



Great Bridge

PRESBYTERIAN PRESCHOOL

Parent Handbook

333 Cedar Road, Chesapeake, VA 23322

757-549-4303

gbprespreschool.org

Revised Summer 2024

PHILOSOPHY GREAT BRIDGE PRESBYTERIAN PRESCHOOL

Our Preschool sets forth as its basic tenant "Children are for loving and guiding."

Each and every child in this world should feel loved.

To love is:

- To be truly concerned about the individual child;
- To listen with a view to understanding (this does not always necessarily mean approval or agreement);
- To care about successes and failures;
- To be a comforter in times of stress, sadness, or disappointment;
- To rejoice during periods of happiness or jubilation;
- To be a silent, unwavering, and available ballast in contemplative, reflective moments;
- To be attentive during all interactions;
- To be consistent in reactions and expectations.

To guide is:

- To acknowledge the developmental level of each individual child;
- To give direction (as opposed to directions);
- To attempt to lead, as well as accompany, a child toward a real understanding of where he or she wants to go and to where he or she needs to go;
- To set reasonable limits on physical behavior and promote the development of personal ethics.
- To help him or her progress with self-assurance, self-discipline, intellectual curiosity and competence.

Interwoven with self-concepts and skill-building is a belief in God and His love for each of us. Enrichment in the fields of fine art, music, foreign language, and technology is enmeshed within our curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool*. We consider it a privilege to have you in our school family and hope that this year is one of growth and many special blessings.

As a ministry of the church, we are exempt from licensure by the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Education. We annually submit documentation to retain our exempt status. Our compliance with the Code of Virginia is detailed in this edition of our Parent Handbook.

We have an "open door" policy and encourage families to participate in all areas of school life. With the home and school working together, each child will have an opportunity to grow and develop in a loving and supportive atmosphere.

HISTORY AND MISSION

Established in 1972, our goal is to provide a warm, loving, Christian environment where all children will know that God loves them, as the staff guides each child toward reaching his or her highest potential. Our program is designed to expand and develop the child's interests, teach basic skills, promote communication and encourage a healthy sense of self-worth. We believe that each child is unique, and we dedicate ourselves to fostering a love of learning, creativity and individuality.

STAFF

The staff of *Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool* consists of experienced, caring, and creative individuals who have demonstrated their abilities to further each child's emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual growth.

All staff members have demonstrated competency in early childhood education and meet or exceed qualifications as set by the church. Each staff member has a background in early childhood education through college certification, professional mini-courses and workshops, and/or experience. The director oversees the program, including financial and curriculum aspects. The PK2 teachers have extensive background in early learning and childcare. The PK3, PK4 and PK5 teachers hold education degrees and have experience in early education. The Kindergarten teachers must hold a degree in education and a current Virginia teaching license.

Each staff member has passed an extensive criminal background check, as have church staff personnel, and all staff are certified in CPR and First Aid. At least two staff members have EMAT Certification to administer emergency medication.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS FOR STAFF

Staff employed at GBPP MUST be certified by a practicing physician to be free from any disability which would prevent them from caring for children. Documentation is on file at the preschool.

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool is covered by public liability insurance which provides coverage in the event that someone brings suit for personal or bodily harm suffered during the operation of the preschool as a result of negligence.

DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES

The preschool is located at 333 Cedar Road, Chesapeake, VA. The preschool utilizes one wing of the church, including 10 classrooms and the director's office. The kitchen facilities are not available for use by the preschool. We also utilize the playgrounds located outside of the preschool wing of the church, including the smaller playground designed for use by the two year old children. For special programs, we also use the church sanctuary and fellowship hall.

ENROLLMENT/CAPACITY

The maximum number of children that the preschool will enroll is 175. The maximum number of children to be in care at any one time (as dictated by the local building inspector) is 157.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

We invite and encourage parents to participate in class and school activities, and we rely on parents to help us in many ways. Your child is always happy to have you at school. We love to have parents attend and lead class parties, go on field trips with us, bring in treats, read to the class, or send in donations. We thank you for all that you do!

PROGRAM

Educational opportunities for whole child development are provided in many areas including spiritual, social, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic, and physical. A close relationship between family and school is encouraged to enhance this process.

