



Family Handbook

2017 - 2018

108 Sound Beach Avenue * Old Greenwich, CT 06870 * (203) 637-5430



WELCOME

Thank you for choosing First Church Preschool, where we focus on “*Learning Through Caring ~ For Ourselves, Each Other & Our Earth.*” We welcome you to our caring community.

This Family Handbook is designed to inform families about how our program operates. Being familiar with these general policies and procedures will help make your experience with us more enjoyable, successful, and efficient. Many of our regulations have been established because they are required in order to maintain Connecticut State licensing. They also serve to provide families with a high quality early childhood education program. You acknowledge your understanding of our policies when you submit a signed Statement of Receipt of First Church Family Handbook Form, which is provided along with this handbook. If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of the information contained in this Family Handbook, please contact us

Our staff is committed to meeting the developmental needs of your child. The educational backgrounds of our teachers and our wealth of experience make us well equipped to teach young children. Staff members attend workshops, seminars, and educational conferences throughout the year and maintain rigorous standards in order to ensure the highest quality programming for your child. Our teachers are happy to help you with your early childhood concerns.

We look forward to getting to know you and your child better as the year progresses. Your child will leave First Church feeling confident and with a wonderful foundation for further education.

Sincerely,

The First Church Preschool Staff

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the First Church Preschool is:

- **to offer** an active preschool educational experience for children ages 3 through 5 years where growth is promoted in four specific areas: cognitive development, social/emotional development, creative expression, and physical development;
- **to help** children become aware of their special abilities and individual worth as human beings;
- **to encourage** self confidence and channel a child's curiosity and energies into meaningful activities; and
- **to foster** friendships, partnerships, and social development among children, program staff, families, and the community through humility, respect, sharing, caring and a sense of humor.

FIRST CHURCH PRESCHOOL GUIDING BODIES

The Preschool Board
The Parent Committee
The State of Connecticut Department of Public Health

The Preschool Board directs the First Church Preschool. The Board sets policies and makes decisions regarding the operation of the program. The Preschool Director works on behalf of the Board to implement the school's policies and procedures and to manage the day-to-day operations of the program.

A Parent Committee composed of parents of children currently enrolled in the program supports the efforts of the preschool through fundraising activities, social events, maintaining the playground and promoting the school through publicity.

First Church Preschool is licensed to operate by the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health and subject to the rules and regulations they put forth.

First Church Preschool Board Members 2017 – 2018

Richard DenUyl	Sr. Pastor	203-637-1791	richardd@fccog.org
Patrick Collins	Associate Pastor	402-840-2251	patrickc@fccog.org
Marty Bitner	Member-at-Large	203-869-5749	martybitner@optonline.net
Donna Hascher	Chair	203-329-2243	donna.hascher@gmail.com
Rosemary Lamie	Dir Family Ministries	203-637-1791	rosemaryl@fccog.org
Frosty Friedman	Budget Comm Rep	203-637-5127	frostyfriedman@gmail.com
Peg Wentworth	Member-at-Large	203-637-0733	thewentworths@mac.com
Steve Summerton	Dir Church Adm & Fin	203-637-1791	steves@fccog.org
Kristin Sterling	Parent Comm Chair	917-656-8913	sterling.kristin@gmail.com
Lauren Brown	Parent Comm Chair	203-344-9270	lauren_a_brown@hotmail.com
Darla Steiner	Preschool Director	203-637-5430	darlak@fccog.org

OUR PROGRAMS

Preschool Program

First Church Preschool follows the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards and the Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework for developing and implementing an educational program for children 3 to 5 years of age. We do not adhere to any one specific published curriculum, but rather implement an evolving mix of teaching strategies, experiences, and activities that are empirically shown to embrace best practices and standards currently accepted within the early childhood education field. We implement a play-based approach, believing wholeheartedly in the necessity for play in fostering children's early learning and developmental success.

There are two components within our preschool program: "3s" classes for children who have or will be turning 3 years of age by December 31st of the calendar year in which they are enrolling, and "4s" classes for children who have or will be turning 4 years of age by December 31st of the calendar year in which they are enrolling. All children entering our preschool programs must be toilet trained, meaning that they have experience with and are amenable to using a toilet, and they must not wear diapers or "Pull-Up" type diapers to school. Our classes for 3s are held either 3 days per week – Mon/Wed/Fri – or 5 days. Our 4s classes are 5 days per week. We offer ½-day AM or PM classes which run for 2.5 hours, or Extended Day classes, which run from 9AM to 2PM for both our 3s and 4s.

Program for 2 Year-Olds

We have added a program for children who will be turning 2 years of age by December 31st of the calendar year in which they are enrolling. Our "2s" program is designed to be a fun, safe, stimulating time for toddlers during which physical, language, cognitive, and social development are nurtured and encouraged. Children in the 2s program do not need to be toilet trained, but families must supply diapers and wipes for their children to use at school if needed.

