



FPDS PARENT HANDBOOK

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ABOUT THE SCHOOL

History

In the early 1960s, more than one hundred years after the founding of First Presbyterian Church in downtown Austin, the congregation conducted a survey to prayerfully discern future areas of ministry. As a result of this visioning process, the church felt called to expand its outreach by relocating, providing worship services for independent senior citizens, supporting legal aid efforts in East Austin, and establishing a preschool for young children.

In September 1962, First Presbyterian Day School (FPDS) opened on Jackson Avenue and was met with enthusiastic support from the community.

Following the church's relocation to Mesa Drive in April 1978, another needs assessment revealed a growing demand for high-quality early childhood education in Northwest Austin. In response, the congregation continued its commitment to serving families by reopening the preschool at its current location in September 1979 with 50 students and a staff of three.

Over the years, FPDS has grown alongside the Austin community. Today, we are proudly located at 8001 Mesa Drive in the Northwest Hills neighborhood, continuing a long-standing tradition of providing a nurturing, Christ-centered early childhood program.

Mission Statement

The mission of First Presbyterian Day School is to provide children, families, and staff the opportunity to experience the transforming love of Jesus Christ through a developmentally appropriate early childhood program.

We are committed to creating a nurturing environment led by dedicated and caring educators. Through meaningful relationships and intentional teaching, we help children develop spiritually, emotionally, physically, socially, and intellectually.

Philosophy

We believe childhood is a time of wonder, growth, and discovery. Young children are naturally curious and eager to explore, create, and learn. Research consistently shows that children learn best through active, hands-on experiences. Through purposeful play, exploration, creativity, problem-solving, and social interaction, children build the foundational skills needed for school readiness and lifelong learning.

As a ministry of First Presbyterian Church, we seek to model kindness, respect, gratitude, and love in our daily interactions. Relationships are at the heart of our school. We strive to create classrooms where children feel known, valued, and secure. Strong partnerships between teachers, children, and families foster confidence, independence, empathy, and a sense of belonging.

Each child is welcomed as a unique and cherished member of our community.

Handbook Revisions and Policy Updates

FPDS reserves the right to revise, amend, or update policies and procedures as needed to comply with licensing regulations, safety standards, or operational requirements.

Families will be notified of significant policy changes via email and/or Brightwheel communication.

Continued enrollment constitutes agreement with current policies.

DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS

At First Presbyterian Day School, we are committed to nurturing the whole child. Our program supports growth across social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and physical domains through intentional teaching and purposeful play.

Social, Emotional and Spiritual Goals

We strive to support children as they:

- Develop increasing independence and confidence
- Build a positive self-concept and sense of belonging
- Form secure, trusting relationships with caring adults
- Learn to play cooperatively and develop friendships
- Begin to understand and respect different perspectives
- Show empathy, kindness, and compassion toward others
- Develop healthy ways to cope with fears, anxieties, and frustrations
- Cultivate curiosity, initiative, and persistence
- Strengthen problem-solving skills
- Develop positive attitudes toward school and learning
- Practice and experience Christian values such as love, respect, gratitude, and service

Cognitive Development

We support children in developing strong foundational thinking and language skills by encouraging them to:

- Listen, understand, and respond to ideas expressed through oral language
- Express their thoughts and ideas through conversation, storytelling, art, writing, dramatic play, and other symbolic forms
- Observe, compare, classify, and recognize patterns and relationships
- Ask questions, generate ideas, and explore solutions
- Engage in early literacy and early math experiences through hands-on learning

Physical Development

We promote healthy physical growth by helping children:

- Develop awareness of their bodies in space
- Strengthen coordination and control of both fine motor skills (such as drawing and writing) and gross motor skills (such as running, climbing, and balancing)
- Build confidence in movement through indoor and outdoor play

FAITH DEVELOPMENT and MISSION

Spiritual Development

First Presbyterian Day School is a Christian community dedicated to nurturing the spiritual growth and formation of children and families. We believe that children have a natural openness to wonder, meaning, and the presence of God. Helping children grow in their understanding of God's love is a cornerstone of the FPDS experience.

Spiritual formation takes place throughout the day — through our curriculum, the caring relationships and modeling of teachers and pastors, and our weekly chapel worship.

During their time at FPDS, we hope each child begins to understand these foundational truths:

- God loves me and the world.
- God created me and the world.
- I can worship God.
- I can serve God and others.

Christian formation is woven into daily life at FPDS by:

- Connecting children's learning to their growing awareness of God's creation
- Praying at mealtimes and at other moments throughout the day
- Reading Bible stories
- Participating in weekly chapel led by our pastoral staff

Our goal is to nurture a foundation of faith rooted in love, gratitude, compassion, and service.

Weekly Chapel

Weekly Chapel is led by the Pastor for Children, Youth, and Families and is held in the Sanctuary or courtyard. During chapel, children pray, sing, and hear Bible stories presented through the Godly Play curriculum.

Godly Play introduces children to foundational stories of Scripture and the language of faith in developmentally appropriate ways. It invites children to wonder, ask questions, and discover how they are part of God's ongoing story of love and redemption.

Mission Projects

Throughout the year, classes and the school community participate in service projects that benefit others beyond our campus. These opportunities may include collecting non-perishable food items, toys, or other donations during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons or at other times during the school year.

Through these experiences, children begin to understand that even at a young age, they can serve and care for others.

ENROLLMENT AND PLACEMENT

Term of Enrollment

Enrollment is for one full school year. The school year begins approximately two weeks after the start of Austin ISD and concludes approximately one week prior to the end of the AISD school year (or for the remainder of the school year if enrolling after classes begin).

A detailed school calendar outlining holidays and breaks will be distributed in August.

