



*"Let the little children come to me... for
the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as
these."*

Matthew 19:14

Parent Handbook 2013-2014

www.firstfaithkids.org

A Weekday Ministry of
First United Methodist Church Mansfield

Dear Parents,

This handbook has been prepared for you with the intended purpose of providing you with important information pertaining to various aspects of First Faith Preschool and Kindergarten. As questions arise, please refer to this book as it references the procedures, policies and philosophies of our program.

Our name, “First Faith”, represents our nature, as we gently portray God’s faithfulness to each child through unconditional love, attention, and grace. We understand the importance of providing a safe and secure environment for our children, while teaching and encouraging them to reach their fullest God given potential. We are committed to using our talents and abilities to challenge, stimulate and most of all love your child. Thank you for the privilege of nurturing your child through our First Faith Preschool and Kindergarten program.

Faithfully,

Betsy Peak
FFP&K Director

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of First Faith Preschool and Kindergarten is to provide positive, fun, and enriching experiences to fulfill children's spiritual, emotional, and intellectual potential while demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ. Special attention is given to the individual child and their timetable for growth. Children are prepared for academic learning through a wide range of activities that encourage creativity and exploration.

CURRICULUM EMPHASIS

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To provide a secure and nurturing environment fostering independence, curiosity and the development of age appropriate skills.
2. To introduce children to Jesus Christ through prayer, worship, and Bible stories. (chapel time)
3. To stimulate intellectual achievement for children in a Christian environment using WeeLearn curriculum.
4. To encourage cooperative play.
5. To enhance educational experiences through language, music and targeting motor skills. (music, computer lab and Stretch-n-Grow)
6. To promote good self-image and a sense of identity by understanding that each person at First Faith is a child of God.

Our small class sizes enhance the individualized instruction that First Faith offers. We provide children ages 6 months – 6 years a climate of warmth, acceptance, and space to learn and play.

PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

6 mo – 11 mo	1 or 2 days T-F
12 mo – 17 mo	2 days TTh or WF
18 mo – 23 mo	2 days TTh or WF
2 yr	2 or 3 days TTh or MWF
3 yr	2 or 3 days TTh or MWF
4 yr	2, 3 or 5 days TTh, MWF or M-F
Kindergarten	5 days M-F

ENROLLMENT/REGISTRATION

Although children may enroll at any time during the year when openings are available, formal registration will begin during the month of **February**. First Faith accepts applications for children 6 months – 6 years, (age as of September 1st), regardless of race or religion. All registration and medical forms must be on file in the office upon entrance of a child to the school. It is the parents' responsibility to update any changes (phone numbers, address, authorized persons for pick up, or any other pertinent information necessary for maintaining the safety of your child) as soon as the change presents itself.



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL

First Faith Preschool and Kindergarten hours are 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Children are excited arriving and departing from school. Parents must accompany children as they enter and exit the building and when going to and from the parking lot. Children may arrive for school between 8:55 a.m. – 9:05 a.m. Our school day begins promptly at 9:05 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. **Children who are not picked up by 2:40 p.m. will be taken to the director's office, in which a late fee will be assessed. Late fees are charged as follows: \$10 at 2:40 p.m. and \$1 per minute thereafter.** With respect for your child and your child's teacher, thank you for observing promptness in your arrival and departure times.

Persons who bring or pick up children at school must make certain that the child's teacher is always aware of the child's arrival and departure. No child may be left at school without an authorized First Faith person receiving him/her. Teachers will not be available to accept your children prior to 8:55 a.m. You are required to sign your child in and sign your child out each day on a clipboard posted outside the child's room. For safety reasons, children are

not allowed to play on the church grounds or playground before or after school.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Absolutely no one other than the parents will be allowed to pick up a child from school unless:

1. The name of the alternate person is listed on the child's enrollment form
AND
2. The alternate person is listed on the check in sheet **OR** a written note is provided to the teacher.
AND
3. The alternate person has a photo ID in their possession at pick up time.

DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE PRACTICES

It is our policy that mild discipline issues be handled by the teacher, in the classroom. Our teachers are trained to use redirection, encouragement, problem solving and time out for their discipline strategies. Teachers will always give a verbal correction before time out occurs. **Lots of praise and positive reinforcement is our focus!**

If a teacher encounters a problem that she is not successful in solving in class, the child is then sent to the office. The office staff is trained to talk to the child and help them problem solve. The child will also have a time out in the office. At this point, the parents will be notified in writing of the behavior problem and how it was handled. The parent should later discuss the behavior issue with the child. Please remember that your child has already had a consequence for his/her action. No further punishment should occur at home.

