

PARENT HANDBOOK



A Christian-Based Developmental Program

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Director

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Preschool: (703) 451-3314
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www.gracepresby.org

GRACE WEEKDAY PRESCHOOL
HOLIDAY SCHEDULE 2019-2020

October 14	Columbus Day
November 4-5	Student Holidays (FCPS Closed)
Nov. 27-29	Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec. 19-Jan. 3*	Christmas Vacation (classes resume on Jan. 6)
January 20	Martin Luther King's Birthday
January 27-28	Student Holiday (FCPS Closed)
February 17	Presidents' Day
March 3	Student Holiday (FCPS closed)
April 6-13	Easter Vacation

Preschool begins on Monday, September 9.
The last day of preschool will be Friday, May 22.

***Please Note:** These dates vary from the FCPS Calendar.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

FCPS will make a decision by 6 a.m. regarding school closings due to inclement weather, and will inform radio and television stations. It will also be posted on T.V. Cable Channel 21, the FCPS station. **When Fairfax County Schools are closed, our school will be closed. When Fairfax County Schools open one or two hours late, our school will open at 10:30 a.m. and will close at 12:30 p.m.** After-school programs will run as scheduled. You will be contacted by 9:00 a.m. if we deviate from the above policy.

*****WE DO NOT MAKE UP SNOW DAYS*****

GRACE WEEKDAY PRESCHOOL

Grace Presbyterian Church
7434 Bath Street
Springfield, Virginia 22150
(703) 451-3314 (preschool)
(703) 451-2900 (church)

SECTION 1 GENERAL INFORMATION

Mission Statement

Grace Weekday Preschool is an outreach ministry of Grace Presbyterian Church to families of the church congregation and the surrounding community. Our primary focus is to foster the social, emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth in young children. Recognizing that growth occurs in individual ways, every effort is made to ensure each child's development of a positive self-image and an awareness of his/her own uniqueness as one of God's children. While children of all faiths and cultures are welcome, Grace Weekday Preschool emphasizes Christian faith and values.

Organization

Established in 1956, Grace Weekday Preschool is a non-profit school and part of the education ministry of Grace Presbyterian Church. Grace Weekday Preschool admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin. The school operates under the guidance of the Grace Weekday Preschool Committee, which is composed of volunteer members from the church, as well as a parent and teacher representative. The committee oversees, guides, and supports the staff, curriculum, and students. All teachers of the school are experienced in preschool education and/or have a degree/credentials from an accredited college or university. Teachers participate in annual continuing education classes. Our teachers are loving, nurturing, and dedicated to the safety and well-being of each child.

Class Placement

The school reserves the right to move a child into another class when it would be beneficial to the child.

Tuition

Please pay by check, payable to **Grace Weekday Preschool**. *Tuition is an annual fee and may be paid in nine (9) equal monthly installments or all at once. Tuition is not determined by holidays, snow days, or a child's attendance.* The last month's payment (May) is due in advance of the school year and is non-refundable. Exceptions will be made for military families with a 30-day notice and copies of orders. Tuition is due on your child's first day of school each month. **A late payment fee of \$25.00 will be applied if payment is received after the 10th of the month.** Refunds for tuition will not be made because of ordinary illnesses, holidays, or vacations. Unusual or emergency cases are given every consideration.

Withdrawal Policy

The preschool and/or the parents reserve the right to withdraw a child from the program when it is in the best interest of the child or the preschool. All fees are non-refundable.

Required Documents

A copy of your child's birth certificate is required. Also, a completed Commonwealth of Virginia Health Form, signed by your child's physician, must be on file for each child. *It is the policy of GWP that all children have age-appropriate immunizations.* As your child's immunizations are updated, a copy of that immunization record, signed by the physician, can be attached to the health form. **Children will not be allowed to attend school until the health form has been submitted and birth certificate is on file.**

If your child requires the use of an Epi-Pen or inhaler and you wish these medications to be kept in the Preschool Office, you must complete a required form and have your pediatrician sign it before we can accept the medication.

Transportation

The school does not provide transportation, except for field trips taken as part of our program (see Field Trip section below). A list of children enrolled in our preschool will be provided to assist parents in forming car pools.

Field Trips

Off-site field trips are offered to 4-year-old classes only. Transportation will be provided by licensed, insured parent drivers, and participation by the child is at the discretion of each parent. **A field trip authorization signed by the parent is required for each child attending an off-site field trip. Additionally, your child's car seat MUST be dropped off with your child the morning of the field trip so that it can be used when transporting your child.** If permission by the parent is denied, your child will be unable to attend school that day, as we do not have extra staff on hand to care for children not in their regular class.

Parent Participation

The staff of Grace Weekday Preschool values parental support and involvement in your child's education. Parents are encouraged to participate in the classrooms by invitation of the staff to assist in various activities. This varies by age level and teacher. It is requested that younger children not accompany you during classroom time.

