

# First Presbyterian Church Nursery School

Parent Handbook  
2019 – 2020



LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER

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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 snacks 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!

Kathleen Carlson

Director

**Curriculum**

We are very proud of our curriculum at First Pres. 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.

Kathleen Carlson  
Director

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Pre-K 4s Support Teacher/ Pre-K Enrichment Support Teacher

Kim Meyer  
3s Support Teacher

Renee Beaubouef  
3s Support Teacher

Donna Hicock  
Pre-K 4s Support Teacher

Claudia Lagunes  
Pre-K 5s Support Teacher

Katherine Guantez  
Music and Movement Teacher/2s Support Teacher

## **Healthy Snack Guidelines**

Children are provided a nutritious snack and filtered water at Snack Time during their school day.

Parents are welcome to contribute snacks in the form of fruits and vegetables for their child's class throughout the school year. Each teacher will have a monthly sign-up sheet with available dates. If you have any questions or concerns about a particular food item, please check with your child's teacher for prior approval.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

Birthdays are very special in preschool and it is our pleasure to help your little one celebrate his/her day. Birthday crowns, songs, and a special snack are all age appropriate ways to create a unique birthday celebration for your child at school. We request that you do not send in goodie/treat bags. You may, however, send in a special snack (see below). Decorative plates, napkins, and/or cups are also acceptable but not mandatory.

Please work with your child's teacher to plan if/when you would like to celebrate your child's birthday by sending in a special snack. **Please note, all foods and drinks shared with other children must be nut-free and not made in a factory that handles nuts.** To ensure everyone's safety, please provide original packaging and pick one of the snack suggestions below. **Snacks not on our approved list will be returned.** If you have any questions or concerns about a particular food item, please check with your child's teacher for prior approval.

### Approved Birthday Snacks

- Applesauce
- Pretzels
- Fruit kabobs
- Cubes of cheese with pretzel "toothpicks"
- Guacamole with Vegetables
- Pirate's Booty
- String cheese

## **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 or to arrange a conference. In this way, the teacher will not have to neglect children who need her, and she will be free to give you her undivided attention. 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.  
Parent Year-End Evaluations of our program help keep us focused on our goals.  
Results from these surveys are posted in our school office and are available for you to review.

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 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.

Our open door policy for parents welcomes you to visit the school at any time during school hours. If you would like to participate in your child's class, please arrange a date and time with your child's teacher.



## **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 (About Us/Forms/Universal Child Health Record) or pick up a printed copy in the school office.

If your child is under a physician's care for any special health problem, 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.), gastro-intestinal (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.

It is the policy of the school not to dispense any medicine. If your child may need any form of medication during the hours that they are in our care, you are welcome to come to school to administer the medication. Please contact the Director to arrange a time to come in and do so.

## **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.

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**

Tuition is paid in a deposit and four installments. The deposit and an enrollment fee are due with the signed enrollment contract. The four installments are due the first Monday of September, November, February, and April. 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. Tuition must be paid in full as of April 30.

If an account is more than 30 days past due, and no alternative arrangement has been made between the parent(s) and the Business Manager, the student will not be permitted to attend school until the account has been brought current or an alternative payment plan has been signed by the parent(s) and the Business Manager.

If you opt to pull your child out of a program during the school year, the following tuition payment schedule applies:

<b>Withdrawal Period</b>	<b>Tuition Due</b>
September – October	*1 <sup>st</sup> installment
November – January	*1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> installment
February – March	*1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , & 3 <sup>rd</sup> installment
April – May	*1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , & 4 <sup>th</sup> installment

## **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 is included in this booklet as well as on our website [www.firstpresnurseryschool.com](http://www.firstpresnurseryschool.com) on the Home page under the Calendar tab.

### **Daily Schedule**

#### **Morning Classes**

Monday - Friday

Arrival 8:45 am (doors open at 8:40 am)

Dismissal 11:15 am

#### **Pre-K 5s**

Monday - Friday

Arrival 8:45 am (doors open at 8:40 am)

Dismissal 11:45 am

#### **Afternoon Classes**

Monday - Thursday

Arrival 12:15 pm (doors open at 12:10 pm)

Dismissal 2:45 pm

#### **Enrichment 3s**

Monday - Thursday

11:15 am - 1:30 pm

#### **Enrichment 4/5**

Monday/Tuesday & Wednesday/Thursday

11:15 am - 2:30 pm

## **Inclement Weather and Half-Day Schedule**

We will notify you via email whenever school is closed due to inclement weather. If the Caldwell – West Caldwell Public Schools are closed, First Presbyterian Nursery School will also be closed and all classes and programs will be canceled for the day. If the Caldwell – West Caldwell Public Schools have a delayed opening, we will follow the half-day schedule below:

### **Delayed Opening Schedule**

#### **Morning Classes/Pre-K 5s**

Monday – Friday

Arrival 10:30 am (doors open at 10:25 am)

Dismissal 12:15 pm

#### **Afternoon Classes**

Monday – Thursday

Arrival 1:00 pm (doors open at 12:55 pm)

Dismissal 2:45 pm

#### **Enrichment 3s**

Monday - Thursday

12:15 pm – 1:30 pm

#### **Enrichment 4/5**

Monday /Tuesday & Wednesday/Thursday

12:15 pm – 2:30 pm

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

### **Parking**

Pick-ups and drop-offs are very busy times at First Pres 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 block the circle that loops around the church and school. You may utilize this area for quick pick-ups and drop-offs as long as you do not leave your car unattended. Doing otherwise prevents others from leaving in a timely manner.
- 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.

### **Arrival**

The entrance to our school is located on Westville Avenue. The doors are unlocked 5 minutes prior to the start of your child's class or program time and will be locked each day 15 minutes afterward. Please be sure to arrange your drop-offs accordingly. The Director or a staff member will be present at the door during arrival times. Parents or authorized persons may drop off their child at the door or the entrance to their classroom. If your child is enrolled in Kindergarten Enrichment or Pre-K 5s, they will gather in the gym before walking with their teacher to their classroom. Please keep in mind that your child's school day begins once he/she enters their classroom so it's important to say goodbye and not linger.

### **Circle Drop Off**

A drop off option is available for the convenience and safety of the children. Our drop off zone is in the church circle off of Westville Avenue. The drop off option will be available starting at 8:40 am for morning drop off and 12:10 for afternoon drop off. To drop off your child, please pull around the circle and stop between the 2 orange cones. A school staff member will be waiting to assist your child.

## **Dismissal**

Teachers will walk with their classes to the entrance located on Westville Avenue. Children will be dismissed one at a time by their teacher or another staff member. Please be sure to stand away from the doors and allow the teacher to acknowledge you before dismissing your child into your care. If you need to enter the building at this time, please wait patiently until the dismissal process is complete.

## **Policy on the Release of Children**

Each child may 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 at times 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, and the courtyard in between the church and school. For your child's safety, please adhere to these rules before and after school hours.

### **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 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 Nursery School's Policy on Discipline and/or if the child's behavior is distracting to the learning environment

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](http://www.firstpresnurseryschool.com) and/or our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/FirstPresSchool](http://www.facebook.com/FirstPresSchool). However, before taking and publishing any photograph or video of your child, we need your permission via our Photograph/Video Release form. This form is distributed within your Parent Packet at the beginning of your child's school year.

Once a year, a professional photographer is scheduled to visit the school and take single poses, sibling poses and class pictures. Please check the school calendar for those dates.