



FIRST
CHRISTIAN
ACADEMY

FIRST CHRISTIAN ACADEMY & LEARNING CENTER, INC.

**PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK
2025-2026**

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PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

Head of School: Ms. Susan Kunsman
Preschool Administrator: Tifanee Wright
Bookkeeper: DeeDra Leopardi
Receptionist: Sherry Fenech

OFFICE HOURS

School Year: 8:15 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday
Summer: 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday

First Christian Academy and Learning Center (further known as First Christian Academy) admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in admission policies or any school administered programs.

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook will help to explain our school and our operational policies further. We reserve the right to update this handbook at any time, but we will let families know if we do. Please take a few minutes to become familiar with this information. During the registration process, you will be asked to acknowledge your receipt and agreement to the policies outlined in this handbook on your Acknowledgement Sign-Off Sheet. You agree to adhere to the policies and procedures as stated in this handbook which includes that there is no smoking (including e-cigarettes) on First Christian Academy's campus. You understand that your child will be taught Bible truths consistent with the school's Statement of Faith as stated on our website. Your signature on the Acknowledgement Sign-Off Sheet gives consent for FCA to transport your child(ren) to our off-site location, in case of an emergency evacuation: Calvary Chapel Worship Center located at 6825 Trouble Creek Rd, New Port Richey, FL 34652, (727) 376-7733. Parents will be contacted via phone and email if an emergency evacuation takes place.

WHO WE ARE

Mission and Values

The mission of First Christian Academy is to connect children and families to Christ through Christian education. We are committed in creating a stimulating, loving and nurturing environment where children of all abilities, regardless of socio-economic or cultural background, can grow and learn together in acceptance of one another. This mission is carried out daily by trained staff, low teacher/child ratios, specialized curriculum, and contracted therapy services (as needed).

Philosophy

First Christian Academy exists in response to our church and community's need for a quality Christian school in Pasco County. FCA will strive to connect students and their families to Christ through a warm and caring environment. Your child will experience the care of our dedicated staff while building Christ centered friendships and learning through the academically acclaimed curriculum.

We recognize that each child is unique; therefore, it is our goal to help each child grow in three ways: spiritually, academically, and socially. As Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "A three strand cord is not easily broken." For children with special needs, inclusion facilitates developmental progress by exposure to role modeling of social, language, and physical skills through interactions with typically developing peers. We also believe that the typically developing children gain solid interpersonal skills, including self-confidence, acceptance, empathy, and communication. Inclusiveness allows all children to relate and interact with peers in play and daily routines, engaging in experiences that promote the development of self-help skills, self-control, and the understanding that others have different backgrounds and perspectives than themselves.

The Staff

The quality of the program is due to the quality of the staff. It is vital to attract staff that is experienced and knowledgeable in the field of early childhood. Each classroom in Infants through 3's/4's is staffed with 1 lead teacher and 1 assistant. VPK classrooms are staffed

with 1 Lead Teacher. Multiple Assistants float between the VPK rooms to offer additional support or coverage where needed.

First Christian Academy strives to hire educators with the following qualifications:

- **Lead Teachers serving children in infants through 3's/4's** - Must be CPR & First Aid Certified and have the 40-Hour Child Care training through the Department of Children and Families and a minimum of a Florida Staff Credential or equivalent.
- **Lead Teachers serving children in VPK** – Must be CPR & First Aid Certified and have the 40-Hour Child Care training through the Department of Children and Families and a minimum of a Florida Staff Credential or equivalent and/or a bachelor's degree. In addition, they must be certified through the Early Learning Coalition via the VPK Emergent Literacy Training requirement.
- **Assistants & Substitutes serving all children** - Must be CPR & First Aid Certified and have a minimum of the 40-Hour Child Care training through the Department of Children and Families.

Each staff member must maintain a minimum of 10 hours of continuing education in-service training each year. This requirement is what state licensing regulations require and is crucial in maintaining qualified teachers for the ongoing success of First Christian Academy's program. All teachers must have some level of experience with young children and demonstrate a genuine interest in children. All staff members are level 2 background screened.

Licensing and Accreditation

Our preschool is state licensed through the Department of Children and Families and regularly Inspected to ensure everything meets or exceeds standards, including child-to-teacher ratios and safe facilities. First Christian Academy is subject to inspection by state and local health, fire, licensing, and building agencies. Regulations and inspections pertain to staff qualifications, the facility and playground, nutrition, health and safety matters, record-keeping, and child-to-staff ratios. If you have any questions regarding licensing or regulations, please speak with the school's Preschool Administrator, Mrs. Wright. Additionally, First Christian Academy is a member of ACSI (Association of Christian Schools International).

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Classrooms

Our classrooms are structured like our K-8 in that age groups/classes are divided by the age of the child as of Sept 1st (1's through young 3's follow this as close as possible, but some exceptions are made). The individual developmental needs of each child are considered when final placement decisions are made. For a child to develop a positive self-image and appropriate social skills, they need to be grouped with peers whose developmental age is similar to their own. In all groups of children, there will be varying ability levels.

Curriculum

At First Christian Academy we focus on child-centered teaching, developmentally appropriate practice and the belief that 'play is a child's work.' Our goal is to develop each child's confidence, creativity, and life-long learning skills in our program. To support this goal, we use a Christian

based curriculum called WEE Learn. WEE Learn is grounded in evidence-based practices. Per their site, programs using the WEE Learn philosophy and curriculum work to support children and families. Children's individual differences and learning styles are considered, as they learn through play and interactions with supportive early childhood teachers to maximize each child's learning potential. It supports best practice and has been cross-referenced with multiple State's Performance Standards. In addition, VPK also uses the Christian based ABEKA curriculum for their Phonics and Writing as it has been found to be an excellent curriculum in teaching the fundamentals of phonics and preparing our students for our Kindergarten Program.

Assessment

Child assessment is a vital component of all high-quality early childhood programs. Assessment is essential to understand and support young children's development. First Christian Academy uses various assessment tools to measure child outcomes. While our teachers are constantly observing the students and using that information to provide individualized instruction, they also do formal assessments of each student three times per school year.