Parent volunteers are needed to support the school program in many ways. Opportunities are available throughout the school year. A parent meeting is held once a month to discuss both parental and preschool issues, and to promote communication between school and family. Parents are encouraged, but not required, to participate.

Inclement Weather Policy

FCPS will make a decision by 6 a.m. regarding school closings due to inclement weather, and will inform radio and television stations. It will also be posted on T.V. Cable Channel 21, the FCPS station. When Fairfax County Schools are closed, our school will be closed. When Fairfax County Schools open one or two hours late, our school will open at 10:30 a.m. and will close at 12:30 p.m. You will be called by 9:00 a.m. if we deviate from the above policy.

If school has opened for the day and changing weather conditions warrant an early dismissal, you will be called to pick up your child at an earlier time than the regular dismissal time of 12:30 p.m. ***It is imperative that we have current emergency numbers to reach you if necessary.***

We do not make up days lost to snow or other emergencies.

Please Note: In accordance with Grace Presbyterian Church's snow removal plan, the main preschool entrance (on Grace Street) will be cleared/salted for the safe arrival of students. The back stairs (near the Bath Street parking lot) may not be cleared in time for students' arrival. Parents need to park accordingly.

Illnesses/Emergencies

If a child becomes ill or injured at school, the parent will be contacted immediately; if the parent cannot be reached, the emergency contact person will be notified. ***It is imperative that the school have current home, work, and emergency contact numbers.*** If the situation warrants immediate medical attention, the 911 emergency number will be called and appropriate action taken.

Parents must notify the school if their child develops a contagious disease/condition (including, but not limited to: chicken pox, conjunctivitis, mononucleosis, ring-worm, impetigo, flu, or head lice). ***If antibiotics are prescribed, your child must be on the medication and be symptom-free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school.*** In certain cases, it may be requested that you provide a note from the doctor stating that your child is no longer contagious. Regarding head lice, GWP has a "no-nit" policy and your child must not have any visible signs of lice in order to return to school.

A child with a fever, sore throat, stomach-ache, vomiting, and/or diarrhea is NOT allowed to attend school until he/she is free from the above symptoms for a minimum period of 24 hours. We appreciate a phone call or email when your child is ill, informing us of his/her absence, as we do track illnesses within our school.

The well-being of each child is a priority for the staff and director. If the director feels it is in the best interest of the child, as well as his/her classmates and teachers, that he/she be sent home due to

illness, a parent will be notified and requested to pick up the child at that time. Conditions which may warrant a phone call include the child's physical comfort level, lack of concentration, lethargy, or heavy nasal discharge and the inability to take care of physical needs associated with the common cold.

***Please note that outdoor play is part of our daily activity. Children with seasonal allergies or other concerns should not come to school unless they can participate in outdoor activities with their class.** We do not have extra staff to stay with children who are separated from their class.

Snacks

Please do not send food to school with your child. The school will provide daily snacks (i.e., pretzels, crackers) and water for all students. Special arrangements can be made for children with food allergies. For the safety of all children, **GWP adheres to a strict no-nut policy.** Please keep this in mind when you are preparing/purchasing treats to send in for birthdays or special events. Snacks may be provided by parents at other times, provided the classroom teacher is notified first. Additionally, teachers may ask parents to supply ingredients for classroom cooking activities.

Extended-Day Opportunities

Children attending after-school activities must bring a lunch from home. We encourage healthy eating habits and request that you keep this in mind when packing your child's lunch. A small sandwich, a serving of fruit and/or vegetables, yogurt, and cheese, are all acceptable, healthy choices. Another option is to pack a warm lunch in a small thermos, if your child does not like sandwiches. We encourage all children to eat their healthy food before enjoying a small dessert that may also be included. Please remember to also send in a healthy beverage (water, juice, or milk). As a reminder, GWP adheres to a strict no-nut policy; please keep this in mind when you are preparing your child's lunch.

Dress

Please dress your child in casual, comfortable clothing. We enjoy getting messy! Tennis shoes are best for active play and for climbing on the outdoor equipment. The mulch on the playground is especially uncomfortable for children wearing sandals. The children play outside every day, weather permitting. *Please make sure your child dresses appropriately for the weather, and that his/her name is on each outer garment.*

Please provide your child with an easy-opening book bag, clearly labeled with his/her name, to carry home artwork, papers, and notices. Be sure to check your child's bag each day.

Diapers must be provided for children in the 2-day class who are not toilet-trained. All other children must be toilet-trained prior to entering school and, therefore, should not come to school in diapers.

Communication

You can reach the director or your child's teacher by calling the school at 703-451-3314. After hours, your call will be taken by an answering machine and messages will be retrieved by the director.

