



Parent Handbook

August 2026 - July 2027



A ministry of
First Methodist Church
200 South Lee Street
Americus, GA 31709
229-924-5419

Dear Parents:

This booklet is for parents who have a child entering the First Methodist Bright Beginnings Preschool. This handbook has been developed to help make parents aware of our policies and procedures. Please read it carefully, keeping in mind that it has been developed for the benefit of all the children in our program. This is a very important day in the life of your child. We want the change from home to school to be a happy one.

The Bright Beginnings program will provide opportunities for a variety of experiences through which your child will grow and develop...

Socially – Your child will make progress towards a better social adjustment by learning to communicate verbally, to give and take appropriately in group situations, to listen for and follow directions, to follow established practice of hygiene and to maintain self-identity.

Cognitively – Your child will improve and develop attention and memory skills, comprehension and problem-solving skills, and concepts of time, spatial relations, sensation, colors, sequencing, and body awareness.

Physically – Your child will work on gross and fine motor skills such as comprehension and manipulation of objects and tools.

Spiritually – Your child will grow in understanding and appreciation of God's love for them. They will also grow in their willingness and ability to respond to that love.

We look upon each child as a part of the First Methodist family. Each family in turn can look to us as part of its extended family. We welcome you to our family!

The ministry of Christian schools is to lead students to Christ and teach them Bible truths, Christian character, and traditional subject matter. With a traditional Christian approach to education, our curriculum supplies the knowledge for our teachers to reach and train students for Christ. Bright Beginnings follows a well-developed curriculum as well as adding other important aspects to their learning environment.

I trust that this handbook will prove to be helpful to you, the parent of a Bright Beginning child.

Sincerely,

Casey Pitts

Casey Pitts, Preschool Director
Phone: 229-924-5419
Fax: 229-931-6191
Email: Casey@fmcamericus.org

PRESCHOOL PHILOSOPHY AT FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

Bright Beginnings Preschool is a ministry of First Methodist Church Americus (FMCA) and operates under the official governance of FMCA. The Preschool Committee is responsible for overseeing all operations of the Preschool and reporting back to the official governing body of FMCA. The committee currently consists of nine members, including the Preschool Director, Assistant Preschool Director (non-voting), Director of Children's Ministry, Church Administrator, three unrelated parents of current preschool enrollees who are also currently members of FMCA, and two members at large from the FMCA congregation. The committee meets regularly. Parents are encouraged to address concerns directly to members of the Preschool Committee.

The First Methodist Church Bright Beginnings preschool officially opened in July 2001. The preschool became a state licensed program in September 2005. In March 2018, Bright Beginnings was awarded a 2-star Quality Rated designation. Bright Beginnings is not childcare; it is not baby-sitting; it is a preschool operating in full compliance with the rules and official oversight of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning "Bright from the Start" program.

When Bright Beginnings was organized in July 2001, the FMCA Church Council adopted "A Vision for Children" – that vision remains foremost:

"We desire to show Christian hospitality to God's children. We desire for Christ's love to be real in their lives, not just a part of their lives. It is our desire to continue and expand current ministries and serve children who are un-churched regardless of racial or cultural differences."

Corporately, FMCA acknowledges:

- Our children are the most important asset at 200 South Lee St
- Our children are our most important investment
- Our children are our future

The Bright Beginnings Preschool staff fully supports and adheres to this philosophy.

Our Teachers

Our teachers are all fully certified preschool teachers in the state of Georgia. Each teacher must complete a minimum of 10 hours of state approved early childhood training each school year and maintain Red Cross certification every two years. All staff at FMCA must be certified under the Safe Sanctuaries Program advocated by the Methodist Church. Teachers must comply with specific job descriptions and receive two no-notice evaluations each year from the Director.

CO-OPERATION OF THE PARENTS

We know that you are anxious for your child to receive maximum benefits from his/her experience while attending the Bright Beginnings Program. We will need some assistance from you, the parents.

Please help us by doing the following:

Discuss with real interest your child's daily experiences at school. Ask your child specific things like...who did you play with; what did you sing at circle time; or what was the most fun thing you did? Most importantly, LISTEN to your child's responses.

Look at what your child brings home from school and display it proudly in your home. Find something positive to say.

Bring up in your child a wholesome, friendly attitude towards friends and your child's teachers.

If you are having a problem with your child, please give the director a call. Together we can work on it.

Encourage your child to do the following:

- Put on and take off jacket or sweater and hang it up.
- Establish good hygiene in the bathroom.
- Use a napkin at mealtimes.
- Put away playthings when finished.
- Establish regular sleeping habits.
- Learn his or her full name, address, and phone number.
- Learn where his or her parents work.

facebook

Join us on Facebook by liking our page! We post announcements as well as pictures of all the fun we have each day!

Remind

Join us on the Remind app to stay up to date on the latest news and information from our preschool. No personal numbers are shared with the preschool or other participants.

