



Parent Handbook

2020 - 2021



Welcome to Children First, Children's Day Out and Preschool, at First Methodist Midland! We are looking forward to an exciting new year of learning and growing. The early years in a young child's life are the most impressionable ones. Our goal is to provide your child with positive experiences to help him or her grow as Children of God. Thank you for trusting us and giving us the wonderful opportunity to be a part of your child's life.

Here, your child will learn as they play and interact with others in their classroom and beyond. These interactions will help your child grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. At Children First, your child will experience a day filled with opportunities to explore, discover, and create new things. Please dress your child appropriately for all of the fun and sometimes messy experiences that will occur. Precautions will be taken to protect clothing, but remember that accidents do occur from time to time. Teachers will try to warn you in advance when such events will take place.

During the first few weeks of school, your child will be introduced to his or her new surroundings and routines. We will work diligently to help your child become comfortable and excited about attending the Children First program. As the school year progresses, your child will be presented with age-appropriate activities and lessons to stimulate and challenge his or her developmental needs. As your child works, plays, and interacts with the environment, many valuable learning experiences will take place. Language and social skills will be developed and enhanced through the different opportunities presented to your child each day. We hope to share God's love by exhibiting a safe and caring environment for your child to play and grow, and we are committed to providing the best experiences and care for your child.

We are very excited about the upcoming year!

Blessings,

Penelope Hicks
Children First Director
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Purpose and Goals

Our purpose is to provide your child with a Christian environment where he or she can grow spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Our goal is to support the development of each child to his or her greatest potential. We believe this happens in a nurturing environment which fosters mutual respect and appreciates the unique qualities of each individual.

Our Philosophy and Curriculum

We adhere to developmentally appropriate practices – *children learn while they play*. Our curriculum focuses on the process of learning rather than the finished product. Teachers act as facilitators for learning by providing a carefully planned environment that is appropriately challenging for each age-level.

With infants and toddlers, emphasis is placed on positive interaction with the teacher and exposure to educational toys. We believe that a nurturing environment where the child's needs are met promptly by caring teachers is vital to the development of the young child who is learning to trust. It is important to us that your child feels happy and secure while they are in our care.

In the Two Year Old classrooms, we build on developmentally appropriate skills while maintaining a nurturing environment that helps your child to feel happy and secure. The child will stay engaged through fun activities that foster a love for exploring and learning. Through the use of centers, manipulatives, social interaction with their peers, and one-on-one teacher interaction, your child will grow in the areas of cognitive development, language, and motor skills.

The Preschool classrooms will use the Letter People® curriculum. The Letter People curriculum is correlated to the Texas Pre-K standards. The Letter People® will develop the child's print awareness, oral language and listening skills, letter identification and sound/symbol association, vocabulary development, writing and spelling, math, science, personal and social development, and engaging home-to-school activities.

Christian Education

In our chapel time each week, your child will be taught creative and age-appropriate Bible lessons. This means that the lessons are both developmentally and spiritually appropriate for your child, as well as intended to be fun and engaging.

In the Infant and Toddler classrooms, Jesus' love for your child is demonstrated by providing a safe and loving environment in which the child can sing and play.

In the Two, Three, and Four Year-Old classrooms, your child will begin learning Bible stories, as well as the concepts of friendship, helping others, and forgiveness.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

DATES

The Children First Program will begin on **September 10, 2020**. “Meet the Teacher” will be held on **September 8, 2020 from 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.** for parents and children to visit the classrooms and meet their teachers. The last day of the Children First Program will be on **May 13, 2021**.

CHILDREN SERVED

The Children First Program offers a two-day program on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The program serves children ranging in age of 6 months (by September 1st 2020) through Pre-K 4.

CALENDAR & INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Children First Program follows the Midland Independent School District (MISD) school calendar. If MISD is out for a school holiday or inclement weather, the Children First Program will also be closed. Canceled days will not be made up. If MISD delays the start of school, Children First will not have school that day. You may also go online to the First Methodist Midland website, www.firstmethodistmidland.com, to check on weather-related closings for our church.

REGISTRATION: TUITION AND FEES

Registration will begin in January prior to the upcoming school year. The registration process will continue throughout the school year. A spot is reserved once the Registration fee and the last month’s tuition (May 2021) are paid in full. If a classroom is full, there will be a waiting list for children and parents will be contacted as openings become available.

