



SCHOOL FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

Bellaire United Methodist Church

4417 Bellaire Boulevard Bellaire, TX 77401 713.666.1111

Early Learners and **Preschool**

2026-2027 Parent Handbook

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Welcome!

We are so glad to have your family at School for Little Children. For 76 years, School for Little Children has been a steady presence in children's lives and a place where children can grow and **learn through play**. It is a privilege to partner with you during these important early childhood years of development with your little one. You will find this to be a friendly, warm environment where your family will feel welcome.

Philosophy

School for Little Children provides a safe nurturing environment that promotes the development of the whole child. Experienced teachers provide developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that encourage intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth.

Mission Statement

The School for Little Children staff and families will work as a team to provide quality early childhood education in a Christian environment as an extension of the Bellaire United Methodist Church family outreach ministry.

NAEYC Accreditation

Since the 1980s our programs have been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. Accreditation is a voluntary program for centers that choose to meet the high-quality standards defined by NAEYC Accreditation criteria. The criteria can be found on the NAEYC website at www.naeyc.org. Currently, we are accredited through May 2030.

Licensing

We are licensed by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services and meet all Texas Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers. A copy of these standards and our licensing inspection reports are available in the School for Little Children office and online at <https://uatchildcare.hhs.texas.gov/Public/ChildCareSearch>

For more information these numbers may be helpful:

Childcare Regulation: 713-287-3236

Child Maltreatment Statewide Intake: 800-252-5400

Online: hhs.texas.gov

Insurance

As a ministry of Bellaire United Methodist Church, School for Little Children is covered for liability under the church's insurance policy.

Parent's Rights

Texas Child Care Regulation requires that we notify parents of their rights regarding care of their child. You *do not need to sign and return the form below* because you will sign that you have received and read this entire handbook on the Waivers and Release form before your child begins school.



Form 2987
October 2023

Parent's Rights

This form provides the required information per Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code (HRC) Section 42.04271.

Directions: Parents will review these rights upon enrolling their child.

Rights of Parent or Guardian

A parent or guardian of a child at a child care facility has the right to:

- (1) enter and examine the child care facility during the facility's hours of operation without advanced notice;
- (2) review the child care facility's publicly accessible records;
- (3) receive inspection reports for the child care facility and information about how to access the facility's online compliance history;
- (4) obtain a copy of the child care facility's policies and procedures;
- (5) review, at the request of the parent or guardian, the facility's:
 - (A) staff training records; and
 - (B) any in-house staff training curriculum used by the facility;
- (6) review the child care facility's written records concerning the parent's or guardian's child;
- (7) inspect any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving the parent's or guardian's child, provided that:
 - (A) video recordings of the alleged incident are available;
 - (B) the parent or guardian of the child does not retain any part of the video recording depicting a child that is not their own; and
 - (C) the parent or guardian of any other child captured in the video recording receives written notice from the facility before allowing a parent to inspect a recording;
- (8) have the child care facility comply with a court order preventing another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the parent's or guardian's child;
- (9) be provided the contact information for the child care facility's local Child Care Regulation office;
- (10) file a complaint against the child care facility by contacting the local Child Care Regulation office; and
- (11) be free from any retaliatory action by the child care facility for exercising any of the parent's or guardian's rights.

I acknowledge I have received a written copy of my rights as a parent or guardian of a child enrolled at this facility.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Resources

Facility Information and Online Compliance History: <http://txchildcaresearch.org>

Child Care Regulation Contact Information: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/safety/child-care/contact-child-care-regulation>

Enrollment

Registration for all School for Little Children programs for the next school year begins in February and continues until classes are full.

Applications and registration information are available at bellaireumc.org/preschool for all current families and new families in mid-January and are due in mid-February. A random lottery determines placement. Church members and currently enrolled families have priority. Places are filled in the order of their lottery number.

Parents will be notified of their status by the middle of March. Enrollment is complete when all fees have been paid, and when the tuition deposit for the upcoming school year is paid.

Any openings remaining after the lottery will be filled as space is available through the beginning of January.

Wait Lists

Wait lists are created from applications remaining after all places have been filled. Any openings during the school year are filled from these lists. Wait lists are active until January. January is the last opportunity to enter SLC for the school year. Wait lists are then discarded and registration for the next school year begins as described above.

Withdrawal

If it is necessary for a child to withdraw from the program, parent(s) must submit notice in writing **at least 2 weeks in advance**. Please note that the registration fees and tuition deposit paid prior to the start of school are non-refundable upon withdrawal. Not all children are ready to enter a group program. We reserve the right to determine if a child should not attend. In this case, refunds will be made for the unused days.

