

Parent & Student Handbook



Revised May 2017

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Parents,

You want the very best care and education for your child. You want him or her to be in a safe and stimulating environment and to receive loving guidance and encouragement to learn and grow.

As the pre-school of Decatur First United Methodist Church, First Grace is totally committed to providing the excellent care and education that you want and expect your child to receive. As partners with parents and families, our purpose is to make these first and most formative years a happy and memorable time while building a strong foundation in each child for future growth and learning.

As the pastor of First United Methodist Church, I see the First Grace providing the quality care and teaching every day that I want my grandchild

to have. Our two-year-old grandson was a “drop-in” student at First Grace one week during the summer. After the first day, he woke up every morning saying, “Pop Pop, We go to First Grace.”

I will do everything I possibly can to support the children, parents, and staff of First Grace so all the children of First Grace will be inspired to discover more every day about themselves, their world, and their God who loves them infinitely. My direct role in First Grace is to lead a brief Bible lesson in chapel each week for ages 2 and up. If I can be of service to you in any other way as you carry out the most important job in the world, the work of parenting, please do not hesitate to call on me.

Sincerely,

Pastor Hughey Reynolds



Dear Parents,

Welcome to a new school year! We are so excited to have your child at First Grace this year! Your child will grow and learn in a happy, nurturing and stimulating environment that emphasizes a LOVE for learning! We are looking forward to getting to know you and your child.

Our preschool program offers a wide variety of academic experiences and works to instill a love of Jesus into the hearts of our young students. Your child will be actively learning throughout the day regardless of what classroom they are in. Teachers will work on fine motor skills, language, art skills, music, math, writing, science, STEM activities and reading. We plan daily lessons to encourage and challenge your preschooler. Our 2K-1 – 4K students have Chapel every Wednesday with Pastor Hughey and Music and Motion each week with Mr. Patrick. We have fun opportunities in the classrooms from daily jobs to student of the month. Each classroom teacher works hard to ensure your child has the best preschool experience! You will be amazed at all the new and exciting things your child will learn at First Grace this year!

Sincerely,

Cindy Brigman
First Grace Director

First Grace Child Development Center

Mission Statement

Our goal is to provide a Christian environment through a variety of learning and play experiences that contribute to spiritual, physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of each child.

To Achieve Our Goal:

We strive to provide a safe and loving atmosphere where parents can feel secure about leaving their children in our care.

We believe that each child is a unique individual. We are sensitive to a child's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs. We provide developmentally appropriate programs that focus on the process of learning and which provide success for all. We encourage not just learning, but the love of learning.

We believe that the strength of our program is in the dedication of our teaching staff. We support our teachers with staff development, resources and freedom to create the best of learning experiences for the youngsters. The teachers encourage creativity, curiosity, and self-esteem, while making learning fun.

We believe in positive methods of discipline. We establish consistent, age-appropriate limits to help children function in their world. We hope to encourage a sense of independence and responsibility resulting in an increased awareness of others and respect for each other.

We believe in providing a physical environment that is safe, clean, healthy and oriented to children. The classrooms are arranged to provide an environment in which children construct knowledge, use communication with adults and peers as part of the learning process, and use their creativity in many, varied ways. Developmental levels of children are considered as the classrooms are designed.



Daily Operations

First Grace is open Monday-Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Arrival

Parents are responsible for delivering their child to the appropriate classroom and signing them in for the day. Sign-in sheets are conveniently located and are kept on file for documentation purposes. It is very important that we have a record of arrival and departure of each child every day.

Attendance

Preschool instruction, specifically the 2k, 3k and 4k classes, will begin at 8:30. To assist with classroom planning, please notify the Director and/or your child's teacher of any variation in your child's normal schedule, including upcoming scheduled appoints or vacations, as well as unscheduled absences as soon as possible. If you child will not arrive before 9:30 am, but will arrive prior to lunch, please notify the Director.

Departure

Please notify the office, 256-355-5555 or firstgrace@decaturfumc.org if you will not be able to pick your child up on time. Your child will only be permitted to leave First Grace with those who are included on the pick-up list, which is included in the registration packet.

