

DISCOVERY CHURCH PRESCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK

Program Goals and Purpose

The Discovery Church Preschool is an outreach mission of the church's Children's Ministry program. We seek to offer a safe and loving Christian environment where young children can feel secure, grow in self-esteem and gain a love of learning. Here children can learn of and experience God's love for them through Bible stories, music, games, and creative activities, all while learning the academic and practical essentials that will prepare them for Kindergarten and beyond.

Our Philosophy of Early Childhood Education

We believe that every child is a unique creation of God, and that the body, mind and spirit of each child should be nurtured. As such, we seek to meet each child where he or she is emotionally, developmentally, spiritually, educationally and socially, and we apply these principals to each facet of our planning, instruction and activities. Children will experience faith, fun and friendships under the guidance of teachers and staff who embrace and model the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Our Staff

Our staff are Christ-centered individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced in early childhood education and dedicated to the loving care and teaching of young children. They are required to submit to background checks before beginning work at our preschool.

Our Curriculum

Academic instruction is designed to prepare the children for Kindergarten through fun and memorable learning experiences designed to foster a lifelong love of learning.

Teachers will guide the children through a regular daily routine that includes self-directed and teacher-directed educational play and activities. Children will encounter learning through a combination of circle time, seatwork, centers, games, story-time, memory work, structured play, art, music and movement, outdoor fun, classroom "jobs," field trips, special events, and more.

Hearing Bible stories, learning to talk to God through the regular practice of prayer and exploring God's amazing love and acceptance through Jesus are at the core of your child's day at Discovery Church Preschool.

Progress Reports

Teachers will perform assessments on a regular basis to stay informed children's developmental and academic progression. Results will be used to fine-tune instruction for each child. A daily report and a monthly newsletter/calendar will keep parents informed of what's going on in the classroom.

Parent Involvement

Parents are encouraged to participate in the education of each child through visits, volunteer time, conferences and special events, such as holiday parties and field trips.

Visits to Discovery Church Preschool by parents are always welcome. However, we ask that you first make arrangements with your child's teacher so as to minimize disruption in the classroom.

Communication between staff and parents is highly encouraged. We urge parents to speak with their child's teacher and to keep them informed of any important events that may be happening in the home or family so that we can offer loving support and sensitivity to the child while they are at preschool.

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled during the year. However, should you wish to confer with your child's teacher at other times, please schedule an appointment with her or send a note in your child's folder, rather than speaking with her during drop-off time when she needs to concentrate on the children. Your understanding is greatly appreciated.

Governance

Discovery Church Preschool is an entity of Discovery Church and part of the church's Children's Ministry program. The preschool is governed by a Board composed of at least four members, including a member of the Discovery Kids Team, the Preschool Director, and two members-at-large, which can include church members and/or parents of children currently enrolled in the program.

The Preschool Board oversees the operation of Discovery Church Preschool, provides administrative guidance and confers upon decisions related to the hiring or dismissal of program staff and the development of program policies. The Preschool Board works to facilitate good relations with the church leadership in their shared desires to provide a high-quality early childhood Christian education and discipleship program.

Program Schedule and Fees

Mom's Morning Out: Wednesday, 9:00am–12:00pm
\$50 per month, \$25 registration/materials fee

Three-year-old program: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9:00 am–12:30 pm
\$135 per month, \$100 registration/materials fee

Four-Year-Old Program: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 9:00 am–1:00 p.m.
\$140 per month, \$100 registration/materials fee

Monday thru Thursday, 9:00 am–1:00 pm
\$175 per month, \$120 registration/materials fee

Enrollment

Enrollment is open to the families of Discovery Church starting in mid-January and to the community at large in early February. No drop-ins are accepted. Children must be enrolled to attend Discovery Church Preschool.

The materials fee is due upon enrollment and is non-refundable. Parents must provide a copy of their child's immunization records. Children must be fully potty-trained for the 3 and 4 year old programs. The birthday cut-off is August 31, 2011.

Schedule of Operation

Discovery Church Preschool follows the schedule of the Johnston County School System, including holidays, breaks and teacher workdays. However, our school year will come to a close at the end of May, rather than in June.

Tuition Payments

Student fees are due upon enrollment and are non-refundable. Monthly tuition payments are due on the first 5th of each month. Checks should be made payable to **Discovery Church Preschool**. Payments made by check can be placed in the tuition box, and the canceled check will be your receipt. If you choose to pay in cash, please see the Director.

