



Children ages 36 months through 5 years participate in the preschool program at Monty Ballard YMCA

5 Tips on What to Look for in a GREAT PRESCHOOL

Katy Magazine breaks down how to find the best school for your child

Written by Meagan Clanahan



Monty Ballard YMCA takes a hands-on approach to child care



It's important for preschools to foster a child's learning



Second Baptist Church offers Christian-based learning for children

Choosing a preschool for your little ones can be an overwhelming task, especially here in Katy where choices abound. Full-day or half-day? Traditional versus Montessori? Christian-based or secular? What accreditations should you look for? Let's break it down.

1. LIFESTYLE FIT

Katy offers a plethora of options for preschool, whether it be a more traditional full-time preschool for working parents or a "Mother's Day Out" setting with school ranging from three to six hours. Consider why you need this type of care: Do you need to have work hours covered or are you looking to engage your children in a classroom setting a few times a week? Katy mom Marianne Horton says, "I wanted a faith-based school with flexible day options. Carpool drop-off was also a huge plus for me." Evaluate your goals and needs and narrow down your choices from there.

2. OVERALL COST

No doubt that preschool is an extraneous expense for most families. Thoroughly check out the websites of the preschools under consideration and calculate the total cost. Most will allow monthly payments, but pay attention to non-refundable registration fees, supply expenses, and late fees. Don't be surprised if they require payment upfront for the beginning and end months. Additional expenses may include nap mats, backpacks, lunch boxes, field trip money, teacher gifts, and more.

3. SAFETY

This is typically the number one concern for parents sending their kids to preschool, as for many it's the first time the child has been out of their hands. "Primrose Schools has a digital Safe School Plan available to parents that sets out in detail plans and responses to every type of emergency," says Starla Finch, marketing director. "The plan is administered by campus school emergency response teams. Monthly drills ensure students and teachers are prepared in the event of an emergency." Many preschools also have classroom webcam options, so with a click of a mouse, you can check in on your child's day at any time. Other considerations include visitor and guest procedures, front and back locked doors, and policies on who can pick up your child.

4. THE CLASSROOM

This is where it's highly recommended you take guided tours of the preschool during normal operating hours. Beware of schools that don't offer that option, as it is important to see how the classroom functions between the teacher and the students. Additionally, "watching the teacher-child interactions is important and will certainly give you a great insight into the care being provided; however, don't forget to consider the surroundings in which your child will be all day," says Pamela Etta, owner of Kiddie Academy of Grand Harbor. "You don't want to spend your day in a

small, dark, cluttered room, so why would you make your child? Look for lots of natural light and spacious, clutter-free classrooms." Another consideration is a low teacher to student ratio. According to Etta, when the ratio is high, it can lead to teachers feeling overwhelmed, more classroom chaos, and therefore, a higher turnover of staff. Lower ratios allow for more positive interactions with teacher and child and opportunities for small group and one-on-one activities.

5. THE CURRICULUM

Research and ask the preschool directors about the particular type of curriculum they offer. You'll want to decide what particular structure you prefer for your child in advance. "The most important thing I looked for in my search for the best preschools for my children were the schools' recognition that developmentally appropriate practices are what foster a love for learning in kids. We wanted a place that inspired learning through play and creativity and not rigorous academics," shares Stefanie Heintz, a Katy mom of two. Play-based curriculum has gained traction in recent years as studies show kids perform better when they are actively learning a unit of study through play. Katy is also home to wonderful Montessori schools which combine age groups and focus on individualized learning. Some programs, such as Primrose, combine both child-led learning and traditional teacher instruction. **KM**

MEAGAN CLANAHAN is a Katy mom to twin 6 year olds who have thrived in Katy preschools from an early age.



FOR PARENTS

- NAEYC is a voluntary accreditation process and has listings for childhood programs.
- AdvancED is a non-profit that accredits preschool and early learning institutions with thorough on-site reviews and analysis.
- CDC.gov is a website resource for parents with developmentally appropriate milestones, free materials, signs of early autism, and more.
- TXDFPS allows you to search by school to ensure that it meets all state licensing requirements to be a preschool, as well as lists any infractions.