Pre-K Program (sometimes referred to as a "Connecting Program")

The Pre-K Program is specifically tailored for children who have completed a 4 year old preschool program and who are eligible to start kindergarten, but who, after careful consideration from parents, teachers, and/or other early childhood professionals, are deemed likely to benefit from delaying starting their kindergarten experience. The Pre-K Program offers a curriculum that has been designed to be challenging, developmentally appropriate, and taught in an atmosphere that is both stimulating and nurturing. The curriculum focuses on language arts, mathematics, science, physical education and social studies activities. In language arts, the beginnings of writing will be encouraged. The children will become familiar with comparisons, spatial relationships, letter-name recognition and sound discrimination. Daily program activities and opportunities will foster the development of hand/eye coordination, left/right progressions and organizational skills. In science, children will participate in hands-on activities that pique their natural curiosity. Children will use their senses to observe their physical environment, predict outcomes, and know the excitement of discovery. In social and emotional development, children will continue to gain confidence, learn independence, and accept responsibilities. The program also provides daily outside recreation and bi-weekly formal music and movement programs.

All of our programs provide a balance of teacher-directed and developmentally appropriate children's choice activities, and group and individual activities. A wide variety of classroom

materials engage children in exploration and discovery. The program includes opportunities for musical expression, artistic creativity, imaginative play, and for supporting children's social, emotional, physical, and thinking skills. In addition to their regular classroom opportunities, children have the chance to participate in various music, physical education, yoga, and science enrichment experiences led by trained professionals.

The typical daily schedule for our preschool programs incorporates the following components (not necessarily in this order):

- Arrival time: each child is greeted, welcomed, and assisted with transitioning to class
- Child-directed center time: play, discovery with various materials, social interaction,
- Teacher-led group time: story time, class meetings, group games and discussions
- Snack time: a variety of fruit, vegetable, cheese, and cracker choices and filtered water provided by the school; we are a peanut/tree nut free school
- Clean up time: a class-wide undertaking
- Outdoor play time: weather permitting, we will utilize our playground, take a walk around our campus or the nearby park; in inclement weather, we will utilize our indoor gym space for large motor exercise, games, and play
- Dismissal time: each child is encouraged to gather their belongings and sent off with an authorized adult

Operating Schedule

First Church Preschool is open five days per week, Monday through Friday, with office hours beginning from 8:00 AM through 4:00 PM from September through June. Our 2s, 3s, and 4s preschool program half-day morning classes run 9:00 AM to 12 PM. Our Extended Day 3s, 4s, and our Pre-K classes run 9:00 AM through 1:55 PM. We are closed on national holidays, as well as for extended periods in late December, February, and for a spring break in March or April. All families will receive a school-year calendar that indicates what days we plan to be closed, including school-wide special event dates that will impact the typical operating schedule. This school year calendar can be accessed through our website: www.firstchurchpreschool.com.

We do not make up for up to four days that the school is closed due to hazardous weather and other emergency related situations. If we have more than four unscheduled emergency closings, we will make up one day for each day we close beyond the fourth day.

Our Summer Program, which usually begins mid-June and goes for six consecutive weeks through the month of July, runs 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM for the 3s classes (also called the "Seahorses" classes) and 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM for all the 4s & 5s classes.

No programming is conducted in August. Thorough cleaning, maintenance, and repairs usually take place at this time. Our office is still open, but on a limited basis. If you need to contact us during this time, please understand that there could be a short delay in response, but we will make every effort to get back to you as soon as possible if you leave a message.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Lunch Program

Children who participate in our Lunch Program bring a nutritious lunch from home to eat at school. They enjoy additional playtime, lunch with friends, music, and stories. The Lunch Program, offered at an additional fee, runs for separate consecutive sessions on Mondays through Fridays from 12 PM – 1 PM. An enrollment period precedes each of the sessions of the Lunch Program, during which applications are accepted on a first come, first served basis. All those participating in our Lunch Program must bring lunches that are tree nut and peanut free.

Children in our 2s program may participate in the Lunch Program during the second session, which generally begins around early November.

Afters Program

Our Afters Program provides a unique learning and social opportunity where children focus on specific curriculum topics through music, science, mathematics, literature, and language activities, while also extending their morning classes to 1:55 PM. Children who participate in our Afters Program first enjoy a lunch brought from home, and then engage in a variety of fun, multisensory activities appropriate for children 3 and 4 years of age. As with our Lunch Program, the Afters Program is offered for an additional fee during separate consecutive sessions, running from 12 – 1:55 PM. Families can sign children up for the Afters Program during the enrollment period just prior to each session, and applications are accepted on a first come, first served basis. Our Afters Program enrollees must bring lunches that are tree nut and peanut free.

Before Care Program

We operate a Before Care Program where we will arrange to have a staff member onsite between 7:30 AM and 9:00 AM to supervise and care for children during those times when families must drop their child off before class begins. You can register for the Before Care Program on a regular basis for those instances where a consistent obligation necessitates having to drop your child off early, or you can also arrange for your child to be dropped off on a per diem basis. When you anticipate needing Before Care on a per diem basis, then we request you let us know as soon as possible, and no later than 3:00 PM on the day before needing the Before Care, so we can ensure proper staffing. Registration forms for those needing the Before Care Program on a regular basis will be available the first week of school and Before Care will begin the second full week of school. Per diem request forms for the Before Care Program are available from the school office.

