

# First United Methodist Church - Clinton

## MMO, Preschool, and Full Time Care

# Parent Handbook

Information in this handbook is subject to change at any time without notice. A current handbook is available on our website at <https://fmcweekday.org>. Reviewed and Revised: 08/25/2023

### Vision Statement

Our vision at First UMC Preschool is to provide a premium level of care for children ages one year through five years which meets the safety, nutritional, developmental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of the children we serve.

### Mission Statement

First UMC Preschool is committed to providing a safe, nurturing Christian environment inclusive of all children and their families. We develop the whole child with engaging experiences to teach age appropriate social/emotional skills and give them the confidence needed to effectively communicate with others. Our compassionate staff is composed of dedicated professionals who provide high quality education. First UMC Preschool's curriculum is comprised of purposeful learning experiences, intentional center play, skill-based activities (literacy, math, gross & fine motor, and STEM) as well as field trips. First UMC Preschool offers our families an open-door policy and encourages families to play an active role in their child's education.

### Philosophy

We believe children learn by doing. Therefore, we implement a thematic curriculum using a center-based, hands-on approach focused on Christian principles to prepare children for their future.

### Statement of Policy

May we state that we are keenly aware of our responsibility to the children, parents, and community we serve to maintain the highest level of childcare available. We expect every member of our staff and every child enrolled to be of the highest level of character, conduct, and cleanliness. Our policies governing these expectations are strictly enforced. We strive to provide each child and each family with as much personal attention as possible to ensure every reasonable need of every child is met or exceeded.

### Management

Michele Rittenhouse/ Weekday Ministries Director/[michele@firstmethodistclinton.org](mailto:michele@firstmethodistclinton.org)

Alicia Johnson/ MMO Supervisor

Phone: 601-924-9961

## Staff

All members of the First UMC Preschool staff are carefully selected by checking references and conducting background checks. Teachers are thoroughly trained in teaching and managing children and are always highly supervised. All Management and Staff are required to obtain a minimum number of CEU (staff development) hours each year. In addition, most of our staff members are certified in First Aid and CPR.

## Curriculum

The PreK3 PreK4 classes at First UMC Preschool uses the Get Set for School Curriculum by Learning Without Tears. It is designed to meet the Early Learning Standards recommended by the Mississippi State Department of Education for high quality early education programs. These standards create a framework to ensure children are ready to process information needed for a smooth transition to the Mississippi College and Career-Ready standards implemented in our public schools' K5 classrooms. All our lead teachers have been trained to implement these benchmarks using methods that best match the way we know young children learn and develop.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### Enrollment

All enrollment forms must be completed before your child may attend. Applications are subject to review and approval by First UMC Preschool management. We reserve the right to deny any application due to enrollment limitations or medical or behavioral problems or any other reason we feel that enrollment of a child is in any way not in the best interest of First UMC Preschool. We do not discriminate based on sex, religion, or race for the enrollment of children. Please inform us of any changes in addresses, work and home telephone numbers, places of employment, or individuals authorized to pick up your child. In particular, the state requires for the health of all children that a current Immunization Form 121 be on file. This must be on the state Form 121 provided by area Health Departments or doctor offices.

### Inclusion Statement

First UMC Preschool strives to develop the whole child. Children at all levels participate in inclusive classrooms where individual needs are prioritized, and instruction is individualized. It is our goal that all children will not only feel included but also receive the highest quality care.

### Activities and Dismissal

By enrolling your child at First UMC Preschool, you as a parent or guardian give permission for your child to be involved in the activities and events at First UMC Preschool. You further understand that First UMC Preschool is a private childcare center whose goal is to provide a positive, enriching pre-school. Although rare, a situation may arise in which it becomes evident that the needs of a child cannot be met effectively by our center. A decision to dismiss a child will only happen after we feel every option has been explored. Every measure will be taken to meet the needs of the child in question, and our director will assess each dismissal not only regarding the individual child's needs but also with consideration of the needs of all children served. The parent will be a central figure in discussions regarding this issue, but the decision to dismiss a child must be left to the discretion of our director.