In the event someone new is picking up your child, prior documentation in writing will be required. Photo identification will also be required for pickup.

Late Pickup: Children remaining at the center after 6:00 p.m., will be incur a late fee of \$15.00 for the first 5 minutes and \$1.00 each minute thereafter. These fees will be assessed to your monthly statement when applicable.

Withdrawal

A two week written notice is requested to withdraw your child from First Grace. Weekly fees are still applicable during this time and your child's account will need to be made current before leaving.

First Grace reserves the right to withdraw your child if the Director determines that the program is not meeting your child's needs or if your child demonstrates an inability to properly acclimate to the classroom environment.

Registration & Enrollment

Children attending First Grace 5 days per week are considered full time. At the discretion of the Director and with board approval part-time enrollment may be considered.

An annual non-refundable supply fee of \$100 is required upon admission and re-enrollment.

Expecting Parents: Along with a written application, a non-refundable application fee of \$25 will be required to secure a spot on the classroom waiting list.

Waiting List Students: Open enrollment is held annually in May. A non-refundable application fee of \$25 is required with the submission of a written application.

Current Students: Re-Enrollment is held annually in April for all current students and will be opened to new students in May. In order to retain your child's enrolled status, all enrollment forms, including the supply fee mentioned above are due within the designated Enrollment Period.

Registration Checklist

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| _____ Registration Form | _____ Parent/Guardian Agreement |
| _____ Emergency Medical Form | _____ Payment & Tuition Agreement |
| _____ Form of Affidavit | _____ Walking Permission Slip |
| _____ Photo Release Form | _____ Vaccination Card (Blue Card) |
| _____ Non-Refundable Supply Fee (\$100) | |
| _____ Non-Refundable Application Fee (\$25) – Waiting List Students ONLY | |



Holiday Schedule

First Grace will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

- New Years Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and Day After
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day



happy
holidays!

When a Holiday falls on a Saturday, it will be observed on the previous Friday. When a holiday falls on a Sunday, it will be observed the following Monday.

Personal Celebrations

We want to celebrate special days, such as birthdays and other important events with your child. Please coordinate these types of celebrations with your child's teacher.



What to Bring to School

Infant & Crawler Room

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Formula
- Bottles (no glass bottles please)
- Baby Food/Rice Cereal
- Pacifier if needed
- Two complete changes of clothes
- Blanket/Lovey

Wobbler and 1K Room

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Bottles (no glass bottles please)
- Sippy Cup
- Baby Food
- Pacifier if needed
- Two complete changes of clothes
- Blanket

2K-1 & 2K-2 Classrooms

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Sippy Cup
- Pacifier if needed
- Two complete changes of clothes
- Nap Mat & Blanket

3K-1 & 3K-2 Classroom

- Sippy Cup
- Two complete changes of clothes
- Nap Mat & Blanket

4K Classroom

- Sippy Cup
- Two complete changes of clothes
- Nap Mat & Blanket

Extra clothes should be sealed in a large Ziploc bag marked with your child's name clearly indicated on the outside. It is recommended to write children's names on the tag of jackets, sweaters and hats.

Security items, such as stuffed animals, blankets, etc. are permitted for use at naptime. Please refrain from sending unnecessary toys, gum, candy, soft drinks or jewelry to school. Although books, videos, and other educational material of interest to your child may be brought to share when coordinated with your child's teacher.

Dress Code

Children should be dressed in comfortable, washable, weather appropriate play clothes that allow freedom to participate in all activities. Potty training and/or potty trained students should be dressed in clothing he or she can manage without help. As often as weather permits, students will have daily outside playtime, please be mindful of this when dressing your child for school. Rubber soled tie or velcro shoes (tennis shoes) are best for school. Providing proper footwear could help decrease the chance of an accident while playing in or outdoors.

