to remedy disobedience, disrespect and harmful behaviour to self and others.
- Level Four Offenses include any act of violence which has the potential to cause permanent harm or vandalism.

Consequences for Offenses

| Level One | Level Two | Level Three | Level Four |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Handled by classroom teacher* | Handled by classroom teacher* | Immediate referral to the Principal | Immediate referral to the Principal |

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| <p>Single offenses elicit teacher correction.</p> <p>Repeated offenses elicit parent involvement and a strategy for new habit formation.</p> | <p>Parent notified by phone call and a record made in the pupil's journal file.</p> <p>Repeated offenses elicit parent involvement and a strategy for new habit formation.</p> | <p>Possible suspension for the remainder of the day or longer</p> <p>Parents are contacted and consulted as to response.</p> <p>Multiple offenses with lack of repentance will result in expulsion.</p> | <p>Immediate suspension and probable expulsion</p> <p>Parents are contacted for an immediate meeting with the Principal.</p> <p>Multiple offenses will result in expulsion.</p> |
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*In cases of a pattern of offenses, the teacher is expected to seek the Principal's counsel and involvement.

Policies for Pupil Dismissal

Pupils may be dismissed from Gardens Nook Pre-School for the following:

- Any Level Four offense
- Repeated Level Three offenses or lack of repentance for a Level Three offense
- A pervasive pattern of Level Two offenses which seriously undermines the school atmosphere and for which the pupil is unrepentant
- A pattern of excessive absence from school in their Grade R year
- An unwillingness to dutifully engage the academic work
- A determination by teacher and Principal that Three Peaks School is unable to meet the academic and/or personal needs of the pupil.

Any pupil guilty of a Level Three Offense for which he/she is unrepentant, or a Level Four Offense is subject to the possibility of immediate expulsion at the recommendation of the Principal with the concurrence of the Directors.

In all other cases, when a pupil is in danger of dismissal, the Principal and teacher will schedule a meeting with parents and pupil. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Clearly communicate that the pupil is in danger of dismissal
- Clearly identify the behaviours that must change if the pupil is to remain at Gardens Nook Pre-School
- Develop a strategy for supporting the pupil in positive change.

The pupil's teacher and the Principal will diligently seek to support the pupil in his weakness and will be in regular contact with his/her parents, notifying them of progress or lack of progress. After a minimum of four weeks, if the Principal deems that there has been insufficient progress towards the needed change and that the

pupil's continued presence at the School is a disservice to the pupil or to other pupils at the School, the Principal will recommend to the Directors that the pupil be dismissed.

Should a majority of the Directors vote for the pupil's dismissal, the Principal and a Director will meet with the parents of the pupil and request that he/she be withdrawn from the School. If the parents are unwilling to voluntarily withdraw their child, then the pupil will be formally dismissed.

Parenting Resources

Podcasts

You can find helpful podcasts on <https://amblesideschools.org/the-ambleside-difference/>.

Practical tips

“Every day, every hour, the parents are either passively or actively forming those habits in their children upon which, more than upon anything else, future character and conduct depend.”

Charlotte Mason

Practical ways to support your child's education:

- Keep a bonded relationship with your child and have regular times when you give them your full attention. Your children should know that you are for them, that growth is required of them though they will be supported in their areas of weakness
- Require your child to respect you, others and as a result appropriately submit to authority at school
- Complete tasks to the best of their ability in the time provided
- Give your children unstructured play time, especially outside in nature
- Demonstrate habits of self-control and displaying the strength required to bring yourself to do what you ought to do
- Model delight in learning and work, and the privilege of service
- Read together and enjoy listening to your children as they narrate for you at home

Observation of Growth and Reports

“Thought breeds thought; children familiar with great thoughts take as naturally to thinking for themselves as the well-nourished body takes to growing; and we must

bear in mind that growth, physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, is the sole end of education.”

Charlotte Mason

Children are expected to pay attention and demonstrate effort every school day. All pupils are active participants in the learning process and are called upon to narrate and discuss each day's readings and presentations and teachers observe children daily.

For Grade R learners, as a reflection of the commitment to support your child, their teacher may request that s/he stay to do work after school for additional learning support. The teacher may also request that some homework is done with the parent. Your partnership in this is essential in setting them up for success.

Teachers communicate to the parents regarding their child in the following ways:

Parent-Teacher Conferences

During the first and third terms, the school hosts parent-teacher meetings. These are compulsory for Grade R children, but not compulsory for Pre-Grade R children. During these meetings, you will engage in discussions pertaining to your child's relationship to authority, to their peers and to their work.

Growth Reports

You will receive a report on your child's growth at the end of the second and fourth terms. The reports further detail the teacher's observations about the child's character development in relation to self, others and to work.

The Grade R reports detail observations about the child's relationship to skill and content based knowledge. These areas are also graded by indicating that a child is Strong / Some Growth Needed / Below Required Level.

In Pre-Grade R, further observations are also made about the gross motor, fine motor, creative, and language development etc of children.

