

Al-Noor Academy

Pre-School Handbook



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❖ Our Mission

Al-Noor Academy (ANA) aims to provide an education that is rooted in Islamic faith and ideals that draws upon the noblest Islamic traditions of ‘Ilm (Knowledge), ‘Ibadah (Worship), ‘Adl (Justice) and ‘Ihsan (Excellence) and seeks to inculcate these values in our students so they can take their place in society as conscientious Muslims, following the Sira'at-al-Mustaqeem (The Straight Path) while also aspiring to the highest goals in the profession they choose.

❖ Our Philosophy

We believe children learn best in a play-based environment that allows them to explore, create and develop new skills while they are collaboratively having fun.

Activities are designed to help each child develop at his/her own pace in a nurturing atmosphere. Imaginative craft projects are offered daily to improve fine motor skills. Sensory tables, puppet theaters and thematic centers are used in the classroom. Our outdoor playground offers children time for exercise and play while circle time allows children to enjoy group stories, poetry and songs.

❖ Accreditation & Affiliations

Al-Noor Academy has been accredited by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges since 2010. Our preschool

program is licensed-exempt by Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

ANA is also affiliated with the Islamic Center of New England (ICNE), our local community group.

❖ Curriculum

Aligned with our school’s mission, our pre-school program carefully integrates our Islamic teachings in all aspects of our students’ life; from learning the morning adhkar to numerous duaa, all aspects of language arts, math, science and social studies always bear relevance to our deen.

- **Arabic**

Our preschoolers will begin to recognize, write and explore Arabic alphabets, numbers and sight-words. They will also learn to differentiate between speech sounds and letter names, learn how to write their own names and focus on expanding vocabulary in their immediate environment.

- **Quran**

Our preschool program provides clear and intelligent beginning lessons in Quran recitation and memorization. The practice is carried out every day.

- **Opening the World of Learning (OWL)**

OWL is a comprehensive Early Literacy Program that prepares every child for success through rich and integrated content in all domains of early learning. OWL provides research-based instruction

and adopts favorite classic children books, songs and poems to develop skills and concepts in in meeting NAEYC standards. Students will learn aspects of Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies thematically.

❖ **Our Staff**

The faculty at Al-Noor Academy is a team of highly qualified professionals with a sound knowledge of Islamic ideals and practices.

❖ **Registration**

In keeping with best practices, students who are 2years 9months by September 1st will be eligible for admission into our pre-school program and may remain until they turn five years of age.

Important: students must be 5years old by October 31st to be eligible for kindergarten.

Registration may be made online using our TruForm platform on our website at www.alnooracademy.org and all required registration forms may, likewise be readily downloaded. Registration is complete only if all the necessary documents are submitted including, but not limited to, original copies of birth certificate, immunization form, emergency contact form, tuition payments and/or checks.

Please contact our Registrar with any enrollment enquiries.

❖ **Part-Time or Full-Time Attendance**

ANA offers a flexible part-time (3-days or 4-days) or full-time 5-days attendance options.

For part-time, parents must confirm and commit to the specific days of the week they have selected for their child to attend school at the time of enrollment. Any request for change in the day of attendance is subject to space availability. Parents are urged to closely review the school calendar prior to selecting the days for part-time students.

Important: There will be no refund for any days missed, whether a student is part-time or full-time. Withdrawal policy will apply (as set-out under the Tuition Policy) if a student leave school any time after the school year has begun.

❖ **School Calendar & Hours of Operation**

Please visit our school website at www.alnooracademy.org for a downloadable copy of our current school calendar. ANA is open from Monday through Friday, except during school holidays as set-out in the school calendar.

Arrival is from 7.50am to 8.00am. Dismissal takes place from 2.50pm to 3.00pm.

Important: Students who are not picked-up by 3.15pm will be directly enrolled into our After-School program and the daily fee will apply.

❖ **Before & After-School Program**

ANA offers a Before-School program from 7.20am to 7.50am and an After-School program that runs from 3.00pm to 5.00pm daily.

Our Before and After-School programs are a convenience for our working parents and provide additional development opportunities for the children involved. Students can seek to gain Arabic support, Quran, Reading fluency, homework help, enrichment activities and sports activities through these programs.

Any child who is enrolled at ANA may participate in these programs on an occasional “drop in” basis, for a nominal fee. Parents must make arrangements with staff at least one day in advance to ensure that there is space available that day. Forms for either the Before and/or After-School program are available on our website at www.alnooracademy.org.

❖ **JupiterEd – Student Online Portal**

Every student enrolled will be given a unique online account from which all formal communication between home and school will be logged, including and not limited to parent-teacher emails, attendance record, assessment, report card, discipline report, etc.