Assessment Plan

- The assessment tool is used alongside informal classrooms assessments such as written observations, work samples, and checklists and is built into our classroom activities.
- Children are assessed 3 times a year: once within the first 30 days of school, once mid school year, and once the last 30 days of the school year.
- Children will be assessed in familiar spaces, and assessments will be conducted by adults the child is familiar with.
- Assessments will be conducted via observation during the natural course of the child's day. This may include one on one, small group, or large group opportunities.

Assessment Results

- Teachers use the information gathered during the assessment process to:
 - Identify children's interests and needs
 - Be intentional in their teaching
 - Develop goals for each child and plan for individual student needs
 - Guide instructional/environmental planning that best meets the needs of all children
- Assessment results and developmental progress is shared with parents.
 - Teachers will schedule parent-teacher conferences on a case-by-case basis.
- Suppose assessments indicate a need for further evaluation. In that case, the teachers will discuss this with the family and use the information gathered for referral to an outside agency for additional diagnostic screenings and assessments.

BEHAVIOR GUIDELINE PHILOSOPHY

Our foundational goal at First Christian Academy is to help our students develop strong social and emotional skills. Instead of discipline, we use guidance. Guidance is about building an encouraging setting for every person in the group. It means helping young children understand they can learn from their mistakes, and it starts with showing them how (NAEYC). Positive guidance techniques used by our staff will teach the children self-control and self-direction. Research indicates that children with strong social-emotional skills tend to be happier, show greater motivation to learn, have a more positive attitude toward school, eagerly participate in class activities, and demonstrate higher academic performance than students who exhibit social and emotional difficulties (Hyson 2004; Kostelnik et al. 2015).

Additionally, socially-emotionally healthy children are better able to establish and maintain positive relationships with adults and peers. To support our students in developing these skills, we take a proactive and preventive approach to guidance that reinforces appropriate behaviors rather than focusing on inappropriate behaviors.

- **Our Environment:** We provide children with exciting materials and engage them in activities that are appropriate for their age to keep them focused and attentive. We develop schedules that meet the needs of young children by avoiding long periods of waiting time without activity. Yet, our schedule is flexible enough to follow the children's interests as well as their cognitive, physical, and biological needs.
- **Our Teachers:** We work to develop a strong rapport with each child speaking to children calmly, especially during redirections. We help children put words to their emotions. We use social stories to help teach our students healthy social skills. We strive to serve the individual needs of each child while ensuring the safety of young children.
- **Our Families:** We communicate regularly with families to ensure consistency in guidance between home and school. We partner with families to offer support, guidance and, if necessary, connect them with experts to help give their children the best foundation for academic and life success.

Hyson, M. 2004. *The Emotional Development of Young Children: Building an Emotion-Centered Curriculum*, 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Press

Kostelnik, M.J., A.K. Soderman, A.P. Whiren, M.L. Rupiper, & K.M. Gregory. 2015. *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning: Theory and Skills*, 8th ed. Stamford, CT: Cengage.

Guidance Procedures

When any student at First Christian Academy presents with challenging behavior, teaching staff shall follow the techniques below:

- Observe the children to identify events, activities, interactions, and other factors that predict and may contribute to challenging behavior.
- Teaching staff shall focus on teaching the child social, communication, and emotional regulation skills and using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior.

- Teaching staff shall respond to challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the child's safety and the safety of others in the classroom. Our response will be calm, respectful and give the child information on what is acceptable behavior and what is not.
- We will document the challenging behaviors and the intervention methods that were attempted in a log. Documentation may include incident reports, ABC charts, or Behavior Plans.
- Teacher-parent discussions regarding a child's behavior shall be held in private. They shall focus on working as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.
- If necessary, intervention shall ensure each child has access to professional services, such as referrals to community agencies offering early intervention services, community mental health centers, and/or a private therapist.
- All discipline decisions will always be individualized, consistent, and appropriate to each child's understanding level.

First Christian Academy does not condone or tolerate the use of physical punishment of any kind on First Christian Academy property. This policy restricts parents and staff from using physical punishment on their children while on school property. Also, First Christian Academy will not tolerate psychological abuse, coercion, threats, derogatory remarks, withholding, or threatening to withhold food as a form of discipline.

Despite these efforts, some children may continue to exhibit significant, challenging behaviors. The following steps will be completed if a child must be removed for challenging behaviors that constitute an imminent danger to the child or others:

- Make a referral to an early childhood mental health specialist or Healthy Social Behavioral Initiative specialist through the Child Care Resource & Referral and refer to the agency responsible for early childhood special education services. If a child's behavior is such that it necessitates temporary removal on a repeated basis, there should be sufficient documentation for consideration of special education services.
- Maintain documentation on file of the incident's outcomes, subsequent parent conference, and the plan developed that includes appropriate intervention strategies. The parent conference's purpose is to create a plan jointly with the family and available resources to address the specific behaviors that constitute an imminent danger (recurring violence, behavior, or aggression)
- If a child continues to exhibit persistent, severe challenging behavior that is unsafe to themselves, other children, or the teachers, First Christian Academy may recommend and/or require alternative placement.
- Suppose a child with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) exhibits persistent challenging behaviors. In that case, special considerations are enacted due to procedural safeguards and due process rights ensured under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Parts C and B. First Christian Academy will follow all state special education rules and regulations governing suspension/expulsion.

Biting

Biting is a normal part of child development. Young children bite for various reasons, such as teething or exploring a new toy or object with their mouth. Biting can also be a way for toddlers to get attention or express how they're feeling. Frustration, anger, and fear are strong emotions, and toddlers lack the language skills to deal with them. If they can't find the words they need quickly enough or can't articulate how they're feeling, they may resort to biting.

