

First Presbyterian Church Nursery School

Parent Handbook



LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER

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www.firstpresnurseryschool.com

Dear Parents,

Welcome to First Presbyterian Church Nursery School, established in 1963. Whether this is your child's first year attending preschool or returning for a second or third year, attending nursery school is a big step towards growing independence. Our program provides a safe, nurturing, and enriching environment for your child to play, explore, discover, and learn. We are delighted that you have selected our program!

Our curriculum is designed to nurture your child's self-esteem and positive feelings towards learning and others. The First Presbyterian Church Nursery School's ultimate goal is to provide enjoyable, thought-provoking, and creative experiences, which will lead your child to develop a lasting love of learning. Sand play, block building, painting, dramatic play, reading stories, singing, creative movement, outdoor play, and sharing stories are just a few of the activities that make up a typical day here at First Pres. It is this learn through play curriculum that sets the foundation for your child to love school!

This Parent Handbook serves as an information guide and provides general and detailed information about our school. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any content of this handbook, please don't hesitate to ask.

Thank you for entrusting you child's early childhood education to us at First Presbyterian Church Nursery School. We're so happy to have you and yours as part of our First Pres family. Here's to a great new school year together, filled with fun, friends, and lots of learning!

Warm Regards,
Kathleen Carlson
Director

Curriculum

We are very proud of our curriculum at First Presbyterian Church Nursery School. We are strong believers in professional development, giving our teachers and administrators opportunities to learn about different schools, programs and philosophies. We continue to adjust our curriculum to meet the needs of our students and use our new knowledge to enhance our strong curriculum foundation.

Our curriculum has been influenced by Maria Montessori, the Reggio Emilia approach and Waldorf philosophies. We have taken the best of these programs and incorporated them into our curriculum.

Our program is literature based, meaning we use literature on a daily basis to introduce subject matter, build upon prior knowledge, and bring enjoyment to all of our students. We use a project-based curriculum in all of our classes. A project-based curriculum allows our teachers and students to delve into a topic touching upon all subject areas. A project may last 3 to 8 weeks and follows the basic guidelines of introducing a topic through literature, gathering existing knowledge, learning about a topic through many different means, using new knowledge to express new learning through projects and finally, sharing new knowledge with others. Literature and Project-based learning work so well together and allow students to experience an exciting well-balanced program.

Philosophy

Our philosophy and goal is to provide a safe and loving environment in which 2 ½ - 6 year olds can successfully grow up to be thoughtful, kind, independent, and creative people while learning to discover themselves as unique individuals capable of developing their own sense of positive self-worth.

Staff

Our staff is comprised of experienced teachers who work as a team, committed to helping children gain self-esteem, socialization, and a love of learning. They strive to provide a safe, nurturing environment that encourages exploration and creativity. Each child is an individual with different needs and it is our goal to meet those needs and provide an inspiring environment.

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Mariyana Moreira
2s & 3s Support Teacher

Aimee Jacobs
3s Support Teacher

Claudia Lagunes
3s Support Teacher

Madelyn Derderian
4s Support Teacher

Cara Bannon
4s Support Teacher

Nicole Colello-Kim
5s Support Teacher

Security

The safety and well-being of our children and staff are top priorities. We take security very seriously. A lock and video system are in place on all doors. The doors lock automatically. Teachers and staff are instructed never to leave a door propped open.

Teachers and staff have key fobs to enter. Persons who are not staff must ring the doorbell. Visitors who are known to the staff will be buzzed into the building. Visitors who are unknown are not allowed entry unless met at the door by a staff member.

The Emergency Policy as stated in this handbook will be reviewed with staff at the beginning of the school year. We continually re-evaluate and assess our plans and policies as needed for the protection of our school community.

Home-School Communication

In order for us to plan intelligently for your child, good communication must occur between home and school. Simple messages may be delivered by hand, voicemail, or email. If you wish to communicate anything other than a brief message, please ask your child's teacher to contact you when she is free to arrange a time to talk, either in person or by phone. While email is a great convenience, parents and teachers are strongly discouraged from using email to discuss substantive matters regarding a child's progress or issues that arise in the classroom.