❖ **Screening & Assessment**

Our school year is based on trimesters as set-out in our school calendar.

DIAL-4 Screening

During October-November, all newly-registered preschoolers and kindergarteners will undergo a Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL-4) screening to measure their motor, language and cognitive skills. This include documented feedback from both parents and teacher through prescribed survey forms. Results from this screening will be shared with parents with individualized recommendations for follow-up, if any.

Observations & Assessment

Formal and informal observations and assessment are conducted throughout the school year.

Teachers will maintain a portfolio for each of the children. Works of art, writing and photographs of the child’s work are documented for use in their files

Children’s files are kept confidential, unless parents provide written consent to sharing the information with any third party.

❖ **Parent-Teacher Conference**

Formal Parent-Teacher conferences are held two times a year as set-out in our school calendar. We will make every effort to accommodate parents’ work schedules to encourage attendance and engagement.

Parents will be presented with their child’s complete and updated portfolio at each parent-teacher conference and both academic assessment and social progress will be shared. Teacher and parents are expected to jointly support the holistic growth of our young children.

Informal teacher conferences can be held at any time during the year, also by appointment. Please contact your child's teacher directly to make arrangements.

❖ School Uniform

All preschoolers must come to school dressed in the appropriate school uniform attire **printed with our school name** as follows:

Top: Dark navy blue sweatshirt/polo-shirt; short or long-sleeve

Pants: Dark navy blue sweatpants

Sweater: Dark navy blue with school name

Please visit our school website at www.alnooracademy.org for detailed information on our school uniform policy and vendor information.

❖ What Your Child Needs To Bring

Please bring the following items on the **first day** of school and ensure all items are marked with your child's name:

- ❖ Complete change of clothes including socks, undergarments, sweater or sweatshirt, in a labeled bag
- ❖ In cold weather, please include a hat, gloves or mittens, boots
- ❖ Shoes with Velcro fasteners or zippers only (no open-toe, slippers or sandals allowed)
- ❖ Lunchbox or lunch container
- ❖ Blanket, a small stuffed animal or favorite soft doll for nap
- ❖ One photograph of the child

❖ Transition Period & Observations

Parents may accompany a new child in their classroom for a reasonable period during their first week of school. Once school is in session, parents or other visitors must make arrangements with the office first to schedule school visits and classroom observations.

Observations can be scheduled any time during the year. We expect to have additional observers such as university education majors and teachers from other early childhood programs; so all visits must be scheduled in advance.

Any new child enrolling is given the option of coming to school for half-days as a transition during their first week of enrollment. This option eases some shy children into the new environment, allowing them to get used to the unfamiliar situation gradually.

❖ Morning Drop-Off Procedures

To help facilitate transition from home to school during morning arrival, preschoolers will be offered several free-choice activities when they arrive. Formal lessons begin at circle time, which starts promptly at 9:00 am daily. It is important for cohesion of the group that your children come to school on time. Parents are asked to complete the sign-in log near the entrance of the building before accompanying the child to the classroom if they arrive after 8:00am.

❏ Absenteeism Policy

Parents are required to notify the school before 9.00am in the case of an unanticipated illness. Please let us know as far in advance as possible for any anticipated absence.

Important: There is no tuition reimbursement for sick days or make-up days for part-time students. For a long break in services due to health or urgent family matters that require attention, parents should provide written communication to the office to better assist in working out any issues regarding absences.

❏ Snow Days

Al-Noor Academy closely defer to Sharon and/or Mansfield Public Schools on weather-related closures or delays. ANA reserves the right to exercise other weather-related cancellations based on the schedules of other public and private schools in the area, if any.

Such closures/delays will be made no later than 5.30 am through the school's OneCallNow automated announcement service (phone, email, text), school's main telephone, school's website and on the local news station WBZ TV. On expected inclement days, please conduct such communication checks before leaving home in the morning.

❏ Non-Discrimination Policy

Al-Noor Academy does not discriminate in terms of student admissions or staff employment. A child will not be refused

enrollment on the basis of religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, primary language, race, or disability. Admissions are on a first-come, first served basis and upon available openings.