Summer Program

The Summer Program is a 6-week program starting in mid-June through July, where children have a blast engaging in warm weather and outdoor activities. Children may be enrolled for either one week periods or the entire 6 weeks. Much time is spent in the great outdoors in water play, games, and exploration. The program is designed for children ages 3 to 5 years. Those who are 3 years old participate in the “Seahorses” group and attend T, W, TH from 9 – 12 PM; all others attend M – F from 9 – 1 PM. Registration for our Summer Program generally begins in mid to late January.

Tuition for all of our special programming will be announced during their respective enrollment periods.

Non-Discrimination

The First Church Preschool does not discriminate against anyone for any reason. We encourage and support cultural diversity as part of our program. We make every effort possible to meet each child’s individual needs.

PAYMENT POLICIES

Payment Schedule

A \$500 deposit fee and a \$25 application fee, both non-refundable, are due at the time of registration for all preschool and pre-k programs in order for a child to be considered officially enrolled and for a spot to be saved for that child. If registering more than one child per family, a deposit and application fee must be paid per each child being enrolled. If a family wishes to enroll a child at a point in time after the initial tuition installment payments become due, then an alternate payment schedule may be established with that family.

Deposit and payment schedules for special programming, such as the Lunch, Afters, and Summer Programs, will be announced at the time registration opens for each respective program.

Programs for 2s	Total Tuition	Installment Payment Amt
2-day – T/TH 9 AM – 12 PM	\$5,725.00	\$500 deposit & \$1,306.25
3-day – M/W/F 9 AM – 12 PM	\$7,850.00	\$500 deposit & \$1,837.50
Programs for 3s		
3-day – M/W/F 9 AM – 12 PM	\$6,925.00	\$500 deposit & \$1,606.25
3-day – M/W/F 9 AM – 2 PM	\$8,200.00	\$500 deposit & \$1,925.00
5-day – 9 AM – 12 PM	\$9,500.00	\$500 deposit & \$2,250.00
5-day – 9 AM – 2 PM	\$12,150.00	\$500 deposit & \$2,912.50
Programs for 4s		
9 AM – 12 PM	\$9,500.00	\$500 deposit & \$2,250.00
12:30 PM – 3:30 PM	\$9,500.00	\$500 deposit & \$2,250.00
9 AM – 2 PM	\$12,150.00	\$500 deposit & \$2,912.50
Pre-K Program (5 days per week)		
9 AM – 2 PM	\$12,500.00	\$500 deposit & \$3,000.00

Families who find themselves unable to keep current with their payment schedule are encouraged to speak with the director and/or administrative assistant as soon as possible so that a financial agreement can be worked out. Invoices will be sent out in advance of when tuition installment payments are due. There will be a 10 business-day grace period from the date the tuition installment payment is due. On the 11th business day after a tuition installment payment is due, if the payment has not been received, a late fee of 1.5% of the total payment due amount will be compounded on a daily basis for up to a maximum of another 10 business days. If payment still has not been received at that point, the child will be withdrawn from the program and vacancy will be offered out to be filled.

Enrollment

First Church Preschool conducts an Open Enrollment period during the month of October for the next school year's enrollment. Families wishing to enroll their child during that time must submit a completed application and the deposit and application fees in two separate checks, one in the amount of the deposit and one in the amount of the application fee. If more applications are received for a particular program than there are spots available, a lottery may be held. If, as a result of the lottery, a family wishes to decline the spot they received for their child, the deposit check they submitted at the time of registration will be returned. A family may request to have their name added to a waiting list in the event that a spot they desire for their child does become available. If a spot opens up that a family who has their name on a waiting list wishes to enroll their child for, the family must then submit the requisite deposit (and application fee, if not already paid) in order to secure the spot for their child.

Refunds

No part of the deposit payment will be refunded because of absence, failure to continue, or withdrawal of a child from First Church Preschool. Further, unless a family provides written notice to the director that they plan to revoke their child's enrollment prior to the date that the first tuition installment payment is due (on or before February 28, 2017), families are unconditionally obligated to pay the tuition and fees for the full school year, and no portion of such tuition and fees will be refunded or cancelled notwithstanding their child's absence, withdrawal, or dismissal from First Church Preschool for whatever reason, and notwithstanding any waitlist for the particular program in which their child is hereby registered. In the event a family withdraws after February 28, 2017, all unpaid tuition and fees will become payable immediately.

Withdrawing A Child

Families must notify the director in writing if they will withdraw a child from enrollment at the preschool for any reason. If possible, the written notification of withdrawal should be submitted as soon as possible, and no later than two weeks before the anticipated date of withdrawal. As stated above, no part of the deposit payment or any installment due and paid at the time of the withdrawal will be refunded if a child is withdrawn from the program.

