

GRACE *Kids*
EARLY LEARNING

2022-2023

Parent Handbook

A LETTER TO ALL PARENTS

It is a pleasure to welcome you to GraceKids Early Learning. We consider it a privilege to serve you and your family. The purpose of this handbook is to answer many common questions about the policies and procedures of our program. Please feel free to contact our office between the hours of 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM for any other questions you may have that have not been answered for you in this handbook. You may also schedule an appointment for conferences during those same hours. The goal of our program is to help establish a strong academic and biblical foundation so that our children will fulfill God's plan for their lives. Please keep GraceKids and our staff in your prayers as we will be doing the same for you.

PROGRAM

GraceKids Early Learning operates Monday through Thursday at Grace Fellowship Church in Paradise, Texas. The program is from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM daily and runs from September through May each year. We follow the Paradise ISD calendar with the exception of the starting and ending dates and Staff Development Days.

We use ABC Jesus Loves Me and Disciple Land Curriculum.

ENROLLMENT

Our program is offered to children 6 months old through Pre-Kindergarten and is available on a first come, first served basis. We recommend that you register as soon as possible to secure your child's spot. Once a class has reached the maximum number of students, a waiting list will be generated to fill spaces as they become available. Registration is only valid when all registration forms are turned in (enrollment, shot records, and medical release) and the non-refundable registration fee is paid. Parents will be notified of any policy changes in writing. Grace Fellowship Church has a racially non-discriminatory policy towards students. Grace Fellowship Church reserves the right to refuse service to anyone.

CLASS PLACEMENT

GraceKids follows the Texas public school system's mandated birthdate rule for enrollment, which states that a child is enrolled based on their age as of September 1st of each school year. For example: a child who turned 3 on September 2nd would be enrolled in the two-year-old class for that school year. A child who turned 3 on August 31st would be enrolled in a three-year-old class for that school year.

TRIAL PERIOD

A two-week adjustment period will begin on the first day of a child's attendance. It is important to us that your child enjoys his/her time at GraceKids and will consult you for help if the child is having difficulty adjusting. If a child continues to have a difficult time after two weeks and the Director feels that all options have been exhausted, then the child may be dismissed from the program. (Registration fees are non-refundable)

TUITION

Tuition is reviewed annually. Factors such as salaries and supplies are budgeted and a yearly tuition rate is set and then calculated into nine monthly payments. This monthly rate remains the same over the program year, even in months when the students attend more or less than the standard four weeks.

Your tuition reserves a place for your child and does not change due to absences or holidays.

Tuition payments are to be made on the first week of the month. If payment is not received by the 10th of the month, a late fee of \$10.00 may be charged to your account. If payment is not received by the 15th of the month, your child's enrollment in the program may be in jeopardy. Please contact the Director if extenuating circumstances arise which cause the tuition to be late. A \$25 fee will be charged for all returned checks. If two NSF checks are returned to the church, you will be required to pay by cash or certified funds.

We have several payment options. We accept cash, checks, credit cards, and you can pay online at gracekids.com or on Brightwheel.

Registration fees are non-refundable.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

If you are going to withdraw your child from GraceKids, you must notify the office two weeks in advance. This notice must include the date of the last day of attendance for your child/ren. If we do not receive this notice, you will be held responsible for the amount billed to your account.

ATTENDANCE

There are no state or federal laws requiring the attendance of your child. However, consistent attendance is the best way for your child to gain the full benefits from our program and all that their teachers have for your child to learn and explore. If your child is going to be absent, please let your child's teacher know via Brightwheel Messenger.

ABSENCE

Our tuition is based on a full-time schedule and our staff must be paid accordingly. Absences, illnesses, vacations, etc., will not be prorated from the tuition that is due.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is a key element in the success of our program. In order for our communication efforts to be effective it is necessary for you, the parent, to read all the information sent home, including; this parent handbook, Brightwheel, teacher's notes, and anything else sent home with your child. If your child is absent, please make sure you receive all information that may have been sent home while he/she was absent.