A **non-refundable** registration fee of \$100 per child will be charged at the time of registration. This fee is required to hold a spot in the program in addition to the last month’s tuition (May 2021). If your child is placed on a waiting list, you will not be charged the registration fee or the last month’s tuition until a spot becomes available.

Supply fees will be paid at the beginning of each semester, or upon registration if enrolling after the semester has started. The supply fee is \$50 per child, per semester.

Monthly tuition and fees are as follows for the Children First Children’s Day Out and Preschool program:

TUITION

	<u>Annual Tuition (Sept. – May)</u>	<u>Monthly Payment</u>
1 st Child	\$2,115.00	\$235.00
2 nd Child (& any additional)	\$1,903.50	\$211.50

* May 2021 tuition is due upon registration. This is refundable if withdrawing in writing before May 1, 2020.

* Annual tuition (minus May 2021 tuition) may be paid by September 1, 2020, or you may elect to pay monthly via electronic draft.

FEES

<u>Fee & Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Registration fee – paid upon registration; required to reserve a space; NON-REFUNDABLE	\$100 per child
Supply fees – paid twice a year; due at the beginning of each semester	\$50 per semester, per child

All monthly tuition will be paid by electronic bank draft, unless another method is approved by the Director. The electronic bank draft form will be provided to the parents prior to the start of school.

We cannot carry your child **past twenty days without payment**, and therefore, such delays subject the child to removal from our enrollment list.

WITHDRAWAL FROM PROGRAM

During the school year, written notice of withdrawal must be given by the 15th of the month, or you will be responsible for the next month's tuition. The last month's tuition (May 2021) is non-refundable if your child is not withdrawn in writing by May 1, 2020.

DISMISSAL FROM PROGRAM

The Director of the Children First Program reserves the right to dismiss any child from the program when the best interests of the child or program are not being met. Our goal is to serve all children of the program with the best care possible.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, classes begin promptly at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. Parents may begin dropping off their child at 8:20 a.m.

Arrival

There will be staff members at the portico area beginning at 8:20 a.m. These staff members will escort your child to his/her classroom each morning. In the event you have a message or note to give to your child's teacher, please notify these staff members.

Departure

Parents may begin picking their child up at 2:30 p.m. each afternoon. An adult will need to walk in to pick up their child from the classroom. Any child picked up after 3:05 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays will be charged a late fee of \$10.00 and \$1.00 per minute after 3:05 p.m.

VISTORS

While parents and visitors are welcome, all visitors are asked to sign in and out at the Ark (the front desk area) for the safety of all children.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

For the safety and security of your child, teachers will release your child only to those who are authorized. If a teacher does not recognize the person picking up your child, we will ask that person for identification. Your child will not be released to anyone other than parents without either a signed and dated note or speaking directly with the Director.

GUIDING THE DEVELOPING CHILD

Discipline (positive guidance) will be based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of the child. Teachers will encourage acceptable behavior and inner control over actions by praising appropriate behavior and redirecting inappropriate behavior. In some cases, we will use the positive strategy of withdrawing the child from a situation for a brief time.

Biting is a phase that some children go through and will eventually outgrow. It is a fact that biting sometimes occurs when young children are placed in group care or in a classroom setting. We are genuinely concerned whenever biting occurs in our classrooms, and we will work diligently with the child and the parents to redirect and change that behavior. If at any time you have questions regarding our policy concerning this matter, please see the Director.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents have a responsibility to inform the Director of any special needs or physical disabilities a child may have prior to enrollment. We reserve the right to refuse admission if the situation is one for which our staff is not trained.

When a child with special needs is admitted to the program, it will be on a trial basis. Our goal is to effectively meet the needs of each child. If a child with special needs is admitted to the program and after working with the child the teachers do not feel the child's needs are being met, we reserve the right to hold a confidential conference with the parents to determine if the child should remain in the Children First program. The well-being of each child in our program is our highest priority.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Each child enrolled in the Children First program must have a current immunization record on file. An immunization record must be present before the first day of school. It is the responsibility of the parent to update the records each time the child receives an immunization. Parents must pay close attention to keeping immunization records current.

ALLERGIES /MEDICAL ISSUES

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the teacher and director of any allergy or medical issue your child may have. If your child has an allergy or medical issue, it should be disclosed on the enrollment form completed during registration. If your child develops an allergy or a medical condition during the school year after paperwork has been submitted, please notify the director immediately.