Biting tends to occur most often between 12-24 months of age. Biting past the age of two and a half to three is less common. For repeated biting instances with preschoolers, we may request a parent/teacher conference. The purpose of the parent/teacher conference is to discuss what may be causing the child to be upset, frustrated, confused, or afraid and therefore lead to biting. Additionally, we would develop a joint plan of action following our behavior guidance procedures listed in this handbook. If your child bites or is bitten, you and the family of the other child involved will receive an Incident/Accident Report that keeps the identity of both children confidential. If any child is considered by our staff, to be a habitual biter (age 3 and above), or to exhibit other aggressive behaviors (i.e. hitting, punching, etc.) that are harmful to other children or staff, she/he may be asked to leave our school. An habitual biter would be considered anyone aged 3 and above who bites any other child under any circumstances and breaks the skin, more than three times. The parents of the biting child will be called to come and pick up their child immediately to be removed from the school for the day.

ENROLLMENT

Admissions Process

The admission process begins with a tour of the school. Each year's Enrollment opens for current families in the month of January, and for the general public on February 1st. Children are enrolled on a first-come, first-serve basis, depending on availability in the most developmentally appropriate class. Children are placed on a waiting list if there is no availability in the most appropriate class.

Spaces are filled from the waiting list according to the following priority system:

- FCA Staff children
- Siblings of currently enrolled children
- Previous First Christian Academy families
- General Public

Children must be able to benefit from participation in an inclusive group setting. If, after a tour and discussion of the child's needs, it is determined that First Christian Academy is not a good fit for the child, First Christian Academy will attempt to give resources and information about other programs that may benefit the child and family.

Registration & Requirements for Enrollment

On the admission date (or after), you must complete the First Christian Academy Registration Application (found on our website). Once you are accepted, you will then log back in and complete the Enrollment portion of the application and pay the non-refundable registration fee (where applicable).

Upon receipt of the enrollment application and payment of registration fees, the parent will receive a welcome email and paperwork packet required to be filled out and returned to the Preschool Office. In addition to the packet, we will need a copy of the child's birth certificate, Form #680 Immunization Record or Religious Exempt Certificate, and Form #3040 Student Health Exam Form from their Pediatrician.

PLEASE NOTE: We are required to have each of the forms in the provided paperwork packet in our files in order to maintain our license to operate. State law requires us to exclude from school any student whose files are incomplete until we have received their missing paperwork. We appreciate your cooperation.

Withdrawing

If you need to withdraw your child from First Christian Academy you must notify the school via email. Registration fees are non-refundable. Tuition will not be adjusted or refunded for departure prior to the end of the month. However, the month following the withdrawal we will stop any further tuition charge.

THE SCHOOL DAY

Beginning of the School Year

Preparing for the first day of school can be exciting, but it can also be an overwhelming and anxious time – we understand! We will work with you to make your child's first day the best it can be. We will have a "Meet The Teacher" Open House a few days before our first day of School! We will ask you to bring your child's school supplies during this time. Don't hesitate to share any concerns you have before that first drop-off. We know that a lot of our little friends have never been in Preschool. Please know that we EXPECT tears and are ready with loving arms to comfort your little one. It is very important that the drop off is quick, especially if your child becomes upset. Parents are not permitted into the classroom at drop off so a special hug and goodbye at the door is what you can prepare your child for! We highly recommend carline drop off after the first few days of school. *We may recommend some new students start with half days, gradually lengthening their time. This may help your child become familiar with the new environment and new faces and reduce anxiety. Each child is unique in their patterns and ease of adjustment to new situations, so this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.*

A consistent daily schedule (arrival and departure routines) also helps children adjust to a new routine and environment. You're always welcome to call any time to see how your child's adjusting.

Arrival & Carline

Mornings can be busy times, and they often set the tone for our day. Help your child have a successful start to their day by following the guidance below!

- If your child is going to be absent, you **MUST** inform the teacher prior to the school day. You can do this through email, Facebook, or by calling the office. If we do not hear from you within the first hour of the school day, Licensing has mandated that we call you to confirm where the child is. If we cannot get ahold of you we have to begin calling emergency contacts.
- Doors open at 8:15 am and the Preschool door locks at 8:30 am.
- For your child to receive the high-quality benefits of this program, it is essential that your child be here on time every day. Drop off begins at 8:15 am every morning and children need to be here no later than 8:30 am when our school day begins. On occasional instances (Dr appointments, etc), we will allow late drop-offs. Drop off will not be permitted after 10:00 am each morning for half day students and 10:30 am for full day students, however.
- For 2's through VPK, drop off is through the front car loop where your child will be walked to their class by an FCA staff member OR you can walk your child into school to their classroom door (but not into the classroom). At pick up, children are escorted to the front car loop by their teachers.
- Parents are to remain with their vehicle and allow the teachers to direct drop off.

Separation Anxiety

The first few weeks of school are always a time of adjustment, and many students (and parents) feel a sense of separation anxiety which is perfectly normal. Here are a few strategies to help with the process. Remember, separation anxiety is a phase, it is perfectly natural, and it will pass.

- Make the goodbye prompt and cheerful. Giving your child "one more minute" prolongs the inevitable. As a parent, the best thing you can do is hug your child, say "I love you," and reassure them that you will be back soon.
- Establish a goodbye routine. Children crave routine, and parents who establish a consistent goodbye routine have better luck with successful goodbyes. This could be a secret handshake or a special 'I Love You' ritual. This provides a special moment between the two of you that offers a sense of reassurance.
- Trust your child's teacher. This may be difficult to do when you do not yet know them, but keep in mind that our teachers have chosen this profession because they love children, and they have a wealth of ideas and strategies to help settle an upset little one.
- Acknowledge how your child is feeling. It is important to accept and respect your child's temporary unhappiness as it is genuine and normal. Say things like, "I know you feel sad when Mommy leaves, but you will have a good time, and I will be back very soon."

Also, be prepared for regression. Sometimes a change in schedule like a long weekend or an illness that keeps your child home for a few days can have you feeling like you are right back to square one. As frustrating and upsetting as this can be, it is perfectly normal. Stick to the above strategies, and you should notice a significant difference in a couple of days.

VPK MONTHLY ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION

One part the parent/guardian plays in the VPK program is verifying your child's attendance at the end of each month. This is done by signing a monthly attendance verification form that will be provided by the school.

Teachers will notify you of signing days and encourage you to walk your child in that day in order for us to keep carline running as smoothly as possible.