Discounts

First Church Preschool offers a tuition discount for families enrolling more than one child concurrently in our programming. Families will pay full tuition for the child enrolled in the program with the highest tuition, and receive a 10% discount for each child thereafter enrolled in a program of equal or lesser value.

Children or grandchildren of current, active members of the First Congregational Church, our sponsor, will receive a 10% discount off the total tuition incurred. First Church Preschool must first receive written verification from the First Congregational Church that an enrolled child is indeed a child or grandchild of a current, active member before the discount will be applied. The parent or grandparent must be a current, active member at the time the child is enrolled in order to receive the discount. Families who qualify for the church member discount and who also have enrolled more than one child concurrently will receive a 10% discount off each enrolled child's tuition.

Children of currently employed preschool and church staff members receive a 25% tuition discount, and their grandchildren receive a 10% tuition discount. Preschool and church staff must be employed at the time their child is enrolled in order to receive the discount.

Late Payments

Families who find themselves unable to keep current with their payment schedule are encouraged to speak with the director and/or administrative assistant as soon as possible so that a financial agreement can be worked out. Invoices will be sent out in advance of when tuition installment payments are due. There will be a 10 business-day grace period from the date the tuition installment payment is due. On the 11th business day after a tuition installment payment is due, if the payment has not been received, a late fee of 1.5% of the total payment due amount will be compounded on a daily basis for up to a maximum of another 10 business days. If payment still has not been received at that point, the child will be withdrawn from the program and vacancy will be offered out to be filled.

Payments

Tuition checks should be made payable to “**First Church Preschool**”. They may be mailed to **First Church Preschool at 108 Sound Beach Avenue, Old Greenwich, CT 06870**. Checks may also be hand delivered to the preschool office or left in the locked tuition mailbox just outside the preschool office door.

Scholarships

Scholarships are available based on financial need. Please contact the preschool director for more information on how to apply. All applications for scholarships are subject to review by the Preschool Board.

Adjustment to School

Our staff strives to make each family’s adjustment to our preschool a pleasant one. At the beginning of each school year, we offer a Visiting Day during which children and parents together visit their new classrooms for about one hour in order to meet teachers and classmates and get acclimated to the environment. In addition, we have a Welcome Coffee/Orientation the day after our Visiting Day, so parents of students can meet and share important information about our school and its policies with the director and representatives from the Parent Committee. We endeavor to get you the information you will need to transition smoothly into our school community.

We understand that children react to new environments differently. We will make every effort to help your child thrive at preschool. Experience has shown that if families of children convey a positive attitude toward their child going to school and leave promptly at drop off time (without revealing signs of anxiety themselves), then children adjust more quickly and happily to being at school. A smile, kiss, and a quick goodbye work best. If you are concerned about whether your child is experiencing separation anxiety, please know that you are welcome to call the office and we will be happy to give you a progress report.

Toileting

The license we received from the Connecticut Department of Public Health stipulates that children who are enrolled in our 3s, 4s, & Pre-K programs must be toilet trained. Children are not allowed to wear diapers or “Pull-Up” type diapers at school. We encourage children in their growing independence and self-help skills, including personal hygiene. We offer general reminders to children to use the toilet and wash their hands, and we will verbally instruct them through the toileting process, offering limited assistance as necessary. We understand, however, and expect that toileting accidents may occur from time to time. So, we ask that you please provide a clean change of clothing just in case. Please know that if children have toileting accidents, they will be instructed to change themselves, or, if necessary, we will contact their family or their designated emergency contact person to come into the school to change them. If a situation develops in which toileting accidents become a chronic problem with a particular child, the child’s family and his or her teachers will work together to establish a plan for addressing the issue.

Communication

A monthly newsletter, called *The Prism*, will originate from the director and is designed to keep you informed of events taking place on a school wide basis. Additionally, monthly newsletters from your child's classroom teachers outlining what activities and themes will occur in the classroom will be distributed. Generally, both newsletters will be sent to you via email, unless you request otherwise. In addition, there may be special notices placed in what we call the children's "Friday Folder". These folders are sent home in your child's school bag each Friday (or the last day of the week that your child is scheduled to attend school). Please check your child's school bag regularly for any special notices and important information. You will also find a monthly calendar on our school's website which highlights pertinent information. This website calendar is updated on a regular basis so that you can refer to it for the latest information.

If there is a need to pass specific information to your child's teacher, we suggest writing a note, sending an email, or scheduling a call during a mutually convenient time so all are informed. We respectfully ask that communication at arrival be limited so our teachers can welcome and successfully transition all our children.

An Open House Night is held one evening in September for all families. During the Open House Night, teachers give an overview of their plans and goals for the school year, and families have the opportunity to visit their child's classroom and speak informally with the teachers.

Family conferences will be scheduled twice each year, in the fall and in the spring. Please refer to our current school calendar for the specific dates set aside for these conferences. These meetings are a great opportunity to discuss with the teachers about your child's acclimation and progress within the program. Should you wish to speak with your child's teacher at other points in the school year, appointments can be arranged.