We have acquired a software program named Brightwheel. It is instrumental in communication of information, pictures, and updates. Please be sure to check it regularly to aid in the flow of information.

*Please refer all questions, comments, concerns, or suggestions regarding the program, to our Director.

*Parent, child, teacher, and Director conferences are available as necessary upon request. Please contact the Director or the Teacher to set up an

appointment to discuss any questions, concerns, policies, or procedures of the program.

*You are always invited and welcome to observe your child in action. We want you to see how well your child does at school. Please realize that your child may not understand that you must leave again, so you may need to observe from another room (out of sight). If you join your child in the classroom, your child is still expected to follow the teachers' direction and classroom rules.

*Our staff uses the time between 8:00-8:25 am to prepare and pray for the day and will not be available to accommodate children before 8:25. Please be courteous by allowing us this time.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

When arriving at the church, it is important that you check your child in by using the Brightwheel app and QR code on the pedestals. When picking up your child, please sign them out on Brightwheel.

In cases of divorce, we are required to release a child to either parent unless there is a legal custody agreement stating otherwise. Please contact the Director if this pertains to your child so that we may be abreast of the situation. All urgent situations will be handled by the Director, and/or the Operations Pastor. If a problem should arise, we will contact local law enforcement for assistance.

Persons appearing under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will not be permitted to pick up the children from the church/school. Local law enforcement will be contacted, if necessary.

GraceKids Early Learning must have on file the name, phone number, driver's license information, and the relationship of each adult whom you have designated to pick up your child. We cannot release a child to unauthorized adults. If someone other than the parents or legal guardian will be picking up your child, the church must be notified in advance. A picture I.D. is required for adults not regularly picking up your child. This procedure will be enforced for the safety of your child.

LATE PICK UP

Students should be picked up promptly at 3:00 PM. Many of our teachers are parents also and need to pick up their children as well. Please be prompt and courteous when picking up your child. An additional fee of \$1.00 per minute may be assessed after 3:15 PM.

EARLY DISMISSAL

If it is necessary to pick up your child before the usual dismissal time, please send a note to the teacher informing them what time s/he will be picked up, who will be picking them up, and if they will be returning.

ITEMS FROM HOME

Please clearly label **EVERYTHING** your child brings from home with your child's name. This includes diaper bags, blankets, bottles, cups, nap bedding, lunch kits, and ALL clothing, especially coats and sweaters.

NO TOYS FROM HOME PLEASE

We will not be responsible for any items that are misplaced, misused, or broken.

NAPTIME

Following lunch, children may be provided with a nap or rest period. A nap mat and a small cover may be brought to school. But remember, all personal items **MUST** fit in the student's cubby.(backpack, lunchbox, nap mat, nap blanket, etc.)

DAMAGES

Parents are responsible for payment of any damages to the church property caused by their child or themselves. This does not apply to regular wear and tear or breaking small toys.

PROGRAMS

GraceKids Early Learning implements programs that are designed to educate the whole child; spirit, mind, and body. We are cognizant of the fact that each child is unique and grows and learns at his/her own pace. We plan lessons and activities that are age appropriate for the developmental level of each class.

Spiritually, our children are taught biblical principles every day. Praise and worship, prayer and scripture memory verses, are an integral part of the day. Children are also encouraged through centers, language, math, science, social studies, cultural awareness, music, art, and books. (Classroom Library)

Fine and gross motor skills are developed as children practice skills designed to develop these areas. Outside play is a part of the children's daily routine. (weather permitting) Social skills and skills designed to encourage independence are developed throughout the day as children learn how to share, take turns, interact during playtime, and perform simple tasks on their own. Lesson plans are provided by each teacher to relay information about the themes and skills being taught.

REPORTS

Teachers of Infants will have a Daily Report on Brightwheel to keep informed of their child's day which will include times the child slept, times and amount of food consumed, times of diaper changes, child's general mood for the day, and a brief summary of the activities in which the child participated. Parents are always encouraged to know how their child is progressing in the skills being taught at his/her level.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE

If a need arises, you may request a conference with your child's teacher. A call to the Director must be made in advance to allow for proper scheduling.