We strongly encourage you to use this app to:

- Send and receive individual messages with the preschool office
- Stay up to date on preschool news and reminders (without all the papers)
- Receive the first wave of communication in the event of inclement weather school closings and other school wide emergency situations

See the preschool's office for an invite/code!
You may find these outside of the classroom doors as well!

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS POLICIES

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Bright Beginnings Preschool complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and all amendments to each. Bright Beginnings does not discriminate against persons based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, disability, political belief, or religion.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

A non-refundable registration fee of \$230 for Fall Session and \$65 for Summer Session is required when your child is enrolled. Completed registration forms are due at the same time fees are due. ALL forms must be completed prior to enrollment. The registration fee and completed paperwork ensures your child a place in our program. A current immunization record from the Health Department or your child's physician must be on file in our office. The preschool reserves the right to deny the application of any child for admittance based on the preschool's ability to meet the child's needs. We also reserve the right to remove a child from enrollment whenever this appears to be in the best interest of the child or the other children in the group. All waiting lists expire in August of that school year. We DO NOT carry over names on any waiting list from year to year or from summer to fall sessions.

IMMUNIZATION & HEALTH RECORD REQUIREMENTS

All children must have immunizations according to the schedule prescribed by the state health department. A current immunization report is required at admittance to Bright Beginnings and must be kept up-to-date during the child's stay at the preschool. The director is able to log in to GRITS (Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services) to obtain your child's **Form 3231 ONLY** if the child's form is up-to-date. It is your child's physician's responsibility to update the GRITS website with your child's information. After 30 days of enrollment or expiration of immunizations, a \$5 noncompliance fee will be added to accounts each week that Form 3231 is not on file at the center. If not in compliance within 30 days of enrollment or expiration, then the Preschool Committee will be notified for further action. If your child is unable to be inoculated due to medical reasons, you must turn in the appropriate form obtained from the health department.

All 4-year-old children enrolled in Bright Beginnings must have a vision, hearing, nutrition, and dental screening **Form 3300** on file within 90 calendar days of program entry or birthdate. Parents can obtain the Form 3300 at their pediatrician's office or from the health department.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

The preschool accepts children from 6 weeks to 4 years of age. We follow the same age guideline that the public-school system uses. Children are enrolled in classes according to their age on September 1st; however, we reserve the right to maintain flexibility in certain instances. Enrollment is first offered to current students during our pre-registration period. AFMC members will be given a one-week priority registration period after the current student registration period and before the waiting list and the public registration periods.

- To be eligible for AFMC member priority registration, the parents or guardians of the child being enrolled must be current AFMC members.

A child is considered registered for the program upon the return of a completed registration packet and the registration fee. Registration packets and fees are not accepted when there is not a spot available. AFMC members will be given priority over others on the waiting list, should they need to be placed on the waiting list. All waiting lists expire on May 1 of that school year. We DO NOT carry over names on any waiting list from year to year or from summer to fall sessions. Families are placed on the waiting list under the following circumstances:

- All spots have been filled for the current session, and the parent desires to be placed on the waiting list in the event a spot becomes available during the current session.
- A parent is interested in enrolling their child for an upcoming summer or fall session.

TUITION

Tuition bills will be sent on the first of each month. Tuition payments are due on the 15th of each month. **Morning and extended day will be billed for every day your child is registered, and school is in session. The ONLY time you will not be billed is if the school is closed as a whole, for the extended day fees only. There is no reduction in tuition for your child being absent due to illness or other reasons.** Please make checks payable to "First Methodist Church or FMC". An additional \$10.00 "late fee" must accompany late payments that are received after the 15th. Families with accounts 30 days or more overdue will be asked to meet with the Preschool Director to determine what action should be taken and possibly other arrangements made for your child. **Failure to pay tuition for 2 months is reason for immediate dismissal from the program unless other arrangements are made with the director.** No refunds can be given for absences of any kind. Payments may be mailed to First Methodist Church, 200 South Lee St., Americus, GA, 31709 or put in the marked tuition boxes in the preschool area. Bright Beginnings will accept cash, checks, money orders and official checks as payment for tuition. Parents may also request to be placed on the EFT (electronic funds transfer) payment schedule. However, if a person's check is returned to Bright Beginnings and is deemed uncollectible on two separate occurrences, Bright Beginnings will no longer accept checks from that individual and will only accept cash, money order or official check. Also, Bright Beginnings will charge a \$20.00 fee on all returned checks. (Rate sheet is included in the back of this handbook).

WITHDRAWAL

We cannot refund tuition or registration fees if you choose to withdraw from our pre-school program for any reason. A two-week written notice or a two-week payment is required for withdrawal from any class.

CHANGE IN CHILD'S ATTENDANCE

Two weeks' written notice must be given to the preschool director before any change is made in the number of days your child attends Bright Beginnings. If you need to send your child to Bright Beginnings on a day other than they are scheduled to attend, you must inform the director. Example: If a child is Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the child may NOT come on Tuesday and Thursday unless special arrangements have been made with the director.