Grievances

Any grievances should be brought to the attention of the Director. Every effort will be made to resolve problems and issues related to the children, the school, and the staff, while giving the best interest of children the utmost importance. In the event of a lack of agreement between a parent and the School for Little Children staff, the Director will ask the School for Little Children Board of Directors to arbitrate, and all parties will abide by their decision. Any necessary communication between parents and the School Board will be in writing.

Confidentiality

School for Little Children ensures confidentiality of child and family information. Children's files are kept in a locked file cabinet in the office. Only School for Little Children staff and regulatory authorities have access to this information. A "Consent to Share Information" letter must be written by a parent and submitted to the SLC office in order for any information to be shared with outside professionals or schools.

Program Evaluation

At the end of the year parents will be invited to participate in a survey and asked to formally evaluate our program. We use the survey responses to maintain our areas of success and to make helpful modifications to our program. We value your ideas and suggestions at any time during the year as well as on a formal evaluation.

Tuition

Tuition rates are set annually by the School for Little Children School Board and announced prior to registration for the following school year. Annual tuition may be paid

- in one payment at the beginning of the year
- in two installments at the beginning of each semester
- in monthly installments

Tuition is an annual amount which is divided into equal monthly payments (balanced billing) for your convenience. Tuition is due regardless of whether your child is absent for any reason; there are no tuition reductions for student absences.

The annual registration fee is due upon submission of your child's enrollment application, is non-refundable, and is in addition to tuition. There is no supply fee.

To complete the enrollment process and secure your child's placement we collect a tuition deposit equivalent to one month of tuition which is applied to May, the last month of the school year. This payment is non-refundable.

Monthly tuition is due on the 15th of the prior month beginning August 15 and ending March 15. Any tuition received after the 20th of the month (5 days late) will be assessed a \$75 late fee. Tuition must be received in full each month in order for children to attend school on the first day of the following month. If your account has an unpaid balance, your child will not be permitted to attend.

For example, tuition is due on August 15th for the month of September. Tuition received after August 20th will be assessed a late fee of \$75. Tuition must be paid in full by the last day of August for the child to attend in September. The same pattern will proceed for all months of the school year.

To manage finances we use a platform called SmartCare. Regardless of payment method, your account must be set to **Autopay** for the duration of the year. You may toggle it on, or we will do it for you. There are two ways to pay tuition.

1. Link your bank account to your SmartCare account for an ACH transfer. SmartCare charges a \$2.00 fee per transaction. (This is the option most families choose.) Note: SmartCare charges a \$30 fee for insufficient funds.
2. Pay by credit card through SmartCare. SmartCare charges a convenience fee.

Note, the transaction fees are charged by SmartCare, not SLC. We do not profit from the fees. We do not accept cash.

For families with more than one child enrolled, we offer a tuition discount of 5% beginning with the second child.

If you need to make alternate financial plans with us, please let us know; we will work with you.

Curriculum

We know that children learn best through play.

We offer a play-based curriculum derived from

- NAEYC guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- High/Scope Key Developmental Indicators for Infants/Toddlers and for Preschoolers
- Texas Education Agency Curriculum Guidelines

These three curricula sources provide objectives which are offered daily through play activities in classroom learning centers. Children are offered a variety of materials to explore new concepts and add complexity to their understanding of previously learned concepts. Activities include language, literacy, creative representation, initiative and social relationships, music, movement, classification, and a variety of early math skills.

Teachers are attuned to their students and thoughtfully tailor plans to the unique interests and needs of the children in the class. While at school children can expect to play with a variety of materials appropriate for their age and stage of development, and at the same time provide a challenge for growth.

Assessment of Developmental Growth

Teachers assess the growth and development of children through classroom observations throughout the year. Teachers are trained to use assessments, and parents have an opportunity to see the assessment instrument and learn how it is used. We use a variety of assessment methods in order to assess learning across differing cultures, experiences and abilities. These include a developmental checklist, anecdotal notes, the documentation of children's learning activities, and anecdotal contributions of parents.

We find assessment helpful for several reasons. It helps parents and teachers communicate effectively about the growth, needs, and interests of the child. When outside screenings and diagnostic testing are needed, assessments provide helpful information. They also give teachers valuable information needed to adapt and design lesson plans to meet the developmental needs of individual children or the class as a whole. Assessments help teachers gather information on all areas of a child's development and learning including cognitive skills, communication skills, approaches to learning, health and physical development, as well as self-help skills and social-emotional development.

Assessment information is exchanged with parents twice yearly. You will receive the developmental checklist at the Parent/Teacher conference in February and then again at the end of the year in May. These records are kept confidential per our Confidentiality Policy.

