

# GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

## Parent's Handbook HHSC 746.503

"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Mark 10:14

**3000 W. Golf Course Road Midland, Texas 79701**

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Dear Families,

We are pleased to welcome both you and your child to Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Program, accredited through National Lutheran School Accreditation. We sincerely believe that each child is created to be unique and precious. Therefore, our staff's goal is to provide each child with experiences that will enhance his/her God given potential in the areas of social, emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual development.

This handbook is intended to serve as an overview of the guidelines developed by the ECP Board and is available in the ECP office. The ECP is a licensed child care program and follows Texas HHSC Minimum Standards for Child Care, available online. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the director.

## **NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOL ACCREDITATION**

In 1997 Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Program attained National Lutheran School Accreditation through the Texas District, Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in conjunction with the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission. Accreditation is a five-year process and Grace ECP was granted re-accreditation in 2016.

## **TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION**

Grace ECP is licensed through Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The ECP follows HHSC Minimum Standards for Childcare Centers and is inspected annually. The emphasis of the inspection is to prevent risk to children in care and to help operation employees and caregivers comply with the laws, rules, and standards. A copy of the minimum standards and Grace's most recent licensing inspection report are available in the ECP office or at [www.hhsc.state.tx.us](http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us). The number to the local licensing office is 432.368.2693 and child abuse hotline is 800.252.5400.

## **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

Through God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit, the goal of Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Program is to promote excellence in early childhood care and education by sharing God's grace, living His Word, and making disciples.

## **GOALS FOR EACH CHILD**

The child will begin to:

- A. **Spiritually**
  - Build a personal, trusting, relationship with God using Bible stories, prayer, and songs of praise.
  - Sense an assurance that God cares for him, even though we do wrong, and forgives us through Christ, even as we forgive others.
  - Develop a feeling of thankfulness for physical and spiritual blessings.
  
- B. **Physically**
  - Develop large and small muscles.
  - Become more self-reliant in personal habits.
  - Engage in active and quiet play.
  
- C. **Emotionally**
  - Become more independent.
  - Develop self-confidence, self-control, and a positive self-image.
  
- D. **Socially**
  - Use words to communicate and solve problems with others.
  - Reflect upon how others feel.
  - Participate in group situations.

#### E. **Intellectually**

- Extend the use of language.
- Explore, experiment, and question.
- Build an academic knowledge base through hands-on activities.

The ECP believes that young children learn best by doing. Thus, our staff will facilitate the development of these goals through play. Play provides the foundation for academic or 'school' learning. Play is the preparation children need for learning highly abstract symbols such as letters and numbers.

#### **CHAPEL**

Children go to chapel with a Pastor every Wednesday and Thursday. The threes, fours and kinder attend chapel at 10:00, twos attend at 10:15 and the ones attend puppet chapel. This is a wonderful opportunity to share the Word of God with the children and reinforce proper etiquette in the sanctuary. **Parents are welcome to attend chapel.** Puppet Chapel is the second Wednesday and Thursday of each month when the puppet ministry of the church visits chapel. Jesus Time is the daily devotional time in the classroom. Children may not be exempt from chapel or Jesus Time.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

**You may not post photos of Grace Lutheran ECP classes or children (other than your own) on Facebook or other social media.**

#### **MUSIC /CREATIVE MOVEMENT**

In addition to regular classroom activities all children will have the opportunity each week to participate in a large group class focusing on gross motor development through music and movement.

#### **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Students are assessed twice a year and parents are provided results. Parents will be given the opportunity to schedule parent/teacher conferences. The kindergarten teacher will conference parents each semester. Parents are encouraged at any time to initiate conferences.

#### **TUITION AND EXTENDED CARE**

Annual tuition is billed in nine monthly payments. **Tuition is due in full on the first of each month.** A statement for tuition will be placed in your child's cubby at the beginning of each month. A late fee of \$20.00 will be added if payment is not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> school day of the month.

Deductions in tuition are not made in holiday months (i.e.: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring Break). Parents are responsible for each month's total tuition, regardless of the days of attendance in that month. **There will be no reduction of payments due to illness, holidays, vacations, absences, or injury.**

Extended care is \$4.25 an hour and will be added to the next month's statement.