Class Placement

Final class placement decisions are made by the Director. Placement is determined by age as of September 1 and teacher recommendations regarding developmental readiness.

Requests for specific teachers or classroom placements may be considered but are not guaranteed.

Enrollment Priorities

1. Children of FPDS or FPCA staff
2. Currently enrolled students
3. Siblings of currently enrolled students
4. Siblings of previously enrolled students
5. Members of First Presbyterian Church
6. Waitlist applicants (based on application date and classroom balance needs, including age and ratios)

Student Withdrawal and Dismissal

Enrollment at FPDS is a commitment for the full academic year. However, circumstances may arise that require withdrawal or dismissal prior to the end of the school year.

Withdrawal by Parent

Parents may withdraw their child from FPDS for any reason by providing written notice to the Director. Two weeks' written notice is requested whenever possible, except in cases of serious illness or relocation.

Tuition deposits and prepaid tuition are non-refundable. Families remain financially responsible for tuition during the notice period.

Dismissal by the School

FPDS reserves the right to dismiss a student when it determines that continued enrollment is not in the best interest of the child, other students, staff, or the school community.

Grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to comply with school policies or procedures
- Repeated lack of parental cooperation

- Delinquent tuition or unpaid fees
- Failure to submit required enrollment documentation
- Behavior by a child or parent that endangers the physical or emotional safety of others
- Ongoing behavioral concerns that significantly disrupt the classroom environment
- A determination that the school is unable to meet the child's specific needs within available resources

In most situations, FPDS will work collaboratively with families to address concerns prior to dismissal. However, the school reserves the right to implement immediate dismissal if circumstances involve safety, licensing compliance, or serious policy violations.

The Director has the authority to make dismissal decisions. The FPDS Board may be consulted when appropriate.

Tuition deposits and prepaid tuition are non-refundable in cases of dismissal.

Your Child's Records and Confidentiality

FPDS maintains records for each enrolled child in accordance with state licensing requirements.

Parents are encouraged to share relevant developmental or medical information, including therapy services (speech, occupational, physical, behavioral, vision, or hearing), so that staff may better support their child's learning and well-being.

If your child previously attended another school or program, you may authorize communication between programs to assist with a smooth transition.

Use of Information

Information provided by families, healthcare providers, or outside professionals is used solely to support the child's educational experience and will be shared only with staff directly involved in the child's care.

Third-party evaluations or assessments may be used to inform classroom planning and accommodations when appropriate.

Access to Records

Parents or legal guardians may review their child's records upon request.

Records will not be released to outside parties without written parent authorization, except as required by law.

If documentation is needed for another school, therapist, or professional, copies will be provided to the parent for distribution.

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TUITION AND FEES

Registration Fee

A non-refundable annual registration fee of \$150 per student is due at the time of enrollment.

Tuition Deposit

A non-refundable deposit equal to one month's tuition is required at registration. This deposit will be applied to the final month of the school year (May).

Facility Fee

An annual facility fee is due at registration for the upcoming school year:

- T/Th: \$250
- M/W/F: \$375
- T–F: \$500
- M–F: \$625

The annual family maximum for facility fees is \$1,000.

Annual Tuition

Tuition is calculated as an annual amount based on projected operating expenses and is divided into nine equal monthly installments.

Tuition payments are due September through April.

Because tuition reflects the annual cost of enrollment, no adjustments or refunds are made for:

- Illness
- Vacations
- Schedule changes
- School closures due to weather or emergencies

Reducing the number of enrolled days does not reduce tuition. Families enrolled in a multi-day schedule are responsible for the full tuition rate for that schedule.

Families may choose to pay the full annual tuition by September 1.

Late Tuition Payment

Monthly tuition payments are due on the first of each month.

A \$30 late fee will be assessed if payment is not received within 10 days of the due date.

Returned Checks

A \$35 fee will be assessed for returned checks due to insufficient funds.

Returned payments must be replaced with a cashier's check or money order. After three returned payments, all future payments must be made by cashier's check or money order.

Failure to resolve returned payments may result in dismissal.

Nonpayment of Tuition and Fees

Failure to pay tuition or fees by the end of the applicable month, without prior arrangement, may result in review by the FPDS Board and potential dismissal from the program.

Tuition Refund Policy

Tuition at FPDS is an annual obligation divided into monthly installments for convenience. Payment secures your child's placement for the full academic year.

Tuition refunds or credits are not provided for:

- Absences due to illness
- Family vacations
- Schedule changes
- Withdrawal prior to the end of the school year
- Weather-related closures
- Emergency or health-related closures
- Temporary classroom closures required by licensing or public health authorities

The tuition deposit is non-refundable and will be applied to the final month of enrollment (May).

If a child withdraws during the school year, families remain responsible for tuition during the required two-week notice period.

Tuition deposits and prepaid tuition are non-refundable in cases of dismissal.

FPDS reserves the right to make limited exceptions in extraordinary circumstances at the sole discretion of the Director and/or Board.

Financial Assistance Policy

As a ministry of First Presbyterian Church, FPDS seeks to make high-quality Christian early childhood education accessible to families while maintaining financial responsibility and program sustainability.

Financial assistance is need-based and subject to available funds.

Short-Term Tuition Assistance:

Short-term tuition assistance may be available for families experiencing temporary financial hardship.

- Assistance of up to 50% of tuition may be granted
- Assistance is limited to a maximum of two months per school year
- Extended Day, enrichment programs, and summer programs are not eligible

Requests must be submitted confidentially to the Director. Approval is not guaranteed and is based on demonstrated need and available funds.

Year-Long Tuition Assistance:

Families seeking financial assistance for the upcoming school year must submit a Tuition Assistance Request Form by March 1.

