



# **Parent Handbook 2023-2024**

## **Presbyterian Preschool Advisory Board**

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**Dear Parents,**

**Welcome to Presbyterian Preschool! I thank you for choosing to become part of our school family. Our entire staff looks forward to developing positive relationships with you and your child in the coming year.**

**The purpose of this handbook is to inform you of our program policies and to encourage a spirit of cooperation between parents and Preschool staff. We hope you will spend some time reading this handbook and that you will ask questions about any policy that is unclear or any issue that has not been addressed.**

**We wholeheartedly believe that you are your child's first teacher, best advocate and primary authority on his/her development. We look forward to learning from you as we guide your child through our school experience. We want to be a resource for you as well, so please let us know when we can assist you in any way!**

**Looking forward to a delight-full year of play and learning....**

**Dana Brown  
Director**

## **PRESCHOOL PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY**

The Preschool program is intended to supplement the family experiences of young children, providing a transition into the school setting through hands-on activities and positive interactions with other children and adults. Our program supports the physical, social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development of the child in a Christian environment. We also provide opportunities for parents to increase their understanding of their own children, and young children in general, through participation in classroom activities and parent-teacher conferences.

Presbyterian Preschool accepts children ages 12 months through five years, and includes children of all races, colors, religions, abilities and national or ethnic origins.

## **ADMISSIONS INFORMATION**

Presbyterian Preschool admits children throughout the school year, as space becomes available. A one-time, non-refundable deposit of \$25.00 per family must accompany the enrollment form to place a child in the program. The deposit will hold the child's place on the waiting list if a space is not available. Every effort will be made to assign children to the parent's first choice of days, and to coordinate schedules for siblings or carpoolers. Children are placed in classes according to developmental and chronological age. Because all children are unique, we reserve the right to place children according to our assessment of developmental level and ability in relation to other children in the class, and to balance class size across the program.

## **ANIMALS**

Our school has five tanks of fish, a rabbit, a guinea pig, a leopard spotted gecko, a water turtle and a bearded dragon. All animals are inaccessible to the children except for viewing.

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

The doors to our building are locked during school hours for the safety of the children. Each family will have a four digit key code to allow them access to the building. Each child must be accompanied by an adult to the door of his/her classroom. The adult must remain with the child until doors open at 9:00. Children are to be picked up no later than 11:30, 1:00 or 2:00, depending on their schedule. The preschool phone number and the director's cell phone are also posted on the doors if you cannot get into the building and you need access.

CHILDREN WILL BE RELEASED ONLY TO PERSONS INDICATED ON THE ENROLLMENT FORM, UNLESS THE TEACHER IS PERSONALLY NOTIFIED BY THE PARENT. Identification will be required from persons other than parents.

In accordance with the staffing requirements of the State of Oklahoma, and out of respect for teachers' personal time, parents who are chronically late in picking up their child may be fined or excluded from the program.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

We love to celebrate birthdays! Parents are welcome to bring a special treat for snack time. Please sign up on the snack calendar and note that it is a birthday celebration. Invitations for parties outside of school should be distributed at school ONLY if all children in the class are invited.

## **CALENDAR AND HOURS OF OPERATION**

The Preschool generally follows the Stillwater Public School calendar, beginning in mid-August and closing in late May. A summer session is sometimes available.

The preschool offers classes two, three or five days per week from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. Additional scheduling options may include:

- ❖ Early Bird session from 7:45 to 9:00.
- ❖ Extended Lunch session from 11:30 to 1:00.
- ❖ Extended day, for children age 3 and up, from 11:30 to 2:00.

## **CLOTHING**

Preschool is a place for play. Children should dress appropriately for indoor, outdoor, and messy activities. This means comfortable play clothes that the child will not be concerned about getting spotted or stained. Teachers will encourage the children to wear smocks for messy activities; however, refusal to wear a smock will NOT keep the child from participating, and we cannot guarantee that clothing will not be damaged.