❏ Parent Volunteer Commitment

As part of an ongoing commitment to build the school community, families are requested to donate 50 volunteer hours over the course of the school year to assist the school and its programs. Some of the areas where volunteer energy will be welcomed include:

- ❖ Providing a guest appearance in your child's class to share a skill or artifact, read a book, speak about their culture or country, or to help generally
- ❖ Accompany children on or organize field trips
- ❖ Assist in planning special events (graduation, Eid party)
- ❖ Materials-making (i.e. cutting, laminating)
- ❖ Help decorate bulletin boards
- ❖ Photography and video at school events
- ❖ Library book maintenance and repair
- ❖ Conduct weekly bake-sales
- ❖ Fundraising projects

Parents who wish to volunteer in the classroom with the children or accompany children on field trips will need to get criminal (CORI) background checks. This is required by state licensing for anyone who is exposed to other people's children. All volunteer hours will be logged and recorded.

❖ **Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)**

Parents may become engaged in school and classroom-specific issues through the regular meetings and communication of the PTO and the committees that work with the school staff and board.

- Recruitment/Marketing Committee
- Fundraising Committee
- Physical Plant Committee
- Special Events committee

❖ **Sharing or “Show & Tell “Time**

In order to facilitate communication skills and to make the connection between family, home, and school, children are encouraged to bring in items for “Show and Tell.” Teachers will let parents know which days they will include sharing during circle time. The types of items appropriate for sharing include: cultural items from different countries, science items (animals, shells, stones, leaves, shark’s teeth, etc.), things from trips and places visited with the family, photographs, etc. Small, plastic, commercial type toys will not be allowed and will be confiscated and sent home. No guns, swords or violent toys should be brought to school.

❖ **Behavior Management Plan**

At ANA-Sharon, we believe that teacher’s attitude and behavior determines to large extent the atmosphere and environment, which in turn develops attitudes and behavior in children. We help the

children develop self-esteem, self-control, and empathy in several ways.

Our discipline is age appropriate and often takes the form of a gentle reminder or redirection. Choices are offered encouraging children to make appropriate decisions and to take responsibility for their actions. “Reflection” chair is used for limited time periods primarily to encourage a “cooling-down” opportunity and student may rejoin the lesson or activity when they are ready. We encourage a joint effort between the family and school if the above redirections do not produce appropriate needed behavior. Removing a child from the classroom is rare and only used if the child has not responded to repeated verbal limits and continues to harm himself, others, or the environment. If this becomes necessary, the teacher will accompany the child to quiet spot to talk about what happened and help the child calm down so she/he can return to the classroom quickly.

Important:

In the event a child’s behavior may endanger him/herself and/or others repeatedly during the course of the day, parent will be contacted for early dismissal as a cooling-down measure and to ensure safety of the child and others.

We use the following direct guidance techniques :

- We use walking feet
- Use your words to tell us you’re angry (not hands or feet)
- Listening ears
- Looking eyes
- Quite, indoor voices
- Helping hands

All forms of corporal (physical) punishment are strictly forbidden.

❖ **Lunch and Snacks**

Eating is a big part of every child's day. By age two years, nine months, children are usually able to manage finger foods and drinking from a cup, and they can understand basic table manners. Please feed your child a substantial breakfast before they come to school, and/or provide food for them to eat upon arrival. Food preparation is a part of our pre-school curriculum under the topic of Practical Life Activities, which involves care of the Self and the Environment. Children learn about nutritious, healthy foods and they may have cooking activities in class. During snack and lunch times teachers will sit and eat with the children and engage them in conversation about nutrition and about their day.

To comply with quality standards regarding food, the school cannot refrigerate or warm food; please use ice packs and thermos and label your child's lunchbox. If your child does not bring a lunchbox, please label all containers individually.

Due to choking hazards, staff cannot offer children younger than four years whole hot dogs; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; hard pretzels; chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.

A variety of finger foods cut into child-size portions are best. Leftovers, pasta, soup, rice (heated at home and kept warm in a thermos), fresh and dried fruits, raw vegetables, whole grain breads, meats and high protein foods, dairy products and other healthy foods are suggested. Please do not pack foods that are high in sugar such as cookies and donuts. Water and milk are recommended; no juice, please.

Children will be encouraged to eat what is in their lunch box. No food sharing is allowed. Any remaining lunch will go back into the lunch box, so parents can be aware of the amount and types of foods their child actually ate.

Please **do not** send gum, candy, cookies, excessive sweets, yogurt squeeze tubes or soda.

Teachers will inform parents if there are food allergy restrictions in the classroom.

❖ **Toilet Training**

It is not required for children to be able to use the bathroom independently before starting school. If a child meets the minimum age requirement, our preschool staff will work with families to assist the child with bathroom needs while parents commit to supporting the child at home with an established potty-training routine.

❖ **Extra Clothes**

In preparation for the inevitable potty "accidents" or wet clothes from water play or inclement weather, we ask parents to provide a full set of clothes (including undergarments and socks) which will remain in a labeled box at school. If an "accident" occurs, we will have extra clothes available in which to send a child home. Please wash the soiled clothes immediately and return them the very next day so we will always be prepared for such emergencies.