## Attendance and Tuition Charges

Tuition and other fees are to be paid in full without deduction for absences of any duration or for any cause and without substitution of other days of attendance as “make up” days. Please understand that this is because staffing and other operational costs are incurred based on fixed levels of enrollment and because few of these costs are eliminated when the child is temporarily absent.

## Payment Policy

Tuition is due each month by the 10th. A late fee of \$20 is applied on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Statements of your payments are available at any time. If your draft returns for any reason, \$30 will be charged to your account. If you do not make payments or do not give two weeks written notice of withdrawal, you will be given a one-time written notice of charges owed. You will then have 15 days from that notice to pay or resolve any disputes with the management of First UMC Preschool. You agree to pay any reasonable attorney’s fees or collection agency fees and court costs. Please refer to the current tuition agreement for prices. For your convenience, we accept cash, checks, bank draft, and credit card as forms of payment.

## Fees

There is an Application/Registration Fee of \$75.00 per child. Summer Registration Fee of \$25.00 per child. Annually there is a Supply/Activity fee of \$100. It can be paid in full in September, or in two \$50 installments – one in September and one in January.

## Center Hours

We are open Monday through Friday from 8:15 am to 2:00 pm (7:30 am – 5:30 pm for full time care) with each program having assigned hours. After each program’s scheduled dismissal time there is a late pickup charge of \$1 for each minute late in pick-up. After repeated late pick-ups, you may be asked to find a center that better fits your schedule.

## Holidays

The following holidays are routine closures for all First UMC Weekday programs.

New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving (2 days), Christmas (2 days), and New Year’s Eve.

In addition, MMO and Preschool closely follows the Clinton Public School Schedule during the school year. This means that MMO and Preschool are closed when the Clinton Public Schools are closed. Full time care is open on these days. During these breaks we will allow a limited number of drop-ins for families that need to work. We can also accommodate siblings of children already enrolled and former students. To drop-in during the breaks, you need to sign up ahead of time.

The summer schedule is independent from the school year schedule. Typically, MMO and Preschool will take a one week break at the beginning of summer and a two week break at the end of the summer to prepare for the next session. These weeks are not charged for MMO and Preschool. Full time care is open at this time.

No discount from tuition will be made for holidays or other days on which the facility does not operate or opens late (i.e., snow days, etc.).

## **Incident Weather**

In the event of unusual weather conditions such as snow or ice, you may call us at 601-924-9961. Though you may use the Clinton Public School closings as a general guideline, we will attempt to open or stay open later to accommodate our parents. We will communicate with families primarily through the ProCare App.

## **Notifying the Center of Your Intent to Withdraw**

From the date you start, your child is considered enrolled in our school until we receive written notice otherwise. A minimum two-week written notice addressed to the Director is required, although we request 30 days if possible. The two weeks begins on the date we receive written notice. This notice is common among high-quality childcare providers and allows us to notify the family of the next child on our waiting list of an opening.

## **App Check In & Out**

The primary mechanism for ensuring the security of the school is strict adherence to established procedures for your child's arrival and departure, including clocking in and out on the ProCare App. We ask that you always check your child in and out using the App. State regulations require us to know who is in the building at all times. Please note that photo ID may be requested to confirm identification before allowing pick up of any child. Anyone who needs to pick up and sign out your child will be required to show a photo ID (unless and until staff is familiar with this person) and must be listed on your pick-up list. Failure to clock your child in and/or out on the app may result in your account being charged \$1 each time.

## **Arrival and Departure**

It is important that your child's day begins on a positive note. Upon arrival, please sign your child in and make sure your Pre-School child's teacher knows your child has arrived. An authorized adult must accompany a MMO child into and out of the building. From time to time, your child may experience some separation anxiety. This is normal. Experts suggest you hug and comfort your child, let them know you are leaving and will see them later, then promptly leave the classroom. While leaving a crying child can be difficult, most children stop crying within five minutes, and your lingering in the classroom most often makes matters worse. Dropping off your child during nap time is not allowed unless you have received approval from the Director. Naptime drop-offs disturb the children who are already resting. At pick-up, please sign your child out and check for any notes, messages, or permission slips you may need to sign.