When special services require information from classroom observations and/or norm referenced/standardized tests for eligibility for services, other professionals may be granted permission to assess the child in the classroom setting. Please notify us before scheduling outside professionals or when requesting we share records with others. (See *Confidentiality*.)

Recommendation Forms or Letters

Teachers and administrators are happy to complete recommendations forms or letters for children applying to private schools. Teachers and administrators carefully evaluate children and complete recommendations forms thoughtfully with evidence and insight relevant to admissions committees, thus parents must provide a minimum of two weeks' notice. SLC cannot guarantee timely submission regardless of application deadlines with less than two weeks' notice. A family's financial account balance must be current before SLC will submit recommendations.

Educational Evaluations, Learning Differences, and Special Needs

We want to make sure that School for Little Children is the best learning environment for your child. *If your child has had an educational or developmental evaluation, please share the results with our Director prior to registration. If you are concerned your child has delayed or neurodivergent development, please share your concerns with the Director prior to registration. We will review your child's developmental reports and meet with you to discern whether or not your child is likely to meet his or her developmental goals in our setting.* While we are able to meet the educational needs of most children, please keep in mind that this is not a therapeutic setting, and School for Little Children is not the optimal environment for every child. Early intervention in the right setting is vital for optimal success, and we can guide you to find the right setting if we determine our school is not a match for your child's needs.

When a parent, teacher, and the Director agree there is a need for a professional evaluation or services, SLC can provide a list of referrals. In some circumstances, SLC may request that a parent seek an evaluation and any recommended therapy as a condition for their child's continued enrollment at school. For children who have identified learning differences or special needs, we are glad to work with professionals to carry out individual goals or IEPs that are reasonably appropriate for our setting. The guidance parents receive from therapists in coordination with classroom teachers can help provide continuity of care for the child and a greater probability of reaching goals.

Discipline and Guidance

At School for Little Children we take a "whole child" approach to learning. We teach and foster growth in all areas of development. The domains of social and emotional development are no exception. At SLC "discipline" means teaching. Every day we help children learn to express their feelings, negotiate conflict, self-regulate, and have appropriate social interactions. We use a variety of positive and age-appropriate guidance methods which include redirection, modeling, prompting, coaching, and direct teaching so that children may fully participate in our program.

Physical punishment, psychological abuse or coercion is not permitted in any circumstance except when restraint is necessary to protect a child from harming him/herself or others. **At no time will teaching staff use physical punishment or engage in psychological abuse or coercion. We do not use seclusion as a behavior modification strategy.** All staff members receive training on our discipline policy and on positive behavior strategies. When a child displays challenging behavior, we will make every effort to address the behavior so that the child can remain a member of their classroom community. We will first assess the function of the behavior through observation and documentation. We will then work with parents and, if needed, other professionals to develop a plan to address the behavior using positive support strategies. We will have regular follow-up meetings to assess progress with the goal being that the child can continue to be a member of the classroom community. In the rare event that these methods are unsuccessful, the Director, the child's teachers, and parents will work together to find another suitable school setting.

School for Little Children complies with federal and state civil rights laws. A child will be immediately and permanently excluded from our school if the child or the adult(s) accompanying the child are found to be in possession of a weapon or incendiary device as these are unlawful and in conflict with Bellaire United Methodist Church's stated policy.

Preventing and Responding to Child Maltreatment

In accordance of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) minimum standards 746.501 (25), School for Little Children provides annual training to all staff on preventing, recognizing and reporting child maltreatment. Training includes warning signs that a child may be a victim of maltreatment and prevention techniques for child maltreatment. As a licensed child care center, we are required by law to report all suspected cases of child maltreatment immediately to the TDFPS Child Abuse Hotline or a law enforcement agency.

Failure to report suspected child maltreatment is a crime.

For parents and caregivers, we recommend the awareness and prevention help provided in the website “Help for Parents. Hope for Kids” at <http://www.helpandhope.org/>

If you or your child is a victim of maltreatment, please refer to the reporting contact information below.

- Child Maltreatment Statewide Intake: **800-252-5400**
- Online: dfps.state.tx.gov

Security

Health and safety is a priority. School for Little Children staff members and enrolled children are permitted in the school and on the playground. *Any visitor including parents must first check-in in the SLC office and will then be escorted through the school hallways.*

We have a security guard present during school hours who assists with traffic, secures all entrances to the school and playground, and makes regular rounds to help maintain a safe environment.

At school we speak to each other with love and respect, and we teach the children to do the same. Parents or visitors who speak harshly, curse, or threaten to harm another person will be immediately and permanently excluded from School for Little Children.