EMERGENCY CARE / DROP-IN FEES

All drop-in days **MUST** be cleared with the director and your child's teacher before your child will be allowed to attend on a day they are not registered. The following fees pertain to drop-in days:

Full day - \$50.00, Morning only - \$25.00, Afternoon only - \$35.00

ATTENDANCE

For the benefit of your child, we ask that you maintain a regular pattern of attendance. If you are receiving a subsidy from social services or any other program and your child does not meet the agency's attendance requirements, you will be responsible for tuition charges not paid by the agency. In addition, you could risk losing your childcare subsidy.

DELIVERY

Students may begin to enter the classrooms at 8:00 am. Parents are required to bring their child inside and accompany them to their classroom each day. At this time, please sign your child in and give the teacher any special notes. **Please make every effort to have your child in the classroom by 8:30 am. Punctuality makes the educational time more effective, limiting the number of disturbances and interruptions in the classroom.** Early drop-off is available for those in need starting at 7:30am for an extra fee. Please contact the director for more information. You are responsible for your child if you arrive before 8:00 and do not use Early Drop-Off. We ask that you keep your child with you if this occurs.

EARLY DROP-OFF

Children are not allowed in the classroom before 8:00 am. The teachers use this time to prepare for the day. We offer "Early Drop-Off" starting at 7:30 am for parents who need an earlier drop-off time for an additional fee of \$3.00 per day. This will be billed the following month. The teachers will pick up the children from the Early Drop-Off Room at 8:00 am to begin their day.

PICK-UP

Unless prior arrangements have been made with the director, all children must be picked up from the school by 12:15 pm (morning) or 5:15 pm (extended day). If your child is not picked up by the scheduled time, we will attempt to contact you and your designated emergency contacts. If these attempts are unsuccessful, and after one hour, we will notify local authorities and release your child into their custody. Delinquency fees will be charged for a child left after their scheduled pick-up time at the rate of \$3.00 per minute. (This does not apply when prior arrangements have been made with the director).

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Children will be released only to authorized individuals listed on their registration forms. It is the parent's responsibility to keep this list current. Identification will be required of those authorized individuals who are unfamiliar to the staff. If a child is to be picked up by someone else, a written note, email, or message via Remind should be sent to the preschool office. Verbal messages cannot be accepted. Children may not be released to anyone less than 18 years of age.

NO SMOKING

There will be no smoking on the premises of First Methodist Church Americus and Bright Beginnings preschool.

PARKING

You may use the main parking lot to park when you are picking up or dropping off. Please avoid parking in front of our main entrance/gate area to ensure safety of the children.

RECORDS UPDATE

It is the responsibility of the parents to notify the director in writing of any change in address, phone numbers, schedules, or other pertinent information. Phone numbers on file in the director's office are used to notify parents should there be an urgent situation.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Class assignments are completed each year by a team that consists of the director and teachers. Every aspect will be considered for each child before placement. Classroom rosters are completed after evaluating what we feel is best for each child, teacher and classroom. Please keep in mind that preschool is a time for children to make new friends and experience new things. **"Class" requests and "Teacher" requests are not accepted at Bright Beginnings. Parents are required to abide by this policy in all situations.**

POTTY TRAINING

If your child is "potty training" we will be glad to help all that we can, BUT we are not able to handle a lot of "accidents". If your child is having a little trouble, we ask that you send them in pull-ups with easy open pants and shoes appropriate for changing since it is hard for teachers to spend the time needed to clean up and change a child with a classroom full of other children. **We require all children in the three-year-old classes to be potty trained. "Pull-Ups" are not allowed for children in the three-year-old classes. This is a licensing guideline due to the absence of changing tables and ventilation on our non-diapered side. If a child in one of these classes has two or more accidents in a week the child is not considered fully potty trained (according to licensing guidelines), and the situation will be reviewed for reassignment / possible withdrawal until training is complete. If your child is having an issue during naptime, please consult with the director.**

EXTENDED DAY LUNCH / SNACKS

If your child is in the Extended Day Program, please provide a lunch each day. Daily lunch must be in compliance with USDA Nutritional Guidelines (please contact the preschool office if you would like a copy of the nutritional guidelines). Please place lunch inside a LABELED zip loc bag. Please remember that teachers are not allowed to cut the food into bite-sized pieces. **Do NOT send foods that are not cut into small sizes or foods that could be a choking hazard. Peanuts, hot dogs, raw carrots, popcorn, fish with bones, and grapes shall not be served to the children less than three (4) years of age. Children older than three (4) years of age may be served these foods provided that the foods are cut in such a way as to minimize choking.**

Bright Beginnings provides two snacks each day - one in the morning and one in the afternoon with the choice of milk, juice, or water. (\$10/per month)

Snack/lunch time blessing:

Thank you, God, for snack/lunch time,
It always tastes so good.
and thank you for the people
who help us to have food.