## **Outdoor Time**

State licensing regulations require that children spend time outside. Except for extremely cold or hot days, or smoggy days in summer, understand that your children will spend time outside each day. If your child is not well, and you do not want them to go outside, they are not well enough to be at school and need to be kept at home that day.

## Clothing and Personal Belongings

Please always leave an extra set of clothes for your child. This applies to our children of any age. Accidents happen, and this will prevent us from calling you to leave work and bring a change of clothes. Please label all clothing with your child's first and last name. We cannot be responsible for lost articles. Please send children to school in play clothes. Long dresses, jelly shoes, cowboy boots, and flip-flops can be dangerous. Rubber soled or non-slippery tennis shoes are best for school.

We require that you leave all food, gum, and toys at home. A soft sleep toy is OK for naptime only. As seasons change, please send your child to school with appropriate jackets or coats labeled with his/her name.

## Food / Birthdays

Birthdays are important days for young children, and we share your desire to make your child's day a special one. However, birthday celebrations are often over-stimulating to young children, and we ask that some limitations be respected. We celebrate birthdays during regular snack times. Parents may provide a special snack for all the children, with advance notice and the approval of your child's teacher. Since certain children have severe food allergies, please speak with the director ahead of time about the appropriateness of the snack. Peanuts, peanut butter, and snacks with peanuts or peanut oil in them (i.e., candy bars, etc.) are prohibited due to the severity of allergies associated with that food.

## Access to Your Child's Classroom

Parents are permitted access to their child's classroom and play areas anytime their child is present. We request cooperation, however, in not disturbing our program.

## Procurement Fee for Hiring Our Teachers

Hiring of our teachers by parents is highly discouraged because it presents a conflict of interest for the teacher. If a parent does hire a teacher for a position (i.e., nanny or caregiver) that competes with the center during enrollment or for a period of 12 months after withdrawal from school, then the parents shall have 30 days to notify the center and pay the center a \$2,500.00 placement fee. This fee is common and in line with what many nanny agencies charge for placement. This does not apply to after-hours babysitting.

## Class Directories

From time to time, we may provide parents with a list of children in his/her child's classroom. This is for birthday parties or special days. Unless you instruct us otherwise in writing, you agree to allow us to use your name and email address for this purpose.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

### Immunizations

We ask that your child's immunization record (MS Form 121) be presented with enrollment forms. You must update and provide a new form as appropriate. Failure to maintain a current Form 121 will result in your child staying home.

## Illnesses / Medical Conditions

Please understand that for your child's protection and the protection of our staff and other children, we strictly enforce our illness policy. We kindly request your full cooperation by not bringing in sick children and picking up a sick child within one hour of being called to do so. We cannot allow children with contagious diseases in the center. You understand that if your child is ill, including, but not limited to a severe cough, undetermined rash or spots, oozing wounds, boils, congestion, non-clear runny nose or continuously runny nose, pink-eye, head lice, temperature over 101 degrees, severe headaches, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat or extreme irritability (not acting like usual) he/she cannot be accepted into the center until well or until he/she has been without fever or other symptoms for 24 hours. In the event of a conflict between the Health Department Regulations we must follow and the doctor's note we will go with the Health Department regulations. In the event your child has a contagious disease, please notify the center immediately so we may notify other parents. A release form from a doctor may be required before your child re-enters the center. First UMC Preschool will notify parents if a contagious disease has been introduced into the center. A child who, due to a temporary health condition, cannot play outside should remain at home. For safety reasons, we are simply not staffed to watch a single child inside while the rest of the class plays outside. A child who is too sick to go outside is too sick to be at school. Any child with special medical conditions or needs must have written documentation from a physician stating his/her individualized medical plan and protocol for action in an emergency (i.e., EpiPen).

## Medicines

First UMC Preschool does not administer medicine. Please do not send any medicine to school with your child. Please do not administer fever reducing medications (acetaminophen or ibuprofen) to your child before they come to school. If your child is not feeling well, has a fever, or needs medication other than routine allergy medication or finishing an antibiotic they do not need to be at school.