We value the importance of play in each child's development. Through free play and directed play activities, teachers encourage children to reach developmental milestones that will help them succeed in all areas of life.

Spiritual needs are met by caring Christian teachers who value each child as a special gift of God and teach and model Christian values. There are worship experiences at least once a month to enrich devotional life. Teachers also strive to incorporate biblical values into their daily lessons.

Social needs are met in limiting class size and by working and playing in small and large groups. These varying environments provide experiences to promote genuine caring and respect for others and opportunities for the development of important social skills.

Intellectual needs are met by providing a developmentally appropriate program of activities in language arts, math, science and social studies in all classes. Each child moves at his or her own pace along a continuum of increasingly challenging activities. *Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards, Birth-Five Learning Guidelines* guide the curriculum of the PK2, PK3 and PK4 classes. We follow the curriculum of the Chesapeake Public Schools in our kindergarten class, ensuring that all Standards of Learning have been covered and the children will make a smooth transition into first grade.

Emotional needs are met by encouraging the child to fully develop individual talents and abilities in a loving environment where success and growth in self-confidence are fostered. Varying interactions with peers and adults add further dimension and opportunity for maturation.

Aesthetic needs are met by art, music and movement experiences integrated within the curriculum in individual classrooms as well as the opportunity to participate in "end of school" programs.

Separate enrichment classes are offered in music and foreign language for all ages (PK2 through Kindergarten).

A STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) lab is offered in 4- and 5-year old classes to introduce the technical expertise necessary in the future and provide a different venue for skill development, problem-solving, and creativity.

Physical needs are met by daily play on a safe, well-equipped playground and through classroom activities. An indoor room is available and can be utilized during inclement weather.

REGISTRATION POLICY

All classes will be based on the child's age as of September 30th. PK2 students must be 2 before they attend.

Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool offers the following programs:

- PK2-year olds - choice of a three-day class (M,W, F) or two-day class(T,TH).
- PK3-year olds - choice of a two-day class (T,Th) or a three day class (M, W, F)
- PK4-year olds - three day classes (M, W, F) or five-day classes.
- PK5-year old class - five day class.
- Kindergarten - five day class. This class follows the curriculum of Chesapeake Public Schools.

All 3 year olds and older must be completely potty-trained. NO DIAPERS OR PULLUPS WILL BE PERMITTED.

Registration for the upcoming school year will proceed as follows:

- During the first week of January, enrollment will open for current students and their siblings.
- Children whose parents are active members of Great Bridge Presbyterian Church or alumni may register next.
- Registration for the general public will open next.
- Exact dates will be printed in the December and January Preschool Newsletter, the January church newsletter and the Preschool online calendar. Please call the office if you have any questions (757-549-4303).

HOURS OF OPERATION SCHOOL CLOSURE POLICY

Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool operates from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. each school day. The kindergarten class will meet 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. to provide quality instruction time, as well as a smooth transition to a full day in first grade. Stay and Play is offered for ages 3 and up from noon to 2pm.

If Chesapeake Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather, Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool will also be closed. If public schools open one hour late, the Preschool will open on time. If public schools are open two hours late, PK2 through PK5

classes will be cancelled but Kindergarten will be two hours late and will begin at 11am. You will be notified of any other changes in schedule.

You will be notified concerning make up days.

FIRST DAYS SEPARATION PERIOD

Starting school is exciting for everyone, but separation time on those first few days of school can create anxiety for both parent and child. If your child initially experiences some degree of distress at your departure, do not be alarmed. This is expected behavior for some preschoolers. We find that children settle down more easily and quickly when the good-byes are brief. This is often difficult for parents, but our experience tells us it is best if you do not linger.

ATTENDANCE

The staff and administration of Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool believe that parents have selected our school because of the quality curriculum, Christian environment and loving staff. We strive to provide the best possible educational experiences for your child and are committed to using every minute of every day wisely.

All preschool and kindergarten classes start promptly at 9 a.m. Tardiness is discouraged as it does not model positive behavior and causes the child to miss the beginning of class. We ask that parents honor the beginning of the school day by observing the 8:50 to 9:00 a.m. window for bringing students to school at the playground entrance so that all students will be in the classroom ready to begin class on time. Doors will be open at 8:50 a.m. and will be locked at 9 a.m. (or as soon as all cars in line at that time are unloaded). After 9:00 a.m., entrance is through interior doors near the director's office or through the doors next to the playground.