HEALTH

Your cooperation is needed to help maintain high health standards in our program and to help protect all of our children from unnecessary illness.

Parents are asked to keep their child home when the child:

- ☒ Gives evidence of a fresh cold
- ☒ Has a temperature of 99 degrees or more
- ☒ Has a sore or discharging eye
- ☒ Has had vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- ☒ Has a heavy nasal discharge
- ☒ Has a constant cough
- ☒ Is fussy, cranky, and generally not him/herself
- ☒ Has not been without fever for at least 24 hours
- ☒ Cannot play outside

Parents will be called to pick up their child immediately if he or she becomes ill at school. Please pick up your child as quickly as possible.

Should your child have an illness diagnosed by the doctor as a contagious disease (for example, chicken pox or flu), please notify the school. Before any child diagnosed with a contagious disease is allowed to return to school, there must be a signed statement from a doctor confirming that the child is ready to return to school. This statement must be given to the Director.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please label (first and last name) all personal items of clothing, blankets, bottles, diaper bags, lunch boxes, nap mats, etc. that you bring for your child. All other personal items, such as toys, should be left at home.

FOOD

Please send a well-balanced, nutritious lunch and a drink each day with your child. Do not send any items that need to be cooked or warmed in the microwave.

For the benefit of our children with certain allergies, we are a NUT free school. Please do not send any food or snack items that contain NUT products.

For children in the Toddler, Two Year Old, and Preschool rooms, please make sure that what you send is something your child can feed him/herself. Also, please include eating utensils if they are needed. We will not provide such items. For infants, send plenty of bottles and food with the exact instructions as to how and when your child is to be fed.

Lunches will be stored in your child's cubby. Use a thermos or ice pack to keep lunches cold and/or hot. All lunch kits must be labeled with the child's name.

Please do not send breakfast for your child to eat at school. This applies to children of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Teachers are very busy receiving children at the beginning of the day and schedules do not allow time for feedings at the beginning of class.

SNACKS

Parents are asked to provide snacks for their child's classroom. At the beginning of each semester, a snack calendar will be sent home, along with an age-appropriate suggestion list.

***For the benefit of our children with allergies, we are a NUT free school.
Therefore, please do not send any food or snacks that contain NUT products.***

CLOTHING

Children should wear comfortable, washable, play clothes in which they can move easily and freely. We paint, glue, play with sand, and use markers. All articles of clothing should be marked with the child's name. Shoes should be rubber soled and comfortable. **Each child needs to bring a complete change of "seasonally appropriate" clothes in case of any type of accident. Please make sure to include shirt, shorts, undergarments (if applicable), and socks.**

We will play outside for some period of time each day, except during inclement weather. Please make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for this.

For health and safety purposes, **flip flops, open toe sandals, soft sole shoes and open back shoes** will not be allowed. Your child should wear some version of a closed toe shoe.

DIAPERS AND BABY WIPES

Parents are required to send diapers and wipes for their child, for those children who need them.

We also ask parents to provide wipes to leave in the classroom. These wipes are used to clean faces and hands after snack times and lunch. When the supply is low, you will be notified by your child's teacher.

POTTY TRAINING

The Children First staff will assist in the potty training process after the child has been successful for five (5) consecutive days at home. After success has been reached at home, your child can attend Children First in underwear. Please notify the teachers that your child has underwear on and not a diaper/pull-up as to minimize any surprises. Your child needs to be able to **communicate verbally** that they need to go to the potty without reminders from an adult. There are times in the daily schedule where teachers do remind the child to go to the potty, but we cannot take them every thirty minutes to the bathroom as this disrupts the classroom schedule and activities, unless they ask.

During the training process, we request the following: (1) Your child must wear loose fitting clothing that is easy for the child to pull up or down on his/her own; (2) a supply of **3 complete changes of clothing** including socks is to be kept in the classroom in the event of an accident; (3) a supply of pull-ups will be kept in the classroom until the child has shown naptime dryness for a week; (4) Children First does NOT rinse out or wash soiled clothing. It will be sent home at the end of the day.

Please keep in mind that often a child shows a readiness and has success for potty training at home before the signs are seen at school. There may be a period of time where your child is potty trained at home and not at school. That is perfectly normal. If your child comes to school with underwear on and has two accidents in a short period of time, the teachers will place a diaper or pull-up on your child and we can try again another day when he or she shows signs of being ready at school.