CLASSROOM SCHEDULE

Each classroom follows a slightly different schedule that is customized for their students. The primary school day is from 8:30 am to 12 pm for half day students and 8:30 am to 2:30 pm for full day students *with a rest time from 12:15 pm to 2:00 pm for non-VPK students.*

Staff is sensitive to the attention spans of young children and plan accordingly, making activities extensive enough to be challenging and fun but short enough to avoid overwhelming a child. Each classroom has a schedule posted that lists approximate times of activities. Routine provides security, but flexibility is also important in meeting the varying needs of young children.

Classroom Activities

Teachers plan activities for the learning centers in the classrooms weekly. Teachers strive to be culturally aware and sensitive in their approach to planning. They plan concrete activities that can be modified to meet all children's needs and provide challenges in skill development.

The classrooms are organized into centers or defined interest areas. Activities are planned for each center in which the children move freely throughout each day.

Learning Experiences

Teachers connect with and use their community's resources and the families we serve to expand our curriculum and provide additional hands-on learning experiences. In-house learning events may include cultural experiences through community members as well as a cultural experience provided by families within the center, demonstrations by community helpers, or scientific investigations.

Playground and Outdoors

We play outside every day that the weather permits. When the weather keeps us inside, we find safe and fun ways to get active indoors. Our playground equipment and materials are designed for active play and exploration, which keeps kids learning while getting exercise and fresh air. Teachers plan outdoor activities to address multiple areas of skill development, including climbing, balance, and coordination, throwing, kicking, running, jumping, and pedaling.

Mealtimes

Healthy, balanced meals are just what growing bodies need! At First Christian Academy, parents provide a healthy snack and lunch for their child, as well as a Contigo style cup of water

(that must be labeled with the child's first and last name). During mealtimes, students and staff are sitting together and engaging in conversations.

If you provide lunch items that need to be kept cool, you MUST put an ice pack inside your child's lunch box per Licensing. We do not have a refrigerator for lunches (aside from the infant room), nor are we able to microwave any meals.

Foods that are associated with young children's choking incidents must not be served to children 4 years of age or under, such as, but not limited to, whole/round hot dogs, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, whole grapes, nuts, cheese cubes/sticks and any food that is of similar shape and size of the trachea/windpipe. Food for infants must be cut into pieces $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or smaller, food for toddlers must be cut into pieces $\frac{1}{2}$ inch or smaller to prevent choking.

Formula/Bottles/Sippy Cups

First Christian Academy staff cannot mix formula bottles and cannot add cereal to bottles. If a child is drinking formula, it must come to school premixed and labeled with the child's name and date every day. Please do not leave bottles at the center overnight; their contents will be discarded. Due to the potential risk, children will not be laid down to rest with a bottle/sippy cup, nor will the bottle/sippy cup be propped. Children cannot walk around the classroom with their bottle/sippy cup.

Rest Time

All children will participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep; however, we have a very busy and stimulating morning, so most toddlers and preschool-aged children will nap when given a relaxing and quiet space to do so. If a child does not fall asleep after a short rest, they are given quiet activities within the nap room. First Christian Academy provides a cot for each napping child. Parents are asked to bring a crib sheet, blanket, and small stuffed animal (optional) every Monday for the nap week. Each child's items remain in their cubbies during the week and are sent home on Fridays to be washed and returned.

There is always a staff member within the nap room during naptime observing by sight and sound. We do not use mirrors, video, or sound monitors in place of sight and sound supervision.

Personal Belongings

Within each classroom, each child has a cubby assigned to them. This will provide storage space for your child's personal belongings. Everything your child brings to school (including backpack, lunch box & nap items-if applicable) must fit into their cubby crate.

Your child will be provided with stimulating, educational toys every day. Special objects such as a blanket, soft toy, or a stuffed animal are okay for rest time. Please leave other toys and belongings at home, as bringing a treasured object to school can create tension between children and stress for children and staff if something is lost or misplaced. We cannot assume responsibility for lost or damaged personal belongings.

Toy weapons (guns, water pistols, swords, shields, or other items that resemble weapons) are not permitted at First Christian Academy.

To prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost, please label ALL items brought from home with your child's name (backpack, lunch box, jackets, etc).

Clothing & Shoes

A full day at our school includes fun activities like singing, painting, playing indoors and out, dancing, and eating, so we recommend easy-fitting, washable clothes. Being comfortable lets kids focus on learning and having fun!

Make sure your child is wearing shoes for easy movement. Flip-flops, clogs, and slick-bottomed shoes often cause children to fall when running outside and limit their play. Please be sure that your child's shoes are rubber-soled with a closed heel or heel strap. Shoes are required for all students.

- Please provide two complete sets of extra clothes, including socks, for your child. It's always a good idea to keep an extra pair of shoes and a sweater or sweatshirt at school, too. Clothing should be labeled with your child's first and last name and checked periodically to make sure it still fits.
- Please provide appropriately layered clothing to keep warm in cold weather.
- Sometimes learning and fun can get messy! First Christian Academy isn't responsible for lost, stained, soiled, or torn clothing.

Diapers & Wipes

Parents of children in diapers and of children who are toilet training must provide an ongoing supply of diapers, wipes, and additional necessary clothing. If your child is wearing pull-ups, it is helpful to send in the type with Velcro sides. This allows us to help your child change without having to take off their pants and shoes.

Both the diaper and the outer shell must be changed as a unit. Clothes that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.

Change in Pickup Person

The safety of our students is our top priority. Please notify your child's teacher if someone other than you will be picking up your child. First Christian Academy staff will only release your child to the parents and guardians or the other adults you authorized on the student's Enrollment Application in Renweb. If you need to authorize a new pickup person, please send the request via email to Mrs. Wright, the Preschool Administrator.

For your child's safety, any time a person we do not recognize comes to pick up your child, we will ask for a government-issued photo ID.

Departure

Students are dismissed through the front car line at both 12 pm and 2:30 pm. Car line signs are provided for all families at the beginning of each school year. YOU MUST PUT THESE IN YOUR WINDOWS DURING DROP OFF/PICK UP.