A fee schedule was included in the registration packet and is available in the ECP office. **Non-payment of tuition after 30 days will result in dismissal from the ECP program** unless special approval is given by the Board due to extenuating circumstances. Tuition payments should not be combined with other payments such as T-shirts, pictures, field trips, book fair, etc.

### **DROP IN AND MAKE UP DAYS**

Students who miss their regularly scheduled days may not make up those days. Grace ECP does not allow students to "drop in" on a day they are not registered to attend.

### **NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Grace Lutheran ECP admits children of any race, color, religion and ethnic or national origin and makes available to them all the programs and activities provided by the facility. Students will be placed in class according to their age as of September 1.

### **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

Families are welcome to visit the school during operating hours. Siblings brought into the classroom must be supervised by the parent. For security reasons all doors are locked. All access to and from the building is through the southwest door. Key cards are available.

### **CLOTHING AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

Children should wear washable clothing appropriate for indoor and outdoor play. A **COMPLETE CHANGE OF CLOTHES MUST BE KEPT AT SCHOOL** to be used for accidents or messy activities. Please place an outfit with underwear and socks in a Ziplock bag clearly marked with the child's name. Parents must provide diapers and wipes for one and two year old children not yet trained.

### **TOILET TRAINING**

Please provide diapers and wipes for 1 & 2 year old children. All personal items must be marked with the child's name. The 2 year old children routinely go to the restroom, consistently encouraging training. The staff will assist the family with the process,

please tell us how we can best help. **All 3 & 4 year old's must be toilet trained to attend classes at Grace ECP.**

### **GUM, CANDY, SOFT DRINKS, TOYS, AND MONEY**

Children may not bring gum, candy, soft drinks, toys, or money to school unless asked to do so for a class "show and tell" or other activities. Toys, candy, etc. brought to the classroom will be stored until time to go home.

### **OUTSIDE PLAY POLICY**

The ECP considers outside time an integral part of the daily schedule for all age groups. Children who are well enough to attend school will be expected to participate in outdoor play. Children will go outside if the temperature is above 40 degrees including the wind chill factor. Please make sure your child has appropriate outerwear (jacket, hat, etc.) for outdoor play.

### **BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

Birthdays may be celebrated at school. To provide refreshments, please make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance. Invitations, birthday or other, will **only** be distributed at school if an invitation is provided for every child in the class.

### **LUNCH**

All children must bring a lunch that includes a drink (no soft drinks). All parts of the lunch must be labeled with the child's name. **No provisions for keeping lunches cold or hot will be made by the school/teacher.** Please cut all food into bite sized pieces. Send food that your child likes and can eat independently. Children's lunches will be stored in their cubbies in the classrooms. A room for breast feeding is available.

### **NAP/QUIET TIME**

Children in the one and two year old classes nap during class time. Threes, fours, and kinder that stay in extended care will be provided a nap/rest time at 2:00. The ECP will provide a nap mat for each child. Children must bring a cover for the mat and blanket marked with their names. HHSC 746.2901

### **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

Texas Health and Human Services Commission requires that each child be **signed in and signed out.** Parents must note the **time of arrival and dismissal,** leave a **phone number** where they can be reached and indicate **who will pick up the child.**

HHSC 746.631 (a)

*Parent must notify Grace if they are **not** able to pick up their child. The child will not be permitted to leave the facility with persons other than those authorized by the parents on the registration form unless prior arrangements are made with the ECP office. When arrangements are made with the office; the designated person will be required to provide identification. HHSC 746.4101 & 4103*

*If there is a discrepancy with drop off or pickup of a child, the Director will follow the phone order as authorized on the enrollment form. If no one is reached on the contact list, HHSC or 911 will be called. HHSC 746.4101*

Morning extended care students must be signed in on the classroom sign in sheet **and** the extended care clipboard. After school, extended care children are signed out on the extended care clipboard.