Get Acquainted Chats are held during the first two weeks of October.
Parent-Teacher Conferences are held during the first two weeks of February.

Please keep us informed of any changes in your family's routine that may reflect on your child's behavior. What is important to you and yours is important to us as well.

It is your right to have information regarding your child and family treated in a respectful and confidential manner. Please know that we will not disclose or exchange any information regarding your child without your written authorization.

The First Presbyterian Church Nursery School retains a five-member Advisory Board whose primary purpose is to assist the Director and staff. Any parent concerns may be brought to the attention of the Director and reviewed by the Advisory Board.

Health and Illness Policy

Every child enrolled is required to have a health examination performed by a health care provider within six months prior to admission, for children 2 ½ years of age or younger and one year prior to admission, for children above 2 ½ years of age. You must return the completed Universal Child Health Record or its equivalent, along with an immunization record before the first day of school. No child will be admitted until this form is received and all required immunizations have been administered. Please note that you may either print a copy of the Universal Child Health Record from our school website under forms or pick up a printed copy in the school office.

If your child is under a physician's care for any special health issue, is taking any medication, and/or has allergies, please be sure these items are noted.

If your child shows signs of illness, such as fever, rash, red eyes with discharge, diarrhea, sore throat, etc. he/she should not attend school. Please note that your child must be free of fever for 24 hours before returning to school. Children with communicable respiratory illnesses (strep throat, chicken pox, etc.), gastrointestinal (Hepatitis A, etc.), or contact diseases (lice, impetigo, etc.) will require a note from your physician deeming it appropriate to return to school. A complete list of communicable diseases is posted in the office. If a child shows symptoms of illness at school, the parent will be called and the child must be picked up within 30 minutes by a parent or an authorized caregiver.

Covid Guidelines as per the NJ Department of Health

If your child is fully vaccinated, please submit their Covid vaccination record to the school. We will keep these on file as this will affect the covid protocols if a child needs to quarantine.

Parents should monitor signs of illness everyday before arrival. Students who are sick should stay home and report symptoms to the school.

Covid Positive

If Covid positive or if a parent chooses not to test their child with Covid related symptoms:

- The child must stay home for at least 5 full days. The child can return on day 6 if 24 hours symptom free without use of medication.
- If returning on day 6, child must wear a mask for 5 days in school. (Children unable to wear a mask will stay home 5 additional days and return on day 11.)
- After a Covid positive diagnosis, contact the school for a plan to return safely to school.

Covid Exposure

If Covid exposure happens at school, parents will be notified that their child has been exposed. If a child is exposed outside of school, parents are required to notify the school of the exposure.

- If a fully vaccinated child is exposed, the child does not have to stay out of school as long as they are symptom free and able to wear a mask for 10 days following the exposure.
- If unvaccinated and showing no signs of illness, the child can Test to Stay in school. Test to Stay allows asymptomatic individuals to continue in-person learning. Students should be tested immediately following notification of exposure. If negative, student may continue to attend school wearing a mask and test again on day 5. If negative, student is required to wear a mask through day 10.

Masking

At this time, masking is not required for staff and children. If at any time the levels of Covid transmission increase, we will update our school policy. We are in compliance with the New Jersey Department of Health. We continue to follow their protocols and seek their guidance.

Our school supports mask wearing by staff and students who choose to do so.

- If you would like your child to wear a mask at school, please send your child to school wearing a mask. Please provide additional masks for your child in their tote bag.

Travel

If traveling domestically or internationally, contact the school prior to your trip for updated guidance.

Dress Code

School clothes that afford children maximum freedom and require minimal attention are best. Clothing that can be put on and off with ease and that is sturdy and washable allows children to devote their attention to the tasks at hand without concern for their attire. Children should be prepared for both indoor and outdoor activities every day. Active play is safer when low-heeled shoes with non-skid soles are worn. Please note that flip-flops, sandals, crocs, and clogs are not acceptable footwear for school. For safety reasons, children should not wear jewelry to school.