Since development of self-reliance is a goal in our program, school clothing should be easy for the child to manage independently. (Overalls, for example, generally require help.) Shoes should be well fitting and appropriate for active play, running and climbing. Children under three should avoid wearing small items such as hair clips, which can be a choking hazard. Jewelry is discouraged as it is easily lost. Children should arrive at school each day with appropriate layers of clothing for changing weather conditions, including hats and gloves. We feel the outside environment is just as much of a learning environment as inside the classroom so we will go out if at all possible. Please send appropriate outerwear. Please label everything! Coats are often identical and difficult for teachers and children to distinguish.

## **CONTINUITY OF CARE**

Every effort is made for children to remain with the same adults throughout the day as we know that consistent personnel with the same class of children create stronger relationships. All regular day teachers are hired to cover the entire regular day in their classroom with the same teacher co-worker. They are hired with the intention of being employed for the entire school year. However, sometimes due to staffing and enrollment numbers, children go from one class to a different class. For example, early birds (7:45 drop off) might be in a room with a different teacher than your regular day teacher. Also, for 1:00 lunch or 2:00 extended day classes, children might move to a different class with a different teacher to finish out their day. Those teachers however stay the same throughout the school year as much as possible. We employ floaters in our building that the children become familiar with so that when they step in to give the regular teachers a break or if they need to substitute, children are with familiar faces/friends.

## **CURRICULUM**

Our program supports the development of the whole child. Each class offers learning centers that provide free play experiences in social, emotional, physical and intellectual areas. These experiences are offered in large blocks of uninterrupted time, both indoors and outdoors. Active play is balanced with quieter group times for snack, discussion, music and stories. A dependable yet flexible schedule is followed to give the children the security of knowing what is going to happen throughout the day.

Each day is filled with a variety of activities that cover curriculum areas including language/literacy, social studies, math and science. Children may express themselves through work with creative media such as paints, paste, clay, sand and water. Large muscle development through jumping, climbing and building occurs each day. Music activities include singing, dancing, creative movement and rhythm instruments. As children become verbal, they are guided in developing problem-solving and cooperation skills with peers.

“School readiness” is a term that refers to preparation for the elementary school environment. Research shows that during the preschool years the most crucial preparation involves skills such as focus and self control, perspective taking, communication, critical thinking, self direction and engagement in learning, and abilities like making connections and taking on challenges. Support for these essential skills is intentionally embedded in the environment, activities and choices made available to the children at every age level.

## **DAILY PROGRAM**

Classes are limited in size as follows;

1 year olds; 8 children    2 year olds; 12 children    3-4 year olds; 14-16 children  
4-5 year olds; 18 children

Each class has two teachers. Daily schedules are posted in each classroom, and will include times for indoor learning centers, group times (for 2 years and up), snack, toileting, and outdoor activity. While schedules are relied on to create a secure and predictable environment for children, parents and teachers, they are also flexible enough to accommodate unexpected events, weather changes and teachable moments. Our operating hours are Monday-Thursday 7:45-2:00 and Friday 7:45-11:30. We generally follow Stillwater Public Schools’ schedule so observe the same holidays they do. We make every effort to keep children with the same staff members throughout the day as best practices state that strong relationships with teachers create the best and most secure learning environment for the children.

## **DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES—STARS ACCREDITATION**

Our program is a five star program (out of 5) and parents can view our DHS compliance file at any time. It is kept in the parent center in the hallway.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Emphasis is placed on helping children develop the control necessary to be SELF-disciplined, with the understanding that this is a learning process that involves lots of trial and error, experimentation, and mistaken assumptions. Therefore, teachers spend time stating clear expectations, modeling correct behavior and positively reinforcing the child's efforts. Children are encouraged to reconcile with each other after conflicts. When a child is out of control, a brief time-out may be necessary to help regain composure. In the case of biting or other seriously harmful behaviors, the parents will be consulted and a plan of correction formulated. NO physical punishment or verbal abuse of any kind is ever used at Presbyterian Preschool.

**Child Abuse:** State law requires staff members to report ANY suspected child abuse or neglect. The Department of Human Services will be called. We are not trained to investigate: only to report. The parent/guardian may or may not be called at the time of reporting. The Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-522-3511.

### **EMERGENCIES**

In the event of an emergency that would cause us to evacuate the building, we have three possible places to go. We could go to the Fellowship Hall of the First Presbyterian Church. It is located directly next door to our building on the West side of the main church building. If we need to be a bit farther away, we have secured permission from OnCue officials to use their office building next door to the west (217 W. 5<sup>th</sup>). In the event that we need to be farther away, we have also secured permission to use the Simmons Bank location at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Main for evacuation. Teachers are trained in emergency preparedness and all of our emergency plans are reviewed annually or more often.