Applications are reviewed confidentially through an independent third-party agency. Financial assistance awards typically range from 15–30% of total family tuition and apply to all enrolled children within a household.

Assistance:

- Must be requested annually
- Is based on demonstrated financial need
- May require supporting documentation
- Is contingent upon available funding

All financial information is handled confidentially.

Receipt of financial assistance does not exempt families from compliance with all school policies.

DAILY OPERATIONS

School Days and Hours

The regular school day is Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Class schedules vary by age and may include 2-day, 3-day, 4-day, or 5-day options.

Children should arrive promptly to ensure a smooth transition into the school day. Late arrivals may disrupt classroom routines and learning experiences.

Arrival and Dismissal

Attendance

Regular attendance supports consistency and classroom relationships. Parents should notify the school office or the classroom teacher when a child will be absent.

In accordance with licensing requirements, each child must be signed in and signed out daily using the Brightwheel app.

Arrival Procedures

School begins at **9:00 a.m.**

- Children may not enter classrooms before 8:55 a.m. unless otherwise authorized.
- Each child must be signed in upon arrival.
- Children must be escorted to the classroom by a parent or authorized adult.
- Parents must ensure that a teacher acknowledges the child's arrival.
- Children wash their hands upon entering the classroom.

Dismissal Procedures

Regular dismissal is at **1:00 p.m.**

- Children must be signed out at dismissal.
- Teachers must acknowledge the child's departure.
- Children will only be released to authorized individuals listed on the Emergency Contact Form.

If a child participates in Extended Day, dismissal is no later than **2:30 p.m.**

Children remain under school supervision until properly signed out.

Communication at Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival and dismissal times are dedicated to supervision and transitions. If you need to discuss concerns with a teacher, please schedule a separate meeting time.

Electronic Devices

For safety and attentiveness, cell phone use is discouraged during arrival and dismissal.

Extended Day Program

FPDS offers optional Extended Day programming from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

- Children must be three years old to participate in Stay and Play.
- Children age two and younger are eligible for Stay and Nap.

Enrollment details and registration information are provided at Parent Orientation.

Late Pickup Policy

Children must be picked up promptly at dismissal time.

- After 1:00 p.m. (regular day dismissal)
- After 2:30 p.m. (Extended Day dismissal)

A late pickup fee of \$2.00 per minute, per child, will be assessed beginning at 1:01 p.m. or 2:31 p.m., respectively.

Repeated late pickups may result in review of continued enrollment.

Unexpected School Closures

FPDS follows the lead of Austin Independent School District (AISD) for weather-related closures or delays.

Families will be notified of closures via email and Brightwheel.

The school may also close due to:

- Severe weather
- Flooding
- Fire
- Utility interruption
- Unsafe building conditions

- Other emergencies impacting health or safety

Tuition refunds are not provided for weather-related or emergency closures.

After five weather-related closure days, the FPDS Board may consider adding a make-up day to the calendar.

Substitute Teachers

FPDS maintains qualified substitute teachers to ensure continuity of care and instruction during staff absences.

Parents who may be interested in serving as a substitute can inquire at the beginning of the school year. Substitutes are paid bi-weekly (on the 15th and last day of the month) at a rate of \$20/hour.

All substitute teachers must:

- Complete Substitute Orientation
- Undergo required background checks
- Meet applicable licensing requirements

Parent substitutes serve in a supporting role and will not act as the lead teacher. Classroom management and discipline remain under the direction of the classroom teacher.

Supplies

Each child should bring the following to school:

- A labeled change of clothing (updated seasonally)
- A labeled backpack or tote bag
- A labeled water bottle
- A daily snack and lunch (see Nutrition section for guidelines)

Teachers may provide additional classroom supply lists at the beginning of the school year.

Please label all personal belongings clearly, including clothing, lunch containers, water bottles, and outerwear.

Security and Comfort Items

To encourage independence and social engagement, comfort items (such as stuffed animals or toys) should remain in backpacks or be left at home unless otherwise discussed with the teacher.

If your child is experiencing difficulty with separation, please speak with your child's teacher to develop a supportive transition plan.

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable, washable clothing that allows for independent toileting and active play.

Please provide a complete, labeled change of clothing to be kept at school at all times. This should include:

- Shirt
- Pants/shorts
- Underwear
- Socks

Clothing should be appropriate for outdoor play and changing weather conditions. Layers are recommended during cooler months.

Footwear

Closed-toe, closed-heel athletic shoes are required for safe participation in playground and movement activities.

Sandals, Crocs, boots, and other unstable footwear are not permitted for active play. If a child arrives in inappropriate footwear, parents may be required to provide suitable shoes.

School Photos

Individual student photos are typically taken in the fall. Class photos are taken in the spring.

Photos are taken during the school day and made available for purchase. Participation is optional.

Classroom Donations

FPDS appreciates the generosity of families who wish to donate items.

To ensure compliance with safety and licensing standards, all donations must be reviewed and approved by the school office prior to classroom use.

Items may not be given directly to teachers. The school reserves the right to decline items that do not meet safety guidelines or program needs.

EXTENDED DAY & AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Stay and Play / Stay and Nap

Stay and Play/Nap is an optional extended care program available to enrolled students from **1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

- Students must be pre-registered to attend.
- An additional fee applies.
- Children must be signed out at dismissal.

This program is separate from the regular school day schedule.

After-School Enrichment Programs

Occasionally, outside enrichment providers offer programs on campus immediately following school hours.

These programs:

- Are operated independently from FPDS.
- Contract directly with parents.
- Maintain required background checks and safety compliance.
- Are not employees of FPDS.