You will receive a monthly newsletter from the director which will inform you of school-wide events and notices. Other newsletters regarding your child's class will be sent from the classroom teacher, either weekly or monthly. Bulletin boards in the hallway, as well as our website, will serve as reminders for school-wide events.

A Parent Orientation is mandatory before your child enters preschool. To accommodate busy schedules, we have combined this Parent Orientation with our Open House. It will be held on the Friday before school starts. Classroom teachers and the director will meet with you to discuss goals and expectations, and to provide other school information.

Conferences are held on an as-needed basis for any child throughout the school year. Written evaluations will be sent home mid-year for all 3- and 4-year-old students and for all students in May.

School Hours

School begins at 9:30 a.m. Please do not arrive prior to 9:30 a.m., as teachers are busy preparing for the day. It is important that children arrive on time each morning to establish a sense of routine and begin their day with the rest of their class. **Dismissal is at 12:30 p.m.** Please remember that it can be very distressing to some children to be the last one picked up. If you are running late, kindly give us a call so we may inform your child you are on your way. If a parent is habitually late picking up his/her child, late fees of \$1/minute will be assessed.

If your child is to go home with anyone other than the regular, designated person, you must give us written permission. All persons who are unknown to staff will be asked to show a picture I.D. before your child is released to them.

SECTION II CURRICULUM

Grace Weekday Preschool is a Christian-based developmental program. We use developmentally appropriate units of study and activities to arouse curiosity and create wonder in a natural and playful environment. Christian values are modeled through weekly Chapel lessons and daily interactions with students. Each day provides opportunities for both teacher-guided and child-initiated activities. During our daily center rotations, children freely explore the resources in each room. Teachers assist children as needed to facilitate learning. Please see an example of a typical daily schedule in Section III.

SECTION III A DAY AT PRESCHOOL

Consistency is important in a child's daily schedule. Young children find comfort in following a predictable routine. Consistency does not, however, preclude flexibility or spontaneity. Each teacher has the flexibility to make changes according to children's needs and interests. Time is allowed within each day for teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, as well as individual or large group activities.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

9:30	Doors Open
9:30 – 11:00	Classroom Activities: Morning Work Circle/Story Time Snack Music (designated days)
11:00 – 12:30	Playground/Center Rotation <i>or</i> Center Rotation/Playground
12:30	Dismissal

Chapel: Conducted weekly in the church sanctuary by one of the pastors or the director.

Music: Two or three times a week, depending on the number of days enrolled.

Cooking: Offered periodically by your child's classroom teacher.

Field Trips: Field trips allow our children to develop an increased awareness of the world around them. On-site field trips are offered to all classes. Off-site field trips are offered to 4-year-old classes only. Please refer to the **Field Trip** section on page 3 for further details regarding our field trip policy.

For a complete description of our learning centers, please visit our website at www.gracepresby.org; click on preschool.

SECTION IV DISCIPLINE

Our goal at Grace Weekday Preschool is to develop the whole child and to instill in each child the knowledge that he/she is loved by God. The preschool recognizes that children are developing confidence and self-control. We create an atmosphere in which each child is respected and encouraged to show respect toward others. Redirection is used as a means to guide the child back to appropriate behavior. Should attempts at redirection fail, time away from the group provides an opportunity for the child to calm down, think about his/her actions, and discuss with the teacher ways to change inappropriate behavior. For persistent inappropriate behavior, at the discretion of the director and the child's teacher, parents will be advised of the situation and encouraged to work with the child to provide consistent and positive guidance. If all attempts fail to correct the behavior, the director reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment.

Of primary importance at Grace Weekday Preschool is the safety of each of our students. We, therefore, take very seriously any injury to a child that is intentionally inflicted by another child (for example biting). In such an event, the child who inflicted the injury will be separated from the class and given a warning from the teacher and the parents will be notified. In the case of a second incident, the parent will be called and asked to pick up the child immediately, and a conference will be scheduled. If a third incident occurs, you may be asked to remove your child from the school permanently.

SECTION V VIRGINIA CODE OF COMPLIANCE

Grace Weekday Preschool, as a church-sponsored center, is exempt from state licensure. However, our school must file certain documentation with the Department of Social Services and must meet additional requirements as indicated in Code of Virginia 63.2-1716.

Documentation includes annual Health Department report of sanitary inspection, fire inspection report, staff health reports by a practicing physician, fingerprinting/criminal history record checks on staff, and verification of staff/child ratios. Grace Weekday Preschool has an enrollment capacity of 75 students.

Additionally, Grace Weekday Preschool staff are certified in child CPR/First Aid and complete workshops on daily health screening and recognizing child abuse. As a religiously exempt preschool, we are subject to unannounced inspections by the Department of Social Services.

Our school is covered under Grace Church's public liability insurance.