### **EXPULSION**

Expulsion from our program is a last option, but in some cases of behavior that is injuring others, a student may be expelled. Also, failure to make tuition payments beyond 45 days could terminate a student's participation in our program.

## **FAMILY ORIENTATION**

Families are provided a formal intake process upon enrollment. Parents are given a parent handbook to read that has the family policies and procedures for our school. Parents have several forms that they must complete including ones that help the teachers get to know each child better and individually before school starts. Parents are invited to attend a curriculum night at school and there they listen to the director give general school-wide information. Then, parents go and listen to their child's teacher give the specifics about their child's classroom. Parents also bring their child to school before school actually starts and the child and family spend time getting to know the classroom, the teachers and the classroom routine at a meet-the-teacher event.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Our school does not take any field trips and so we do not transport children at any time.

## **HEALTH**

**Immunizations:** An immunization record or an exemption form, and signed medical/emergency release form are required to be on file when the child begins attending Preschool. The State of Oklahoma requires CURRENT immunization records be on file at the school at all times, so parents are required to notify the school any time the child receives a new immunization.

**Illnesses:** A child with signs of oncoming illness will be isolated until parents can be notified and the child sent home from school. Children or teachers who have any of the following symptoms *must stay out of school until 24 hours AFTER the symptom is gone (without the help of medication), or until a doctor's release is obtained.*

- **Temperature of 100° or greater**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Vomiting**
- **Head and skin infections (e.g. ring worm, impetigo, lice, etc.)**
- **Rash with fever or behavior change**
- **Discharge from eyes**
- **Contagious illness (e.g. chicken pox, strep, bronchitis, sinus infections, viral infections, croup, some colds which have thick nasal discharge, etc.)**

Please notify the Director if the child has a contagious disease, so that other parents can be informed. We will inform parents of a communicable disease exposure while maintaining the confidentiality of the ill child or personnel.



**Injury:** In the event of serious injury, first aid will be administered and appropriate steps taken to take care of the injured. If any staff member deems it is appropriate, an ambulance will be called. Parents will be notified ASAP as soon as the injured child is stabilized.

**Poison Exposure:** In the event of a poison exposure, first aid will be administered, poison control called, and their directions will be followed. If any staff member deems it necessary, an ambulance will be called. Parents will be notified ASAP as soon as the child is stabilized.

**Medication:** No medication can be administered at Preschool. Special situations must be handled with the Director. Diaper creams are considered medication.

**Head Lice:** Children that are found to have head lice will be sent home. After treatment and upon return to school, parents will present the child to the director for a re-check of the head to ensure there are no live lice. If nits are found, parents will be encouraged to re-treat the child periodically until they are nit free. The teachers will do their best to keep children from sharing hats, coats, blankets, pillows, and will encourage children to keep their personal belongings in their individual cubbies. Parents will be notified of an infestation exposure, while the confidentiality of the child will be maintained.

**Allergies:** If your child has any allergies, it is important that you discuss them with the teacher and director. Special instructions should be provided in written form at the time of enrollment.

**Hygiene:** We require staff and children to practice good hand-washing practices throughout the day, and encourage parents and visitors to do so as well.

**Sunscreen:** If you would like your child to wear sunscreen because we play outside every possible day, please put it on them before they come to school. We consider sunscreen a medication.

**Insect Repellent:** If you would like your child to wear insect repellent, please put it on them before they come to school. We consider insect repellent a medication.

## **PARENT PARTICIPATION**

Parents are encouraged to contribute their skills and interests to the program. Opportunities for active involvement include providing snacks, visiting and observing in classrooms, making learning activities and participating in special events. We have an open-door policy. Parents are ALWAYS welcome to visit, announced or not. Teachers may, however, suggest alternative forms of participation for a parent whose presence in the classroom interferes with the child's adjustment to the program, or with regular classroom routines.