If the behavior persists, despite the efforts of the teacher and the office staff, the parents will be called in for a conference with the teacher and the director. A behavior management plan will be laid out. Parent support is essential at this point!

If the behavior problem persists after the conference, and if a second behavior plan fails, the child will be dropped from our enrollment.

There are certain behaviors that will require the child to be sent home immediately for the day. These include:

- *physical injury to another child
- *hitting, kicking, biting or spitting at a teacher
- *refusal to follow directions of office staff member if the child is sent to the office
- *inappropriate language, refusal to stop swearing
- *inappropriate physical contact with another child

BITING

When a child bites, a detailed report will be sent home to the parents of the child who bit, as well as the child who was bitten. The child who bit will remain anonymous for privacy purposes. Office copies will be kept in a permanent file. This serves as notice of the bite and the circumstances surrounding the bite.

If a child continues to bite other children, despite the teacher's and the parents' efforts to stop the biting, the child may be dropped from our enrollment at the discretion of the teacher and the director. What constitutes continual or chronic biting is up to the discretion of the director and will be handled on a case by case basis. Age, severity of bites, temperament, cooperation of parents and teacher opinion will all figure into the final decision. Generally, if a child bites for more than 4 weeks, or if the child bites more than once a day for one week, the child will be dropped from our enrollment.

Readmission will be considered after a period of six weeks, based on a case by case basis and if there is an available spot in the class. Possibility of readmission will depend on all of the factors listed in the preceding paragraph.

When a child bites, he/she will be sent home for the day if:

- *the child bites twice or more, unprovoked
- *the child bites on the face
- *the bite breaks the skin

SNACKS/LUNCH

Each child should bring a well-balanced lunch and drink in a labeled lunch kit. Two napkins should be in the lunch kit EVERY day. Make sure to include a spoon or fork, if needed. If items require refrigeration, please include a frozen ice pack and let your child's teacher know. Our microwaves are used for warming food only. Microwavable meals tend to get "hot spots", and are prohibited at our school. Please send your child with milk, water or 100% fruit juice in their lunch. No carbonated drinks are allowed. Please do not send

gum in your child's lunch. After lunch, all opened containers, (juice, yogurt, and applesauce), will be thrown away. Partial or uneaten food will be returned home so the parent can see what the child has eaten. Be sure your child's teacher is well informed of any food allergy your child may have. These are posted in the classrooms, along with other health issues.

Classes will post, on monthly calendars, one child per week to bring a healthy snack for the class on a rotating basis.

For children not ready for table food, written feeding instructions must be provided by the child's parents (signed and dated). Please update the teacher monthly on feeding changes. Parents have the right to breastfeed (room 122 in the nursery wing) or provide breast milk for their child while in care.

***WE ARE A PEANUT FREE SCHOOL!
MEANING ALL LUNCHES AND SNACKS NEED TO BE FREE OF PEANUTS.***

CLOTHING/DIAPERS/PERSONAL BELONGINGS FOR REST TIME

Please provide a complete change of clothing, including underwear and socks, in a one-gallon plastic baggie. This should be in your child's backpack EVERY time they come to school in case of an accident or spill. Each item should be marked clearly with your child's name. We cannot be responsible for keeping your child in dry clothing unless it is provided by the parent.

Clothing worn to school should be loose and comfortable, large enough to pull on easily, suitable to the weather for outdoor play, washable (we often get messy!), and marked with your child's name.

We do play outdoor year around unless the weather is rainy, muddy or below 45 degrees. Please keep this in mind when dressing your child. During cold weather, please send a warm jacket. *We ask that children not wear flip flops or boots to school, as they are difficult to play in.*

If your child is in diapers, you should write the child's name on two diapers for the day. These two diapers should be placed in the appropriate place for your child's room. Additional diapers should be in your child's backpack/bag in case additional changes are necessary. Pull-ups with Velcro snaps are recommended for children older than 2 years. We work, along with our parents, to help our children with potty training. We require children use the restroom on their own by the time they are 3 ½ years old.

The school will provide wipes. If you require special wipes, please provide them in your child's bag and let the teacher know where they are. Please send a written note if your child needs diaper cream or powder.

All children in the program observe a rest time in the afternoon. We ask that children ages 12 months and older bring their own nap mat daily. One favorite small stuffed animal or blanket will often provide comfort during naptime. Please label all rest time items with your child's name and remember to wash these items **weekly**.

In order to make sharing a meaningful event for children, we support the opportunity for children to bring items of interest to school. Your child's teacher must approve the item your child wishes to share prior to bringing it to school.

First Faith will not be responsible for any lost items. Labeling all personal belongings will help ensure they are returned if misplaced.