INFANT REQUIREMENTS

Parents must furnish all food, milk (pre-mixed) and juice needed for infants. These must be in plastic bottles labeled with the child's name (on all parts of the bottle). Disposable diapers and pull ups are also the parent's responsibility. An updated feeding plan must stay current on all infants. It is the parent's responsibility to request a copy of the feeding form to update when changing your child's feeding schedule. (Infant Feeding Plans are updated every 3 months)

PARENT / TEACHER CONFERENCES

Our teachers will be happy to talk with you about your child's progress and adjustment. Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled as needed. We ask that you schedule a conference with your child's teacher other than arrival and pick-up times. This will allow the teacher to concentrate on the well-being of all the children in the class.

COMMUNICATION

Parents need to be well informed of events in their child's school. Notes will frequently be sent home concerning school events and other information, as well as sending messages on Remind. Please check your child's bag daily for important notes and schoolwork. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email the director. **Parents should refrain from contacting Bright Beginnings teachers on personal phones during the preschool day, as the teachers' focus should remain on the care and supervision of the children. However, the director will not be able to answer any messages between 5:30 pm and 7:30 am on weekdays and at any time on the weekends or holidays. We sincerely believe that evenings and weekends should be time spent with family.**

OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

Children need fresh air and exercise daily. Children will be allowed to play outdoors on the playground each day, weather permitting. Children will only be kept in during the rain or extreme heat or cold. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather and provide appropriate outdoor apparel (i.e., coats, jackets, hats).

EXTRA CLOTHING

Accidents happen, so it is required that all children have a change of clothing (shirts, pants/shorts, underwear, and socks) at the preschool. You can place a change of clothing in a labeled plastic bag for the teacher to keep in the classroom. Remember that Bright Beginnings Preschool is a "hands on" learning environment, and the children will be exploring with lots of materials that may be messy. Please dress your child in washable play clothes, suitable for all types of activities including painting and eating. Bright Beginnings is not responsible for any lost or damaged clothing. We make no apologies for making learning fun! Please be aware that our playground has rubber mulch and can leave black marks on shoes.

Label everything! This includes jackets, lunch boxes & food items, backpacks, sippy cups, bottles, pacifiers.

JEWELRY

We recommend that no jewelry or small accessories be worn by any child while at Bright Beginnings. Small items such as, but not limited to, earrings, beads, bobby pins, and small barrettes, may be lost and cause a choking hazard to our students. Bright Beginnings is not responsible for any lost jewelry. Necklaces and pacifier clips are not allowed to be worn by students while at Bright Beginnings.

BIRTHDAYS

If you would like to send simple refreshments on your child's birthday, **please let the office know a few days in advance.** We do enjoy celebrating and recognizing each child's birthday. **Please remember the snacks MUST be store-bought or from a professionally inspected kitchen (per licensing guidelines).** We suggest mini cookies or cupcakes.

BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS

We will be glad to place birthday party invitations in children's bags **IF ALL** the children in the class have been invited to the party. Please understand that due to state licensing guidelines, Bright Beginnings can **ONLY** furnish first names to any parent requesting names for invitations of any sort.

TOYS & PETS

Please do not allow your child to bring toys or books to school unless they are on "Show and Tell" days and approved by the classroom teacher. It is too easy for these items to be misplaced or broken. **NO LIVE PETS OR ANIMALS ARE ALLOWED IN THE PRESCHOOL.**

SECURITY

The physical access to the Bright Beginnings area is limited during school hours. Parents enter the area through the front door which is controlled by an electronic access panel. Each family will be assigned a four-digit code for entry into the preschool. **DO NOT SHARE THIS CODE WITH ANYONE ELSE.** We also have bullet proof glass installed at both entryways of the preschool.

BAN ON WEAPONS

Weapons of any kind are not permitted on school grounds. As a safety precaution, we also request that your child not bring any toy which resembles a weapon to school.

DIAPERING PROCEDURE

Bright Beginnings Preschool follows the diaper changing procedure included in the back of this handbook.

SLEEP SAFE POLICY & PROCEDURE

Infants

- The preschool provides a crib for each infant that is safety approved in compliance with Consumer Product Safety Commission and American Society of Testing and Materials International safety standards. ("Infant" refers to any child under the age of twelve (12) months or any child who is under eighteen (18) months of age who is not walking.)
- All cribs are in good repair and free of hazards.