School for Little Children and Bellaire United Methodist Church is a non-smoking facility. Firearms, other weapons, and incendiary devices are not permitted at school. Failure to comply with this policy will result in immediate and permanent exclusion from School for Little Children.

Gang-free Zone Statement

We are required by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services to notify parents that School for Little Children is located in a gang-free zone. Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1,000 feet of a child-care center or school is a gang-free zone, meaning that any criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

Health

Health Records

Health records are kept confidential and may be accessed by School for Little Children staff and emergency medical personnel only. See Confidentiality Policy on page 6.

Emergency Procedure

All teachers and staff are certified in CPR, the use of AEDs, and First Aid. In the event of a medical emergency, we will call 911 and then notify you immediately.

Food Allergies

If your child has food allergies, please provide an individualized Action Plan from your child's health provider. Include your written permission for School for Little Children to post your child's name and food allergy in the classroom as a visual reminder for teachers and staff. If your child needs to have allergy medication available at school, it will be stored in a secure location that is accessible to staff. If your child's Action Plan specifies the need for a daily written report of what your child ate each day, one can be provided.

Administration of Medication

Your child will be at school for only a few hours each day. If possible, please plan to administer medication to your child outside of school hours. We follow state guidelines regarding the administration of medication including over-the-counter products. If your child must have medication while at school, we will give you a form to complete with exact instructions for timing and dosage*.

Do not send any medication for your child to administer to himself or herself. Medication should never be sent in a child's backpack. Please hand any medication directly to a School for Little Director or Assistant Director.

*Trained staff will administer both prescription and over-the-counter medications only if the child's Health form documents that the parent or legal guardian has given written permission. This record should include instructions from the licensed health provider who has prescribed or recommended medication for that child; alternatively, the licensed health provider's office may give instruction by telephone to the trained staff.

Sunscreen and bug repellent are considered over-the-counter medications. If you want your child to wear sunscreen or bug repellent, please apply them before school.

Immunizations

School for Little Children values the health of all persons both within and beyond our school community and strongly recommends all children be fully vaccinated.

Any school with a child care license, regardless of designation (faith-based) or funding, is not permitted to deny admittance to an under-immunized child. All children must have an immunization record or affidavit of exemption on file. **Prior to the start of school, parents are responsible for providing current immunization records, or a letter from the child's healthcare provider stating the reason for a vaccine delay or omission, or an affidavit stating objection to immunizations.**

Immunization records for all children are reviewed twice per school year.

If a vaccine-preventable illness occurs at school, any under immunized child will be immediately removed from class and kept safely in the school office away from the infected person. Parents will be notified to pick up their child immediately.

The following immunizations are required:

DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis), HepB, HiB, MMR, Polio, Hepatitis A, Varicella, Pneumococcal conjugate (PCV7)

All School for Little Children staff regularly monitor their own health in partnership with their physician. Teachers will receive adult immunizations if a risk to a child is identified.

Hearing and Vision Screenings

All children in Pre-K classes will have a vision and hearing screening by a certified screener. Parents may opt out of the screenings by submitting a written request. Parents will be notified of results only if their child needs to be referred to a health care professional for further evaluation.

Preventing Illness

The health of children and adults at school is a high priority. Keeping in good health takes cooperation from everyone—families, children, and staff. Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to prevent illness. We teach children proper handwashing techniques by direct instruction and modeling. Children and staff wash their hands upon arrival and many other times throughout the day. Visitors to classrooms wash their hands upon arrival. We request that parents/caregivers make sure children wash their hands upon returning home from school.

Hand sanitizer is available at school for children two years old and older and may be used with supervision on occasion, but it will not be used to replace handwashing.

To prevent the spread of disease it is important for children to stay home when they are ill. Children who present signs or symptoms of illness upon arrival will not be admitted to school.

When to Keep Your Child at Home

Help us provide a safe and healthy environment for everyone at school by keeping your child at home if he or she:

- is unable to participate comfortably in all activities
- has a greater need for care than teachers can provide while caring for other children
- is irritable or is generally not himself/herself
- had a fever greater than 100 degrees in the last 24 hours
- had diarrhea or vomited in the last 24 hours
- has been taking an antibiotic for less than 24 hours
- has nasal discharge that requires frequent attention
- has a sore throat
- has shortness of breath or a persistent cough
- has chills
- experiences loss of taste or smell

Please notify the Director if your child has a communicable disease so that other parents may be alerted.

Illness at School

If a child becomes ill while at school we will care for that child until a parent/caregiver arrives. The child will be removed from class and comfortably monitored in a separate area in the school office. Parents should have plans in place to pick up a child within 30 minutes of notification from School for Little Children.