PK2 through PK5 classes dismiss promptly at 12:00. These classes will begin loading cars at this time on the playground side of the preschool or by the small parking lot. Kindergarten will dismiss at 2pm and will be loaded into their cars in the small parking lot on the corner of Briarfield Drive and Cedar Road or on the playground side of the preschool.

If a student is not picked up within 10 minutes of dismissal, a charge of \$13 will be assessed to the family.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE SAFETY PROCEDURES

Safety is always our first priority. Please keep the following foremost in your mind when arriving and departing Preschool.

NEVER LEAVE A CHILD UNATTENDED IN YOUR VEHICLE FOR ANY REASON.

We encourage each child age 3 and older to enter school independently. To ensure this happening as safely as possible, please follow the car line information sent to you at the beginning of each school year and the following procedures for arrival and departure.

Note: PK2 children may not participate in the drop-off lines due to safety concerns.

Never leave your car unattended in the car pool lane.

School staff will be available in the car pool line to help your child out of the car each morning.

Upon arrival, an aide will open the vehicle door and help the child exit. Aides and teachers will guide students to their individual classrooms.

When picking up a child, make sure you have your Brightwheel Code readily available to enter in the school device. You can find your individual code under your profile - each approved pick up has their own individual code. You can also use the following link to find your check in code: <https://help.mybrightwheel.com/en/articles/8640348-check-in-students-as-a-guardian>

If you do not have a code, you must show your ID so that we can check it against the list of individuals allowed to pick up the child. Walk to the assigned door for your child's class where we will call for your child and bring them to you. Siblings will go to the youngest child's classroom.

To keep the car pool line moving smoothly, do not take the time to speak to your child's teacher about particular problems. You may send a note, call the teacher, and/or schedule a meeting.

If you would like to walk in to drop off your child, you must enter through the doors by the church office, located by the parking lot off of Briarfield Drive. All students should be walked in during the first week of school using the doors by the playground.

Never remove a child from the preschool without first speaking to the teacher or aide. Please have your Brightwheel Code and/or bring your ID so that we can check the list of approved individuals allowed to pick up the child.

If your child is to ride home with someone other than the usual ride on a particular day, you **MUST** send a note giving permission (place it in your child's lunch box) or send a note

through Brightwheel. For the children's safety, we must have a note and not a phone call except in emergency situations.

The Great Bridge Locks Bridge often opens at noon, making the Route 168 Bypass an excellent alternate when coming to pick up your child.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

One of our goals at Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool is to support children's social and emotional development by providing a safe, appropriate environment to learn and grow. Self-regulation and cooperative skills develop over time. To help guide the children through this process, teachers and administration will use positive guidance techniques, reinforce positive behaviors, and provide the children with ongoing opportunities to develop solid self-regulation and social skills, while maintaining a safe classroom situation.

The teachers and administration will establish expectations that are understandable, fair, developmentally appropriate, and consistently applied. Both the group as a whole and the child as an individual will be considered when determining how to handle a situation. Consistent with our developmental approach, behavioral guidance shall be constructive in nature, age and stage appropriate, and shall be intended to redirect children to appropriate behavior and resolve conflicts. At times, a child is removed from a situation until they regain control of their feelings, always under the caring supervision of a teacher or aide.

Parents want to be advised of any unusual occurrence during the school day. Staff will contact parents if a student has been involved in a situation involving biting, hitting, pushing, pinching or use of inappropriate language, etc. Parents and teachers can work together to determine how best to help the child model more acceptable behavior.

In the event that a child displays consistent challenging behavior, a meeting will be set with the director and parents. It is important that the child not be present for this meeting. At this time, all concerns will be discussed. The purpose is to open the lines of communication and come up with a mutually agreed upon behavior plan. During this meeting, a written behavior plan will be created in an effort to address concerns. The preschool and/or parents will implement the plan immediately. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled within 3 weeks to discuss progress.

In the event that the preschool or child's parents decide that the Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool is unable to provide for the needs of the child, a decision about the child's continuation in the program will be made. While we seek to support children to the best of our ability, we must maintain the safety and well-being of every child and staff member of the preschool.