- A crib mattress is provided for each crib and fits firm, tight-fitting without gaps, at least two inches (2") thick and covered with waterproof, washable material. Before a change of occupant, each mattress shall be cleaned with a disinfectant.
- Crib sheets are changed prior to a change of occupant.
- All cribs will be arranged to meet the state standards and requirements.
- The preschool will provide a safe sleep environment in accordance with American Academy of Pediatrics, Consumer Product Safety Commission and American Society for Testing and Materials recommendations.
 - Staff shall place an infant to sleep on the infant's back.
 - Staff shall not place objects or allow objects to be placed in or on the crib (including cover or soft items).
 - Swaddling shall not be used.
 - There shall be lighting adequate to see each sleeping infant's face.
 - When the infant can easily roll over, staff shall continue to put the infant to sleep initially on the infant's back.
 - Wedges or infant positioning devices and monitors shall not be used.
 - Infants shall not sleep in equipment other than a safety-approved crib.
- Parents must provide appropriate sleep clothing for infants, due to blankets not being permitted inside of cribs.

One Year Olds & Up

- Cots are provided for each child who is two (2) years of age or older and who is required to take a nap and for each child under the age of two years who can climb out of a crib.
- Cots shall be of sound construction and of sufficient size to accommodate comfortably the size and weight of the child.
- Cots must be used by the same child daily and marked for individual use.
- Sheets for cots shall be marked for individual use and laundered weekly or more frequently if needed.
- A light cover shall be available for each child's use on a cot and shall be marked for individual use.
- Pillows shall not be used by children under two (2) years of age (this includes the use of nap mats). When used for children two years of age or older, pillows shall be assigned for individual use and covered with pillowcases that are marked for individual use and shall be laundered weekly or more frequently as needed.
- All sleeping and resting equipment will be arranged to meet the state standards and requirements.

SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME & ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA PREVENTION POLICY IN INFANTS AND CHILDREN UP TO FIVE YEARS OF AGE: This policy is informed by evidence-based guidance and educational materials from the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome (www.dontshake.org).

Our preschool is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment for all children. We follow strict practices to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) and Abusive Head Trauma (AHT) in infants and children up to five years of age. These injuries are serious and preventable and can result from shaking or rough handling.

Staff Training & Education: All staff members receive training upon hire and ongoing education that includes:

- Understanding SBS and AHT
- Safe handling of infants and young children
- Infant and early childhood brain development (birth–5 years)
- Age-appropriate caregiving practices
- Strategies for soothing crying, fussing, or distressed children
- Stress management and knowing when to ask for help
- Recognizing and reporting suspected abuse

Safe Care Practices

Staff are trained to use safe, calming techniques such as:

- Proper head and neck support when holding infants
- Gentle rocking, soft voices, and comforting touch
- Meeting children's basic needs (feeding, diapering, rest, comfort)
- Placing a child safely in a crib or supervised area if a caregiver feels overwhelmed
- Asking another staff member for assistance when needed

Crying is recognized as a normal part of development, and staff are taught that it is never safe to shake or handle a child roughly.

Recognizing Signs of Concern

Staff are trained to recognize possible signs of SBS/AHT, including:

- Unusual sleepiness or lethargy
- Inconsolable crying
- Vomiting or feeding difficulties
- Seizures or breathing problems
- Sudden behavior changes

Response & Reporting

If a child shows signs of possible injury or abuse:

- The child's safety is ensured first
- Emergency medical services are contacted when necessary
- The Director is notified immediately
- Observations are documented
- Reports are made to Child Protective Services as required by law

Understanding Brain Development

Staff receive education on early brain development to understand:

- Young children's brains grow rapidly and are especially vulnerable
- Infants have weak neck muscles and large heads
- Gentle, responsive care supports healthy development
- Trauma can have long-term effects on learning and behavior

Prohibited Behaviors

The following behaviors are strictly prohibited:

- Shaking a child for any reason
- Rough or forceful handling
- Physical punishment
- Handling a child while angry or overwhelmed
- Any behavior that could cause physical harm

Violations of this policy result in immediate disciplinary action and reporting to appropriate authorities.

CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT

Our goal is to protect the children in our care. Bright Beginnings is required by law to report any cases where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused, neglected, or exploited, either sexually, physically or emotionally. We will cooperate with the authorities in the investigation of any reported cases.

DISCIPLINE

We want to work cooperatively with you in dealing with any behavior problems that occur while your child is attending this preschool. We like to encourage good behavior for all our students through positive reinforcement. However, students who are continually disobedient, disrespectful of others, overly aggressive or otherwise disruptive to the classroom learning environment and their teachers and peers may be disciplined at Bright Beginnings. Depending on the specific circumstances, the discipline may range from sitting in "time-out", to spending time in the director's office, to serving a periodic suspension from the classroom. Corporal punishment is NEVER used at Bright Beginnings.

The teacher will always explain to the child why he or she is being disciplined. The objective of the discipline is to teach the students that there are consequences of their actions and to encourage the child to accept responsibility for each deed.

Parents are expected to support Bright Beginnings to instill responsibility in the student by reinforcing the disciplinary action rather than excusing the behavior. Any disagreement with either the rule or the disciplinary action should be aired with the teacher out of the presence of the child, in the spirit of two Christians with a common goal of developing a child.