- Parents are to remain with their vehicle and allow the teachers to direct pick up.
 - * We do ask that Parents strap their child into their car seats. *

If you have a child who also attends Elementary/Middle School at FCA, you must pick your preschool child up FIRST and then you will have to go wait in the Elementary/Middle School car line through the parking lot and through the back of the property. A Carline diagram will be provided at the beginning of each school year.

For afternoon pick-up, our recommendation is to come as close to 2:30 pm as possible. All students who have not been picked up by 2:50 pm will be taken to Mrs. Fenech's desk at FCA's welcome area. If you are going to be late picking your child up (after 2:50 pm), you MUST park your car and walk up to get them as Elementary car line will have already begun at that time.

Late Pick-Up Policy

FCA offers full and part-time care. The pickup time for each child may vary. All children are expected to be picked up by a parent or authorized guardian by the time indicated on their Child Enrollment Form. (Please consider weather and traffic conditions when making your pick-up arrangements.) If a parent/guardian arrives 15 minutes or more after pick-up has ended there is an automatic \$15 late fee assessed.

- 12:00 pm dismissal pick-up time is from 12:00 pm to 12:15 pm (\$15 late fee will be assessed at 12:30 pm)
- 2:30 pm dismissal pick-up time is from 2:30 pm to 2:50 pm (\$15 late fee will be assessed at 3:15 pm) *Reminder that if you arrive after 2:50 pm, Elementary car line will have started and you will need to park your vehicle and walk up to get your child.*

If you know you are running late, please contact your child's teacher or the front office and let them know the anticipated time of pick-up. It is helpful for teachers to know in advance so they can help your child adjust to the late departure. It also helps the teacher plan for staff coverage during the minutes the child is remaining in the classroom. Late fee payments are expected within 2 business days of the late pick-up.

Custodial & Foster Care

Some families have legal custodial orders that address who is permitted to pick up or visit a child. If there are custody orders or protection orders relating to your child, a copy must be provided to First Christian Academy for your child's file. This information is confidential and solely for the safety and well-being of your child. Families must update Administration when custody orders change or expire. Please note that employees cannot be responsible for supervising parenting time (visitation), and, as a result, visitation for non-custodial parents is not permitted in our school.

For enrolled children in the foster care system, First Christian Academy will need to receive a copy of the foster care paperwork. First Christian Academy will release the child only to the foster parents or the child's caseworker, who must sign the child in and out on the visitor's list

and provide proper identification. The caseworker must verify any additions or changes in writing (by letter or fax).

The School Year

School Calendar

You will be provided with a calendar upon enrollment. First Christian Academy follows Pasco County School district's 10-month school year calendar closely, with some fluctuations at our discretion. We do not offer school over the summer months.

First Christian Academy maintains the right to change the calendar at any time. Tuition and fees are not prorated for illness, holidays, inclement weather, or emergency closures as we continue to pay our staff.

Inclement Weather Days

In case of inclement weather, First Christian Academy will close as determined by Pasco County School District.

- If Pasco County Schools are CLOSED, First Christian Academy WILL BE CLOSED.

Celebrations & Birthdays

Celebrations and birthdays are special days for kids, and we want to share in the fun! If you'd like to provide a small treat for the celebration, all items must be commercially packaged with ingredient statements so we can be sure we're accommodating any allergies or dietary restrictions. Please do not send in any treats or candy, which may be a choking hazard to our students. Healthy snack options such as whole-grain items, vegetables with dip, fresh fruit, fresh fruit popsicles, or yogurt are always a great choice. Please be sure to provide enough for everyone in your child's classroom and check in with your child's teacher before the special day so they can share any tips and plan accordingly.

Communication & Family Involvement

Communication

The administration utilizes email as the main form of communication. Our teachers will do their best to answer all emails and messages during business hours. We appreciate our FCA families respecting our staff's personal time outside of school, as well.

Your child's class will be utilizing a special private classroom group on Facebook. All parents will receive an email invitation to this group a week before school begins. This private group is for parents/guardians only.

We use a communication folder here at FCA to let you as the parent know what is going on in our classroom. Please send the folder in your child's backpack every day. The folder will be sent home every night with your child's daily report (Infant-2's), artwork, notes from the Teacher, etc.

You will also receive a monthly Newsletter at the beginning of each month detailing all the special things ahead for that month!

Conferences

Family participation is encouraged and welcomed. First Christian Academy's Preschool schedules conferences on an add-needed basis.

Developmental Concerns

If at any point you have developmental concerns for your child, please reach out to your child's teacher to discuss. We are happy to provide strategies, resources, or community programs that may be of support.

Family Support

While First Christian Academy specializes in providing high-quality early childhood education, we recognize that our students and families may have needs outside early education. We have a variety of ways that we can support our families. These include:

- Assist families with locating community resources
- Help families obtain emergency assistance in areas such as food, clothing, utilities, housing, and counseling
- Assist families with a successful transition to school

Please reach out to the school's Preschool Administrator, Mrs. Wright, if you are in need of support.

Confidentiality

All information contained in your child's records, including your personal information, is confidential. Anyone who is not directly involved in the care of your child or affiliated with Department of Children and Families or other government agencies will not have access to your child's records without your written authorization or court order. All First Christian Academy staff members and contracted therapists must sign a Statement of Assurance of Confidentiality upon employment and annually after that.

As a parent or guardian, you can request access to your child's records; to do so, please email

the school's Preschool Administrator, Mrs. Wright. If you withdraw your child from the center, we will maintain your child's records for at least 5 years per state regulation.

Lastly, out of respect for other children and families, please do not post photos or videos that contain images of children other than your own on the Internet.

Family Involvement

First Christian Academy believes that children thrive when the relationship between the family and the center is a partnership. We have an open-door policy—parents and guardians are always welcome at the center, so just let us know when you'd like to come to say hello! We strongly believe in positive two-way communication. Families are encouraged to communicate with teachers and administration in whatever way is most convenient for them. This may include by phone, notes, email, or in person. Information is shared with families through verbal conversations, private Facebook groups, newsletters, communication folder, phone calls, conferences, and e-mail. First Christian Academy has an open-door policy and offers many opportunities to be part of your child's early learning experience and connect with other families.