QUIET TIME & NAPS

Individual sleep/nap schedules will be accommodated for infants. Children in the Toddler to Preschool Three Class will have an assigned nap time after lunch. Children are expected to rest quietly during this time and not be disruptive to the class. **Parents will need to provide a nap mat that can be kept in the classroom. The program does not**

provide such items. Please send something that can fold up easily. If you have specific questions regarding the nap mats, please visit with the Director.

The Preschool Four classroom **WILL NOT** have a nap time during the school day.

BIRTHDAYS

This is an exciting time in the life of a young child. Should you wish to send a birthday snack for your child's class, please check with the teachers as to what they believe will be appropriate. Please do not send birthday party invitations to school unless all children in your child's class are included.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency, the following procedures will be followed:

TORNADO: All children will be taken to the basement of the church in the event of a tornado. We will remain in the basement until it is safe to return upstairs.

FIRE: All children will be escorted out the north doors of the church building and walked to the far north end of the parking lot. We will remain outside until we have been told it is safe to return inside.

Please note that we have the assistance of church staff members in transporting children to either the basement or the parking lot in the event of a tornado or fire.

ROOM PARENTS

Each classroom will have two (2) Room Parents.

The job of a Room Parent is a special job which includes the following responsibilities:

1. The Room Parent will serve as a line of communication between the Children First Director, classroom teacher, and the classroom parents.
2. The Room Parent will contact and ask for volunteers of other parents when special events occur.
3. The Room Parent will be in-charge of organizing all classroom parties in conjunction with the classroom teachers.

Ways Parents Can Help

There are several ways you can help to enrich your child's experience while attending Children First.

- Talk about the program as a happy place not only to your child, but to others as well.
- If your child cries when you bring him or her to class, it is best for you to leave your child with the teachers as soon as possible. Most children stop crying within minutes of your departure. Please remember that the longer you stay, the more difficult it is for a child to separate. Feel free to check on your child throughout the day by calling the Director. The Director will be happy to give you a report on how your child is doing.
- Please make every effort to drop your child off on time so that teachers can get the class settled and begin the day's activities. If you must drop your child off after 9:00 a.m. or pick him/her up before 2:30 p.m., please check-in at the front desk with the Director or Assistant.
- Communicate regularly with your child's teacher. If unusual circumstances arise at home, please let us know. We can be a stronger resource for your child if we are aware of developments that change your child's routine or significantly affect his or her life.
- Read newsletters and all notices sent home carefully. Refer often to your Parent Handbook, calendars, and any postings outside of the classrooms or at the Ark desk.

If you have questions or concerns, please discuss them with the teachers or Director as soon as they arise. We welcome your suggestions for improvement and growth. Children First Children's Day Out and Preschool should be a wonderful part of the growing up process. When families and our program work together for the good of a child, we set a wonderful example of God's love. Our door is always open!

Reminders for the 2020-2021 School Year

1. All monthly tuition will be paid by electronic bank draft, unless another method is approved by the Director. The electronic draft form will be provided to the parents in July and due by August 1, 2020.
2. A penalty of \$10.00 will be charged to your account if your child is not picked up by 3:05 p.m. and an additional \$1.00 per minute after 3:05 p.m.
3. For health and safety purposes, **flip flops, open toe sandals, soft sole shoes and open back shoes** will not be allowed. Children should wear some version of a closed toe shoe.
4. All children in the Preschool Three and Preschool Four classrooms must be potty trained.
5. The registration fee is non-refundable.
6. The last month's tuition (May 2021) is non-refundable if your child is not withdrawn in writing by May 1, 2020.
7. During the school year, a written notice of withdrawal must be given by the 15th of the month, or you will be responsible for the next month's tuition.

Children First Covenant

2020-2021

I, _____, parent/guardian of _____ have received and read the Children First policies and procedures. I agree to abide by all policies and pay all fees incurred while in the program.

I understand the following requirements:

1. All children enrolled in the Children First Children's Day Out and Preschool Program must submit an updated copy of immunization records to be kept on file before the first day of school. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to update records each time the child receives an immunization.
2. The Children First Covenant (this form) must be signed and returned to the Children First Director before my child will be admitted to class.
3. I realize that a child can be dropped or removed from the program at the discretion of the Children First Director.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian

Date

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAGE OF THE PARENT HANDBOOK.