BIRTHDAYS

Your child may celebrate his or her birthday with classmates. Parents are welcome to bring special birthday treats. Please let the teacher know several days in advance if you plan to celebrate the birthday in the classroom. No gifts may be brought to school for the birthday celebrant.

If you are planning a birthday party away from school to which you are inviting all the classmates, you may distribute invitations at school. Do not send invitations for classroom distribution to less than the entire class as hurt feelings and misunderstandings may result.

BOOK ORDERS

The Preschool offers parents opportunities to purchase books and other educational items from *Scholastic Books*. Selection forms are sent home with students each month. Parents who choose to place orders may do so by completing the order form, attaching a check written to *Scholastic Books*, placing both in an envelope and returning it to the classroom teacher. Online payment is also available and convenient. *Please DO NOT make checks for orders payable to the Preschool.*

CHANGE OF CLOTHING

Each child needs to keep a complete change of clothes, appropriate for the season, at school. This should include socks, underpants and outerwear. Use a shoebox or ziplock bag with your child's name printed on the outside of the box. Remember to send a fresh set if this clothing is used.

CLOTHING

Any clothing that might be removed during the school day must be labeled, particularly jackets, sweaters, hats, and mittens. Young children do not always recognize their clothing (many times there are duplicates of popular lines in the same size).

Your child should wear safe, comfortable clothing that allows free movement of arms and legs. Clothing should be easy for the child to handle when using the bathroom. Play clothes that can withstand a little paint, sand, water and dirt will help your child enjoy his or her day at school.

Weather permitting, our children enjoy the playground each day. Shoes that will enable them to play safely on all playground equipment are the best choice. Shoes with smooth leather soles, flip-flops, clogs and other backless shoes are not conducive to safe play. *Remember: All children in PK3 and above must be completely potty-trained. NO DIAPERS OR PULLUPS WILL BE ALLOWED.*

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Ongoing communication is important to us; please feel welcome at any time during the school year to interact openly and often with the Preschool staff and administrators.

Parents or teachers may request a meeting to discuss any problems or concerns regarding your child at any time during the academic year. In January, an in-depth progress assessment conference will be scheduled. We ask that your child not be present for any parent-teacher conferences.

We ask that you do not use arrival or departure times to confer with your child's teacher about concerns. This not only slows down the process, but the child or another parent might overhear discussion better kept private between parent and teacher.

We will try to keep you apprised of all that is going on with your child at our Preschool. Let us know of any events that might be stressful and/or cause changes in behavior at school (i.e. military deployment, the illness or death of a family member or pet, the birth of a new sibling, or an impending divorce). If you keep us aware of any dramatic changes, we can better support and reassure your child.

DUE DATES

When any due date is given (tuition, book orders, pictures, field trips, T-shirts, etc.), please be sure to return forms and/or fees by the due date.

FIELD TRIPS

During field trips, you must comply with all state guidelines, regulations and laws regarding the use of car seats and seat belts.

Educational field trips are planned for all of our classes. Field trip choices are carefully made by the teachers to enhance their thematic units of study.

Each parent signed a general field trip permission form when completing registration forms. Parents will receive timely notice of any field trip, either in the monthly newsletter

or by written notice from the teacher. Please note the date, time, and any special instructions as to fees, snack, clothing, etc. When due dates are provided for payment of fees, please remit on time to help make the process smooth for all field trip preparations.

Because of child safety seat regulations, we ask each parent to bring his/her child to the field trip location. If you are unable to attend with your child, you may make arrangements with another parent to drive your child and provide the driver a car seat. Teachers and aides cannot be responsible for installing car seats or transporting students.

FIELD TRIP DRIVER PROCEDURES

A field trip is a very special way to share an enriching experience with your child, and parents are encouraged to participate.

- Check in with the teacher at the field trip site and remain with the class during the trip.
- Keep children in sight at all times during the trip.
- Hold hands when crossing streets or moving from one area to another.
- Do not allow children to enter a restroom unless they are accompanied by an adult. Team with another adult to safely supervise restrooms.