Opportunities include:

- Join our Parent Teacher Board!
- Become a classroom Homeroom Parent!
- Volunteering is always welcome. We would love to have you share your time and talents with the class. We encourage you to read a book, play an instrument, or share a hobby with the children. Ask your child's teacher about the many ways you can help.

All First Christian Academy employees are expected to treat all children and families with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. If difficulties arise, we encourage families to share their concerns with the school's Preschool Administrator, Mrs. Wright verbally or in writing. Inappropriate language directed toward staff and/or in front of children will not be tolerated. Through communication, we will work to resolve the issue. If any member of the First Christian Academy community shows behavior that threatens the safety of others or shows repeated disrespect towards other members of our community, First Christian Academy reserves the right to ask the family in question to leave the school immediately and terminate that child's enrollment at First Christian Academy.

Tuition & Fees

Tuition

We know that your child's early education is important and doesn't come without a price. Paying tuition on time helps ensure that we can continue to retain our highly trained teachers and provide them a positive work experience. Information about current tuition rates is available on our school website. Tuition increases occur each school year and typically reflect a cost-of-living increase. All tuition is due in advance of services provided and in accordance with your tuition agreement through FACTS.

First Christian Academy is committed to the security of your personal information online. No one at our company or externally has any access to any customer banking records.

All tuition should be paid by the agreed upon date in your FACTS agreement. While we are a non-profit organization and strive to take the needs and problems of our families into consideration, we must maintain financial stability. Accounts in arrears or repeated failure to pay tuition by the due date may result in the termination of services. Any requests for exceptions must be made with the school's Preschool Administrator, Mrs. Wright. A late fee will be assessed on any account that has not been paid in full by the due date, unless these arrangements have been made. Upon enrollment at First Christian Academy, all families will be expected to sign a statement that they have read, understand, and will abide by the tuition agreement.

Annual Fees

Annual registration fees for currently enrolled families are due each year at re-enrollment for the following school year (does not include VPK only families). All registration fees are non-refundable.

Returned Checks

There will be a service charge for any returned checks. In the event of a returned check, a money order will be due immediately, late fees will apply, and immediate termination of services may apply. Payments from customers with prior unpaid returned checks must be, from there on out, in the form of a money order or cashier's check.

Family Discounts

Families with more than one child enrolled full-time receive 10% off the youngest child's tuition for Preschool tuition only.

Health & Safety

We all know that safety comes first! At First Christian Academy our first goal is to keep children safe, which starts with paying attention to every detail - big and small. Every day at our center, you can be confident that your child is in the very best hands.

Daily Health Checks

Each morning when your child arrives, we will conduct a daily health check. This is a quick physical observation where we check and observe a child's behavior/mood and physical condition, including breathing, skin, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Additionally, we ask that you please alert us of anything out of the ordinary we need to know regarding sleep, appetite, bowel movements and urination, mood, and behavior at home and/or unusual events.

Illness Policy

We realize that it is difficult for working parents to keep their children home, but exclusion from school will help prevent contagion and promote the health and safety of your child. Children should be kept home from school if they are feverish (100 degrees or higher), have diarrhea and/or vomiting, have nasal mucous discharge that isn't clear, or if they show signs of becoming sick (unexplained rash, listlessness/drowsiness, productive cough, sore throat, ear pain, eyes that are pink, burning, itching, or producing discharge). If your child cannot comfortably participate in the day's usual activities or your child needs to stay indoors and/or have additional rest, these signs are generally indicative that the child should not be at school.

First Christian Academy has established guidelines in accordance with state childcare law and other best practices concerning sick children. In case of a communicable disease or condition, and at the discretion of the school's Preschool Administrator, Mrs. Wright, other parents will be notified to watch for symptoms in their children.

If your child becomes ill during the school day, every effort will be made to make them comfortable, away from the other children, but with a familiar caregiver. A parent will immediately be called to come and pick them up. First Christian Academy is not able to provide arrangements to care for sick children. Parents are required to respond as soon as possible concerning the sick child when contacted by First Christian Academy staff. If we cannot reach the parent within thirty minutes, we will reach out to the family's emergency contacts as stated on enrollment/annual forms. If the illness warrants, the child's pediatrician will be contacted for consultation.

Children may attend with minor illnesses if it is not contagious, and it does not affect the child's ability to participate in the day's routine. Minor illnesses include:

- Mild respiratory infections
- Acute infections subsiding after treatment, such as pink eye, impetigo, ear infections
- Cold symptoms without a fever

If the child's health deteriorates at some point in the day, the parent will be contacted to come to pick them up.

It is always helpful if you can provide First Christian Academy a doctor's note, when applicable.

Medications

Whenever possible, we recommend that you administer medications at home. To help with medication scheduling, you may consider asking your health care provider for prescriptions with 12-hour dosages. At the center, medications will be administered in accordance DCF regulations and the policies described below.

General Medication Policies

- No prescription or over-the-counter medication and no topical, non-medical ointment, repellent, lotion, cream, or powder shall be administered to any child:
 - a) without written authorization from the child's parent
 - b) without written instructions from the child's parent, physician, or another health professional
 - c) in any manner not authorized by the child's parent, physician, or another health professional
 - d) after its expiration date
 - e) or non-medical reasons, such as to induce sleep
 - f) with a known allergy to the medication.
- Medication will be stored separately for each child.
- Medications will be stored in a locked cabinet in the classroom or locked box in the Center refrigerator, depending on the medication. Medications for external use will be stored separately from medications for internal use.
- Do not store medication in diaper bags, lunch bags, backpacks, or any other personal belongings.
- We do not mix the medication with food, formula, or juice, nor will we dispense any medication in a bottle or cup.
- Medications will be administered by regular classroom staff who have been trained in medication administration in the presence of another staff person. All staff follow the Six Rights of Safe Medication Administration: right child, right medicine, right date/time, right dose, right route & right documentation. Staff will document each dosage on the medication form, listing time, amount given, and initial. If any side effects are noticed, they will be noted on the form, and the child's parent will be notified.
- Medication forms will be added to the child's file after the medication request is completed. Forms for long-term medication will be considered confidential and treated as such.
- It is the responsibility of the parent to remove or dispose of any medication after the duration of the request has ended. The classroom staff will dispose of any medicine at the Center after the medication form has expired or after a child has left First Christian Academy.
- Alternative medications, such as herbal or homeopathic medications that are not tested by the US Food and Drug Administration for safety or effectiveness, lack safety information and cannot be administered at First Christian Academy.
- First Christian Academy reserves the right to refuse the administration of medications if we feel that it is in the best interest of the staff.