Arrival

The First Church Preschool opens at 8:55 AM for our morning classes, and your child is most welcome at that time. Since preparation time before 8:55 AM is essential for the teachers, we ask that you please do not arrive early. It is imperative that all children are signed in and out of their class each day by a parent or designated authorized adult. A sign in/out sheet is posted by each classroom door in the hallway. If your child is dropped off to school via our curbside drop-off (described below), then he/she will need to be signed both in and out at pick up time.

Please note that it is against the law to leave a young child alone in a car even if the engine is off. The Greenwich Police Department strictly enforces this law. Children must also be securely strapped in car seats and seat belts when inside vehicles with the engine running. Since no child may remain in a car alone, all children should be escorted by an adult into the main hallway of the preschool and directly to their classrooms, unless using our drop-off option, which is described below. The hallway may get crowded at arrival times, so please carefully supervise all children in your care.

Curbside Drop-Off

Two weeks after the start of school, curbside drop-off is offered daily from 8:55 AM until 9:10 AM. With our drop-off option, staff members assist children in exiting your vehicle at the curb

and escort them to their classrooms. In order for our drop-off option to run efficiently and safely, it is extremely important that you follow these procedures:

Drop-Off Procedures:

- There will be no drop-off under the following conditions:
 1. Wind chill temperature under 15 degrees
 2. Torrential or wind-driven rain
 3. Icy/ snowy conditions on the sidewalk and driveway
 4. Staffing issues
 5. Discretion of the director/administration

A sign will be up at the top of the driveway to indicate if there is no drop-off for particular day for any reason.

- We encourage children must exit the vehicle on the *passenger side*, the side closest to the sidewalk, if possible.
- We encourage adults to stay inside the vehicle. The vehicle must be at a complete stop and placed in “park” while the children are exiting the vehicle.
- If a situation arises where an adult needs to assist their child in exiting the vehicle, the driver will be asked to leave the drop-off lane and proceed to find a parking spot in the school parking lot and escort their child into the school.
- Children must have their coats, hats, etc. on and zippered when exiting the vehicle.
- The parking spaces in the lane between the church building and the cemetery that leads to Sound Beach Avenue are reserved for staff. Please do not park in this spaces. Further, this lane is a one-way thoroughfare.

Dismissal

All children attending morning classes should be picked up at 12 PM at their classroom door, unless you are notified otherwise by our staff or your class is scheduled to be picked up from the outdoor classroom. It is helpful to remember that your child anticipates your timely arrival and becomes upset or concerned when you are not present at the same time as others coming to pick up children. If you are going to be late picking up your child, please call the office and alert us so we can explain your delay to your child. Children who are being picked up late can be retrieved at the preschool or director’s office. If you are chronically late with picking up your child, we encourage you to discuss those factors attributing to your situation with us so that we might come to a mutually agreeable solution.

We encourage the use of carpools, but advise that they be established only after your child has made a comfortable adjustment to the preschool. If you choose to use a carpool for your child, you must list the carpool drivers on your authorization form. In addition, please be certain to provide your child’s teachers with a written carpool schedule.

If anyone other than those listed on your authorization form will be picking up your child, please send a written note to school explaining so. Children will not be released to anyone not listed on the authorization form without our first obtaining your written consent. When providing authorization, please provide the person’s full name and tell them photo identification is necessary for showing to staff when picking up your child.

In order to maintain a safe and secure experience, First Church Preschool reserves the right to refuse to release a child to an adult’s care if that adult appears any way impaired or unable to provide safe transit.

PLEASE DRIVE SLOWLY THROUGH THE PARKING LOT AND CHECK CAREFULLY BEFORE PULLING IN OR OUT OF YOUR PARKING SPACE.

If at a prolonged stop, please turn off the engine rather than keeping it running. The handicap parking spaces are only to be used by those drivers who have a valid handicap license.

Texting & Cell Phone Use

Texting and cell phone use while driving in the parking lot is not permitted by law. Should you need to use your cell phone or text option, please pull into a parking space and turn off your car. Please do not use your phone while waiting in the drop-off line.

Snacks & Lunches

The First Church Preschool provides a daily snack and water to drink. A menu of snacks offered each day at school is posted by each classroom door. Often, children like to bring a snack from home to share with their class. If you would like to send a snack, please check with your child's teacher first. Your child's teacher will make you aware of any food allergies in the room, and if you are planning to send in a snack you must be sure that your choice honors any allergies present. You may need to present a list of ingredients for the snack. Please be aware that all snacks must be TREE NUT AND PEANUT FREE. Your child's teacher can present a list of suggested snack foods that would be suitable to the class.

For children who participate in our Lunch and Afters Programs, all lunches sent from home should also be TREE NUT AND PEANUT FREE. Families are requested to provide healthy choices for lunch and refrain from including candy or sugary treats. We suggest including an ice pack to help keep the food fresh. You may also want to use a thermos container for keeping foods warm. Please be sure to label all containers included in your child's lunch with their name.