Our curriculum is not limited to the classroom. We also use the outdoor playground and the school gym as much as possible. Going outside is an important part of your child's school day. It is best to dress your child in layers for all seasons. Please be sure to provide your child with a coat, hat, mittens, and boots during the colder months. During the warmer months, please apply any sunscreen and/or insect repellants before arriving at school.

Tuition Policy

The First Presbyterian Church Nursery School Programs are on-site/remote learning programs. The School is prepared to shift to remote learning should the School need to close based upon the health and safety concerns in our area. There are no discounts should the school need to shift to a remote model of learning.

Fees and Deposits

An enrollment fee and deposit are due at time of registration for the School year along with a signed Application Form and Enrollment Registration Contract. Fees and deposits are non-refundable.

Tuition Installment Payments

Tuition is paid in 5 installments—an enrollment deposit and four additional installments. The Payment Schedule is as follows:

Installment 1 - June 1st

Installment 2 - September 1st

Installment 3 – November 1st

Installment 4 – February 1st

Late Payments and Alternative Arrangements

If in need of an alternative payment plan, submit requests to the Business Manager.

Installment payments that remain past the 15th of the month in which they are due will be subject to a late fee equal to 1.2% of payment due, unless an alternative arrangement is made between the parent(s) and the Business Manager prior to the due date.

If an account is more than 15 days past due, an alternative arrangement must be made between the parent(s) and the Business Manager. If an account is more than 30 days past due, the student will not be permitted to attend school or participate in remote learning until the account has been brought current or an alternative payment plan has been signed by the parent(s) and the Business Manager.

Tuition must be paid in full on or before February 1st.

Withdrawals

Tuition contracts cover the entire school year. Fees and deposits are non-refundable. No refunds or deductions are possible for the withdrawal or absence of your child or for any periods the School transitions to remote learning.

School Calendar

School is in session from September until early June. With a few exceptions, we follow the same schedule as the Caldwell - West Caldwell Public School calendar. For your convenience, a school calendar can be found on our website www.firstpresnurseryschool.com on the Home page under the Calendar tab.

Parking

Pick-ups and drop-offs are very busy times at First Presbyterian Church Nursery School so we ask that you please adhere to the following guidelines to make this process safe and easy for everyone involved:

- Parking is available on either side of Westville Avenue as well as in the Westville Avenue municipal parking lot, which is behind the Caldwell Diner and next to our school playground. Please be advised that there is a two-hour parking limit in the municipal parking lot.
- Do not park in the First Presbyterian Church staff parking lot located on the side of our school building. This area is for church employees only.
- Do not park in the Valley National Bank parking lot located across the street from our school. This parking lot is for Valley National Bank employees and customers only.
- Do not park, pick up, or drop off, along the curb on Westville Avenue between the Church's circle drive aprons. Doing so, limits visibility of those vehicles pulling out of the circle drive and vehicles on Westville Avenue putting those waiting at the school entrance at risk.

Arrival and Dismissal Times

Each class has a 10-minute arrival window starting at the designated time below. The classroom teacher will open the door at arrival and welcome the students. If you arrive after the 10-minute window, please ring the bell and a staff member will walk your child to the classroom. At dismissal, the classroom teacher will walk the class to the door and release each child one by one to their caregivers.

Class	Arrival	Dismissal	Location
2 ½	9:00 am	11:30 pm	Elevator Door
3 Core	9:00 am	11:30 pm	Elevator Door
3 Enrichment	9:00 am	1:00 pm	Main Door
Pre-K 4	8:50am	1:20 pm, (F) 11:50 am	Main Door
Pre-K 5	8:50am	1:20 pm, (F) 11:50 am	Elevator Door

Policy on the Release of Children

Each child will be released only to the enrolling parent or person authorized by the enrolling parent. If your child is to be picked up by someone other than you on a regular basis, we will provide you with a Dismissal Release Form to authorize that person. If your child is going to be picked up by someone other than the enrolled parent or an authorized person, be sure to notify the school in advance via a written note, email, or phone call. If a staff member does not know the person picking up your child, identification will be required.

Late Pickup Policy

We realize that life is busy and unexpected things happen causing a parent to arrive late at dismissal time. Just as your time is important to you, our teachers and staff have personal responsibilities at the end of their working hours requiring them to leave by a specific time.