Classroom Transition/Advancement Policy

The transition/advancement of students enrolled at First Grace Child Development Center is a partnership between families and the First Grace staff. As children grow and progress through the Center's classrooms, it is important that parents/guardians be informed of the developmental requirements of each classroom in the center. The developmental requirements are in place to ensure children get the most out of their classroom environment and are important milestones to achieve before transition into the next classroom. Outlined below are the developmental requirements for each classroom:

Infants – The Infant classroom is designed for children 6 weeks to 6 months of age. This classroom naps a minimum of twice per day and utilizes individual cribs for napping. Children are appropriately fed individually. Once children become mobile, they are typically transitioned to the “Crawlers” classroom as openings become available.

Crawlers and Wobblers – The Crawler classroom is designed for children 6 to 12 months of age. This classroom naps twice per day and utilizes individual cribs for napping. Children are fed at a multi-seat feeding table and are allowed and encouraged to begin self-feeding with small, age appropriate snacks, bottles and sippy cups. As children begin walking, they are typically transitioned to the “Wobblers” classroom as openings become available.

1K – The Wobblers classroom is designed for children 12 to 18 months of age. This classroom naps once per day and utilizes individual cribs for napping, with an emphasis on transitioning to cot napping. Children are fed at a multi-seat feeding table and are encouraged to self-feed snacks and properly manipulate and utilize sippy cups.

2K-1 – The Young 2's classroom is designed for children 18 to 24 months of age. This classroom naps once per day and utilizes individual cots for napping. Children are fed in the cafeteria and are expected to have the ability to feed themselves (with some minor assistance, if needed). There may be times during the school year when an opening becomes available in the 2K classroom prior to the regularly schedule transition date. When this occurs, the open space will be offered to the child who is most developmentally ready (not necessarily the oldest) for the 2K classroom environment, which includes, but is not limited to potty training.

2K-2 – The 2K classroom is designed for children who have turned 2 on or before September 1st and show signs of being ready to start the potty training process. This classroom naps once per day and utilizes individual cots for napping. Children are fed in the cafeteria and are expected to have the ability to feed themselves, with some minor assistance.

3K-1 and 3K-2 – The 3K classroom is designed for children who have turned 3 on or before September 1st and are potty trained. This classroom naps once per day and utilizes individual cots for napping; accommodations can be made if a child needs a pull-up at naptime. Children are fed in the cafeteria and are expected to have the ability to feed themselves.

4K – The 4K classroom is designed for children who have turned 4 on or before September 1st and are potty trained. This classroom naps once per day and utilizes individual cots for napping. Children are fed in the cafeteria and are expected to have the ability to feed themselves.

The First Grace Child Development Center’s school year will run from the end of August to the end of May, although the Center is a year-round facility. Classroom transitions/advancements will take place at the end of each school year (end of May/beginning of June) to allow the children to adapt to their new classrooms throughout the fun-filled summer months.

First Grace has made a commitment to stay aligned with the public school system in relation to the age requirements for progression of children from classroom to classroom. Exceptions to the age requirement may be presented to the Director in writing for consideration by the administration and staff, but there is no guarantee that an exception will be granted.



Health & Sickness Policy

Maintaining a well-child facility is a team effort, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

- An immunization record (blue card) and emergency medical treatment form must remain on file. Blue cards must be updated each time your child receives an immunization.
- All allergy information must be kept on file in the office and classroom.
- First Grace is a nut free/allergy aware school

When a child is sick:

- If your child becomes sick at school, every effort will be made to contact you. The student should be picked up from the center within one hour of notification. Children sent home for vomiting, fever, or diarrhea cannot return to school the next day.
- In the event of a sickness related release from school, refer to the table below for returning to school. If your child has had a communicable disease, a doctor's release will be required prior to your child's return to the classroom.

Children will not be allowed to attend or remain at school if any of the following conditions exist:

- Fever of 100.4 or greater, vomiting, and diarrhea within the last 24 hours. The child cannot return to school until they have been fever free for 24 hours without medication.
- Rash of undetermined origin.
- Severe cold, cough, sore throat, or colored drainage from eyes or nose.
- Contagious or communicable disease such as thrush, pink eye, or RSV.
- Three diarrhea diapers within a one hour period.



How long should your child wait before returning to school?