## Covid

If a teacher or child has been exposed to Covid they must wear a mask for a minimum of ten days to return to school if they are symptom free. If a teacher or child contracts Covid they must be out for a minimum of five days. They may return to school wearing a mask after five days if they had not had fever or symptoms in 24 hours. A mask must be worn for an additional five days. MMO children are too young to wear a mask and keep it on so they must be out the full ten days.

## Emergency Information

It is incumbent upon parents to keep the center informed of how they can be always reached in the event of an emergency. This includes all work, home, and cell phone numbers for parents and any other emergency contacts. Because we strive to maintain a safe environment for your child, we make every attempt to be prepared to manage emergency situations. Many members of our staff are trained in first aid and CPR. An emergency plan is posted in each classroom. We conduct regular fire, safety, and tornado drills. The local fire department makes annual inspections with recommendations for improved safety.

## Accident Reports

Although many precautions are taken to ensure a safe environment, occasional incidents do and will occur as children explore the world around them. If an incident or injury occurs, first aid is administered. Also, for MMO and preschool children, an accident report will be provided. This report will describe the nature of the incident and the follow-up care that was provided.

## Emergency Medical Care

Should your child become ill during the time that he/she is in the care of First UMC Preschool or suffer a serious accident, the center will contact a parent or guardian immediately and shall be authorized to secure such medical attention, transportation, and care for the child as may be necessary. The parent shall assume responsibility for the cost of any such care. We will make all attempts to contact you and other emergency contact numbers first, so it is important that you keep the center informed in writing as to changes in your telephone numbers (cell, work, home), as well as those of emergency contacts.

## Building Safety and Evacuation Policy

Our Pre-School and After-School centers are equipped with a weather band radio, fire alarm system, sprinkler system and fire extinguishers, as well as firewalls and other fire prevention devices. We conduct fire drills each month to ensure that all staff and children can vacate our buildings quickly (under 2 minutes). We also conduct regular safety (intruder) and tornado drills. In the event of an evacuation, we will work with city and emergency officials in transporting the children to another facility (Morrison Heights Preschool – 201 Morrison Drive in Clinton or Raymond United Methodist Church - 230 W Main St, Raymond 39154). No person who is or who has ever been required to register as a sex offender shall be allowed on any First UMC Preschool property while persons under the age of eighteen (18) are present in the building or on the grounds for preschool and/or afterschool.

## Intruder Policy

Exit doors are kept on a magnetic lock system and visitors must be buzzed in to get inside. We will do a lock down drill where the classroom doors are locked with a special lock to prevent someone from breaking in. Children practice being quiet during these drills as they are playing “hide and go seek.”

## Lost Child Policy

Teachers are attentive and frequently count and verify that all children are accounted for. Children are also taught to stay with the class and the teacher and to ask if they need to use the restroom. Children are monitored in the hallways and counted before and after they move from one place to another. In the event the teacher realized a child is missing the following steps would be taken. 1) The teacher would immediately notify the office and a search would be initiated. 2) The floater would step into the classroom and the teacher would re-trace their steps to look for child. 3) Other classrooms would be checked as well as staff to see if anyone had seen the child. 4) Bathrooms would be checked and all surrounding areas inside and outside. 5) Attendance would be checked to see if the child was at school and had not been picked up. 6) If after ten minutes the child has not been found the police would be called and the parents notified.



## Biting Policy

In even the best pre-school settings, periodic outbreaks of biting occur between infants and toddlers. This is an unavoidable occurrence in groups of young children. When it happens, it can be very frightening, frustrating, and stressful for children, parents, and teachers. Understand that this is not an unusual phenomenon among children who are going through the oral stage of their development. It is also not something to blame on children, parents, or teachers, and there are no quick and easy solutions. Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, or intense desire for a toy. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behavior that is often hard to extinguish because it does achieve results: the desired toy, excitement, and attention. Children may be teething, and biting may be a pleasant sensation to a young child. Knowing that their biting will hurt another person is not yet part of a child's mindset, so the "cause-effect" relationship is not internalized. Our teachers plan activities and supervise carefully to minimize biting. There are times, however, that a teacher cannot be within immediate reach to prevent a bite.