When to Return to School

Your child may return only:

- with a “Return to School” note from a physician OR
- when fever, vomiting, and/or diarrhea have subsided for 24 hours without medication OR
- when other symptoms have subsided enough that the child feels well and can fully participate

If your child is sent home in the middle of the day with fever, diarrhea, or vomiting, the child may not return the next day because a minimum of 24 hours is required for symptoms to subside.

Emergency Plans and Procedures

First and foremost, we will do all in our power to keep your children safe and comfortable. In case of emergency, all School for Little Children staff members and BUMC office staff members will be actively involved in assisting children in whatever the situation demands such as by escorting children or carrying children younger than 24 months or with special needs.

- School for Little Children teachers and staff are trained in CPR, the use of AEDs, and First Aid. We have first aid supplies available. As required by the Texas Child Care Minimum Standards we regularly conduct safety drills for fire, inclement weather, and intruders.
- If an emergency occurs, we will contact local first responders by calling 911 with a landline or cell phone. We will also inform Child Care Regulation by calling 713 287 3236.
- If evacuation of the building is required, we will follow our regular fire drill procedures. (We practice fire drill procedures once a month as well as inclement weather and emergency lock-down drills quarterly). If necessary, we will relocate to the BUMC Scout House in the parking lot across Newcastle to the west. If the Scout House is unsafe, our secondary evacuation location is the interior space of Evelyn's Park directly across Bellaire Blvd. north of campus. The address is 4400 Bellaire Blvd., Bellaire, TX, 77401
- In case of fire, our primary evacuation route takes us to the southernmost parking lot on campus which borders Newcastle and Ione Street. Our secondary evacuation route takes us to the north parking lot at the corner of Bellaire Blvd. and Newcastle.
- If we are required to shelter-in-place, we will move to the gym where there are restrooms and a kitchen with running water. If necessary, the building will be locked down, and we will seal doors and vents. Emergency food and water supplies will be available. When safe to do so, parents will be able to pick up their children from the easternmost entrance to the building along Bellaire Blvd. which is connected to our shelter-in-place location.
- For weather emergencies, we will gather in the Family Life Center first floor hallway until it is safe to return to the classrooms.
- In case of emergency, administrators and teachers will have current attendance, emergency contact information for all children, and any necessary medications, and cell phones with us. We will contact you by email through our SmartCare platform (which gives us direct access to all emergency contacts for children) or by phone. We may also post information on Facebook and Instagram: BellaireSLC. If we have your children with us during an emergency, we will continue to care for them maintaining our typical level of supervision. We will also provide developmentally and situationally appropriate activities to keep children as occupied and calm as possible.
- If it is necessary for us to dismiss children in a manner different from our typical procedure, we will notify parents and/or emergency contacts how and where to be reunited with their children. Children will only be released to adults who have permission to pick them up.
- Parents can help us by keeping emergency contact information current at all times.
- In most cases School for Little Children will follow HISD's lead in closing school due to major weather events or other crises. There may be instances when HISD will close, but our campus is safe, and we can open school. You will be notified by email about closures and when school will resume. School closure may also be posted on the School for Little Children Facebook and Instagram accounts at BellaireSLC.
- To reach us in case of emergency please call the SLC office at 713 666 1111 or the Bellaire United Methodist Church office at 713 666 2167.

Arrival and Departure

Children will arrive by a carpool line in one of two parking lots. To make carpool run smoothly and quickly, your child's class will have a designated location and time for arrival. You will receive specific instructions, including identification signs for your cars, before school begins. Please display your sign every morning in carpool.

Drive very slowly at all times. Cell phone use is prohibited in our carpool lines and when picking up a child from their classroom. (Phones down, eyes up!)

Upon **arrival**, staff members will be present to guide cars. A staff member will approach the car, greet the driver and the child, and escort the child to class. Children will never walk to class alone. **If your child displays any symptoms of illness, he or she will not be admitted to school.** See page 13 for a list of symptoms.

Carpool will begin and end on a specific schedule. *Children who arrive after 9:45 a.m. will not be admitted to class that day.* If you arrive early and the weather is mild, we encourage you to turn your engine off to conserve fuel.

For **dismissal**, parents/caregivers will park, enter the building or playground, and wait outside the classroom door for children to be dismissed. While waiting we encourage adults to become aware of the learning happening in the class by taking note of what is posted in the windows. Teachers will dismiss children one or two at a time to make sure each child unites with the proper adult. Then children and adults will exit the building and return to cars.

In Texas it is against the law to leave children unattended in a vehicle, so we have three designated spaces between the school doors and the playground gate marked with signs that say "Reserved for Baby in the Car". An administrator will attend to your car so you can pick up your SLC student without getting other children out of the car. These spaces are meant for quick in and out. If you want to stay at school for a while, please choose a different parking spot.