KATY PRESCHOOL GUIDE

★ **BRIDGEPOINT EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY**

13277 Katy Fwy.
Houston
832-448-1330

★ **BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF HOUSTON**

2203 N. Westgreen Blvd.
713-290-9025
nordangliaeducation.com

★ **BRITISH PRIVATE PREP SCHOOLS**

25935 Cinco Terrace Dr.
281-394-7737

28031 S. Firethorne Rd.
281-394-5889

4025 S. Mason Rd.
281-828-2000
britishprivateprepschool.com

★ **CENTERRA RANCH MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

23144 Cinco Ranch Blvd.
281-693-2767
centerraranchmontessori.com

CHILD ENRICHMENT CENTER

(Kingsland Baptist Church)
20555 Kingsland Blvd.
281-579-9232
kingsland.org

CHILD'S PLAY LEARNING CENTER, INC.

(Epiphany of the Lord)
1530 Norwalk Dr.
281-578-9332
childsplaykaty.com

CHILDREN'S LIGHTHOUSE

23060 Westheimer Pkwy.
281-395-4466

26051 Kingsland Blvd.
281-392-2211

5740 FM 1463
281-394-9696
childrenslighthouse.com

CHILDTIME LEARNING CENTER

22022 Highland Knolls Dr.
281-392-2400

3170 N. Fry Rd.
281-646-8330
childtime.com

CROSSPOINT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

700 S. Westgreen Blvd.
281-945-5133
crosspt.org

★ **DISCOVERY SCHOOLHOUSE**

4900 Falcon Landing Blvd.
281-698-7234
discovery-schoolhouse.com

★ **FOUNDATIONS ACADEMY**

20817 Westheimer Pkwy.
281-599-1200
foundations-academy.com

★ **THE GODDARD SCHOOL**

24025 Cinco Village Center Blvd.
281-392-1912

5220 Ranch Point Dr.
281-392-1200
goddardschool.com

HOLY COVENANT CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

22111 Morton Ranch Rd.
281-579-8687
holycovcdc.org

KATY MONTESSORI SCHOOL

20660 Westheimer Pkwy.
281-398-7323
katymontessori.com

★ **KATY'S EARLY CHILDHOOD ENRICHMENT CENTER AT WESTLAND**

1407 W. Grand Pkwy. S.
281-693-1999
katycecc.com

★ **KIDDIE ACADEMY OF GRAND HARBOR**

24404 Kingsland Blvd.
281-665-8495
kiddieacademy.com

★ **KIDS 'R' KIDS**

25950 Cinco Ranch Blvd.
281-392-1370

4515 FM 1463
281-347-5437

24007 Franz Rd.
281-347-5444

10602 S. Fry Rd.
281-392-1414

21955 Westheimer Pkwy.
281-828-2273
kidsrkids.com

KINDERCARE

2650 S. Peek Rd.
281-392-2650

2202 Fry Rd.
Houston
281-578-1415

22129 Kingsland Blvd.
281-392-6770

6130 S. Fry Rd.
281-693-6556
kindercare.com

THE LEARNING CENTER

(Living Word Lutheran Church)
3700 S. Mason Rd.
281-392-2273
tlclivingwordkaty.org

MY PLACE EARLY LEARNING CENTER

24034 Cinco Village Center Blvd.
281-392-5900

2212 Katy Flewellen Rd.
281-396-4734
myplacecincoranch.com

★ **PRIMROSE SCHOOLS**

1540 Peek Rd.
281-693-7711

2402 Westgreen Blvd.
281-828-1600

21480 Park Row Blvd.
281-492-7400

26900 Cinco Ranch Blvd.
281-347-1212

1249 FM 1463
281-371-0099
primroseschools.com

RISING STAR ACADEMY

920 S. Peek Rd.
281-391-5437
risingstar-academy.com

★ **SPANISH LEARNING CASTLE**

5024 E. 5th St.
832-437-6479
spanishlearningcastle.com

SUGAR CREEK MONTESSORI

4802 FM 1463
Fulshear


7222 Gaston Rd.
281-693-7267
sugarcreekmontessori.com

★ **WESTLAKE PREPARATORY LUTHERAN ACADEMY**

23300 Bellaire Blvd.
Richmond
281-341-9910

★ Denotes Katy Magazine advertiser

This is only a sampling of the preschools offered in Katy.



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