Full monthly tuition payment is due even if your child is not in attendance. The reason for this is because our staff and other expenses are calculated on our current enrollment levels, and these are not reduced when your child is absent. Therefore, no exceptions are made for illness, vacations, holidays or inclement weather, or when there is a holiday or break.

Tuition payments are due by the 5th of each month. There will be a \$25 late fee for payment not received by the due date. A payment plan may be worked out if done **before** the account is past due. A \$25 fee will be charged for checks returned due to insufficient funds.

If an account remains delinquent and no arrangement has been made regarding payment, the child/ren will not be allowed to return to the program, and their space may be considered no longer reserved.

Arrival and Dismissal

Morning arrival time will be 9:00–9:15 a.m. Bring your child to the door of the main classroom, and make sure the teacher is aware of his or her arrival. Please be prompt so your child can participate in the morning activity, and the class can keep to its daily schedule without significant disruption.

Please arrive on time for your child's dismissal time as the kids have had a full day and are ready to rest.

From time to time, situations may arise that may cause parents to be late in either arriving or picking up. Please speak with the teacher or a director if you need to make special arrangements. A \$5.00 fee will be charged to parents who are late to dismissal more than three times a quarter.

Food from Home

Please bring a box lunch for your child. Label all permanent food containers, such as plastic food storage, thermos, etc., with your child's name. The teachers will assist your child in unpacking their lunch items. Please do not pack food items that must be heated or microwaved.

Daily snacks will be provided by Discovery Church Preschool. Special snacks for the classroom may be brought in on “Star Student” days or on a child's birthday. Please make arrangements with your child's teacher before bringing in any special food to be shared with the class.

If your child has allergies to certain foods, please address this with the teacher and/or director on or before the first day of school. Our staff will work with you to accommodate your child's needs and address any problems.

Toys From Home

In general, we discourage children from bringing toys from home except for specific program purposes, such as “share days.” We request that no weapons (play guns, knives, swords, etc.) be sent to school with your child as we do not consider them toys.

However, we understand that bringing along a “piece of home” is often important to little ones. If this is the case with your child, please speak with his or her teachers to see if an arrangement can be made for a special item that travels from home to Discovery Church Preschool. If the special item causes conflict or disruption in the classroom, your child will be required to keep the item only at home.

Children's Clothing

Please dress your child in comfortable play-clothes for a school day that includes recess, craft activities and more. We make every effort to use washable art items but be aware that occasionally even washable products stain clothes. Please keep this in mind when you dress your child for preschool.

Be sure your child is dressed in clothes they can easily remove by themselves in the restroom (ie, no overalls). **Open-toed shoes are not allowed, as they are a hazard on the playground.** In addition, no clogs or open-backed shoes, and no hats in the classroom. Children will have outdoor recess when the temperature is above 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Please put your child's name or initials on all coats, hats, gloves and/or mittens, etc.

Please provide a seasonally-appropriate change of clothes for your child in a large ziploc bag to be kept at school in case of an “accident.” The teacher will send home a reminder when it is time to change from warm to cool weather clothes and vice versa.

Field Trips

Your child will have opportunities to join classmates for enjoyable field trips. Field trips will be offered as long as we have enough volunteers available to safely supervise the children. Teachers will not provide transportation to students.

A permission slip/travel authorization form must be completed by a parent and returned to your child's teacher prior to participating in a field trip. This form will be provided to you in advance of the date the field trip is scheduled.

Occasionally, there may be a small fee related to the field trip. These are considered separate from the annual student fee and are not covered by the monthly tuition. Payment of such fee must be received prior to the field trip in order for your child to participate.

Discipline Policy

We believe that praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavioral management and discipline for children. No corporal punishment will be used at any time. We use the following guidelines to help with discipline and maintain a pleasant and loving classroom environment:

- Children assist with making clear and concise rules and limits;
- Teachers anticipate and redirect inappropriate behaviors;
- Teachers remind children of expectations, rules and limits;
- Teachers help children use words to express needs, desires and anger, and assist children in the conflict resolution process;
- Children are spoken to in a friendly (never angry), but firm voice when necessary;
- Teachers may remove a child from an activity if inappropriate behaviors persist and help the child to find an appropriate activity to engage in;
- A “time-out” may be given if the child does not respond to the above discipline steps.