FPDS is not responsible for the policies, supervision, or liability of independently contracted enrichment programs.

Questions regarding enrichment programs should be directed to the FPDS Director or the enrichment provider.

After-School Campus Use

Children must be signed out before remaining on campus.

After dismissal:

- Only Stay and Play students may use the large playground between 1:00 and 2:30 p.m.
- Families who wish to visit must exit the classroom area before socializing.
- Children may not re-enter the building without adult supervision.

Playground Use Outside of School Hours

The small playground may be used immediately after school under direct parent supervision.

The following rules apply:

- Children must be supervised at all times.
- Playground equipment may not be moved.
- Sand toys remain in the sandbox.
- School equipment stored in sheds is not available for use.
- Hazards should be reported to the school office.

The playground is not supervised by school staff outside of school hours.

Birthday Parties and Gift Exchange

Invitations may be distributed at school only if the entire class is invited.

If not all students are invited, invitations must be distributed privately outside of school.

Gifts may not be exchanged between students at school.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health Requirements

FPDS complies with all health regulations established by the State of Texas.

Before attending school, each child must have on file:

- Current immunization records or a state-approved exemption affidavit
- A health statement signed by a licensed health-care professional

Children may not attend school without required documentation on file. Parents are responsible for keeping all records current.

Daily Health Screening

Staff conduct informal health observations at arrival each day. If a child appears ill or unable to comfortably participate in activities, the parent may be asked to take the child home.

Parents should inform teachers of any recent illness or injury prior to arrival.

Illness and Exclusion Policy

Children must remain at home if they exhibit:

- Fever of 100.0°F or higher
- Fever within the previous 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the previous 24 hours
- Undiagnosed rash
- Discharging eyes (suspected conjunctivitis)
- Persistent coughing
- Symptoms of a contagious illness
- Symptoms requiring medication to participate comfortably

Children must be symptom-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing or symptom-masking medication before returning to school.

Children must be well enough to participate in all daily activities, including outdoor play.

The school reserves the right to require a physician's note prior to return.

Illness During the School Day

If a child becomes ill while at school:

1. The child will be separated from the group and supervised.
2. Parents will be contacted immediately.
3. The child must be picked up within 30 minutes of notification.

Parents are expected to remain reachable during school hours.

Communicable Diseases

Parents must notify the school if their child is diagnosed with a communicable disease.

Families will be notified of potential exposure while maintaining confidentiality.

Return-to-school decisions will follow state and public health guidance.

Head Lice

FPDS maintains a **No-Nit (Lice Egg) Policy** in an effort to minimize the spread of head lice and protect the health of our school community.

Head lice are common among young children and are not a sign of poor hygiene. However, because lice spread easily in group settings, prompt treatment and careful monitoring are essential.

The child may return after appropriate treatment has been initiated and no live lice or nits are present. The school reserves the right to re-check prior to readmission.

Parents are encouraged to routinely check their child's hair and notify the school of confirmed cases.

Allergies and Asthma

Parents must inform the school of any diagnosed allergies or asthma conditions.

For life-threatening allergies or asthma:

- A physician-signed Action Plan must be on file.
- Prescribed emergency medication must be provided.
- Medication must be current and properly labeled.
- Parents are responsible for replacing expired medication.

Medication Policy

Because FPDS operates as a half-day program, routine medication is not administered during school hours.

If a child requires non-emergency medication during the school day, a parent must come to the school to administer it.

Emergency Medication

In the event of a severe allergic reaction or asthma emergency:

- Trained staff will administer prescribed emergency medication in accordance with the child's Action Plan.
- Emergency services (911) will be contacted if necessary.
- Parents will be notified immediately.

Emergency medications are stored securely but remain accessible to staff.

Emergency Medical Procedures

In the event of a medical emergency:

1. A trained staff member will remain with the child and administer first aid.
2. Emergency medical services (911) will be contacted when necessary.
3. Parents will be notified immediately.

All injuries, accidents, and unexpected illnesses are documented using an Incident Report.

- A copy is provided to parents.
- The original is kept in the child's file.
- Incidents requiring medical treatment may be reported to Texas Health and Human Services as required.

Parents must notify the school if medical treatment is sought following a school-related injury.

Parents receive an immediate phone call for any head injury, regardless of severity.

Vision and Hearing Screening

In compliance with Texas law, children who are **four years old on or before September 1** and enrolled for the first time must complete vision and hearing screening within 120 days of enrollment.

If a child remains enrolled and turns five, updated documentation may be required.

If you choose not to participate in on-site screening, documentation from a licensed or certified provider must be submitted.

Parents are responsible for screening costs.

Handwashing and Hygiene

Handwashing is an essential part of daily health practices.

Children wash hands:

- Upon arrival
- Before meals and snacks
- After toileting
- After outdoor play
- After coughing, sneezing, or nose blowing
- After contact with sand, dirt, or pets

Staff model and supervise proper handwashing procedures in accordance with state licensing standards.

Adult visitors and volunteers are expected to follow the same procedures.

Nutrition

Parents provide a daily snack and lunch for their child.

FPDS does not provide meals and is not responsible for meeting each child's daily nutritional requirements.

Snack and Lunch Guidelines

Families are encouraged to send balanced meals that include a variety of food groups.

- Water will be served with snack.
- Only water should be sent in water bottles.
- Sugary drinks, soda, and sports drinks are not permitted.
- Foods should be prepared and ready to eat.
- Lunches must be packed with appropriate cooling methods, as refrigeration is not available.
- Containers should be manageable for children to open independently.