Please do not leave any valuables in vehicles while picking up your child. Lock your car doors.

It is important that you pick up your child at the time and location specified for your child's class. If you need to pick your child up early, please park in the south parking lot along the building and call our office. We will escort your child out to you.

Please notify the office and teachers in advance when someone other than a parent or caregiver is to pick up your child. Those picking up a child must be authorized by the parents as an Authorized Pick-Up Person.

If for any reason it becomes necessary to restrict persons in the building, we will shift departure procedures to a carpool line. If carpool is necessary, for departure, staff members will be present to guide cars. A staff member will verify the identification sign posted in your car and escort your child to the car.

School Schedule

School will be in session:

9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Friday

Arrival begins at 8:45 a.m., and dismissal ends at 1:10 p.m.

Children will not be admitted after 9:45 a.m.

Any variation in times such as early dismissal days will be represented on the school calendar.

School Calendar

A printed school calendar will be distributed to parents before school begins. An electronic version of the calendar can be found on our website at bellaireumc.org/preschool.

Communication

We will make every effort to provide ongoing communication throughout the year. You will receive information both from the office and from your child's teachers. Following are some ways we communicate with you:

- Our Facebook page and Instagram account: **BellaireSLC**
- Email
- Back-to-School Visitation Days for students before school begins
- Parent Orientation
- Fall phone conferences
- Spring Parent/Teacher conferences
- Matriculation meetings about future academic placements
- Photo sharing sites
- Videos
- Dry-erase boards by classroom doors

Parent Participation

We encourage parents to be active participants in a child's learning experience. Teachers have the latitude to determine what is appropriate for their class based on children's age, comfort, and individual needs within the group. School for Little Children teachers will share information about classroom life and welcome parent observations and input about home life.

There are several parent committees which give families an opportunity to build relationships, model service, and benefit the school. The committees address events, culture, gardening, classroom support, outreach, etc. Information about committees and ways to get involved is provided at the beginning of the year.

Back-to-School Visitations

Prior to the start of school, each child and family member(s) are **required** to attend a Class Visit to meet the teachers and become familiar with the surroundings. (Caregivers are also welcome to accompany parents.) We find that these visits help children feel comfortable and ease the transition to school. Children learn by using their senses thus gain understanding by seeing their teachers faces, hearing their voices and the sounds of the room, and by touching items in the room.

Teachers will share information specific to your child's class about the structure of the day, general goals, what to bring and not bring, and other helpful tips. The teachers will contact parents to schedule the visit. **Children will not be permitted to start school until their family has attended a Class Visit.**

Clothing

Please dress your child for active play which will include sitting on the floor, playing in sand, painting, or participating in other messy activities. Shoes should have rubber soles. Flip-flops, "dress-up" shoes, cowboy boots, and slippery shoes are **not** safe for school. Please keep in mind that children play outside for approximately one hour per day and assist your child in selecting weather-appropriate clothing. In cold weather dress your child in clothing warm enough for outdoor play. **Please put your child's name in all removable clothing.**

Photography

We take many photographs of children in their classes. These photos are used to share with parents, document a child's learning, and may be used in educational presentations, or on our website or social media. Teachers have private class photo share sites, and you will receive further details before school begins.

Photos will only be used with your permission on the Waivers and Release form. Given that some families opt out of photos for their child, we ask that all parents refrain from photographing and/or videoing on campus. Parents do not know which children have permission to be photographed and which ones do not.

Celebrations

Holidays are kept low key at School for Little Children. We ask that children not wear costumes to school for Halloween or at any other time. We also ask that you not bring treat bags or other candy to school for Halloween or Valentine's Day. It has been our experience that these things distract children from the wonderful learning experiences that teachers have planned for them.

Birthdays are important and are recognized at school. Teachers will provide you with information about ways to celebrate birthdays specific to your child's class. When planning a birthday party, please extend invitations from home; birthday invitations may not be sent home from school.

Food

Each day at school, parents will provide a small snack and lunch for their child. The purpose of eating together is so children can take a little break from play, practice social skills and manners, and practice self-help and fine motor skills. Teachers will provide more specific information about food, beverages, and containers before school begins.

While parents are responsible for the nutritional content of their child's food, our general guidelines are as follows:

- Send food in a container that your child can manage with very little help.
- Label the container with child's name.
- Send healthy foods such as fresh fruit, vegetables, and protein.
- Avoid processed foods and foods high in added sugar. Read labels before you pack!
- Food must be safe to serve at room temperature. We do not heat, refrigerate, prepare, or store food for children.
- Children under three years old should have pre-cut, bite-size pieces.
- Water may be sent in a sport bottle or sippy cup labeled with child's name. Juice and milk are not permitted because we do not refrigerate food or beverages.