**Parent conferences** are held in the fall and spring to discuss the child's progress. Teachers are continuously observing and assessing children informally and they are available to meet with parents any time there is a concern. However, we are unable to engage in lengthy conversations at the beginning or ending of a class period since those are times when teachers must attend to all of the children and parents. At parent conferences, teachers will share more formal assessments of the students with parents and offer resources if needed.

## **OUTDOORS**

We consider the outdoor environment to be an essential part of every child's whole and healthy development. We are committed to providing the children with plenty of time to explore and experience the natural environment, in most kinds of weather. They WILL most likely get dirty, and sometimes wet! Please dress them accordingly. All preschool classes will go outside every day that the weather permits, for at least 20 minutes if possible. Since teachers are outside with the children, there is no supervision for a child to remain indoors during outside time.

## **SNACKS AND NUTRITION**

We are committed to fostering healthy eating habits and encouraging children to make good food choices. We invite parents to provide snack for the entire class once or twice a month, and we strongly encourage choices from the fruit, vegetable and whole grain food groups. We serve water with our snacks.

Food allergies and cultural food restrictions should be discussed with your child's teacher and will be closely observed.

## **STAFF**

Preschool staff members are hired based on education, experience and philosophy about teaching young children. Lead teachers plan curriculum and develop the classroom program to reflect the school's philosophy and meet the developmental needs of the children. Assistant teachers team with the lead teacher to provide guidance and assistance to the children. All staff members engage in continuing education opportunities throughout the year.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

Partial scholarships are available through the Deacons committee of the First Presbyterian Church for families in need of financial assistance. Applications are available through the Director and are awarded at the first of each semester.

## **TOILETING**

Younger children should have clothing that is easily removed for toileting and or diapering. Disposable diapers are to be provided by the parent for any child who has not yet mastered toileting in the school environment. Wipes will be provided by the Preschool. An adequate supply of diapers for 3 hours should be available, as well as a change of clothing. Diaper bags must be clearly marked with the child's name. The Preschool staff will gladly work with parents and children on the process of toilet learning. Please inform us and discuss the procedures to be followed. If you are interested in our toilet learning policy, please visit with your child's teacher. Cloth diapers are prohibited at school unless there are special circumstances.

All clothing soiled with bodily fluids (stool, urine, blood, vomit) will be placed in a sealed plastic bag and sent home.

## **TOYS**

Except for toys that are needed in the opening days of school to ease the child's transition, toys and other personal belongings should be left at home or in the car. The school is not responsible for personal possessions that are brought to school without the teacher's permission. NO guns, war toys, or other toys of destruction are allowed on school premises.

## **TUITION**

Presbyterian Preschool is a non-profit program that is subsidized by the First Presbyterian Church.

**PAYMENT OF FEES:** Tuition is charged on a yearly basis. In August we collect half or two thirds of a month of the regular day fees. September through May, payment is the same each month. Full payments are due each month, regardless of the number of class days the school is in session. Full tuition is charged regardless of whether or not the child attends due to illness or vacation. Parents will be billed each month via email. Tuition may be paid by credit card in the director's office or by check, made to Presbyterian Preschool, to be deposited in the Tuition box or can also be paid via the parent portal.

**DELINQUENT FEES:** Overdue notices will be sent when tuition payments are behind. If payments continue to be delinquent after 45 days, notice will be sent that the child's participation in the preschool program will be terminated at the end of the month unless the amount due is paid in full. Special needs can be taken into consideration, and individual payment plans worked out, IF the parent contacts the Director in advance.

Parents must pick up students at the assigned pick up time. Repeated late pick up subjects the family to possible removal from the program.

## **VISITORS AND DROP-INS**

Adults are welcome to visit the program at any time. However, children who are not enrolled are not permitted to visit except for special situations approved by the Director. We reserve the right to ask any visitor to leave if his/her presence is considered by the staff to be disruptive to the class. Because this is an educational program with an emphasis on consistent, positive relationships among teachers and children, our class sizes are limited and we do not accept drop-ins.

## **WITHDRAWAL**

If the child is withdrawing from the program, a two-week notice must be given to the Director in writing. Parents are responsible for tuition payments through the end of the two-week period. If the child is absent for more than one week without any contact from the parents, the child may be dropped from the program, and parents will be charged for two weeks tuition beyond the final date of attendance.