Choking Prevention

For safety, the following foods are not permitted:

- Popcorn
- Whole nuts
- Hard pretzels

The following foods must be cut appropriately:

- Grapes (quartered)
- Cherry or grape tomatoes (quartered)
- Hot dogs (cut lengthwise and into small pieces)
- Large raw vegetables (cut into small pieces)

Staff reserve the right to return unsafe food items to the child's lunchbox.

Food Allergies

Parents must notify the school of any diagnosed food allergies and complete required medical documentation.

FPDS is not a nut-free or allergen-free facility. However, classrooms may be designated free of specific foods when necessary due to severe allergies. Families will be notified if restrictions apply.

Parents are responsible for providing alternative food when special snacks are served.

Birthday Celebrations

Families may provide a special snack for birthday celebrations. Teachers will communicate guidelines in advance.

Balloons are not permitted.

Extended Day

Snack is not provided during Extended Day due to allergies/cross-contamination. Children will have their water bottles available to them during Stay and Play

Physical Activity and Outdoor Play

Children are provided daily opportunities for active play to support healthy development.

Toddlers (12–23 months)

Toddlers receive multiple supervised opportunities for movement appropriate to their developmental stage throughout the day.

Preschool and Pre-K

Preschool and Pre-K children participate in a minimum of 90 minutes of active play daily, including outdoor play when weather permits.

When weather or air quality prevents outdoor play, indoor movement activities are provided.

FPDS follows Child Care Weather Watch guidelines when determining outdoor safety.

Children should wear appropriate clothing and secure footwear for safe participation in active play.

Diapering and Toilet Training

FPDS recognizes that children develop toilet readiness at different ages and stages. We work in partnership with families to support this transition in a consistent and encouraging manner.

Parents should communicate toilet-learning progress so that home and school practices remain consistent.

Children actively toilet training must wear underwear during the school day. Children should demonstrate readiness signs before transitioning to underwear at school. Teachers may recommend delaying full-day underwear use if accidents are frequent or disruptive to the classroom environment.

Accidents are a normal part of the toilet-learning process. Staff will assist children in a calm and supportive manner. Families should provide multiple labeled changes of clothing.

Staff follow sanitary diapering and toileting procedures in accordance with state licensing standards.

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

Discipline Philosophy

FPDS is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and nurturing learning environment. Our approach to discipline is rooted in positive guidance and reflects our Christian values of kindness, empathy, and responsibility.

Staff use developmentally appropriate guidance strategies including:

- Modeling expected behavior
- Redirection to appropriate activities
- Clear and consistent limits
- Logical and natural consequences
- Problem-solving with children
- Brief, supervised separation when necessary

FPDS complies with all discipline and guidance requirements established by Texas Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation.

The following practices are strictly prohibited:

- Corporal punishment
- Shaming or humiliating a child
- Withholding food, rest, or bathroom access
- Isolating a child without supervision
- Verbal abuse or threats

Conscious Discipline®

FPDS staff are trained in Conscious Discipline®, a research-based social-emotional learning and classroom management approach developed by Dr. Becky Bailey.

Conscious Discipline teaches that discipline is something we help children develop within themselves rather than something imposed upon them. Through consistent routines, shared language, and emotional coaching, children learn to:

- Recognize and manage emotions
- Solve problems respectfully
- Build positive relationships
- Develop self-control and empathy

This approach aligns with our play-based philosophy and our commitment to nurturing the whole child.

Supporting Inclusive Services

FPDS values inclusive education and strives to meet the diverse needs of children within our program.

When appropriate, we may:

- Collaborate with early intervention programs
- Participate in IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) or IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meetings
- Make reasonable classroom accommodations
- Allow outside therapists to provide services onsite

Outside providers must:

- Coordinate services in advance
- Meet required background and security clearances
- Work collaboratively with FPDS staff
- Follow school policies

FPDS does not provide separate classrooms for children with special care needs.

If a child's needs exceed the resources available within our program, or if safety concerns arise that cannot be reasonably mitigated, the school may determine that an alternative placement is necessary.

Changes at Home

Significant changes at home — such as travel, illness, family transitions, or other events — can affect a child's behavior at school. Parents are encouraged to inform teachers of changes that may impact their child's emotional well-being.

Aggressive or Unsafe Behavior

Occasional conflicts and developmental behaviors are expected in early childhood. However, behaviors that pose a risk to the safety or emotional well-being of others will be addressed promptly.

If a child exhibits aggressive or unsafe behavior:

1. The child may be briefly separated from the group with adult supervision.
2. Parents will be notified.
3. A conference may be scheduled to develop a support plan.

FPDS will make reasonable efforts to support the child through consistent guidance and collaboration with the family.

However, if behavior:

- Continues to endanger others
- Significantly disrupts the classroom environment
- Cannot be managed safely within available staffing and resources

The school may require temporary removal or may determine that continued enrollment is not appropriate, in accordance with the Withdrawal and Dismissal policy.

Biting Policy

Biting is a common developmental behavior in toddlers and young preschool children. It may occur due to frustration, limited language skills, teething, or difficulty with emotional regulation.

FPDS is committed to addressing biting behavior promptly and thoughtfully while maintaining the safety and dignity of all children.

When a Bite Occurs

If a biting incident occurs:

1. The child who was bitten will receive immediate care and comfort.
2. The child who bit will be addressed in a calm and firm manner.
3. The incident will be documented.
4. Both families will be notified the same day.

To protect confidentiality, the names of children involved will not be shared.

Preventative Strategies

Teachers will:

- Closely supervise children
- Redirect behavior when early warning signs are observed
- Support emotional language development
- Provide appropriate teething or sensory alternatives when needed
- Collaborate with families to develop consistent strategies

Repeated Biting

If biting becomes repeated or frequent:

- A conference may be scheduled with parents.
- A support plan may be developed.
- Additional strategies may be implemented within the classroom.