Parents desiring to review minimum state standards or a recent License Inspection Report can find those available in the Director's office. To contact the local Licensing office, you can call 1-817-321-8604; or visit their website at www.tdfps.state.tx.us

LICENSE

GraceKids Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten are licensed through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Care Licensing Division.

DISCIPLINE

GraceKids teachers plan many fun and exciting activities to keep the students engaged throughout their day. Occasionally a child will need to be reminded of what is expected of him/her in terms of appropriate behavior. Discipline is handled in the following manner:

1. The teacher talks discreetly with the child and discusses proper behavior and expectations.
2. If the behavior continues, the child is removed from the group to think about his/her actions. (Time spent in “time-out is one minute per year of age)
3. If the behavior is still not corrected, the teacher will bring the behavior to the Director’s attention for additional recommendations. At this time, a conference with the parent may be necessary.
4. If a behavior issue is not resolved after steps 1,2,3, or if the behavior is promoting a disruptive, disrespectful, and unsafe environment for the child, other children, or teachers, (I.e.hitting, biting, kicking, hurting others, or continual disruption of the class) the child may be dismissed from the program.

BITING

Children who have bitten other children while in attendance at school, may be removed from the program for a period of time. Children will be able to return to school at a later date, after evaluation by the Director according to the severity and causes of the biting. Children will not incur charges during the time in which they are not in attendance for this issue.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES, AND PARTIES

Birthdays are a wonderful time in a child's life, and we want to make every effort possible in celebrating those with each child in a simple, but special way. If you would like to send cupcakes or cookies with your child on his/her birthday that would be great.

GraceKids will have parties to celebrate Fall, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentines, Easter, and the last day of school. Parents may be asked to help with providing refreshments for these parties. If you are interested in helping, please check with your child's teacher.

Special programs and activities are planned throughout the year for various classes to participate in. These will include, but are not limited to Muffins with Mom, Donuts with Dad, Thanksgiving feast, Pajama Days, 100th Day of School, Art Show, etc. Parent Volunteers may be recruited as needed for these special occasions.

HEARING AND VISION REQUIREMENTS

Texas Health and Safety code, requires a screening or a professional exam for vision and hearing for first time enrollees who are four years of age or older and all children who enrolled in the program who are four years of age by September 1st prior to completion of the semester of enrollment, or within 120 calendar days of enrollment. A licensed or certified screener or a health care professional must conduct the screening.

HEALTH AND MEDICATION

According to State law, children must be current on all required immunizations. Annual health reports **signed by a physician** will be kept on file. **If we do not have this information at the time of enrollment, your child will not be allowed to attend until the proper records are received.** A list of required immunizations can be obtained in the office or by consulting your child's physician or the Health Department. GraceKids Early Learning DOES accept the Affidavit for Immunization Exemption.

A child who appears ill will not be admitted to the class unless **approved in writing by a physician.** The following symptoms will be used as guidelines for dismissal, but are not inclusive.

- *Fever within the last 24 hours (taken before a fever reducing drug has been given)**
- *Vomiting**
- *Undiagnosed rash**
- *Mouth sores**
- *Infected sores**
- *Two or more bowel movements within an hour, including the possibility of diarrhea**
- *Persistent cough**
- *Severe itching of body or scalp, or scratching of the scalp**
- *Unusually dark or tea-colored urine**
- *Sore throat or trouble swallowing**
- *Pink-eye conjunctivitis, viral or bacterial**
- *Tearing and redness of the eyelid lining**
- *Yellowish skin or eyes-these may be signs of hepatitis**
- *Difficult or rapid breathing**
- *All symptoms of Hand, Foot, and Mouth (Sores in the mouth and a rash on the hands and feet)**

Children are not to return to the school until there has been a 24-hour period of the child being fever free. The temperature must have been taken **before** administering any fever reducing medicine. This also applies to vomiting and diarrhea. There must have been a 24-hour period of no vomiting or diarrhea before the child can return to class. We will notify parents when an illness needs attention or is contagious. The child will be isolated until the parent can pick up the child. A doctor note stating that your child is not contagious will be required for your child to be re-admitted into the class. It is imperative that parents contact the school when their child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness. Once identified, a notice may be sent home indicating the type of illness, symptoms to look for, and other pertinent information a parent will need to know. The name of the ill child will not be made public.