“Time out” is the removal of a child for a short period of time (2 to 5 minutes) from a situation in which the child is misbehaving and has not responded to other discipline techniques. The time-out space is located away from the classroom activity but within the teacher's sight. During time-out, the child has a chance to think about the misbehavior, which led to his or her removal from the group. After a brief interval, the teacher will discuss the incident and appropriate behavior with the child. When the child returns to the group, the incident is over and the child is treated with the same affection and respect shown to the other children.

If a child physically hurts another child, he or she will be removed from the activity, the hurt child will be comforted and the children will then be assisted with the conflict resolution process. The parents will be informed at the end of the school day. A conference will be held with the parents if serious inappropriate behaviors continue and cannot be resolved through our regular discipline guidelines.

A Discipline and Behavior Management Policy is included in this handbook. This statement must be signed by a parent and will be kept in your child's file.

Dismissal from Preschool

The Preschool Director reserves the right to dismiss a child from preschool if we cannot meet the needs of the child. Before dismissal, all attempts will be made to work with your child to meet his or her needs. A problem-solving meeting will be held with the teacher, parents and any other agencies requested to help develop a plan to resolve the problem and best meet the needs of the child within a specified time limit. If the problem cannot be resolved and the child's needs are not being met, the child will be dismissed from Discovery Church Preschool.

Illness Policy

Please do not bring your child to school if he or she is sick. Sick symptoms may include fever, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting, greenish nose discharge, chronic cough, or other signs of

infectious illness (ie, sore throat, rash, red eyes, listlessness, etc.). A child coming to school with any of these symptoms will be sent home. Children must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school.

This policy is for the health and safety of all children and families in our preschool. When in doubt, please err on the side of safety and keep your child at home. If your child must be absent from school, please contact Discovery Church Preschool and inform a teacher or the director.

Medicine

If your child needs any medication during school hours, a parent must come to the school to administer the medication. Teachers are not permitted to give any medication to children enrolled at Discovery Church Preschool.

Additionally, if your child must wear sunscreen when playing outside, please put it on at home before coming to school.

Injury

We take every precaution to ensure your child's safety at Discovery Church Preschool, but sometimes accidents happen. If a minor injury occurs, the teacher will write up a brief report to be maintained in the director's file, and the situation will be discussed with you at pick-up time. In case of a serious accidental injury, our staff will make every effort to contact a parent for instructions. In the event a parent cannot be reached, we will contact the person listed as your emergency contact. The medical release paragraph on our enrollment form authorizes our staff to secure medical attention for your child in the event none of your contacts can be reached and such treatment is required.

Emergency Information

Up-to-date parent and emergency contact numbers, as well as physician and health information, will be maintained on-site for every child. If your information changes for any reason, please inform the Director or your child's teacher immediately.

A first-aid kit is kept on site. The teacher will have easy access to both a cell phone and the church's phone throughout the school day. Church staff is available to assist in case of an emergency.

Security Information

Please inform the teacher or director if someone other than a parent will be picking up your child from preschool. You must provide written authorization to our staff in person prior to the day that another party will be picking up your child. We may ask that person to show a photo ID before we release your child to them.

Inclement Weather Policy

Discovery Church Preschool will follow the inclement weather closings and delays as set by the Johnston County School System. If the Johnston County schools are closed, then Discovery Church Preschool will be closed. In the event of a one-hour delay, preschool will open at 10:00 a.m. If there is a two-hour delay, preschool will open at 11:00 a.m. Discovery Church Preschool does not “make up” days that the school was closed because of inclement weather.

Withdrawal from Discovery Church Preschool

You are required to notify the Preschool Director two weeks prior to your child's last day. The monthly fee, as well as any other balances on your account, must be paid in full during this period. The student fee is not refundable.

Conclusion

It is a blessing to us to be able to share the love of Jesus Christ with your child. It is our prayer and our mission to provide a foundation of Christian love and truth that will prepare young children for a lifetime of joyful discipleship.

The policies of this handbook have been established for the safety and welfare of all children entrusted to our care. Should you have any questions, please contact our director.

“[Jesus] said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.” --- Mark 10:14-16

Blessings for a wonderful year at Discovery Church Preschool!