Bright Beginnings Preschool reserves the right to dismiss a child if behavior becomes a problem. If it is determined that a child is having difficulty adjusting to pre-school, is frustrated with the learning environment, shows abusive tendencies toward the teacher or other children, or is a disruption to the entire class, the director will be asked to observe the classroom. A conference will be scheduled with the parents, teacher, and director. The staff is not trained to teach children with special learning or behavioral difficulties, and if it is determined that the child is not able to adjust and behavior is extreme, it may become necessary to ask the parents to withdraw the child from Bright Beginnings.

BITING

Although common in young children, biting can be a frustrating problem. We cannot allow biting in the preschool. The following is an outline of the preventative strategies our teachers commonly utilize:

- Gather up the biter, contain him/her in "time-out" and say calmly "I don't like that and neither does anyone else. You just can't do it."
- Let the biter know that his/her actions caused pain to someone by saying "it hurts when you bite your friend" and say "NO" in a firm no-nonsense voice.
- Inform the parents of both children involved at pick-up time WITHOUT referring to names. Biting is not something to blame on children, parents, or teachers. A child who bites is not on the way to being a discipline problem. It is not an anti-social act, but an act of an individual who is not yet ready to be fully social.
- **If biting occurs 3 times in one day, the parents may be asked to pick up the child early. This will be at the discretion of the preschool administration. Biting 3 times in one day is considered a biting "incident".**
- **If a child has three biting incidents (3 pages completed within a month), the child may be removed from the preschool for 3 days, pending severity.**

ILLNESS

Illness impacts how children learn, develop, and participate in their environment. We want all children to come to school every day knowing that they can participate. Often it is hard to decide whether or not your child is well enough to come to school. The information below may help you decide when to keep your child resting comfortably at home. A child should NOT come to Bright Beginnings if he or she displays any of the following conditions:

- **Fever:** A fever of 100.4 degrees or higher. A child should either be fever-free for at least 24 hours WITHOUT THE USE OF FEVER REDUCING MEDICATIONS, AND provide a doctor's note, before returning to school.
- **Diarrhea:** Child may return to school after all symptoms are gone for one complete school day. If a child is in attendance at Bright Beginnings and has 3 loose bowel movements within 2 hours, he/she MUST be immediately picked up.

- **Vomiting:** Child may return to school after all symptoms are gone for one complete school day.
- **Colds:** Constant green or nasal discharge. This indicates infection, and a child should not attend Bright Beginnings if experiencing this condition.
- **Conjunctivitis or Pink Eye:** Children with red, itchy, draining, or crusty eyes may have conjunctivitis. Children may return to school 24 hours after successful antibiotic treatment with a doctor's note.
- **Hand Foot and Mouth:** Children with hand foot and mouth may return to school when they have been fever-free 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications) and can actively participate in regular school activities, with a doctor's note. Note: All blisters must be scabbed over and dried up.
- **Staph Infection:** Children with a staph infection may not return to school without a doctor's note assuring Bright Beginnings they are not contagious to others.
- **Ring Worm:** A child infected with ring worm may continue to attend Bright Beginnings as long as the parents provide proof of medical treatment, and the area is covered by a bandage.
- **Lice or Scabies:** A child should not return until 24 hours after the child and home have been treated and are found to be free of lice or scabies. A note from your doctor is required in this situation before your child will be allowed to return to Bright Beginnings
- **Communicable Diseases:** If a child has a communicable disease or a serious illness, (such as but not limited to conjunctivitis, strep throat, influenza, RSV) the parents must have a doctor's statement that the child is able to participate in the normal routine before they may return to the classroom. **For Flu and RSV cases**, a child must quarantine away from school for at least 3-5 days until symptoms are not present even if the doctor's note states otherwise. **Parents must call or message the school with the diagnosis as soon as possible** so that other families can be notified if their child has been exposed. The school will notify the health department and take any precautions that they deem necessary. The director of Bright Beginnings may deny admission to a child until she deems the child is healthy regardless of the return date on the Dr. Excuse.
- **See COVID-19 guidelines** (separate document) for information regarding protocol about this illness.

To limit the spread of illness it is important that sick children do not come to school. If your child comes to school with any of the above symptoms, or develops these symptoms while at school, you will be asked to pick up your child **WITHIN ONE HOUR**. **If a child is sent home from preschool due to an illness, he or she MUST have a doctor's note to return to school.** Additionally, all children entering classrooms must wash their hands. Please help us reduce the risk of spreading illness by encouraging your child to wash their hands when they arrive at school. We greatly appreciate your help in assuring that we have a healthy environment for learning.

DISPENSING OF MEDICATION

There are certain instances when it becomes necessary for children to take medication during school hours. The preschool staff must follow specific procedures for dispensing medication to children. This is necessary for the protection of the child as well as the person giving the medication.