Teachers meet in the kitchen for morning devotion and announcements until 8:55. Please do not bring your child into class before 8:55. **Never leave a child in the classroom unattended.** Teachers are in their rooms from 8:55-2:00. Any child dropped off before 8:55 or left after 2:00 will be charged extended care rates of \$4.25 an hour. Please notify us if you will be late picking up your child. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute after 5:30 will be strictly enforced.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Discipline will be based on an understanding of appropriate child development and of the individual needs of the child. It will be directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control in a loving, Christian manner using methods such as praise and encouragement. Teachers will seek to redirect inappropriate behavior and teach the child to respect him/herself, the rights of others, and the school's authority. HHSC 746.2803

*At no time will harsh, cruel or unusual treatment be used with a child (such as hitting, shaking, biting or speaking harshly to a child). HHSC 746.2805*

The following procedures will be followed if a child's behavior is deemed inappropriate:

- Step 1: Teachers will document inappropriate behavior and will seek to resolve the matter immediately. Speaking to the child or time out may be used. Time out shall not be longer than one minute per year of child's age.
- Step 2: If Step 1 has repeatedly proven ineffective, the child will meet with the program director. Parents will be notified.
- Step 3: If the situation persists, the teacher will contact the parent(s), and a parent-teacher conference will be arranged.

Step 4: If no changes occur, the director will meet with the parent and teacher.

Step 5: If all efforts have proven ineffective, the child may be asked to leave the program. HHSC 746.501(8)

\*\*The order of these steps may be suspended if the child's behavior constitutes a threat to his/her own safety or to the safety of the other children and/or teacher.

Appeals may be directed to the ECP School Board.

## **GRIEVANCE GUIDELINES**

Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault. But do it privately, just between yourselves."

To protect the legal rights of all constituents of Grace Lutheran Early Childhood Program these grievance guidelines will be followed.

1. Complaints are properly handled by going to the teacher or parent first.
2. Should this not be successful, the concern should be taken to the Director. Notes of the meeting will be kept on file and/or the meeting may be recorded.
3. An additional meeting may be scheduled to evaluate progress.
4. The ECP Board is available for issues that are difficult to resolve and will make the final decision.

Complaints about the administration are properly handled by going to the Director first. Should this not be successful, the ECP Board Chair will meet with the complainant and the Director. A final decision will be made by the ECP Board.

## **HEALTH REQUIREMENTS**

All registration forms must be in the school office by the **first day of school attendance**. The student's immunization record must be current to meet state requirements. The State Health Department audits the school records annually.

Within **7 days** of school starting, each child must provide the office:

1. A health form signed by a physician stating that the child has been examined within the past year and is physically capable of participating in school activities. HHSC 746.611
2. A current record of immunizations. HHSC 746.603 (4)  
Grace recommends that the staff stay current on immunizations.  
HHSC 746.501 (27)

**Any child who does not have all proper forms filed in the ECP office will be excluded from school until forms are provided to the director.**



## **MEDICATION**

All medication will be stored in the director's office and administered only by the office staff. Any medication brought to school **must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name**. Medication and special procedures will be administered to a child in the school only after a **Medication Release Form** (available in the office) has been filled out and signed by the parent. Medication includes diaper rash cream, insect repellent and sunscreen. **Do not put medication in a child's backpack, lunch box or cubby.** HHSC 746.3803 & 3805

## **HEALTH CHECKS AND CHILD ABUSE**

When the teacher observes an unusual sign or symptom of an illness or injury, the director checks the child. Parents are notified if behavioral or physical changes occur. HHSC 746.3607

In compliance with HHSC 746.1201 (5) employees of Grace ECP are required to report suspected abuse, neglect, and exploitation to HHSC as specified in the Texas Family Code 261.101.