Prescription Medication

- For a staff member to administer any medication to your child, you must complete the Medication Administration Permission Form in its entirety.
- The medication must be brought to school and stored in the original, tamper-resistant container in which they were dispensed with the pharmacy labels. The pharmacy label must specify:
 - The child's name
 - The names of the medication
 - The amount and frequency of dosage
 - The date the prescription was filled and the expiration date
- If the medication is provided via pharmaceutical samples; they must be stored in the manufacturer's original packaging, shall be labeled with the child's name, and shall be accompanied by written instructions specifying:
 - a) The child's name
 - b) The names of the medication
 - c) The amount and frequency of dosage
 - d) The signature of the prescribing physician or other health professional the date the instructions were signed by the physician or other health professional
 - e) Medication expiration date
- The medication shall be administered only to the child for whom they were prescribed. It shall be administered according to the prescription, using the amount and frequency of dosage specified on the label.
- A parent's written authorization for administering a prescription medication shall be valid for the length of time the medication is prescribed to be taken or up to 6 months when needed for a chronic medical condition, whichever is less.

Over-the-Counter Medication

In general, First Christian Academy staff will not administer over-the-counter medication except when a health professional prescribes the over-the-counter medicines. This situation is most common for chronic health conditions (ex: Benadryl for students with allergy action plans or fever-reducing medication for students with febrile seizure action plans). First Christian Academy will not administer over-the-counter medicines such as cough syrup, Tylenol, ibuprofen, antibiotic cream for abrasions, or medication for upset stomach in the cases of acute illness or pain. Children that have these symptoms may need to remain at home until they are symptom-free.

The over-the-counter medication must be brought to school and stored in the manufacturer's original packaging with the child's name written or labeled on it. It shall be accompanied by a Medication Administration Permission Form that specifies:

- a) The child's name
- b) The medical conditions or allergic reactions
- c) The names of the authorized over-the-counter medication
- d) The amount and frequency of the dosages, which shall not exceed the amount and frequency of the dosages on the manufacturer's label

- e) In cases where the prescription says, “as needed” (i.e., allergy exposure, etc.), the instructions need to specify criteria for the administration of the medication (be specific with what symptoms or situations are criteria for administration)
- f) The route in which the medication shall be administered
- g) Possible reactions or side effects
- h) The signature of the parent AND physician, or another health professional
- i) The date the instructions were signed by the parent and physician or other health professional.

Topical Creams and Sunscreen

Parents and guardians may give First Christian Academy standing authorization for up to 12 months to apply over-the-counter topical ointments, topical teething ointment or gel, lotions, creams, and powders, such as sunscreen diapering creams, baby lotion, and baby powder, to their child, when needed.

The over-the-counter topical medications form must be completed before we can administer these medications.

Please apply sunscreen to your child before arriving at the center and dress them in hats/visors and tightly woven clothing to help prevent sunburn during outdoor play.

Cleaning & Sanitation

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of our broad approach to preventing infectious diseases at First Christian Academy. Contaminated toys are specifically washed, sanitized, and air-dried. All surfaces and toys are sanitized and air-dried daily upon arrival and departure. In addition, our entire school is cleaned after school Monday through Friday by a professional cleaning company.

For more specifics about the frequency and type of cleaning that occurs for each surface at First Christian Academy reference the [NAEYC Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Frequency Table](#).

Hand Washing

Handwashing has long been established as one of the most important things to prevent the spread of illness.

In our school, hand washing requirements for staff are as follows:

- Upon arrival at school/center
- Before and after setting up snacks/food for student consumption
- Before and after helping students use the bathroom
- After handling items soiled with body fluids such as blood, drool, urine, stool, or discharge from nose or eyes
- After handling an ill child
- After using the bathroom or taking care of other personal needs (i.e., nose-wiping) and eating

In our school, hand-washing requirements for students are as follows:

- Upon arrival in the morning
- After using the bathroom
- Before and after eating food
- Before and after sensory play
- After they have touched a child who may be sick or who has handled soiled items
- After blowing/wiping their nose

The required method for handwashing is as follows:

- Rub hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds using warm water and soap.
- Wash between fingers and back of hands and wrists.
- Rinse hands well under running water and dry thoroughly with a clean paper towel.
- Turn off water using a paper towel instead of bare hands. This helps prevent acquiring new germs on already clean hands.

Universal Precautions

First Christian Academy follows universal precautions to prevent the transmission of HIV/Aids, Hepatitis B, and other bloodborne pathogens. Universal precautions refer to infection control measures that all health care workers and childcare providers follow to protect themselves and the children in their care from disease-producing microorganisms. The concept requires workers to treat all blood and various other bodily fluids as infected with HIV, hepatitis B virus, and other bloodborne pathogens. First Christian Academy staff follow the following universal precautions when encountering blood or bodily fluids:

1. Gloves are worn for contact with blood, body fluids, mucous membranes, open wounds, and handling items or surfaces soiled with blood or body fluids. Only approved latex or vinyl gloves are worn. Gloves are never to be washed and reused.

2. Hands and other skin areas are washed thoroughly if they contact blood or body fluids. Hands should be washed immediately after gloves are removed.
3. Saliva is not considered by the Center for Disease Control to transmit HIV. Still, it is a body fluid, and mouth-to-mask ventilation devices will be available for resuscitation and shall be used by trained personnel.
4. Staff must review information and procedures about universal precautions, HIV/HBV infections/transmissions, and handling of infectious waste annually.

Toilet Training

High collaboration between you, your child, and your child's teachers makes for more successful toilet learning. Children learn toileting skills through consistent, positive encouragement from all the adults who care for them.