While biting is often a developmental phase, the safety of all children remains a priority.

If biting behavior continues to pose a safety risk and cannot be effectively managed within available staffing and classroom resources, temporary removal or dismissal may be considered in accordance with the Withdrawal and Dismissal policy.

SAFETY & SECURITY

State Licensing and Inspections

FPDS is licensed by Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC) Child Care Regulation.

Our license and most recent inspection reports are available in the school office and may also be accessed online through the HHSC website.

FPDS undergoes regular inspections for:

- Fire safety
- Sanitation
- Gas safety

- Compliance with Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers

Families may review inspection reports and minimum standards at any time.

For questions or concerns regarding licensing, HHSC may be contacted directly.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

All FPDS staff are mandated reporters and are legally required to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Reports may be made to the Texas Abuse Hotline at **(800) 252-5400** or online at www.txabusehotline.org.

Parents who have concerns may also bring them confidentially to the Director.

FPDS staff receive annual training in the recognition and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Custody and Court Orders

If there are custody orders or restrictions regarding your child, a current court order must be provided to the school office.

In the absence of a court order, both parents have equal rights to access their child under Texas law.

FPDS does not mediate custody disputes. If a dispute arises on campus, local law enforcement will be contacted.

Building Security

For the protection of our children:

- School and church buildings remain locked during school hours.
- Each family is issued one electronic access card.
- Additional cards may be purchased.
- Lost cards must be reported immediately. Replacement fees apply.

Families are expected to use their access cards daily and avoid allowing others to enter (“tailgating”).

Unknown individuals should be directed to the church office or school administration.

Open Door Policy

Despite locked doors for safety and security, we welcome parents at preschool at any time. Please be aware that frequent visits may disrupt your student’s school day routine. We ask you to be sensitive to the impact your visit may have on your child and the classroom dynamics.

If you need to speak to a teacher or the Director, we encourage you to email in advance and set a convenient time to meet so that we have time to focus on your issue without disrupting class supervision and activities.

Arrival, Dismissal & Parking Lot Safety

Authorized Pick-Up and Car Pools

Children may be released only to individuals designated in writing by the parent or guardian.

- All authorized individuals must be listed on the Emergency Contact Form.
- If someone not listed will pick up your child, written notification must be provided in advance.
- Staff may request photo identification from any individual picking up a child.

These procedures are in place to ensure the safety and protection of every child.

Parking Lot Safety

The parking lot is considered part of the school campus and safety rules apply at all times.

Drivers

- Speed limit is 5 mph.
- Cell phone use while driving on campus is prohibited.
- Park only in designated, marked spaces.
- Do not park in handicapped spaces without proper authorization.
- Do not block driveways, fire lanes, or designated church access areas.
- Do not double park.

Pedestrians

- Children must be held by the hand while in the parking lot.
- Parents should remain attentive and avoid distractions.
- Children may not walk independently across parking areas.

The safety of children, families, church members, and staff depends on full cooperation with these procedures.

Emergency Contact Information

Each child must have a completed Emergency Contact Form on file prior to attendance.

Parents must notify the school promptly of any changes to contact information.

Emergency forms are maintained in classrooms and in the main office for use during drills and evacuations.

Emergency Preparedness and Evacuations

FPDS maintains a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan for events such as:

- Fire
- Severe weather
- Intruder situations
- Utility failure
- Other emergencies

The school conducts regular fire, weather, and lockdown drills in accordance with licensing requirements.

Emergency evacuation routes are posted in each classroom.

In the event that First Presbyterian Day School must be evacuated to another location, the following locations are arranged as emergency sites depending on the emergency.

St Matthew's Episcopal Preschool
8134 Mesa Drive
Austin, TX 78757

Covenant Presbyterian Church
3003 Northland Drive
Austin, TX 78757

Westover Hills Church of Christ
8332 Mesa Drive
Austin, TX 78759

Smoking, Alcohol, and Drugs

The use of tobacco, alcohol, vaping devices, or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited on school property during school hours and at school-sponsored events.

Weapons Policy

FPDS is a weapon-free campus.

Weapons are prohibited on school property except for licensed law enforcement officers acting in their official capacity.

Parents who are active law enforcement officers should notify the Director regarding professional carry requirements.

Toy weapons, including toy guns, swords, or similar items, may not be brought to school.

Gang-Free Zone

In accordance with Texas Penal Code provisions, the area within 1,000 feet of a child-care center is designated as a gang-free zone.

Suspicious activity should be reported to the Director.

Field Trips

Due to safety considerations, FPDS limits off-campus field trips.

Occasionally, Pre-K or Kindergarten classes may participate in supervised walking trips within the immediate neighborhood.

Written parent permission is required for each off-campus activity.

Water Activities

Children may participate in supervised sprinkler play or water-based sensory activities.

- Wading pools and swimming pools are not used.
- Children are never left unsupervised during water play.
- Parent permission for water play must be indicated on the Emergency Contact Form.

Animals

Animals prohibited by state regulation (including frogs, turtles, and domestic birds) are not kept as classroom pets.

Service animals are permitted as required by law.

Children and staff wash hands before and after animal contact.

Parents should notify the school of any animal allergies.

Parental Rights

In accordance with Texas Health and Human Services Child Care Regulation, parents or guardians of children enrolled in a licensed child-care center have the right to:

- Enter and examine the center during hours of operation without advance notice.
- File a complaint against the center.
- Review the center's publicly accessible records.
- Review the center's written records concerning their child.
- Receive inspection reports and information about how to access the center's online compliance history.
- Have the center comply with a court order that prevents another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the child.
- Obtain contact information for the local Child Care Regulation office.
- Inspect any available video recordings of an alleged incident involving their child, subject to state confidentiality requirements. (FPDS does not maintain classroom video recordings.)
- Obtain a copy of the center's policies and procedures handbook.
- Review staff training records and in-house training curriculum.
- Exercise these rights without retaliation.