## **ACCIDENTS**

In case of minor accidents, first aid will be rendered. For more serious accidents, the child's parents (or other designated adults) will be called. If necessary and no adult can be reached, the director will assume the authority to treat/hospitalize the child at the parents' expense. HHSC 746.3607

## **ILLNESSES/MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

If your child develops a communicable condition, please notify the school. In turn, the school will notify the parents of other children with whom your child has been in contact. HHSC 746.305 **A child may return to school when they are free of symptoms for 24 hours or the school receives a statement from a health care professional stating that the child no longer has an excludable disease or condition.** HHSC 746.3606 (1)

A child may not attend school if one or more of the following exists: HHSC 746.305

1. An illness which prevents the child from comfortably participating in class; HHSC 3601 (1)
2. An illness that necessitates greater care than the staff can provide without compromising the care of other children; HHSC 3601 (2)
3. The child has any of the following: HHSC 3603
  - a. Symptoms of possible severe illness, including: HHSC 3601 (D)

- Fever
  - Runny nose with discoloration
  - Diarrhea
  - Uncontrolled breathing
  - Lethargy
  - Wheezing
  - Rash with fever
  - Mouth sores with drooling
  - Behavioral changes
  - Vomiting
  - Other unusual symptoms
- b. Communicable conditions such as, but not limited to:
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
  - Head lice
  - Scabies
  - Impetigo
  - Strep
- c. Chicken pox, for 7 days after the onset of rash or until all sores have scabbed over.

### **EVACUATION RELOCATION SITE**

In case of an emergency that would necessitate evacuating the premises, all ECP students will be relocated in the Midland Christian School Gym at 1709 Northrup or the location designated by emergency personnel. Parents will be notified when children are relocated.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

In the case of bad weather, ECP classes will be delayed or canceled in conjunction with decisions made by MISD. The teacher will contact the class if this situation occurs. In the event MISD **cancels** school, the ECP will be **closed**. Classes will be made-up on the day MISD designates make-up classes, except on Good Friday. If MISD classes are **delayed**, the ECP will delay the start of classes. Extended care will open at 9:00 a.m. and preschool classes will begin at 10:00 a.m. Extended care will be available to regularly attending extended care students only.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Preschool and kindergarten students take field trips. Annual permission HHSC 5617 (2) must be on file in the ECP office prior to participation. Notification of each event will be posted at least 48 hours prior to the trip. HHSC 746.3003 Parents must provide a booster or car seat for their child. HHSC 746.5607 Parents who

transport children must complete Transportation Training available in the ECP office, provide a copy of their insurance, and driver's license. HHSC 746.5617 (6)

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

Limited scholarships are available for 3 and 4 year old pre-school and kindergarten students only. Applications may be obtained in the ECP office. Scholarships are based on financial need and are reviewed and approved by the ECP Board.

## **CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT**

The Grace Lutheran congregation views the Early Childhood Program as an integral element of its total ministry. Under the auspices of its elected representatives, the ECP Board, the congregation pledges itself to support this ministry by:

1. Providing and maintaining facilities.
2. Providing the ministry of the Pastor and church staff to the children and families of the ECP.
3. Encouraging its members to support the program through prayer, by offering their time and talent, and through monetary means.

## **PESTICIDE NOTIFICATION**

The Texas Structural Pest Control Board (HHSC746.3427) requires the school to notify parents that Grace Lutheran ECP periodically applies pesticides inside the building and on the grounds. A pest control sign will be posted 48 hours prior to each planned treatment including information on the times and types of application. A Consumer Information Sheet will be provided upon request to any individual entering or working in the building. Information concerning these applications may be obtained from the director.

## **ECP SCHOOL BOARD**

The ECP School Board was created for the support and assistance of all constituents of the Early Childhood Program. The Board has put into place guidelines and procedures to help ensure the smooth operation of all areas of the program. Copies of the guidelines are available for review by any interested individual. The Board welcomes comments and may be contacted through the ECP office at 694-3063, the church office at 697-3221, or in writing at 3000 W. Golf Course Road, Midland, 79701

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Please sign and date this form and return (form only) to the ECP office. HHSC 746.503

I have received a copy of the Grace Lutheran Church Early Childhood Program Parent

1. I will make the ECP staff aware of my child's arrival and departure by recording the time I sign in and sign out. HHSC 746.631 (a).
2. I will list the person who will pick up my child and leave a phone number where I can be reached on the teacher's sign in sheet located beside my child's classroom door. HHSC 746.631 (b), 746.4103 (a)
3. If I am not able to pick up my child, I will notify the ECP office and the alternate pick up person will provide identification. HHSC 746.4103 (b)

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Child's Name

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Signature of Parent/Guardian

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Date