When your child shows an interest, you and your child's teachers will discuss how to work together to encourage toilet learning. We're committed to working with your child consistently so that toilet learning can be accomplished in a developmentally appropriate manner with minimum stress for you and your child.

Every child begins toilet learning at a different age and progresses at a different rate. We're always available as a resource to answer any questions about your child's progress. Several complete changes of clothes and a pair of shoes should be kept at the center during toilet learning.

All students entering VPK must be fully potty trained due to changing tables not being available in those bathrooms.

Safety

Supervision

First Christian Academy staff assume responsibility for enrolled children when they enter the classroom or are escorted by a staff member onto the First Christian Academy property. All classrooms monitor attendance by updating their attendance records throughout the day and counting and matching the numbers of children present with names on attendance records. "Name to Face" headcounts occur throughout the day, particularly when moving about the center at every threshold.

Injuries/Accidents

Your child's safety is of our utmost concern, but we recognize that minor bumps and scrapes are an everyday part of your child exploring and learning through experience. Known minor injuries sustained at school are reported to parents on an Incident Report Form, of which you will receive a copy. If your child is injured in our care, our first step is to administer first aid. A first aid kit is available in the office, and each class always has a small first aid kit with them.

The most common treatment is ice on bumps, soap and water cleansing, and a bandage on a minor wound. All permanent staff members are trained in First Aid and Infant/Child CPR within the first 90 days of their employment, and they must maintain their current certification every two years.

If an accident is more than minor, a parent will be called to discuss the need for possible medical treatment. If the accident is more serious, a parent will be contacted and requested to come immediately. In the event of a life-threatening illness or injury, an ambulance will be called. To ensure your child's safety, your Enrollment Agreement provides a record of names, addresses, and phone numbers of the people you have authorized to pick up your child. We ask you to keep this information current and supply names and phone numbers for your child's doctor and preferred hospital.

Emergency Procedures

We make every effort to be prepared for potential emergencies. First Christian Academy has an emergency response plan for fire, inclement weather, or if a lockdown becomes necessary. This plan is updated annually. These plans are also reviewed annually with the staff. Additional precautions we take in the event of an emergency are:

- Emergency phone numbers are posted by all phones.
- First Christian Academy keeps an emergency "To-Go" bag in the main office with first aid supplies and emergency contact information for all students and staff.
- Fire drills are practiced once each month, and shelter-in-place drills twice a school year to prepare children in the case of an emergency.
- Emergency evacuation plans are posted in each room.
- Annual inspections by the New Port Richey Fire inspector. If an emergency requires evacuation, we'll notify you as soon as the children have been relocated to a safe area.

Mandated reporting requirements

It's our mission to ensure all children in our center are safe and well cared for, not only while they are at our center, but at all times. Florida State law requires everyone who works directly with children to report suspicions or evidence of child neglect or abuse to local law enforcement. Those who fail to report can be held accountable under the law. The law prohibits interference with an individual's attempt to report child abuse or neglect. Our school will offer full cooperation during the investigation of the reported incident.

- Should a staff member have reason to suspect abuse, they will contact First Christian Academy administration and follow up with an immediate phone call to Department of Children and Families. If an administrative staff member is unavailable, staff members have the authority to make the call and to prepare a written report of the account.
- First Christian Academy will not hire a person who has been convicted of abuse of any type, and all staff undergoes a fingerprint and criminal background check before employment begins.
- All staff members are responsible for protecting all children from abuse from any child or staff member..
- All staff members are required to report any suspected cases of abuse, whether it is suspected at First Christian Academy or away from First Christian Academy.

- All First Christian Academy staff receive training in recognizing and responding to child maltreatment, including abuse and neglect.
- First Christian Academy strictly prohibits the mistreatment, neglect, or abuse of any child in the program by any staff member. Any employee found in violation of the abuse and neglect policies shall be immediately terminated. If the charges are not upheld, the FCA Administration will determine eligibility for reinstatement.

School Policies

Smoke-Free and Weapon-Free Environment

First Christian Academy's campus is smoke-free and tobacco-free environments. Smoking and the use of any product containing, made, or derived from tobacco, including e-cigarettes, cigars, little cigars, smokeless tobacco, and hookah, shall not be permitted on the premises of the childcare center or during any off-premises activities. Additionally, firearms and ammunition are prohibited in all licensed childcare centers, including First Christian Academy unless carried by a law enforcement officer.

Transportation

First Christian Academy does not transport children to and from school or for any off-premises activities. Parents are expected to provide transportation for their children.

Babysitting

First Christian Academy discourages staff babysitting/personal interaction with students outside of school. Any parent who chooses to use an FCA staff member in this role off campus agrees to hold First Christian Academy harmless for any harm that may befall their child/ren if staff member babysits or participates in an off-campus activity with their child.

Program Oversight

Our program's quality and compliance with State laws are carefully regulated and evaluated three times annually by the Department of Children and Families.

Commitment to Diversity

Tolerance and understanding are fostered by positive exposure to various ages, genders, lifestyles, family structures, races, cultures, religions, and physical abilities. Therefore, we emphasize an environment that welcomes diversity and challenges bias and discrimination.

Grievance Procedure

Disagreements may occur, even with the best of intentions. Experience has taught us that open communication is the key to maintaining a positive relationship. The adults must demonstrate the cooperative, compassionate communication we want our children to imitate. If you have a concern, please discuss it with your child's teacher or the staff involved. If the concern is not

resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, a meeting can be arranged between the persons involved and a member of the administration. At that time, a course of action can be determined.

Legal Information

Nondiscrimination

First Christian Academy does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring, and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all staff members, clients, volunteers, subcontractors, vendors, and clients. First Christian Academy is an equal opportunity employer. We will not discriminate and will take affirmative action measures to ensure against discrimination in employment, recruitment, advertisements for employment, compensation, termination, upgrading, promotions, and other conditions of employment against any employee or job applicant on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Our policy is to accept children in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), its regulations, and any other applicable local, state, or federal laws pertaining to providing services to individuals with disabilities.