❖ **Nap-Time Policy**

After lunch every day, preschoolers will enjoy an hour of “Quiet Time.” Not all children will nap every day, but all can use the rest. Children will be allowed to look at books and have a personal stuffed animal on their individual mats at naptime. If you want your child to be allowed to sleep beyond the hour allotted for “Quiet Time,” please let us know. Parents are asked to provide a small baby blanket that needs to be washed every week, labeled with child’s name and stored in a nylon bag.

❖ **Birthdays**

In Islam, we celebrate achievements, not people. Therefore, birthdays will be marked by asking families to share the child’s achievements during the past year as well as goals for the upcoming year. Parents may wish to donate a book, an educational game or cash donation to your child’s classroom; this is optional and there is no distribution of individual gifts

❖ **Outdoor Play**

Children play outside as part of their daily activities. Please provide appropriate clothing for the weather such as sweaters, hats, and mittens during the cold winter months.

In warmer weather, we ask that parents apply protective sunscreen, sunblock and/or insect repellent on their child prior to coming to school.

In the event of rain or extreme temperatures (higher than 90° F, less than 20° F, or less than 20° F wind-chill factor) children will play indoors. We will check www.weather.com to monitor current temperatures and air quality.

❖ **Safety and Security**

Security is a high priority concern of our staff and school. All efforts will be made to create a secure and comfortable environment, free of danger. All toxic substances, medications, sharp objects, and other hazardous objects are kept in a secured place and out of reach of children. All electrical outlets are covered. We are following all government regulations regarding fire safety, disposal of hazardous waste, and related topics.

Two or more adults will always accompany children who leave school for the playground or on field trips. All adults who work with the children have criminal background checks. The school building will be completely secure and locked during hours of operation.

Parents can visit the facility at any time but are requested to make an appointment or let us know ahead of time of their visit so that class is not disrupted in any way. All other visitors must make appointments. Visitors will be screened and must fill out a “Visitor Information Form.” No one will be allowed to enter the classrooms without being guided in by a staff member. No smoking, controlled substances, or weapons allowed in or near the school premises. If a

child or adult is found with a weapon on premises, we will confiscate the weapon immediately and take further steps following our crisis policy, if necessary.

ANA holds fire drill during the school year in direct consult with the local authorities to ensure children are prepared to evacuate in case of an emergency. Children will be lined up in an orderly fashion and led outside to designated areas away from the building. In the event of an actual emergency children and staff will evacuate the school as practiced during fire drills and they will walk to the open field area behind the school building and/or to the basketball court.

❏ **Release of Children**

Children will only be released to persons that are approved and designated by the parents on the “Designated Release” form. Please provide the school with **the full names** of all designated persons and their **current phone numbers**. No child will be released without a valid proof of identification.

❏ **Sick Policy**

Children with potentially infectious diseases (vomiting, diarrhea etc.) or a fever must be kept home until symptoms are resolved for 24 hours. If a child does not have fever but cannot participate in regular school activities due to illness, she must be kept home as well.

If a child becomes seriously ill while at school, the school will keep the child isolated from the other students and inform the parent to pick up their child immediately. We do not allow ill children as well

as staff members to remain in the program. The child will be made comfortable in the office. Office manager will be responsible for the supervision of the child that was excluded from the classroom because of illness while waiting for the pickup. In cases of possible exposure to highly contagious illness, parents will receive a written notice from the school outlining the risk and suggested precautions.

ANA also reserves the right to call 911, if an emergency presents itself and the student requires immediate medical help. If you wish a copy of our entire sick policy and procedures document, please request it from the office.

Each child must have an annual physical exam including up to date immunizations and lead screening.

❏ **Allergies and Medication**

Please inform the office if your child has specific food or other types of allergies. We will then notify the rest of the parents regarding the lunch and snack items to avoid sending to school.

Parents must complete a Medicine Authorization Form every day there is prescription medicine to be administered, in order to ensure their child’s medicine is properly dispensed. The instructions on how to dispense the medication from the health care provider are required. A staff person will administer medicine to the children at the appropriate times.

Medicine will be secured in a locked box and refrigeration provided, if necessary. All medicine must be in its original container, and labeled with the child’s full name, name of the clinician, expiration date and manufacturer’s instructions. Prescription and non-

prescription medication (Tylenol, Motrin etc.) need written authorization from the child's physician.

