

Evaluating Safety and Security in a Pre-School

By Kathryn Antin

When parents place their most priceless treasure—their children—into the care of someone else, they naturally want to ensure that their child is protected. But how does one evaluate the security provided by a preschool? Knowing what to look for will give you confidence that you have selected a preschool that offers the caring protection that you desire for your child. This brief article offers you a guide.

When one makes the distinction, “security” addresses protecting your child from deliberate harm, whereas “safety” addresses protecting your child from accidental harm. (The issue of safety will be addressed in a later article.) The primary purpose of security is to protect your child from strangers and other unauthorized individuals. There are three aspects of security that one must evaluate in a preschool: outdoor security, building access, and classroom access.

Outdoor security: Outdoor play is critical for your child’s development. Therefore, a preschool must offer a secure environment for your child’s exploration and gross motor activity. A quality preschool will have a play area that does not allow a visitor or stranger access without staff accompaniment. The playground should be fully enclosed by a fence of adequate height and strength and gates that are appropriately locked. Moreover, it is often just as important to keep the children *inside* the play area—under appropriate supervision and away from those who might do them harm—as it is to keep unauthorized individuals *out*; children should not be able to exit the play area unnoticed.

Building Access: A quality preschool will have a system that allows them to grant or deny an individual access to the preschool, while at the same time empowering parents to access their child at any time. This is successfully accomplished through three mechanisms. The first is a reception area that allows a Director, Assistant Director, or Receptionist to view and welcome each parent or visitor and have him or her sign in prior to preschool access. This provides a record of visitors and deters loitering trespassers. The second mechanism is a security system that monitors all access points to the building. A card access system, for example, allows identified parents with a pass-card to access their child after being greeted, but makes sure that a visitor or stranger can enter the preschool only after being identified and accompanied by a staff member. In addition, all exterior doors should have a bell that draws the attention of the staff to the opening and closing of a door.

Classroom access: Full-time monitoring of a classroom will greatly add to a parent’s peace of mind. A quality preschool will have one or more ways for a parent, grandparent, or guardian to observe classroom activity. An exceptional method is through real-time video such as “Parent’s Eye View.” By using a unique password that allows a parent to watch classroom activity via the web through a cell phone, computer, or PDA, parents can be reassured that the classroom is a secure environment for their child. Another method for classroom security is for the preschool to have one-way windows that allow parents and administration to monitor classroom activity. At the very least, the Director or Assistant Director should monitor the classrooms via camera and windows. Of course, a quality preschool will always allow parents to visit the classroom and participate in class activities.

Having peace of mind is critical for parents/guardians of preschool children. The security offered by a preschool is a crucial part of feeling confident and peaceful about the care, teaching, and development opportunities available to your child. When evaluating a preschool be sure to notice their outdoor, building access, and classroom access security system and policies.

Busy Bees Christian PreSchool is a high quality preschool that offers a warm and secure atmosphere for your child to learn. Call 479-267-0456 today to set up a FREE OFFICE TOUR for you and your child.