Ten rooms on the lower level of Grace Presbyterian Church are used for the preschool. The Family Room and a kitchen are located on the lower level near preschool classrooms and also are available for use by the preschool as needed. This kitchen is used by staff for cooking units connected to lesson plans. GWP does not provide lunch to its students. Wester Hall, located immediately above the preschool, is available for indoor gross motor on inclement weather days. We use the sanctuary for Chapel.

All children must have the Commonwealth of Virginia School Entrance Physical Examination and Immunization Certification form on file in the school, as well as a copy of his/her birth certificate.

SECTION VI FIRE DRILL AND EMERGENCY POLICY

Grace Weekday Preschool practices monthly fire drills, in accordance with guidelines established by the Fire Marshal. Teachers also practice evacuation drills (without students) for emergencies other than fire related.

Grace Weekday Preschool has created a plan which, we believe, will keep our children safe in the event of an emergency. An emergency can be related to the weather, a facility failure (gas leak or electrical outage), or man-made (such as a terrorist or sniper attack). *In the event of any type of emergency, our first priority will be to ensure the safety of the children under the care of Grace Weekday Preschool.*

Two policies have been developed for two different types of emergencies:

General Lock-Down Policy -- defined as a situation requiring increased security, but not necessitating keeping the children in the building beyond normal preschool hours.

Extended Lock-Down Policy -- defined as a situation that necessitates keeping the children under secure conditions for up to 24 hours.

Please note that the plans have been designed to provide the highest level of safety for your children and the members of our staff who care for your children. The plans are also intended to keep you safe, by assuring you that, in the event of an extreme emergency, your children will be cared for and you will not have to fear for their safety. We are just as concerned about protecting you as we are about protecting your children. As you read through these plans, please keep in mind that they were not devised to separate you and your child but, rather, to protect both you and your child until such time as the family can be safely reunited.

General Lock-Down Policy

In the event that Fairfax County operates in a lock-down mode at any time during preschool hours, the preschool will follow suit. Lock-down

mode requires all doors to be locked so that no one may enter or exit the building. The preschool will allow entrance and exit only for parents, persons who have established business in the church, or expected visitors. All persons must go to the front doors of the church and ring the doorbell. Please be aware that you could be asked to show your ID through the window before entering. Additionally, playground time and all outside activities will be cancelled during a lock-down period.

If a General Lock-Down Policy is in effect, signs will be posted on the church and school doors. Fairfax County Public Schools will communicate through its emergency messaging system. Radio and television stations (including FCPS Cable Channel 21) will be informed, and you can access the website, www.fcps.edu, for information. Please be prepared and aware of this policy as there may not be advanced warning.

When a lock down is in place or an unexpected event in our area causes massive congestion on our roads, please have a plan in place and a contact person you can reach to pick up your child. *Anyone who comes to the preschool to pick up your child must be on your emergency list.* We will ask for a picture ID of any person unknown to staff. Staff members will stay with the children until they have been picked up. Please be aware that our teachers will also be concerned about the safety of their own families; we, therefore, ask that you are considerate of their time as you make these emergency arrangements for your child.

Extended Lock-Down

If, at any time, Fairfax County or the federal government advises us of an unsafe situation, and has announced that all persons should stay where they are until further notice, the preschool will lock down the facility until it has been declared safe to travel. This plan may be enacted for situations such as severe weather or hazardous chemical exposure. In the event that this emergency plan is activated, please know that your children will be safe at the preschool and that we have supplies on hand to last up to 24 hours. ****We appreciate the donation of bottled water, to have on hand in the event an extended lock-down is necessary.****

**Parents of children with food allergies: Please send in an unopened, non-perishable snack (or one with an extended shelf life) for your child. Please remember to label this with your child's name, using a permanent marker.

Hazardous Chemicals/Biological/Radiological Exposure

In the event that we have been exposed to hazardous chemicals from an outside source, we will lock all doors and windows and will not allow anyone in or out of the church building until it is declared safe. This is for the safety of your children, preschool staff, church staff and any meeting groups that may be present at such a time.

Children and staff will remain together in the hallway between the Preschool Office and 4-year-old hallway.

Off-Site Evacuation Plan

In the case of an emergency requiring evacuation of the Grace Church building, all preschool students and staff will walk to the far end of the back parking lot (located on Bath Street). Staff members will have their cell phones with them, and every attempt will be made to contact parents once the evacuation is complete. An emergency bag will be carried and will contain parent contact information, a first aid kit, diapers, and wipes.

If we should deviate from any of these plans at any time, we will make every attempt to notify you as soon as possible.

2019-2020
GWP Committee Members

Elder, Kathy Drinkard

Financial Manager, Veronica Crump

Parent Representatives, Rachel Amatuzzi, Kristie Mulhollem

Teacher Representative, Rotating Lead Teacher

The Preschool Committee meets with the director on a quarterly basis throughout the school year, or as needed. To contact a committee member, please call the church office at 703-451-2900.