WE MUST BE INFORMED IF YOUR CHILD IS ALLERGIC TO ANY FOOD OR OTHER SUBSTANCE!

Birthdays & Celebrations

Invitations to birthday and other parties held outside the classroom may not be distributed within the preschool unless the entire class is invited. We celebrate each child's birthday in school and families may send in a special birthday snack (please see above section on "Snacks" for details).

Clothing

At school, children engage in a variety of activities that can be messy, so please dress your child in clothes suitable for both indoor and outdoor play and for getting dirty. Children should not wear boots in the classroom. For safety reasons, we find it best to wear sneakers or rubber soled, closed toed shoes for use on the playground, and request that no flip-flops or open back shoes be worn.

Outdoor play is part of our program throughout the year. The length of time spent outdoors will be dictated by the weather. During the winter months, the children should be dressed for cold weather. Please label all hats, sweaters, mittens, boots and jackets with your child's name.

Please bring a complete change of clothes in a large zip-lock bag labeled with your child's name on the first day of preschool. These will be kept at school for use as needed. We ask that you periodically update the items to account for changes in seasons and your child's rapid growth during the year.

Toys from Home

Toys from home should not be brought into the classrooms without first discussing with the teacher.

Classroom Pet Policy

Some of our classrooms adopt class pets for the enjoyment and education of the children. We make efforts to ensure that the pet is healthy. The pet will be kept in an environment that will be cleaned at least weekly by a staff member. Any litter or debris used or left by the pet will be discarded directly to the outside garbage receptacle. A staff member will supervise children when feeding and providing water and/or other necessities for the pet. Anyone who handles the pet will be required to wash his or her hands before and after the handling. A pet care plan will be posted near each pet in the classroom outlining the proper care for the pet. Dogs and other personal pets are not allowed on the premises and must be secured away from the playground, classrooms, sidewalks and other areas people must use to gain access to the preschool.

School Cancellations/ Delayed Opening/ Early Release

Sometimes, severe or hazardous weather or other emergency situations arise that affect our typical daily schedule. Our Parent Committee establishes a communications chain that serves to inform you of any unusual circumstances. Attempts will be made to contact you by phone via this communications chain. We may also email you with any announcements, if at all possible. You may also visit www.connecticut.news12.com on the Internet, or tune into channel 12 on the television, where you can find school closing announcements for our programs.

In the event that we must institute a delayed opening, all morning classes will start at 10:00 AM. In the event of an early dismissal, we will attempt to contact you to let you know. Children should be picked up as soon as possible after the early release is announced.

The following is a list of resources you might refer to for more information during an emergency or hazardous weather situation:

Television stations: Channel 12

Websites: First Church Preschool: www.firstchurchpreschool.org
Greenwich Public Schools website- www.greenwickschools.org
News 12 Connecticut: www.connecticut.news12.com

Illness Policy

Children inevitably catch colds and infections when they first have group experiences. In order to keep these infections to a minimum, we ask that you cooperate with our policies on illness. Please do not send your child to school if he/she:

- Has or had a temperature of 100 degrees or more within 24 hours of class time.
- Has vomited or has had diarrhea within 24 hours of class time.
- Has a contagious disease.
- Has an obvious sign of a cold: sneezing and coughing, with a green discharge coming from the nose, or discharge from the eyes/ears.
- Is not feeling well enough to fully participate in the program, which includes outdoor play.
- Has not been on their prescribed antibiotic for within at least 24 hours of class time.
- Has a rash or skin irritation that has a discharge or is bleeding.

Head Lice: Children who are at school and found to have live head lice and/or more than 4 nits will be sent home to help curtail the spread, and they must be treated for lice before re-entering school. Children who have been found to have lice must report directly to the school office to be screened before going to their classroom. Children will be allowed to attend school when there are no more than 4 nits present, and no live lice, for no more than 3 consecutive days, by which they must have received treatment for lice before they may continue to attend. For each of the 3 days, they must stop in the office for screening before going to class. Children who are found to still have lice one week after having been first discovered to have them will not be permitted to return to school until they are completely free of all nits and live lice.

Chicken Pox: Children who are diagnosed with Chicken Pox must be excluded from school until all blisters have scabs (usually 6 – 8 days), have no fever or other symptoms, and feel well enough to participate in physical activities, including outdoor activities.

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): A child who develops pink eye must be on medication for 24 hours before returning to school.

Fifth's Disease: A child with Fifth's Disease is most contagious before the rash appears — either during the incubation period (the time between infection and the onset of symptoms) or when experiencing only mild respiratory symptom, thus, in order to help curtail the spread, children should not attend school during this period.

Cocksackie: Children who have been diagnosed with Cocksackie may be excluded from attending school until a note from a physician which states that the child is well enough to return is supplied.

Strep: Children who have been diagnosed with strep must be excluded from school until after at least 24 hours from the time they received a first dose of antibiotic (not just the next day), and they also feel well enough to participate in the physical activity, including outdoor activity, typically engaged in at school.