Our policy for managing a biting incident is as follows:

The biter is immediately removed from the group with a firm "NO." The bitten child is consoled, and the bitten area cleaned. If necessary, ice is applied to reduce any swelling or bruising. A written bite report is given to the parents of all children involved when they are picked up that day. The name of the biting child is not released because it serves no useful purpose and can make an already tricky situation more difficult. We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for patterns to prevent further biting behavior. We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner. We try to make every effort to extinguish the behavior quickly and to balance our commitment to the family of the biting child to that of other families. Only after we feel we have made every effort to make the program work for the biting child do we consider asking a family to withdraw the child.

## Food and Nutrition

Snack is included in the price of your tuition. Our snacks comply with the State and Federal Minimum Nutrition Standards. We use a menu that rotates on a regular basis. Menus are prepared and displayed each month so that parents know what their child is being served. Children are encouraged to take at least one bite of each food offered; however, they are not forced to eat. If you miss your child's class snack or lunch, we kindly ask that you please provide a meal for your child before dropping them off and that they finish that meal before entering the school.

The children should bring their own lunch. Per MSDH: The lunch should be labeled with the child's name, the date, and the type of food. All food should arrive in a container that provides an appropriate temperature until eaten. The food brought from one child's home shall not be fed to another child. Children shall not share their food. Food brought from home shall meet the child's nutritional requirements and the standards set forth in the MSDH regulations. If a child's sack lunch does not meet the minimum nutritional standards for child's age the facility shall be required to supplement the lunch with items that meet the nutritional requirements. Parents shall be notified in writing if a child's sack lunch does not meet the nutritional requirements of the child. The notice shall contain instructions as to what foods are proper for a sack lunch. The food should not require any special storage temperature or heating. A drink should be sent with the child's lunch.

In the case of special dietary needs as prescribed by a physician, parents must furnish the food items and/or plan with the Director. Please notify the Director and your child's teacher of any food allergy your child may have, including the severity of such an allergy and what to do in the event a child accidentally ingests such



food. We will take your child's information and post it in the kitchen and in the classroom. Understand that we will make every reasonable effort to accommodate children with food allergies or other food restrictions, but there are limits to what can be done in a large, group care setting.

### **Drinks and Cups**

Each child should bring two re-usable no-spill cups to school each day. For preschool age children they need to be cups the child can open and close themselves. One cup should contain water for use all day. We can re-fill water cups with filtered water if needed. The second cup is for lunch and can contain water, milk, or juice. We do not allow baby bottles.

### **Nap Time / Rest Time for MMO and Full Time Children**

Adequate rest or quiet time is an important part of a young, growing child's day. A rest period will follow lunch each day. You must provide their own nap mat and they are encouraged to sleep or rest for a period appropriate for their age. Blankets and/or stuffed animals that are special to your child are encouraged to help your child feel more comfortable and secure. Nap mats need to go home each week to be washed. Children are not allowed a cup on their nap mat.

### **Toilet Training**

We will be happy to assist you in the toilet training of your child. Parents are asked to initiate the training at home before starting at First UMC Preschool. We must have paperwork on file regarding the toilet training of your child. Once training has begun, consistency is crucial. Please bring training pants with plastic pants or pull-ups and dress your child in easily manipulated clothing. This applies only to MMO children as they must be fully potty trained to enter preschool.

### **Diaper Changes**

Diapers are checked and changed as frequently as necessary to maintain the health and cleanliness of the child. Hand washing and area sanitization is performed before and after each change.

### **Water / Sun Safety**

Sun-safe practices will be followed to promote and ensure the safety of all children. First UMC Preschool will apply sunscreen to children as necessary if provided by the parent.