❖ **Accidents**

Our staff has current First Aid and Pediatric CPR training and will be the first responders in the case of an accident. Teachers will carry cellular phones and a first aid kit and students' emergency contact details with them when they go on field trips. If needed, we will call parents and the appropriate emergency medical personnel. Should a child be injured at school or on a field trip, we will fill out an Accident/ Injury Report describing the injury and first aid procedures administered. These will be kept in the child's file, and forwarded to any physicians or appropriate government agencies.

❖ **Field Trips**

Preschool classes will have a minimum of two field trips each year. They are designed to reinforce material covered in class. Transportation for the field trips may be in the form of a school bus, walking or personal cars. Parents will be notified in writing of any field trips requiring transportation by van or car. Permission slips will be sent home before each field trip. We always need parents to assist us on field trips and we may be asking you to help us.

❖ **Student-Teacher Ratio**

Although ANA-Sharon is license-exempt by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), we make every effort to adopt best practices and maintain a minimum of a 1:10 adult to child ratio at all times.

❖ **Financial Support & Vouchers**

We are committed to promoting the economic diversity of the school. Every effort is made to make tuition affordable while maintaining quality service. Parents may seek a range of financial support options; please contact the school's Registrar for specific documents needed for requests on financial support.

IANE accepts state vouchers as a form of tuition payment arrangement. Please contact the office or your local subsidized childcare agency to see if you may be eligible.

❖ **“Refer A Student” Incentive**

ANA encourages active parent engagement in our enrollment drive through our referral incentive. If a current parent refers a new student to school and the latter consequently registered successfully, this current parent will receive a \$250 referral incentive that will be extended and applied against his/her child's final tuition payment.

Communication

We use frequent communication with families using a variety of methods. We will be sending home notes, providing parent newsletters, posting notices on bulletin boards, calling parents, as well as sending electronic versions of school notices either through JupiterEd and/or OneCallNow.

Individual teachers provide classroom newsletters, and the school provides a general weekly Friday school-wide e-newsletter. We want families to feel that the staff is accessible and welcome two-way communication.

Due to the traffic and safety issues, morning drop-off time and afternoon pick-up times are not ideal times to have conversations. Please make an appointment or email us about any of your concerns.

It is our duty to provide a comfortable and safe environment to children, their families and staff at school and the school has a zero tolerance towards verbal or physical abuse. ANA reserves the right to take appropriate action leading to the expulsion of your child and/or reporting to authorities in the case of a parent/guardian failure to follow the school regulations in such a way that the school will become unsafe for staff and children.

Special Needs & Referrals

A student who needs, or is believed to need, special education or related services may be referred to a specialist or an agency by a teacher or parent. Teachers will contact parents if they feel their child may benefit from additional support in the following areas:

speech and language, cognitive development, motor coordination, vision and hearing, etc. Likewise, parents should contact their child's teacher or the school administrator if they have similar concerns. Parents may also wish to consider contacting their child's pediatrician. After parents have agreed to a referral, the evaluation process will begin with the support of the school. Children with special needs are identified through observations and assessments, early intervention and the referral school's special education department. Such a referral for additional evaluation, while voluntary and confidential, may help identify services or therapies the child may benefit from. It should not be construed as exclusion from attending IANE.

Conditions that Warrant an Expulsion

We make it our policy to work with families so children are happy and comfortable at our school. There are two reasons a student may be asked to leave as follows:

- Non-payment of tuition fees on a timely basis
- A student presents such a discipline problem that, with counseling and family collaboration on a behavior modification program, we still feel that the child presents a danger of harm to him/herself or to other children in the school.

❖ Student's Rights

The Student's Rights

- The child has the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- The child has the right to be spoken to and spoken about with respect at all times.
- The child has the right to learn at his/her own rate.
- The child has the right to confidentiality of records.
- The child has the right to the opportunity to engage in any activity that does not interfere with the safety and rights of others. This activity should be observed and channeled so that it meets the child's interests.

❖ Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

As caretakers, we are entrusted with ensuring the care and well-being of the children we serve. To ensure that we do not violate such a trust and to protect the welfare of each child in our care, ANA has adopted a Child Abuse and Neglect Policy consistent with the provisions laid out in Mass General Laws and the Department of Social Services.

All staff, paid and non-paid, are mandated reporters and therefore suspected non-institutional child abuse and neglect shall be reported. Similarly, if you ever have questions or concerns about the care of your child, please speak directly with your child's teacher or with the administrator of the school. The safety of your child is our utmost priority and the staff and administration will work their hardest to ensure your child's wellbeing.

It is our duty to provide a comfortable and safe environment to children, their families and staff at school and the school has zero tolerance towards verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