Medications: according to State law, we cannot administer any medication to a child, unless it is a personal prescription filled by a pharmacist and the label bears the name of the child, date, and directions for administering. A release form must also be signed. Non-prescription medication must be in the original container. We must have written permission from the parent which also includes the child's name, dosage, and the date the medication was brought to school.

All GraceKid Early Learning employees are emergency trained in first aid and CPR and if there were to be a medical emergency 911 will be contacted if warranted. If deemed necessary, your child will be transported by ambulance to Wise Regional Hospital. A copy of your signed Emergency form will accompany the staff person who goes with your child. We will make every effort to contact you so **PLEASE keep all phone numbers, home, work, and cell current.**

EMERGENCY DRILLS

In accordance with the state license requirements, GraceKids conduct monthly fire drills, 3 "Lock Down" drills, and 3 Severe Weather Drills during each school year.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

Under Texas law, the staff and administration of GraceKids are obligated to report any suspected abuse that comes to their attention. The statute provides in part as follows, "A person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall be reported." GraceKids will comply with the law by calling the Texas Abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400. All employees of GraceKids have annual training hours, and some of those hours detail methods of increasing employee and parent awareness of issues regarding child abuse and neglect, including the warning signs that a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect. If you suspect child abuse or neglect or if you would like to know more about those warning signs you can inquire in the Director's office or you too can call the hotline for more information.

PROCEDURES FOR QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

If a parent has a question about a policy or concern, it is recommended that you schedule a meeting with the Director.

EMPLOYEE VACCINES

We do not require our employees to get any vaccines.

PARENT NOTIFICATION

Written and/or Brightwheel notices will be sent used to notify parents of any changes from the daily routine, incidences in the classroom, or pertinent information.

DRESS CODE

Children should be dressed in comfortable clothes and appropriate shoes for indoor and outdoor play. Sandals, cowboy's boots, and open toed shoes are not suggested to wear. Please refrain from cumbersome clothing for children who are potty training. Overalls for infants and toddlers should have a snap crotch to ease in diaper changing for caregivers and are not acceptable for older children due to the difficulty in getting them on and off for restroom use.

Every effort will be made to ensure your child's clothing is well cared for, however, GraceKids does not assume responsibility when clothing is damaged due to typical school use. (Paint stains, tears/cutting of fabric, dirt or grass stains, etc.)

*Please send an extra set of clothing for your child daily in their bag.

If your child uses the clothes in their bag, please replace them ASAP.

MEALS AND SNACKS

Please send your child with a sack lunch daily. Lunches should be nutritious and should not require heating or refrigeration. GraceKids Early Learning is not responsible for your child's daily nutritional needs. Meals should be

ready to eat and should not require any preparation by the teacher. Please have everything prepared and already cut. Please label juice, cups, containers, and anything else that will need to be sent home at the end of the day with child's name. We do not provide meals unless otherwise stated for a special occasion. A morning snack will need to be provided by parents daily.

WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather, tune to local television or radio stations for a Paradise School Closing announcement. We will follow the Paradise ISD schools in relation to closing or delaying opening due to inclement weather.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

GraceKids regrets that it cannot accommodate students with medical, physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. These students are precious in God's sight and need a school wherein they will receive all they may require.

POTTY TRAINING POLICY

Children enrolled in Preschool-3-year old's and Pre-Kindergarten at GraceKids Early Learning must be potty trained before attending preschool. Children must be wearing underwear with very few accidents. A child having accidents daily would not be considered potty trained. Please note that wearing pull ups isn't considered being potty trained.