COMMUNICATION & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

FPDS values strong partnerships between families and school staff. Open, respectful communication helps create a positive and supportive environment for children.

Beginning of the School Year

Meet-the-Teacher

Prior to the start of the school year, families are invited to attend Meet-the-Teacher in their child's classroom.

This visit allows children to become familiar with their classroom environment and meet their teacher. Teachers will share classroom expectations, developmental goals, and important information for the upcoming year.

One electronic access card per family will be distributed at this time. Additional cards may be purchased at Parent Orientation.

Parent Orientation and Classroom Open House

Parent Orientation is held prior to the start of school and is strongly encouraged.

Orientation provides families the opportunity to:

- Learn about school-wide procedures
- Meet other families
- Sign up for volunteer and PTO opportunities
- Ask questions about the school year

- Children to visit their classroom prior to the first day of school.

Ongoing Communication

FPDS communicates regularly with families through:

- Brightwheel messaging
- Email communication
- Classroom newsletters
- School-wide announcements

Parents are encouraged to check messages daily to stay informed of classroom and school updates.

Contacting the School

During school hours, teachers are engaged in active supervision and instruction.

- Messages for teachers should be sent through Brightwheel or by contacting the Day School Office. Teachers will reply to messages as they are able, potentially at the end of the school day.
- For urgent matters, contact the Day School Office directly.

Distribution of Materials

Any materials distributed to Day School families must be school-related and approved by the Day School Office prior to distribution.

Assessment and Teacher Conferences

Teachers observe and assess children's growth throughout the school year using developmentally appropriate tools.

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled at least once annually and may be requested at any time.

If concerns arise regarding a child's development, behavior, or learning, teachers will communicate promptly and may recommend additional support resources.

Changes at Home

Families are encouraged to inform teachers of significant changes at home (travel, illness, new sibling, family transitions, etc.), as these may impact a child's behavior and emotional well-being at school.

Addressing Questions or Concerns

FPDS believes concerns are best resolved through direct and respectful communication.

1. First, speak with your child's teacher.
2. If further discussion is needed, contact the Director.
3. If concerns remain unresolved, the Day School Board may be consulted.

We ask that concerns be addressed directly with school staff rather than discussed publicly or on social media.

Confidentiality

FPDS respects the confidentiality of children, families, and staff. Information about other children or families will not be shared.

COMMUNITY & FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

FPDS thrives because of the partnership between families, teachers, and the church community. We encourage families to participate in school events and volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

The PTO supports the mission of FPDS by:

- Coordinating community-building events
- Supporting teachers and classrooms
- Assisting with fundraising efforts
- Encouraging family engagement

All families are welcome to participate in PTO activities and meetings.

Annual School Events

Throughout the school year, FPDS hosts special events that foster connection and celebrate childhood.

Make-A-Plate Fundraiser

Families may participate in this annual fundraiser that supports school improvements and programming.

Playground Clean-Up Day

Families are invited to help maintain and beautify our outdoor spaces.

Gingerbread Party

A festive holiday event for children and families.

Teacher Appreciation Week

A week dedicated to honoring and celebrating our teaching staff.

Multi-Cultural Events

Opportunities to celebrate the diverse cultures represented within our school community.

Family Celebration Events

Special gatherings throughout the year designed to bring families together.

Mud & Water Week

A joyful, hands-on outdoor experience celebrating sensory play and exploration.

Graduation Chapel

A special chapel service honoring our Pre-K students as they transition to kindergarten.

COMMUNICATION

From Us to You

Our primary form of communication with you will be by Brightwheel and by email. Any messages generated by the Office will be emailed to the address you have provided us. Your child's teacher will contact you for specific class announcements and progress by Brightwheel and/or messages posted outside the classroom. Please email updates to your contact information to the Day School at dayschool@fpdsaustin.org immediately after changes occur so that we have accurate contact information on file. You can also update your contact information in your Brightwheel profile.

There will be times when announcements or paperwork are placed in your child's tote bag/backpack. Be sure to check your child's belongings each day.

From You to Us

If you have an issue you would like to communicate to the staff, Board or administration, please email fpdsdirector@fpdsaustin.org. Issues should be presented in writing so that concerns are clear and verbal messages are not misunderstood. Please do not call teachers on their cell phones during school time. They need to be spending their time attending to your children. Messages to the teachers should go through the administrative staff in the Day School Office. Therefore, to leave a message with your child's teacher and/or contact the Office during school hours, please call the Day School Office at (512) 345-8961. Please program our number into your cell phone!

Assessment Process and Teacher Conferences

Each family completes a Personal Information Form for their child to enable us to determine any physical, family, social/emotional or cultural issues that will affect your child's progress and development at school. Every family also provides us with goals for their child on the Goal Sheet. It is imperative that you provide us with information about any outside services your child receives (physical, occupational, speech, emotional, vision, hearing) so that we can follow through with whatever the therapist(s) recommend. When we know what is happening in your child's life, we can better provide a wonderful preschool experience for your child.

You and your child will visit with the teaching staff individually in the classroom to help your child orient to the school and to help the staff learn more about you and your child. Speech Screening is available in the Fall. By the end of the Fall term, you will receive a brief written report from your child's teacher. Vision and Hearing Screening opportunities are provided in the Spring. A child or group may be the subject of a focused observation and a developmental assessment.