Pupils Repeating Grade R

If in the judgment of the classroom teacher and the principal, a pupil lacks the necessary emotional or academic maturity to successfully proceed to Grade 1 then the school will expect the pupil to repeat Grade R.

It may also be necessary if a pupil is absent for more than thirty days in a given year. It is usually evident by the third term if a pupil is at risk of having to repeat the grade. In such circumstances, the teacher will meet with the parents timeously to discuss what would be in the best interests of the child.

Gardens Nook Parents' Commitment

Parents have been given the primary care and oversight of their children. By enrolling their children at Gardens Nook Pre-School, parents consent to work together with teachers for their growth and development. Parents and staff cooperate to provide relational support and accountability to raise the children to maturity. Based upon these principles of cooperation and authority, parents make the following commitments:

To Support the Work of Gardens Nook Pre-School:

- Attend Parent Meetings, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and school events
- Uphold school policies
- Volunteer
- To be Punctual:
 - At arrival and dismissal times
 - In fulfilling financial commitments

To Foster Healthy Communication with Others:

- Talk directly to the person with whom you have a concern or conflict, not about the person to others;
- Seek to get a full account of an incident from teachers or administration, acknowledging that a child's retelling of an incident is only one perspective of the incident;
- Follow the grievance policy in a timely manner as outlined in this Handbook;
- Be inclusive in social events

Grievance Procedures

As a community, it is important that Board members, teachers, and parents all work to maintain a positive, affirming, encouraging atmosphere. The expression of negative feelings and even supposedly "constructive" criticism can do much to undermine any school's atmosphere. The Board and administration of Gardens Nook Pre-School (Three Peaks School NPC) do not seek to suppress the expression of any parent's concern or grievance. However, we ask that any such concern or grievance be handled in a healthy, constructive manner. The process as outlined below is followed for concerns within the community. You are not to entertain grievances apart from this process. The lodging of a grievance shall not prejudice you in any way. Stages in the grievance procedure are as follows:

- You are always directed to go to the responsible person (teacher, principal or parent) first. There will be no speaking of or listening to grievances/concerns without the referenced person being present.
- Should you have anxiety regarding going to the responsible person, you should request to be accompanied by a member of the School leadership (principal, head teacher, or board member). However, the accompanying person **MUST NOT** listen to the grievance prior to the meeting with the

concerned person and is to serve only as a facilitator, making NO JUDGEMENT as to the merit of the complaint.

- If your concerns have not been alleviated after consulting with the responsible person, you may then seek a meeting with the Principal. If deemed necessary, the Principal will seek to mediate a meeting between the concerned persons. The Principal will be careful not to make any judgments based on only one side of the story.
- If you wish to question a Board policy or should the Principal be unable to resolve your concern to your satisfaction, you WILL BE ENCOURAGED by the Principal to file a formal “Statement of Concern” with the Three Peaks School NPC Board. The necessary forms will be made available by the Principal and may be transmitted to the School Board via the School principal or a Board member. (Board members must take care not to individually circumvent the grievance process. Such behaviour undermines the Grievance Policy.)
- The Principal will ensure that all persons concerned with a grievance are given the opportunity to provide written statements to the Board. The Board will review the “Statement of Concern” and any additional statements. If necessary, the board will invite the concerned person to meet with the School Board.
- Upon reaching a decision, the Board will select one of its members to communicate its decision to all concerned persons.

Child Protection Policy

Gardens Nook Pre-School takes the wellbeing and safety of every child in our care very seriously. We aim to provide a safe environment, good leadership and safe practices that are in line with the law. Additionally, we believe that adult example has a profound effect on the formation of the hearts of children. Thus, Ambleside teachers, staff, and board members are expected to maintain a standard of personal conduct consistent with the teachings of Jesus on virtue and the relational life as articulated in the Ambleside Code of Conduct.

We believe that the child’s best interests are of paramount importance (section 28(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa) and we recognise our constitutional obligation to respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights afforded to children in respect of the Children's Act, as well as the rights enshrined in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and United Nations Declaration of Rights of the Child, and aims to work in partnership with children and families to maintain the overall welfare of the child.

We believe that children belong primarily to God and therefore must be nurtured, protected and valued at all times, irrespective of their race, culture, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental ability, religion, language, origin of birth or socio-economic status.

The most updated version of our Child Protection Policy is available [here](#) and serves the following objectives:

- Ensuring we practise safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children.
- Providing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse.
- Support for learners who have been abused (and/ or allegedly abused) in accordance with a child protection plan that is done in consultation with the child concerned and their parent(s)/ guardian(s).
- Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.
- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping the school community (staff, parents and children) with the skills needed to keep them safe.

Appendix A: Statements of Faith

The Nicene Creed

(the most widely used ancient statement of orthodox Christian faith)

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son.]* With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

*A latter addition by the western church, this phrase is not accepted by Eastern Orthodox churches and affirmation of it is not required.

Three Peaks School NPC Declaration of Faith

We believe in...