Texas Child Care Minimum Standards do not permit us to serve the following foods to children younger than 4 years old because they are potential choking hazards:

- hot dogs
- whole grapes
- nuts
- popcorn
- raw peas
- pretzels
- spoonfuls of peanut butter
- chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed

Food Allergies and Special Feeding Needs

We have experience in accommodating food allergies. If your child has a food allergy, please plan to talk with the teachers prior to the start of school to discuss any potential modifications to classroom life. If your child needs medication for allergies, see page 11 for more information.

If your child is in class with a child with food allergies severe enough to limit the foods classmates may bring, parents will be notified in advance. When necessary, parents will be given a list of foods that are safe to bring into class.

If your child has a diagnosis that necessitates special feeding needs, please provide an individualized Action Plan from your child's health care provider. We can provide a written daily food log to parents if it is part of the Action Plan ordered by the health care provider.

Multilingual Learners

We welcome children who are learning more than one language. If your child speaks a language other than English at home, teachers will partner with you to help your child be as comfortable as possible in class.

Teachers may request from you common phrases you use at home and share with you common phrases used at school. Teachers have experience pairing words with pictures to make language more visual while children are learning English. We have a variety of books in languages other than English, but we welcome suggestions of books or materials that will help us honor a child's home language and culture in class. We also encourage parents to read to the class in their home language. Exposure to the sounds and patterns of a variety of languages is beneficial to children.

If you prefer to communicate in a language other than English, we will work with you to find someone who can serve as an interpreter.

Physical Activity

Physical activity is an important part of children's development. Daily physical activity gives children opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills, use their imaginations for creative play, and begin to build life-long, healthy habits to take care of their bodies. Activities at school may include, but are not limited to, running, jumping, balancing, climbing, digging, pushing, pulling, gardening, drawing, pedaling, and role-playing.

Playground Information

Children have a minimum of 50 minutes of playground* time in their schedule daily. Classes are staggered so that only children of similar age are on the playground at the same time. Classroom teachers are with their class for the duration of their time on the playground. Children are encouraged to play actively (in both structured and unstructured ways) to develop motor control, explore the natural world, and have positive social interactions with peers and adults. *In inclement or extreme weather, children will play in the gym. Extreme weather is defined as rain with thunder/lightning, temperature over 100 degrees or under 20 degrees. Our strong preference is outdoor play, yet teachers have discretion to combine indoor and outdoor active play time to total 50 minutes.

If you want your child to wear sunscreen or insect repellent, please apply them before school. See page 11 for further information.

Please see page 18 for guidance on appropriate clothing.

Please become familiar with our simple playground rules. Teachers teach children these rules. We want to be united in our expectations for appropriate and safe playground behavior. If your family plays on the playground after school, we expect your cooperation in maintaining the rules.

General Playground Rules

- Sand stays in the sand box.
- Walk on paved areas and on structures.
- Ride vehicles in one direction following the arrows.
- Slide down feet first on the slides.
- Wear shoes at all times.
- Toys or equipment should be played with on the ground, not on structures.
- Hands must be on bars at all times. No hanging by knees without hands on bars.
- Protect our water fountain. It is for water only—no sand or dirt.
- No food on the playground.

Early Learners

Ducklings, Ponies, Kitty Cats, Owls, Turtles, Lambs

What to Bring

All belongings, including food containers, must be clearly marked with your child's name. All children should bring the following items:

- a snack and lunch—see page 19 for details
- a sport bottle/sippy cup with water
- bag or backpack with a change of clothing and ample disposable diapers or underwear; we will provide a bag tag to attach to your child's bag
- one “lovey” or other security item
- outerwear for cool weather

Daily Information Sheet

A significant way teachers communicate with parents is through the Daily Information Sheet. Parents must send a Daily Information Sheet each day with their child. This form includes helpful information about your child that teachers need as well as an emergency number where the parent may be reached that day. **Your emergency phone number is vitally important.** Please be sure the office has current emergency contact information.

The Daily Information Sheet will be returned to parents on Tuesday or Friday. The back will be filled out by teachers with brief information important to parents concerning eating, developmental information, activities, special requests, etc.

A supply of these forms is furnished to parents at the beginning of the year. Additional forms are available online at www.bellaireumc.org/preschool.

Toileting

Children who are being toilet trained at home often regress at school during the process. This is normal and to be expected. Please send adequate clothing in preparation for toileting accidents. If your child is in the very early stages of toilet training, a diaper may be more suitable. Please talk to your child's teachers so we can provide consistency.