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held in February each year. Your teachers will review your child's progress and share celebrations and concerns with you at this time. You will also be given a brief written report at the end of the school year. At any time, you may request a conference for specific concerns with your child's teacher.

Distribution of Information

Any notes, letters, invitations, advertisements, etc. must be related to school business and

cleared with the administrative staff in the Day School Office before distribution to Day School families.

Conflicts

If a disagreement occurs between parents and staff members, we ask you to follow this sequence:

- Speak, first, with the person with whom you have the disagreement. It might also be helpful if you put the problem in writing. If an agreement cannot be reached, then please,
- Contact the Director and set up a dedicated time to meet. You are encouraged to put your concerns in writing to make sure all aspects of the problem get addressed.
- If a satisfactory agreement still cannot be reached, put your concerns in writing to the FPDS Ministry Board Moderator at fpdsboard@fpdsaustin.org. You will be contacted by a member of the Board after your concern(s) have been reviewed.

Who Should I Ask? Who Should I Tell?

If a question, situation, or suggestion arises and you don't know who to ask or tell, please stop by the Day School Office and let us help or guide you. You can always call and leave us a message at 345-8961 or email us at fpdsdirector@fpdsaustin.org. Also feel free to make recommendations and express concerns via email. We love to hear from you!

PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)

The FPDS Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) is organized for the purpose of supporting the education of the children at FPDS by fostering relationships between the school, church, parents, and teachers. The PTO works to enhance the educational facilities and opportunities for the students of FPDS that are not otherwise provided for in the school budget, and by volunteering to augment the activities of the FPDS staff.

The primary objectives of the PTO are:

- promote volunteer opportunities and programs for the school;
- sponsor projects and events that benefit the students of FPDS; and
- raise funds as necessary to support the growing needs of FPDS.

The FPDS PTO Executive Board is comprised of a: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. A FPDS Staff Representative and a Room Representative(s) from each class also actively and provide leadership for the activities of the PTO. Executive Board positions are elected, typically at the end of the subsequent school year. Each FPDS class designates at least one Room Representative for the upcoming year to act as a liaison between parents and the PTO. Any parent/guardian is invited to become a member of the PTO or any of its event committees.

All PTO events are volunteer-led and requires support through attendance and volunteering. Each school-wide event requires one to two Committee Chairs and many helping hands.

Make-A-Plate Fundraiser

This event is our first fundraiser of the school year and one of our most creative. You will take home plate templates, allow your child/ren to turn into artists and create a masterpiece. Volunteers are needed to promote and coordinate this fun fundraiser – over a 2 week period, before and after school.

This event generally occurs between the end of September to mid-October and on-campus. Plates are typically delivered the beginning of December and make wonderful holiday gifts.

Playground Cleanup

Participate in a fun Saturday morning workday – in the Fall and Spring, to assist with playground upkeep. Activities usually include: adding mulch to the fall-zone areas of the playground, planting, power washing playground equipment, and other planned cleanup activities. This is a fun, family-friendly event. Enjoy coffee and breakfast snacks while you work... bring shovels, wheelbarrows, rakes, and work gloves. Children are more than welcome to come help, or just play!

Gingerbread House Party

This is a fun, family-friendly, community event which is a long-standing FPDS tradition. Decorate a real gingerbread house from a smorgasbord of holiday candy, with no mess to clean up. Volunteers are needed to help make this event a success ~ planning and organizing, building gingerbread houses, making icing, sorting candy, decorating the event site. This event generally occurs on the first or second Saturday of December in the Fellowship Hall at FPCA.

Teacher Appreciation Week

Help show our appreciation for the caring hands and daily work of the FPDS Staff. This week-long event combines of various gestures of appreciation to help show the FPDS staff how much they mean to the parent community. Volunteers help facilitate activities over a week period such as special breakfasts and lunches. Room Representatives coordinate classroom participation like 'bring your teacher a flower day', and other creative acts of appreciation. All activities take place occurs on the FPDS campus during school hours, but may require volunteers to perform some duties off-campus.

Multi-Cultural Events

Help the school celebrate cultural diversity and coordinate, decorate, and plan fun-filled, authentic 'holidays' – such as Chinese New Year, Persian New Year and Hispanic Heritage. The celebration(s) often include: special visitors such as Chinese dancers, Ballet Folklorica, school decorations and a food sampling. Please let us know if your family celebrates a special holiday. We would love to share your cultural traditions with the rest of the school!

Cultural holidays currently include:

- Hispanic Heritage (September)
- Chinese New Year (January/February)
- Persian New Year (March)

Family Celebration

We love to celebrate our families! The PTO works alongside the staff by preparing a time of fellowship with – friends, family, good eats, live music, and a silent auction.

Help plan for the music or the food at Classroom Celebration. We have had picnics, food trucks, Dollar Dogs, and pizza parties

The Silent Auction is the largest fundraiser for FPDS, and many volunteers are needed to make this event a success. You can help by gathering donations from friends, restaurants, business products and services, vacation rentals, musicians and artists you know to donate to the Silent Auction. This event typically takes place on-campus the last Thursday of April, in the evening.

Mud & Water Week

During this week, each class will have a day of water-related fun on the playground. Volunteers are needed to transform the playground grass area into a spectacle of pools of water, shaving cream, bubbles, toys, beach umbrellas, and a time for a summer treat like popsicles. Volunteers will set up and breakdown the activities throughout the week. This event takes place in mid-May during the school day.

Graduation Chapel

In late May, we celebrate our FPDS graduates who are moving on to kindergarten. This special chapel service is open to the entire family. The PTO coordinates a slideshow montage and a family-friendly reception, and working directly with the Director and 4's teachers.