COMMUNICATION

An informed parent is an asset to a growing and developing child. It is the school's responsibility to keep the parent informed of the classroom activities and child's progress. It is the parents' responsibility to read the teacher's or director's newsletters and bulletin board notes in order to remain current with school happenings and events. Parents will receive daily reports home, monthly newsletters and calendars. Parent/teacher conferences take place twice a year. (fall and spring) The purpose is to ensure that all needs for each child are specifically met.

CONFERENCES

Arrival and departure times are designated for greeting and dismissing the children. In order to protect your child's confidentiality, we ask that you call the school office and schedule a conference should you need to talk with your child's teacher or the director. We will host parent/teacher conferences in the fall and spring.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

First Faith has an open-door policy for all parents to visit our school during school hours to observe their child, our school's operation, and program activities, without having to secure prior approval. For the safety of our children, please first come to our office, as we will escort all parents and visitors through our school during hours of operation. At the beginning of the

school year, our volunteer advisory committee representative will send home a list of areas where you may choose to volunteer (fundraising, room mom, programs, teacher appreciation, etc.). Criminal background checks will need to be completed before parents can participate/volunteer in classroom activities.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Children attending First Faith are encouraged to participate in our special birthday tradition. On your child's birthday, we encourage each parent to send a new, wrapped book to school. Your child will open the book and then donate it to his/her class. The book will be a permanent addition to our classroom or school library. Please feel free to write an inscription inside the book.

To: First Faith Preschool and Kindergarten
From: Your child's name

In celebration of his/her _____ birthday, _____ (date)



HOLIDAY CLASS PARTIES

First Faith Preschool and Kindergarten implements **ONLY** two celebrations/parties per year, as this is appropriate for the ages we care for. These celebrations include Christmas and Easter. We also partake in a Christmas program in winter and will conclude the year with our annual Spring Program. Additional information will be distributed prior to the celebrations.

SCHOOL PICTURES

We offer two opportunities for school pictures. Individual pictures will be taken each fall. Class pictures will be taken in the spring. *Please notify the director if you do not approve of First Faith posting pictures of your child around our building or for any other school use.*

TxDPRS/MINIMUM STANDARDS CONTACT INFORMATION

All parents reserve the right to review a copy of the minimum standards and our most recent Licensing inspection report, located in the director's office. Please contact Betsy Peak, director, for assistance at (817)473-2785. Parents can contact TxDPRS, (Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services), if you have any questions or concerns by calling 1-800-582-8286, or by visiting their website at WWW.tdprs.state.tx.us/child_care.

POLICIES PERTAINING TO ABUSE

Child abuse and neglect in the U.S. represents a state of emergency. More than four children a day die from maltreatment. All abuse and neglect that is observed will be reported to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TxDFPS) or to the Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400. This number is answered 24 hours a day. This includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and neglect.

First Faith reserves the rights to protect any child whose parents or guardians have abused drugs or alcohol and are unfit to transport and/or care for their child effectively. If, in this instance, parents or guardians refuse to comply, Mansfield police will be called immediately to handle the situation.

GANG-FREE ZONE

First Faith Preschool and the area within 1000 feet of the facility is considered a gang-free zone. Under Texas Penal Code, any criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

First Faith Preschool and Kindergarten regularly practices fire (monthly) and severe weather drills (every 3 months) in order to prepare for any unexpected emergency. The evacuation and relocation map is posted in each classroom concerning both emergencies.

In the case of a *fire* evacuation, one teacher will lead the children out the nearest, designated exit, and the second teacher will follow behind the children. Teachers must take their blue bag, with their teacher binders, including children's registration forms and sign-in/out sheets. Teachers will take roll and a head count when safely outside the building.

In the case of *severe weather*, one teacher will lead the children to the designated area in the hallway and the second teacher will follow behind them. The children will sit on the floor against the wall. Teachers must take their blue bag, with their teacher binders, including children's registration forms and sign-in/out sheets. Teachers will take roll and a head count when all have exited the classroom.

In the event of an emergency, teachers or a church staff member will contact parents of children to disperse pertinent information. The local authorities will also be contacted. Parents may contact FFP&K at 817-473-2785 or 817-477-2287 (main church ph#).

The following facility will be used for alternate pick up in the event of an emergency evacuation:

Alice Ponder Elementary School
102 Pleasant Ridge Drive
817-473-5661

INJURIES/MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

We keep a written record of any/all accidents and incidents that occur on the First Faith campus. The teacher, director and parents will sign the record form, and a copy will be sent home with the parent by request. If a medical emergency arises, we will immediately call an ambulance and have the child transported (with the director) to the nearest medical facility listed on the child's registration form.