- **All Medication**
 - A medication form must be completed and signed by parent.
 - Preschool staff will document all dispensed medication on the medication form.
 - No medication will be left at the preschool (except for EpiPen's).
 - It is the parent's duty to notify preschool staff when medication has been discontinued.
 - It is the parent's duty to notify the preschool staff when a child's medication has been changed. A new medication sheet must be filled out.
 - **Any medication that is to be dispensed at Bright Beginnings will be given to the preschool staff. Medication must be given to the staff directly as it cannot be kept in the cubby / bag area.**
 - It is the parent's responsibility to notify preschool staff when their child is receiving medication at home, in case of adverse reaction while at preschool.
- **Over-the-Counter Medication**
 - Approved over-the-counter medications include creams and powders such as diaper rash ointment, Benadryl cream, corn starch, etc.
 - No liquid over-the-counter medication will be dispensed. Exceptions may include the event of an emergency where Benadryl liquid may need to be administered, and in special cases where a chronic condition requires treatment with OTC medication. A doctor's note must be presented in the case of chronic conditions.
 - Fever reducers are not allowed in the center.
 - Over-the-counter medications will be administered for no longer than 5 consecutive days. If the problem still exists after applying the over-the-counter medications for 5 days, you will need to present a medical prescription to further apply medication.
- **Prescription Medication**
 - Prescription medication must be prescribed for 3 or more doses per day, for preschool staff to administer the medication.
 - Prescriptions must be current (meets expiration date).
 - All bottles or containers must be labeled properly e.g., name of child, name of medicine, time and dosage.

EMERGENCY ILLNESS AND INJURY NOTIFICATION

Parents are notified immediately regarding any illness or injury requiring professional medical attention. In the event that a parent cannot be contacted, the emergency contact person is notified. If none of these are available, the child's physician may be contacted and / or 911 will be called if an illness or injury requires immediate professional medical attention. If professional medical attention is required, no staff will impede in any way the delivery of emergency care or services to a child by licensed or certified emergency health care professionals.

NON-EMERGENCY INJURY NOTIFICATION

A parent is notified upon arrival at pick-up time if their child has become moderately ill or has an injury that does not require professional medical attention. When an accident or injury occurs to a child, an Accident Report Form is completed by the teacher and signed by the director and parents. The parents may or may not be notified, depending on the severity and time of the accident or injury. Parents will receive a copy of this report.

INCLEMENT WEATHER PLANS/ SNOW DAYS / EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS

During severe weather, the director will contact local emergency personnel for information. Should an emergency requiring evacuation occur, you will be notified immediately, and the children will be re-located to an alternate location. Teachers will follow the “Fire/Tornado Escape Plan” in their handbook. During a tornado warning, children will be escorted to the safest area away from exterior walls/windows. In the event of a fire, children will be escorted to the playground. If there is a power outage for more than an hour, parents will be notified to pick up their children immediately. If it becomes necessary to close due to inclement weather or other circumstances, calls will be made to parents or announcements will be posted on local news/radio channels (WISK, WDEC, & WALB), on the preschool Facebook page, and sent via the Remind App. Bright Beginnings Preschool closure policy, due to inclement weather, is based upon our discretion.

PROGRAMS

We will have a musical performance at our Grandparent’s Day program, Christmas program, and our End of the Year program. All programs are TBA. We will also have “Doughnuts with Dad”, and “Brunch with Mom”. We encourage all family members to support these events.

Bright Beginnings also participates in two service projects each year. In November, we participate in Operation Christmas Child. In the Spring, we will participate in a fundraiser for a local cause or organization. (This may vary each year)

SAFE SANCTUARIES

First Methodist Church is a “Safe Sanctuaries” church and Bright Beginnings preschool abides by all regulations in this program, through the South GA Conference. A copy of the regulations is in the director’s office.

CHAPEL

Spiritual development is integrated into every aspect of the academic curriculum at Bright Beginnings. Teachers discuss spirituality and model Christian behavior and attitudes in their daily contact with the students. All students, regardless of religious affiliation, will participate in spiritual instruction and developmental programs as a condition of attendance at Bright Beginnings. The First Methodist Church Children’s Director also leads weekly worship time.

The Bright Beginnings Day

Bright Beginnings Curriculum

Bright Beginnings uses a theme based Christian curriculum that supports academics and school readiness.

Our preschoolers will enjoy laughing, singing, crafting and more while learning basic preschool principles with a Christian basis. The preschool age is such an important time in the life of a child. It’s the time when we lay the foundation for not only learning, but for moral and biblical training as well. Our primary goal is to make school a happy experience for each child. We hope that each child will feel good about himself/herself and the activities he/she experiences during the year.

Our teachers will send home progress reports in December and May so you can follow the progress of your child. Please remember this is just a guideline, and every child develops and grows at a different rate.

Bright Beginnings Preschool has created a curriculum integrating the **Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)** as well as using our traditional strategies to help teach Bible truths and build Christian character. A daily schedule for each age group has been created to reflect routines and activities. Schedules are flexible but routinely followed to provide structure. The class schedule is posted in each group's room, and a copy is provided to parents in the student folder at the beginning of the school year.