1. The one true God who lives eternally in three persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

2. The love, grace and sovereignty of God in creating , sustaining, ruling, redeeming and judging the world.
3. The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God-fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.
4. The dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image to love, be holy and care for creation, yet corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement.
5. The incarnation of God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ - born of the virgin Mary; truly divine and truly human, yet without sin.
6. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God.
7. The bodily resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of our resurrection ; his ascension to the Father, and his reign and mediation as the only Saviour of the world.
8. The justification of sinners solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ.
9. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance, unites us with Christ through new birth, empowers our discipleship and enables our witness.
10. The Church, the body of Christ both local and universal , the priesthood of all believers - given life by the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit's gifts to worship God and proclaim the gospel, promoting justice and love.
11. The personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to fulfil the purposes of God, who will raise all people to judgement, bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal condemnation to the lost, and establish a new heaven and new earth.

The South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms (As endorsed on 21 October 2010) can be found in Annexure F of your enrolment contract.

Charter of Ambleside Schools International (used with permission of St. Martins in the Field, London, England)

We believe in and proclaim both the mystery that is God, whom we partly know and partly do not know, and the human need to worship. We believe in and proclaim the person of Jesus Christ who distinctively reveals the nature of God and the meaning and purpose of life, and who calls us to follow Him through the death of the cross to the place of the Resurrection. We trust in the Holy Spirit who prompts liberty, beauty, truth, love, and joy against the waywardness of human nature. We are committed to using the Bible in a way that takes account of all truth and relates it to the real experiences, both good and bad, that people have of life. We are committed to exploring the meaning of the Kingdom of God and to making connections between what we profess and the way in which we live and work. We acknowledge the destructive power of human sinfulness, and we welcome gratefully the forgiveness that God offers to those who are prepared to turn to the truth. We are committed to taking all people seriously wherever they might be at their particular point of understanding, while at the same time sharing with them whatever insights may have been gained by our relationship with God. We are committed to identifying and affirming what is good and identifying and opposing what is evil, and living as best

we can in the mess in the middle.

Appendix B: Ambleside Code of Personal Conduct

Based on its commitment to the person and principles of Jesus, as an Ambleside Member School, Three Peaks School NPC (which operates both Gardens Nook Pre-School and Three Peaks Primary) has a clear moral vision and definite expectations for its board members, staff, faculty and children. Failure to conform to this moral vision is grounds for disciplinary action. While Three Peaks does not make parental conformity to this moral vision a prerequisite to admission of a child, it does expect that all parents have a clear understanding and accept this moral vision as integral to the curriculum and the life of the Three Peaks community. Adult example has a profound effect on the formation of the hearts of children.

- Demonstrate consistent care for all persons, treating all with kindness, respect, and generosity; never engaging in any behaviour (including verbal) which would be damaging, disrespectful or demeaning of another person, child or adult.
- Be diligent in fulfilling all tasks related to one's responsibilities, maintaining a high quality of work, honesty and integrity.
- Be careful and gracious in speech, avoiding any profane speech and never making a public statement (in any medium, including e-mail) regarding the school or any member of the Three Peaks community which can be considered injurious to the reputation of another person or the school.
- Handle all concerns and grievances in a constructive manner. (See procedures for dealing with Grievances).
- Avoid all illegal activities including illegal drug use, theft, vandalism and fraudulent activity.
- Avoid activities destructive to relationships such as outbursts of rage, violence, stealing, lying or cheating.
- Be moderate and appropriate in the consumption of alcohol.
- Protect the dignity of human sexuality and the virtue of chastity
- By avoiding all forms of lewd speech including base jokes, sexual innuendo, and inappropriate sexually explicit talk.
- By never viewing, possessing, distributing or fostering the use of pornographic material including but not limited to print, video and audio.
- By never advocating or participating in immoral sexual activity (defined as any form of touching or nudity for the purpose of evoking sexual arousal apart from the context of marriage between one man and one woman).
- By never engaging in any physical contact or verbal expression with another person(adult or child) which could be interpreted as being an inappropriate display of affection and thus emotionally abusive, confusing or scandalous.

Appendix C: Three Peaks School NPC (Pupil) Code of Conduct

Our teachers expect us to:

- be kind, considerate, helpful and friendly to everyone
- say hello politely to visitors
- let the grown-ups pass by
- do our best in everything we do, including our homework
- obey the rules for whatever we're doing or wearing or playing
- own up when we do something bad or make a mistake
- encourage others to do what is right
- use words to build others up and show we love them and God
- speak respectfully about religious beliefs, cultures, opinions and choices that are different from our own.

We are not allowed to:

- miss any classes or sports without permission
- ignore or disobey our parents, teachers or other staff members
- mess up or break things, neither on purpose nor by being careless
- borrow or use or take things that don't belong to us without asking
- tell lies or cheat or let people think things that aren't true
- use swear words or make rude signs
- exclude some people by speaking a language they don't understand
- play rough games that hurt others on purpose
- tease or bully anyone, by hurting them (hitting, pinching, pulling hair or kicking) or calling them an unkind name, or making fun of them
- go into "out of bounds" areas unless we're with a teacher
- keep a cell phone with us during the school day
- bring any toys, or ugly, evil, rude or violent books or pictures to school
- bring cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, fireworks, dangerous objects or weapons to school.