Why do children have to be potty trained before they begin preschool?

There are strict standards for changing and disposing of wet or soiled diapers. The classrooms are not equipped for diaper changing. We do understand that even potty-trained children will occasionally have toileting accidents. By definition, "accidents" are unusual incidents and should happen infrequently. In these instances, the teachers will help children to change their clothes, encouraging independence as much as possible.

A potty-trained child is a child who can do the following:

1. Communicate to the teachers that he/she needs to go to the restroom before they need to go.

2. Alert him/herself to stop what he/she is doing, to go and use the bathroom.

3. Pull down his/her clothes and get them back up without assistance.

4. Wipe him/herself after using the toilet. (With minimal assistance for 3-year olds.)

5. Get on/off the toilet by him/herself.

6. Wash and dry hands.

We certainly will ask your child many times throughout the day and always before nap time if they need to use the bathroom. A teacher will assist children as needed, but children should be able to complete toileting activities independently. This is a policy which protects all concerned.

It is not uncommon for a child who is fully toilet trained to have a setback when he/she is in a new environment. Preschool Staff are aware of this and will assist the children when necessary. Parents will be notified if a child has a toileting accident.

We understand that each child arrives at this milestone differently, therefore we will allow 2 weeks from the first day of school for your child to demonstrate accomplishment of this goal. However, if the situation is not manageable within the classroom environment, we will discuss the issue with the parents and reserve the right to suspend attendance of the child at such time.

If your child is not completely potty trained as described above when preschool starts, the following options are available:

1. You may withdraw your child from GraceKids. We can place your child on the waiting list. Registration and fees are non-refundable; however, if your child is re-enrolled in our program at a later date during the same school year, you will not need to pay this fee again. If you choose this option, we cannot guarantee that a space will be available.

2. You may pay 1/2 tuition to hold your child's spot (for up to a month) until potty training has been completed.

After the first 2 weeks of school, the following policies will be in place for children who have accidents outside of nap time.

1. If one or two accidents occur in one week, the parent will be notified with the understanding that the issue needs to be addressed and corrected.
2. If three or more accidents occur in one week, the parent will be notified with the understanding that if the issue isn't corrected by the end of the second week, the child will have to stay home at least one week or longer until he/she is completely potty-trained. Tuition will not be pro-rated during this time. Parents should contact the Director to facilitate the child's return to school.
3. If multiple accidents occur in one day, the parent will be notified on that day; and if not corrected by day three, the child will have to stay home at least one week or longer until he/she is completely potty trained. Tuition will not be pro-rated during this time. Parents should contact the Director to facilitate the child's return to school. We will work with parents whose children have habitual nap time accidents on an individual basis

BREASTFEEDING POLICY

1. We provide an atmosphere that welcomes breastfeeding families. We support mothers who continue to breastfeed their infants/children as they return and continue to work.
2. We have a private, designated space (other than the bathroom) for mothers to breastfeed their children. We welcome mothers to breastfeed in the classroom as well.
3. We "check-in" with mothers for feedback and ways to continue providing support.
4. Staff communicates the infant's changing schedule (i.e., feeding, napping, etc.) so a mother can adjust her schedule for pumping and/or visiting to feed her infant.
5. We discuss breastfeeding support with all potential new families and share this policy and breastfeeding resources with them.
6. We work with parents prior to their first day in child care to transition the infant to bottle or cup feedings.
7. Staff follows storage and handling of breast milk as defined by Texas State regulations.
8. Freezer space is available for milk storage.

9. Staff coordinates with parents about the quantity of milk remaining in containers to avoid waste. Staff fills bottles with less breast milk than necessary for a feeding. Staff will have additional breast milk available to add to the bottle as needed.

10. We develop a sustainable feeding plan with each family including feeding infants on demand as we observe hunger cues and coordinating the last feeding of the day to meet the mother's feeding needs (either to feed or await mother's feeding)

11. Infants are fed by the same caregiver as often as possible. All caregivers hold infants when feeding them.