If you are going to be late, please contact the school so that we can prepare your child for your delay and ensure coverage for your child until you arrive. Continual excessive lateness will result in expulsion from the school as outlined in our Expulsion Policy.

Church Property

The property and buildings surrounding the First Presbyterian Church Nursery School belong to the First Presbyterian Church at Caldwell. Therefore, we ask that you do not let your child play on or around the nursery school, church, and/or playground. This includes all metal bars, trees, the fence area at the top of the hill around our playground and the courtyard in between the church and school. For your child's safety, please adhere to these rules before and after school hours.

Inclement Weather

We will notify you via email and text alert whenever school is closed due to inclement weather. If the Caldwell/West Caldwell Public Schools are closed, First Presbyterian Church Nursery School will also be closed, and all classes and programs will be canceled for the day. If the Caldwell/West Caldwell Public Schools call a delayed opening, First Presbyterian Church Nursery School will follow the delayed opening schedule below.

Monday-Thursday Schedule

Class	Arrival	Dismissal
2 ½	10:40 am	12:00 pm
3 Core	10:40 am	12:00 pm
3 Enrichment	10:40 am	1:00 pm
Pre-K 4	10:30 am	1:20 pm
Pre-K 5	10:30 am	1:20 pm

Friday Schedule

Class	Arrival	Dismissal
2 ½	10:40 am	12:00 pm
Pre-K 4	10:30 am	12:00 pm
Pre-K 5	10:30 am	12:00 pm

Non-Discrimination Statement

The First Presbyterian Church Nursery School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, sex, religion, creed, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. Policies and practices are consistent with Federal Law.

Expulsion Policy

In compliance with the State of NJ Licensing Requirements, First Presbyterian Church Nursery School must have an expulsion policy. Please know that we will do everything possible to work with you and your family in an effort to prevent this policy from having to be enforced. The following are reasons we may have to enforce this policy:

- Non-compliance with the rules and regulations stated in this handbook
- Non-payment of tuition or repeated late payments
- Non-compliance with the NJ state mandated Health and immunization requirements for children in accordance with Chapter 10:122-7.3
- Behavior which is inconsistent with the First Presbyterian Church Nursery School's Policy on Discipline and/or if the child's behavior is disruptive to the learning environment
- Behavior by child or parent(s)/guardian(s) that jeopardizes the safety of children and/or staff
- Abusive or disrespectful language/behavior towards others

The parent/guardian will be verbally informed of reasons to expel the child and a period for improvement will be mutually agreed upon before further action takes place. If no improvement is forthcoming, the Director will provide a written notification to the parent/guardian of intent to expel the child.

No child will be expelled as a result of a complaint to the Office of Licensing.

Emergency Planning

In compliance with the State of NJ Licensing:

1. Lock all classroom doors
2. Students and staff will gather as far away from the windows as possible
3. All communication (calling 911) and/or communicating with parents, will channel through the Director or appointed individual
4. All students and staff will remain on church property until official authority has been given to end emergency plan

In the case of an emergency, which would result in evacuation, staff will follow the evacuation route posted by each classroom door. Once staff has reached assigned area, outside the building, they should follow directions by emergency personnel. Communication to the parents will channel through the Director or appointed individual.

Photography Policy

While attending First Presbyterian Church Nursery School, children may be photographed during their school day, events, and/or special occasions. Photographs may be taken by the teachers to display in the hallway or classroom throughout the year. Classroom teachers send weekly emails that may include pictures of students engaged in activities. **Please do not share photos from school on social media sites.**

Photographs may also be submitted to various local community publications such as The Progress and New Jersey Patch/Caldwells Patch. Photos may also be used on our school website www.firstpresnurseryschool.com and/or our social media sites. However, before taking and publishing any photograph or video of your child, we need your permission given to us on the Parent Sign-Off Sheet.