If your child is diagnosed by a physician with any of the above conditions or some other significant medical condition, please notify the preschool office as soon as possible.

Administration of Medications/First Aid/CPR

Members of our staff attend state approved trainings to learn to administer medications for children who require them due to chronic health conditions, such as allergies, asthma, and diabetes. These types of medications must be approved by a physician for use and, therefore, require a prescription. Individualized health care plans will be established for children who may need to have medication administered during school hours because of medical conditions like these. All individualized health care plans must specify the type of medication, the right dose, route, and time for giving a child the medicine, and correspond to the instructions given by a physician via a written prescription.

Members of our staff also participate in state approved first aid and CPR trainings so that they may respond appropriately to a variety of emergency situations that may arise with children during school hours.

Children who require medication prescribed by a physician as treatment for temporary illnesses often can have the administration of those medications timed in such a way that they can be given by family members at home and need not be given by teachers during school hours. If, however, a need arises that a child needs a dose of medication during school hours for a condition that is not already approved on an individualized health care plan for that child, then parents or guardians of the child must give full written consent to staff members to administer that medication or be present themselves to give the medication at school. Our staff does not give over-the-counter medication to children unless it has been prescribed by the child's doctor. First Church Preschool will not administer the first nor the second dose of any medication, either prescribed or over-the-counter, including sunscreen, in case a child develops an adverse reaction with initial contact with the unfamiliar substance.

Please apply sunscreen at home before coming to school. Our staff members do not routinely apply sunscreen; only per doctor's orders and with written authorization from parents.

All medications kept onsite must be in their original containers and with the prescription label and/or administration instructions intact. Our staff will not administer medication that is beyond its expiration date. We do our best to notify you if medication kept onsite for your child is about to expire.

Health Forms

The State of Connecticut requires that the preschool maintain accurate early childhood health assessment records for each child. This includes having a current (within 1 year) health exam and list of current immunizations submitted by August 1st for participation in programming for the following September. Should your child's health form expire during the school year, it is your responsibility to make sure that a new health form is submitted to the preschool office. We will notify you if your child's health assessment is about to expire. No child will be admitted to class without completed and up-to-date health assessment forms.

Discipline Policy

The teachers at the preschool use positive discipline techniques with the children. This includes positive guidance, praise and encouragement, redirecting the child, setting clear limits from the beginning of the relationship with the child, and continuous supervision of the children.

Teachers are specifically prohibited from using abusive, humiliating, or frightening treatment. They may not hit, embarrass, or scare a child. They may not deny the child snack or recess time as a punishment.

When a child misbehaves, the teacher may remove the child from the group as long as the child remains under constant supervision. The child must be given the opportunity to return to the group when he or she has calmed down or is ready to participate appropriately in the class activity. A child may only be restrained if it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the child him or herself, or another person.

Follow-up to any disciplinary incident should include talking to the child, the director, and appropriate members of the families of the children involved in an effort to prevent such an incident from occurring again.

We welcome a healthy exchange of information regarding limits and discipline routines and would gladly discuss our policies and practices with any interested families and caregivers.

Dismissal from Program

First Church Preschool reserves the right to dismiss a child at any time the Preschool deems necessary. Reasons include, but are not limited to, the following: excessive disruptive behavior by the child or parent, excessive and continuing physical aggression toward other children, adults or property, failure to pay tuition on time, excessive lateness in picking up the child, failure to submit necessary school forms, or any other conduct determined by the preschool to be inappropriate or endangering.

That being said, however, we make every effort to avoid resorting to a child's dismissal from the program. In order to do so, we utilize a system of warnings and probation for children who present challenging behaviors at school:

1st offense: appropriate family members will be made aware by staff concerning the issues surrounding the offense and staff will investigate factors that may possibly be affecting the situation. Staff will document reporting the issues to the family members as well as all findings regarding the potential contributing factors to the situation. Based on any findings, the staff will make any accommodations deemed necessary and appropriate to alleviate the situation, and will communicate those accommodations to the family members.

2nd offense: appropriate family members will be made aware of the persistence of the situation at hand. A meeting will be called at a mutually convenient time for the director and appropriate staff and family members to collaborate in establishing a plan for addressing the problem. At this meeting, all parties involved will determine goals for rectifying the situation, specific strategies to be taken to address the problem, specific modes for communicating the progress being made within the process, and a timeline for achieving desired results and goals. This meeting must be held within one week of the documenting and sharing of the repeat offense with the family members. If the meeting does not take place, the child will not be permitted to attend school unless and until it does.

3rd offense: if the problem still persists after attempting to put the plan for addressing the situation into place, then the child's enrollment will be suspended and subject to possible dismissal. Family members will be notified in writing if their child's enrollment is suspended. The period of suspension will be determined by the director and shall not exceed three weeks in length. During the suspension, the child will not be permitted to attend school. If, during the period of suspension, family members of the child can produce evidence of resolving the problem situation, then the child may resume attending. If no satisfactory resolve has come about during the suspension, however, the child may be dismissed from school. Family members will be notified in writing if their child has been dismissed.