Early Learners

Ducklings, Ponies, Kitty Cats, Owls, Turtles, Lambs

Biting

Biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior in young children that is both common and undesirable. We have several strategies to prevent biting and to address it when a bite happens. First the teachers will assess children to see how they typically handle stress and frustration, the most frequent causes of biting. They will implement positive strategies with the goal of preventing bites. If a child bites, teachers will model appropriate behavior and language to use in place of a bite and notify parents after school. If a child bites frequently, the teachers and parents will work together to identify the cause, strategies to implement both at home and at school, and desired outcomes. Teachers will keep a record of biting incidents to track the effectiveness of strategies and whether the behavior is increasing or decreasing in frequency. If the child's teachers, parents, and administrators feel it is appropriate, a child may be asked to take a short break from attending school with the goal of inhibiting a harmful pattern of behavior and affording a child time to reset before returning to school.

Parents will be notified if their child is bitten at school, but the identity of the child who bit will remain confidential.

Sleep Habits

If your child is accustomed to napping before 1:00 p.m. daily, it will be a challenge for them to remain alert and constructively engaged at school. We recommend beginning in the summer before school starts to practice adjusting your child's sleep schedule to accommodate wakefulness between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Conferences

Teachers will contact you for a phone conference in late October or November to share how things are going at school. Teachers welcome parents' thoughts and observations about their child's development and adjustment to school.

In February, teachers will host an individual Parent Teacher conference with each family. Classes will not meet on two dates in February to accommodate conferences. Conferences are scheduled for half hour slots. At the Parent Teacher conference, parents can expect to receive a copy of their child's Developmental Checklist and other relevant assessment information.

At other times during the year, teachers and parents may communicate through written notes, emails, telephone calls, or scheduled conferences. Teachers are not free to talk with you about your child when they are in the classroom or during carpool. When there are questions, special concerns, or information teachers should have, please set an appointment to talk with your child's teachers.

Preschool

Ladybugs, Dolphins, Bunny Rabbits, Dragonflies, Honeybees,
Pandas, Butterflies, Roadrunners, Tigers

What to Bring

All belongings, including food containers, must be clearly marked with your child's name. All children should bring the following items:

- a snack and lunch—see page 19 for details
- a sport bottle with water
- bag with a change of clothing including underwear; we will provide a bag tag to attach to your child's bag
- outerwear for cool weather

What Not to Bring

Children should not bring toys from home to play with at school. Teachers thoughtfully plan engaging learning experiences with materials at school. Toys from home serve as a distraction and can keep children from learning and practicing concepts. Sometimes that can be a hard conversation at home before getting in the car for school. Consider using a phrase we use at school: “We play with home toys at home and with school toys at school.”

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In February, teachers will host an individual Parent Teacher conference with each family. Classes will not meet on two dates in February to accommodate conferences. Conferences are scheduled for half hour slots. At the Parent Teacher conference, parents can expect to receive a copy of their child's Developmental Checklist and other relevant assessment information.

At other times during the year, teachers and parents may communicate through written notes, emails, telephone calls, or scheduled conferences. Teachers are not free to talk with you about your child when they are in the classroom or during carpool. When there are questions, special concerns, or information teachers should have, please set an appointment to talk with your child's teachers.

Biting

As children reach their third birthday and their communication and problem-solving skills develop, our expectation is that biting happens rarely. If a child bites at school the teachers will assess the situation and try to determine the cause for the behavior. Teachers will model appropriate behavior and language to use in place of a bite and notify parents after school. If a child bites more than twice the teachers and parents will work together to identify the cause, strategies to implement both at home and at school, and desired outcomes. Teachers will keep a record of biting incidents to track the effectiveness of strategies. If the strategies are ineffective or if biting becomes more frequent, and the child's teachers, parents, and administrators feel it is appropriate, a child may be asked to take a short break from attending school with the goal of inhibiting a harmful pattern of behavior and affording a child time to reset before returning to school.

Parents will be notified if their child is bitten at school, but the identity of the child who bit will remain confidential.

Field Trips

School for Little Children does not transport children in vehicles. Walking field trips are planned very rarely for our PreK classes only. If there will be a field trip, parents will be notified of details and will be asked to sign a permission slip for their child to participate. Parents will be asked to chaperone to maintain safe adult:child ratios. Teachers will take emergency forms, a cell phone, and a first aid kit with them. Walking field trips will observe all pedestrian safety guidelines. Teachers will count children upon departure, upon arrival at destination, upon departure back to school, and upon arrival back at school.

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