Information to Parents: From the Department of Children and Families Office of Licensing

Under provisions of the *Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (N.J.A.C. 3A:52)*, every licensed child care center in New Jersey must provide to parents of enrolled children written information on parent visitation rights, State licensing requirements, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements and other child care matters. The center must comply with this requirement by reproducing and distributing to parents and staff this written statement, prepared by the Office of Licensing, Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families. In keeping with this requirement, the center must secure every parent and staff member's signature attesting to his/her receipt of the information.

Our center is required by the State Child Care Center Licensing law to be licensed by the Office of Licensing (OOL), Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A copy of our current license must be posted in a prominent location at our center. Look for it when you're in the center.

To be licensed, our center must comply with the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (the official licensing regulations). The regulations cover such areas as: physical environment/life-safety; staff qualifications, supervision, and staff/child ratios; program activities and equipment; health, food and nutrition; rest and sleep requirements; parent/community participation; administrative and record keeping requirements; and others.

Our center must have on the premises a copy of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers and make it available to interested parents for review. If you would like to review our copy, just ask any staff member. Parents may view a copy of the Manual of Requirements on the DCF website at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/CCCmanual.pdf> or obtain a copy by sending a check or money order for \$5 made payable to the "Treasurer, State of New Jersey", and mailing it to: NJDCF, Office of Licensing, Publication Fees, PO Box 657, Trenton, NJ 08646-0657.

We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies and program of the center or the meaning, application or alleged violations of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers. We will be happy to arrange a convenient opportunity for you to review and discuss these matters with us. If you suspect our center may be in violation of licensing requirements, you are entitled to report them to the Office of Licensing toll free at 1 (877) 667-9845. Of course, we would appreciate your bringing these concerns to our attention, too.

Our center must have a policy concerning the release of children to parents or people authorized by parents to be responsible for the child. Please discuss with us your plans for your child's departure from the center.

Our center must have a policy about administering medicine and health care procedures and the management of communicable diseases. Please talk to us about these policies so we can work together to keep our children healthy.

Our center must have a policy concerning the expulsion of children from enrollment at the center. Please review this policy so we can work together to keep your child in our center.

Parents are entitled to review the center's copy of the OOL's Inspection/Violation Reports on the center, which are available soon after every State licensing inspection of our center. If there is a licensing complaint OOL/Information to Parents/May 2019 investigation, you are also entitled to review the OOL's Complaint Investigation Summary Report, as well as any letters of enforcement or other actions taken against the center during the current licensing period. Let us know if you wish to review them and we will make them available for your review or you can view them online at <https://childcareexplorer.njccis.com/portal/>.

Our center must cooperate with all DCF inspections/investigations. DCF staff may interview both staff members and children.

Our center must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and to discuss with us any questions you may have about it.

Our center must post a listing or diagram of those rooms and areas approved by the OOL for the children's use. Please talk to us if you have any questions about the center's space.

Our center must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to assist the center in complying with licensing requirements; and to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center director, who can advise them of what opportunities are available.

Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the director or any staff member. Please feel free to do so when you can. We welcome visits from our parents.

Our center must inform parents in advance of every field trip, outing, or special event away from the center, and must obtain prior written consent from parents before taking a child on each such trip.

Our center is required to provide reasonable accommodations for children and/or parents with disabilities and to comply with the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), P.L. 1945, c. 169 (N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), P.L. 101-336 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Anyone who believes the center is not in compliance with these laws may contact the Division on Civil Rights in the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety for information about filing an LAD claim at (609) 292-4605 (TTY users may dial 711 to reach the New Jersey Relay Operator and ask for (609) 292-7701), or may contact the United States Department of Justice for information about filing an ADA claim at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Our center is required, at least annually, to review the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), unsafe children's products list, ensure that items on the list are not at the center, and make the list accessible to staff and parents and/or provide parents with the CPSC website at <https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls>. Internet access may be available at your local library. For more information call the CPSC at (800) 638-2772.

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any adult, whether working at the center or not, is required by State law to report the concern immediately to the *State Central Registry Hotline, toll free at (877) NJ ABUSE/(877) 652-2873*. Such reports may be made anonymously. Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting: DCF, Office of Communications and Legislation at (609) 292- 0422 or go to www.state.nj.us/dcf/.