Parents or guardians have a right to appeal the Preschool's decision to dismiss a child from the school. They may initiate an appeal by contacting the Preschool Board Chairperson, whose contact information is posted on a bulletin board in the main hallway of the preschool and in this handbook.

Medical Problems

The preschool has on the premises during school hours, teachers who are certified in First Aid, CPR and medication administration. In the case of a serious medical emergency, the office will call 911 first, and then contact the parents of the child involved. In case of a lesser medical problem, attempts will be made to contact the parents first, and then those listed by parents on their Authorization Form.

Safety/Evacuation Plans

During the school year the staff and children practice a safe and orderly evacuation from the building in the event of a fire or other building issue. This is done in a calm, non-threatening, matter-of-fact way so as not to alarm the children. Children exit the building with their teachers and remain on church property while performing practice drills.

In the event of an emergency whereby the safety of the children would be compromised by remaining on church grounds, the staff will walk the children to either the Perrot Library (if the emergency was specific to the First Church premises) or to the Civic Center (if traffic on Sound Beach Avenue were shut down). We will make every effort to contact you in the event that we must evacuate the premises to inform you of our whereabouts.

Grievance Procedure

Concerns regarding your child's experience at the First Church Preschool should first be discussed with the classroom teachers and then the preschool director. If the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may contact (in this order) the Preschool Board Chairperson, the Senior Pastor, the Greenwich Department of Health, or the Connecticut Department of Public Health. The grievance procedure, along with the names and phone numbers of those to contact, are posted in the preschool hallway on the bulletin board just inside the main preschool entrance.

Diagnostic Services

In the event that our teachers believe that an outside expert can provide useful information regarding practices or strategies to assist a child, we reserve the right to ask for permission to contact outside resources. No outside program or individual will be contacted without parental permission.

The Greenwich Public Preschool Program provides speech and language evaluation and/or development assessment of children attending First Church Preschool. The assessment may be followed up with regular speech and language therapy, if deemed appropriate. These services are offered free of charge through the public schools and may be obtained by speaking with your child's classroom teacher and/or the director.

Plan For Consultation

First Church Preschool has contracted with an early childhood educational consultant, a licensed nurse, a licensed social service consultant, and a licensed dentist in order that they may advise and support our program, staff, and families. Each consultant shall be available for making reviews of pertinent policies and in-service education programs, providing advice regarding relevant problems, and visiting the facilities, staff, and families to consult either individually or as a program seminar. Our consultants are not actual members of our staff, but provide services to our program to help enhance our overall quality.

List of our Consultants:

1. Educational Consultant: Cindy Rzasa-Bess, PhD
203-852-0844
cindy@thebesschoice.com
www.thebesschoice.com
2. Nurse Consultant: Dana Murray, R.N.
(203) 493-6332
dana@nursesfordaycare.com
3. Social Service Consultant: Susan O'Brien
203-226-2516
sobriensearch@cs.com
4. Dental Consultant: Schinto Dental
John J. Schinto, III, DDS LLC
2001 West Main Street Suite 110
Stamford, CT 06902
203-978-1184
schintodental@optonline.net
www.SchintoDental.com

Dual Residence Families

For those children whose parents or guardians reside at separate addresses, First Church Preschool presumes that both parents (and guardians) share joint legal and physical custody of their child. As such, we will not prohibit either parent from picking up their child from preschool unless a court order is issued directing us to do otherwise. If a court order comes into play, all appropriate paperwork must be presented to and discussed with the director as soon as it is determined. Please keep the office staff and director aware of any changes that we will need to know and follow.

Photographs / Internet – Social Media

Teachers often take photographs of children for use in the classroom for pedagogical purposes. If you prefer not to have photos taken of your child for these purposes, you will be able to indicate so on a permission form.

Sometimes we take photographs of the children that we feel might lend themselves for advertisement and/or promotional and informational purposes for our program. If we would like to use a photograph that includes your child in it, we will first ask for your written permission before posting or publishing it.

The posting of photos of children, their families, or staff members of the First Church Preschool to any website or social media website without the written permission of all those represented within the photos is expressly forbidden. Comments on discussion threads posted on social media websites may not disclose information of a confidential nature, nor may they make disparaging remarks against any child, family, or staff member in First Church Preschool.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Families are encouraged to be engaged in the classroom and school wide activities in a variety of ways. If you have a talent or interest that you would like to share, please contact your child's classroom teachers or the director. There are additional opportunities to volunteer through the Parent Committee.

The Parent Committee is a group of family volunteers who work together to enrich the experience of First Church Preschool children and their families. The committee provides social events throughout the year such as Harvest Fest and Family DJ Night. In addition, they provide supplemental educational programs and raise funds for school equipment. The Parent Committee also supports the teachers through establishing class parents and organizing teacher appreciation events throughout the school year. The Parent Committee welcomes all parents and their involvement in making First Church Preschool the best place possible for our children!