### **Discipline**

At First UMC Preschool, we use the method of "redirection" to guide children toward appropriate behavior. If a child is engaged in behavior non-conducive to a safe and happy learning environment, the teacher will "redirect" the child toward appropriate behavior. We believe that behavior is a child's method of communication. We strive to understand what the child is trying to communicate and implement accommodations to teach the child an appropriate response to the stimuli or circumstance. Use of physical punishment or harsh language is prohibited, and we ask that parents and guardians refrain from such actions while at the center, including the parking lot. We will work with children and parents as much as possible to correct negative behavior patterns. School-age children receive written discipline reports for serious behavior problems. Behavior that invades the rights of other children, such as stealing, fighting, or using foul language,

may result in immediate, permanent removal from our program. NEITHER CORPORAL PUNISHMENT NOR TOTAL ISOLATION SHALL BE USED AS DISCIPLINE MEASURES IN LICENSED CHILDCARE FACILITIES.

### **Mandated Reporting Information**

Teachers and Directors are required by law to report evidence of child neglect or abuse. Those who fail to report according to state regulations can be held accountable under the law. No one, including school management and/or a child's parents, can interfere with this reporting requirement.

### **Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco**

The use or presence of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs is prohibited in the building or anywhere on the grounds by any staff, parent, or visitor. Smoking is NOT allowed in the facilities or in the parking lot, and we ask parents to refrain from disposing of cigarettes on the grounds.

### **Transportation**

First UMC Preschool conducts occasional field trips. Due to car seat requirements, we will not transport preschool children. Parents must provide transportation, or arrange for transportation, for their child to and from the field trip. Parents/Grandparents may participate in the field trip at their own expense. If a child does not attend a field trip, they cannot attend school that day as class will not be on site.

First UMC After-School will follow the transportation policy as stated below:

1. All drivers will be appropriately licensed for the vehicle they are driving.
2. All vehicles will have current safety inspection stickers, licenses and registrations, and proof of insurance.
3. Each vehicle will contain a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and a teacher certified in first aid and CPR.
4. Children board or leave the vehicle from the curbside of the street when applicable.
5. Seat restraints will be used. If a child is between the ages of four and seven, and measures less than four feet nine inches or weighs less than sixty-five pounds the parent will be required to provide a booster seat for the child to use with a shoulder belt.
6. Proper teacher/child ratio shall be met during transportation.
7. Vehicle doors will be locked during transport.
8. After transporting children, the bus or vehicle will be checked by a teacher and the driver to ensure every child has exited the vehicle.

### **Insurance**

First UMC Preschool and After-School carries liability insurance only. It is the parent's responsibility to maintain a health and accident insurance policy for each child.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

### **Communication**

At First UMC Preschool we feel the relationship between the family and the center is key to ensuring optimal development of the children enrolled in our program. Parents should feel free to address concerns with their child's teacher and/or the Director. Please inform your child's teacher or the Director if there are changes within the home (one or both parents leave town, new siblings, new home, new job, or changes in the family structure). Changes in the home life often create a systemic impact, affecting all other areas of a child's life. Keeping the center informed will help lessen any negative issues surrounding changes. Parents are

encouraged to discuss any difficulties, differences, concerns, etc. with their child's teacher and/or the Director. Communication can be done by phone, email, or through the parent app.

## **Calendars**

Each month we create activity calendars for each age group. These calendars serve the purpose of keeping parents informed about the following: snacks, activities, weekly units, daily lessons, field trips, what to bring, holiday closings, picture day, and other important information. Please pick up a current calendar and keep it at home so you can check it each day before coming to school. Calendars are available in the office and digitally on our website.

## **MMO Daily Reports**

Each day in MMO classrooms, you will receive a Daily Report that contains details about your child's day, including how they ate, slept, played, information on diaper changes, and what they learned. The daily report may be communicated through the app.

## **Parent Grievance Procedure**

If an issue arise that cannot be addressed by your child's teacher, we ask that you notify the director. If you still feel that your issue has not been addressed properly, please feel free to contact our pastor. Our director is onsite daily and welcomes your input.

## **School Pictures**

We arrange with an outside vendor to take pictures of your child at least once per school year. You will be given advance notice of the schedule so that you can prepare your child. Purchase of pictures is optional and is made directly with that vendor.

## **Enrichment Programs**

From time to time, we offer enrichment classes (dance, Soccer Shots, Kinder Tots, etc.) for the children. We will post information as these classes become available. These classes are over and above our regular curriculum and are taught by professionals from outside our center. Parents pay these professionals directly.