Chicken Pox	5-7 days after outbreak or when sores have healed
Strep Throat	48 after medication has begun and fever free for a minimum of 24 hours
RSV	3-5 days and fever free for a minimum of 24 hours
Hand, Foot & Mouth	5-7 days or when all sores are head and fever free for a minimum of 24 hours
Lice	Remain home until the completion of treatment and the elimination of all nits

Before your child can come back to school you must provide a doctor's note stating your child can return to school.

If your child requires medication while at First Grace a Medication Authorization Form must be filled out and signed before any medication will be administered. Authorization must be given for every day medication is to be given. All medications must be in the original containers with labels intact and legible. The child's full name and dosage information for the medicine should also be on the container.



Safety

Safety is the primary concern when planning all of our activities.

Injury

First Grace Staff are CPR certified and are prepared to take care of minor scrapes and bumps with cleaning, Band-Aids, and love. In the case of a more severe injury parents will be notified for instructions. If the parent is unavailable other names on the emergency pick-up list will be contacted. In the event no one listed can be reached, 911 will be called, while attempts to contact the parents will continue. In the case of an emergency, First Grace will immediately call 911 and then the parent.

Accident reports will be written, distributed to parents and a copy will be filed in the event of any and all injury.

Fire

In the event of a fire children will be evacuated from the building in a calm and orderly manner. Fire drills are conducted on a regular basis to insure everyone's safety. Teachers will remain with their students at all times and will follow the designated fire safety plan.

Tornado

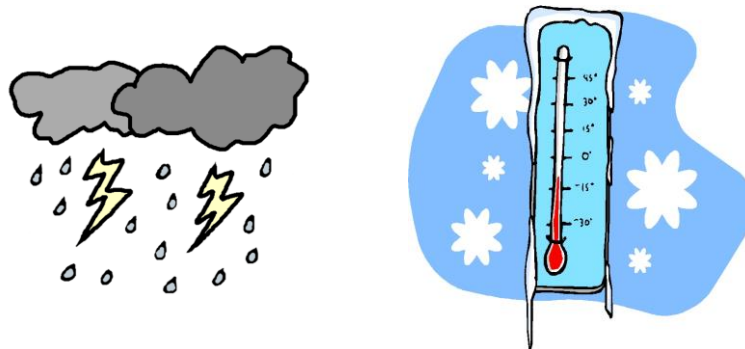
In the event of severe weather children will be taken to the designated "safe place" located in the stair well. Each classroom has a tornado safety plan to follow in the event of severe weather. Tornado drills are conducted on a regular basis to insure everyone's safety.

Lock Down

In the event of an active shooter or other event requiring a full security lockdown, the students will be barricaded in the classrooms.

Inclement Weather

In the event of severe or inclement weather, First Grace will open/close/delay at the discretion of the Director and Board of Directors. Alterations to normal business hours will be communicated via the SchoolCast system and will be sent to WAFF Channel 48 to broadcast.



Guidance & Discipline

Our positive guidance policies and procedures are designed to help children learn appropriate behavior. Children are presented with positive models of acceptable behavior and then given redirection as needed. Through discipline we wish to help your child grow, mature, and develop self-control.

Every classroom will have the same basic rules:

- Always walk in the building
- Always use your inside voice
- Always have sweet hands
- Always have your listening ears on

Disciplinary Procedures:

- First Offense: Teacher will give the child a warning.
- Second Offense: Child will be placed in “Time Out” for the appropriate amount of time, as explained below.
- Third Offense: Child will be taken to the Director’s office for counseling.
- Fourth Offense: Parent will be notified of unacceptable behavior and asked to help with correcting the problem.
- Time Out will be based on the child’s age. Example: a two year old child, will serve a two minute time out.

If the child continues to display the particular behavior and is unable to respect and obey the teacher or is demonstrating destructive or harmful behavior toward others, First Grace reserves the right to dismiss the child from the program.

Biting Policy:

Biting is common in a child care environment. Reasons for biting vary but include teething, sensory exploration, peer interaction, imitation, frustration, anxiety, and curiosity. It occurs most frequently when a child is frustrated, tired, over-stimulated, or not feeling well.