FIRE SAFETY/EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Fire pulls, fire extinguishers and smoke alarms are located throughout the building as well as in the Preschool wing. In compliance with the Chesapeake Fire Code, the Preschool will hold monthly practice fire drills as well as yearly shelter-in-place drills. Procedures for this and other emergencies are detailed in the Preschool Emergency Preparedness Manual, available upon request.

HEALTH AND ILLNESS SAFETY POLICY

In order to protect all children at Great Bridge Presbyterian Preschool, we have very stringent policies concerning sick children.

If your child becomes ill at school, we will call you and ask that you pick up your child immediately or make arrangements for someone else to pick him or her up within 30 minutes. Children must be free of fever, vomiting, and/or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school after an illness, without the use of medication. COVID protocols will be followed according to guidance from agencies such as the VDOE, Virginia Health Department and CDC.

Do not bring your child to school when he or she has:

- A sore throat
- Discharging eyes
- A constant cough
- Diarrhea
- Heavy and/or colored nasal discharge
- A rash
- A fever over 100.4
- Any symptoms of communicable disease
- Lice/nits

These guidelines offer protection for your child and all others present.

No medicine will be administered by the staff of the Preschool with the **exception** of life threatening emergency procedures, such as epipens and inhalers. Medication in its sealed original container will be accepted by the office only after parents have completed the Medication Consent Form and provided written instructions from the child's health care provider. Only staff who have been MAT trained will administer these medications. It is the responsibility of parents to bring and administer these medications when the preschool is on a field trip.

Notify the Preschool office if your child has a contagious illness or disease so that we may take appropriate action to notify other parents and to be alert to symptoms and prevent the spread of germs and/or lice. Individual student confidentiality will be maintained during this process.

If your child has food allergies, provide a list of them for the teacher and the Preschool office. If a parent wishes, they may provide a supply of safe snacks for their child to have in place of a birthday treat brought in by other parents. **We cannot guarantee a peanut free or allergy free classroom, as our classrooms are used by other groups during after school hours.**

HOLIDAY CLASSROOM PARTIES

We celebrate all major holidays of the year with a party, which our parents plan and carry out. Please sign up on the *party list* outside your child's room so that the teacher can coordinate with the "party moms." We also ask that you plan to stay and help clean up after the party.

NEWSLETTER

Communication between home and school is very important. Each classroom is connected through Brightwheel, a free communication app. Parents and caregivers can use this app to receive classroom updates, photos, and announcements. Parents and caregivers can also message the teacher through this app, sign up for conferences, or access documents. For more information, as well as help with difficulties, please visit:

<https://help.mybrightwheel.com/en/collections/87137-parents-family-and-approved-pick-ups>

SNACKS

The morning snack should be a small snack that can be eaten in a short amount of time rather than a meal. Do not send carbonated beverages in thermos containers. Think healthy snacks. Some examples are listed below.

Fruit (bananas, apples, seedless grapes, etc.)

Cheese

Crackers with peanut butter

Granola bars

Carrot sticks

Celery with cheese and peanut butter

Graham crackers

Muffins

Fig Newtons

Fruit juice

Clearly mark your child's lunch box with his or her name.

If there is a peanut or other food allergy in a class, the teacher will inform you. Please do not send in foods that may put another child at risk if you are aware of an allergy in the classroom.

TOYS

Do not send toys to school with your child before checking with the classroom teacher.

TUITION

Tuition is based on the annual calendar and is divided into equal monthly payments for convenience. All tuition payments are made through automatic payments through the Brightwheel application. There is no tuition reduction for school vacations, snow days,

holidays or days absent. Tuition payments are due by the fifth of each month - August through April.

When you filled out the registration paperwork, you were advised of the monthly tuition for your child and signed an agreement to accept the financial responsibility of these payments. You also signed an agreement to provide the Director of the Preschool with written notice thirty (30) days prior to the date on which you plan to withdraw your child in the event that you need to withdraw before the end of the school year. In the event that you fail to provide written notice thirty (30) days prior to withdrawal, you are responsible for payment of a full month's tuition for the month in which your child withdraws (regardless of the number of days attended during the month) and for the payment of an additional one month's tuition.

Discounts for siblings are \$5/month for the second child.

A late fee of \$25 will be charged for all tuition payments that are more than 5 days past due.

If you have questions concerning tuition payments, please call the Preschool Director (757-549-4303).

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