HEALTH STANDARDS

Each child will be required to have a shot record and examination statement from a doctor on file *by the 1st day of school*. This record must be updated each year.

First-time enrollees who are four years of age or older and all children enrolled in programs who are four years of age by September 1st of each year will need to be screened for possible vision and hearing problems prior to completion of the first semester of enrollment or within 120 calendar days of enrollment, whichever is longest, or present evidence of screening conducted one year prior to enrollment.

Current immunizations are required of all children in the program in order for our program to comply with Texas Minimum Standards for Childcare Facilities.

Children with a FEVER are not allowed at school and should remain home for 24 hours after the fever subsides. If a child becomes ill, the parents will be notified and are expected to pick the child up **immediately**. The school should be notified if a child has or has been exposed to a contagious disease (strep throat, pink eye, pin worms, viral infections, measles, mumps, chicken pox, lice, etc.). This helps preserve a healthy atmosphere and protects your child from unnecessary illnesses.

Because of our regional Texas Dept. of Health requirements, FFP&K children are not required to undergo Tuberculosis testing, although it is recognized as a part of our immunization records



Children should not be brought to school when any of the following symptoms exist and should be free of fever and all symptoms for 24 hours:

1. Fever
2. Vomiting and/or diarrhea
3. Any symptom of the usual childhood diseases: Scarlet Fever, German measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox, Whooping Cough or Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease.
4. Common cold symptoms – onset until clear.
5. Thick, colored mucus discharge from nose. (If discharge is due to allergies, a note from the child's doctor must be on file in the FFP&K office.)
6. Sore throat
7. Croup
8. Any unexplained rash
9. Any skin infection: boils, ringworm, impetigo, lice
10. Pink eye and other eye infections such as conjunctivitis

We appreciate your calls if your child will be absent from school.

MEDICATION

First Faith does not administer medication to a child. If your child needs medication before 2:30 p.m. due to a continuous special medical need, please see the director upon enrollment or as soon as the condition presents itself. We make exceptions based on individual needs of each child. (ex: allergies) This will be administered in the director's office.

ANIMALS

Some of our classrooms may choose to have a class pet. We will ensure that the animals at First Faith do not create unsafe or unsanitary conditions and that our teachers and children will practice good hygiene and hand washing after handling or coming in contact with an animal and items used by an animal, such as water bowls, food bowls and cages.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Our academic year begins a week after Mansfield ISD begins and ends one week prior to the closing of Mansfield schools. We will follow the Mansfield ISD calendar for observation of student holidays and inclement weather decisions. If Mansfield ISD is closed for inclement weather, we are too. If there is a *delayed start* for Mansfield ISD, **we are closed**. Please check channel 5s website at www.nbcdfw.com. Closings are listed on the weather page.



FIELD TRIPS

Different resourceful professionals will be invited to our school to support subjects studied. Field trips for on-site study will be available for our First Faith classes. Parent chaperones will be needed for off-site field trips. (4 year old and kindergarten classes only). A criminal background check will need to be completed by all parent volunteers. Because parent chaperones are assisting the teacher with her class, we thank you for making other arrangements for siblings. We appreciate chaperones that display an attitude of helpfulness to the teacher and encourage student education while away from school. The children will be transported in our church van, with a certified driver. We encourage parents to carpool on their own for safety.

LATE PAYMENT FEE

All monthly tuition is due on the 1st of the current month and late after the 10th of that month. A \$25.00 late fee will be assessed for tuition received in the office or postmarked after the 10th. After the 15th of the month your child will be dropped from the program. No cash payments for tuition. Payment options are automatic bank draft, personal check made out to FUMC Mansfield or Mastercard/Visa (with a 4% credit card fee).

SIBLING DISCOUNT

A 10% discount is granted to families with each additional child enrolled in the program. (This does not apply to Registration Fee.) The discount applies to the youngest child/children. Example: 1st child pays 100% tuition, 2nd child pays 90% tuition, and 3rd child pays 90% tuition.

NON-SUFFICIENT FUNDS/RETURN CHECK FEE

A fee of \$25.00 will be assessed for all returned checks. Two returned checks will necessitate cashiers check or money order payment each month thereafter.

WITHDRAWAL NOTICE

If you are transferred or have any reason to withdraw your child from the program, you must give a 30-day written notice. If you are not able to give a 30-day written notice, you must still pay the tuition fees for 30 days.

**If you have any questions in regards to our First Faith policies and procedures, please contact Betsy Peak, Director, at (817)473-2785 or betsyp@fmcm.org. A conference will be scheduled, in which all questions and concerns will be addressed. If there are any changes to be made in our First Faith policies and procedures, it will be communicated to each parent in written form and sent home before the change is implemented.*

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