Although biting is not unexpected behavior for toddlers, biting can be harmful to other children and to staff. This biting policy has been developed with both of these ideas in mind. As a childcare facility, we understand that biting, unfortunately, is a part of our setting. Our goal is to help identify what is causing the biting and resolve these issues. If the issue cannot be resolved, this policy serves to protect the children that are bitten. If a biting incident occurs, a bite report will be distributed to the parent of the child biting and to the parent of the child who was bitten. Names of the children are not shared with either parent.

When Biting Does Occur:

Our staff strongly discourages biting. The staff's responsibility is to keep the children safe and help a child that bites learn different, more appropriate behavior. We do not use techniques to alarm, hurt, or frighten children such as biting back or washing a child's mouth out with soap.

For the Child that was bitten:

1. First aid is given to the bite. It is cleaned with soap and water. If the skin is broken, the bite is covered with a band aide.
2. Parents are notified if necessary.
3. A "Bite Report" form is filled out properly documenting the incident. The original is placed in the child's cubby and a copy in their personal file.

For the child that bit:

1. The teacher will firmly tell the child, "No, No Bite"!
2. The child will be placed in time out for no longer than the child's age (i.e. one year old, one minute).
3. Parents are notified if necessary.
4. A "Bite Report" form is filled out properly documenting the incident. The original is placed in the child's cubby and a copy in their personal file.

When biting continues:

1. The child will be observed and shadowed to help prevent additional biting incidents.
2. The child will be given positive attention and approval for positive behavior.

When biting becomes excessive:

1. If a child inflicts 3 bites in a one week period (5 weekdays, M-F) in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, a conference will be held with the parents to discuss the child's behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
2. If the child again inflicts 3 bites in a one week period (5 weekdays, M-F) in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be suspended for 1 business day.
3. If a child once again inflicts 3 bites in a one week period (5 weekdays, M-F) in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be suspended for 3 business days.
4. If a child once again inflicts 3 bites in a one week period (5 weekdays, M-F) in which the skin of another child or staff member is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the parents will be asked to make alternate arrangements for their child and the child's enrollment at the center will be terminated.

If a child, who has progressed through steps 1 and/or 2, goes 2 weeks (10 business days) without biting, we will go back to step one if the child bites again.

Curriculum

First Grace uses a Faith Based Curriculum along with incorporating STEM activities in the classroom and in the curriculum lab, which students visit 3 times a week. The curriculum is also supplemented by additional resources to enhance the learning experience for each child. As there are many different learning styles, we strive to use many different methods and teaching styles to reach each student. It is our desire for each child to become a lifelong learner who is independent, self-confident, and inquisitive.

Chapel is held on Wednesday mornings with Pastor Hughey in the Sanctuary.

Curriculum Lab: Students will attend Curriculum Lab three days a week.

Music and Motion: Students will attend Music and Motion on Thursdays with Mr. Patrick.



Food Service

- We are a **NUT FREE** facility. Due to the extreme nature of allergic reactions to peanuts and products containing peanuts in some children, no peanuts and/or foods containing peanuts are allowed on our campus.
- We provide nutritious food for your child to help him/her do the very best at school.
- We will also provide a healthy snack mid-morning and mid-afternoon.
- Your child is served a hot lunch that is prepared on site in our kitchen.
- Meals are designed to offer children a variety of healthy meals.

Communication

- All Classrooms will send home daily reports concerning sleeping, eating, pottying, and classroom curriculum.
- Monthly updates will be sent via email from the Director regarding upcoming events.
- Additional information and upcoming event information will also be placed in your child's cubby.
- Keeping the lines of communication open between staff and parents is essential in providing the best quality care possible. First Grace is committed to keeping you informed. If you have any questions or concerns please make contact in this order: Teacher, Director, and then the First Grace Board.

Contact Information

Phone: 256-355-5555 & 256-214-3584

Email: firstgrace@decaturfumc.org

Website: www.DecaturFUMC.org

Mailing Address: 805 Canal Street NE, Decatur, Alabama 35601

First Grace Director: Cindy Brigman

First Grace Board Chairman: Mark Heard

FUMC Senior Pastor: Rev. Dr. Hughey Reynolds



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