About GELDS

For over two decades, the K-12 education system has embraced standards-based learning as an integral part of ensuring student success. Recognizing the importance of standards-based learning, Georgia has served as a pioneer in generating thoughtful and appropriate standards for children at all age levels. **Georgia's Early Learning Standards (GELS)** and **Pre-K Content Standards** were developed to improve child outcomes in early care and learning programs and to promote high-quality early education programming for all children.

However, recent developments, such as the implementation of the **Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) for K-12** and revision of the **Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework**, have called additional attention to the importance of high-quality standards for children's learning and development.

Georgia answered this call for higher quality standards by commissioning a year-long analysis of its early learning standards to determine their comprehensiveness and alignment with other documents, such as the **CCGPS for Kindergarten**, the **Head Start Framework**, and **Work Sampling Online**. Drs. Sharon Lynn Kagan of Columbia University and Catherine Scott-Little of UNC-G conducted the analysis. As a result of their recommendations, Georgia drafted a new set of standards called the **Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)** for children birth to age 5. These standards take the place of the **Georgia Early Learning Standards (GELS)** for birth to age 3 and the **Pre-K Content Standards**.

The purposes of the **GELDS** are to:

- Guide teachers who work with children from birth through five in providing quality learning experiences;
- Guide parents in supporting their children's growth, development and learning potential.
- Lay the groundwork for applying the standards in pre-service training, professional development, curriculum planning and child outcome documentation.
- Create a "Universal Language" for all stakeholders to use regarding the learning and development of children. Stakeholders would include parents, teachers, pediatricians, early interventionists, policy-makers, etc;

- Raise public awareness about the significance of the early years as the foundation for school success and lifelong learning and the importance of the teacher's role in the process; and
- Support the early identification and referral of children with special learning needs.

For more information on GELDS, please visit: <http://gelds.dec.state.ga.us/>

DIAPERING PROCEDURE

Bright Beginnings adheres to the following diaper changing procedure:

Workers should never leave a child alone on a table or countertop, even for an instant. A safety strap or harness is neither sanitary nor safe and should not be used on the diaper changing table. If an emergency arises, workers put the child on the floor or take the child with them.

- Step 1:
 - Get organized. Before you bring the child to the diaper changing area, wash your hands and gather and bring what you need to the diaper changing table:
 - Fresh diaper, clean clothes (if you need them).
 - Wipes for cleaning the child's genitalia and buttocks removed from the container or dispenser so the container will not be touched during diaper changing.
 - A plastic bag for any soiled clothes.
 - A thick application of any diaper cream (when appropriate) removed from the container to a piece of disposable material such as facial or toilet tissue.
 - Put on disposable gloves.
- Step 2:
 - Carry the child to the changing table, keeping soiled clothing away from you and any surfaces you cannot easily clean and sanitize after the change.
 - Gently place child on diapering surface.
 - Always keep a hand on the child.
 - If the child's feet cannot be kept out of the diaper or from contact with soiled skin during the changing process, remove the child's shoes and socks so the child does not contaminate these surfaces with stool or urine during the diaper changing.
 - Do not rinse soiled clothes, but rather place them in a plastic bag and securely tie the plastic bag to be sent home.
- Step 3:
 - Clean the child's diaper area.
 - Unfasten the diaper but leave the soiled diaper under the child.
 - Remove stool and urine from front to back and use a fresh wipe each time. Lift the child's legs as needed to use disposable wipes to clean the skin on the child's genitalia and buttocks.
 - Put the soiled wipes into the soiled diaper or directly into a plastic-lined, hands-free covered can.
- Step 4:
 - Remove the soiled diaper without contaminating any surface not already in contact with stool or urine.
 - Fold the soiled surface of the diaper inward.

- Immediately put soiled disposable diapers in a covered, plastic-lined, hands-free covered can.
- Remove gloves using the proper technique, and immediately put them into a plastic-lined, hands-free covered can.
- Use a disposable wipe to clean the surfaces of the caregiver's hands and another to clean the child's hands, and put the wipes into the plastic-lined, hands-free covered can.
- Step 5:
 - Put on a clean diaper and dress the child.
 - Slide a fresh diaper under the child.
 - Use a facial or toilet tissue to apply any necessary diaper creams, discarding the tissue in a covered, plastic-lined, hands-free covered can.
 - Note and plan to report any skin problems such as redness, skin cracks, or bleeding.
 - Fasten the diaper.
- Step 6:
 - Wash the child's hands and return the child to a supervised area.
 - Use soap and water, no less than 60 degrees F and no more than 120 degrees F, at a sink to wash the child's hands, if you can.
 - If a child is too heavy to hold for hand washing or cannot stand at the sink, use commercial disposable diaper wipes or follow this procedure:
 - Wipe the child's hands with a damp paper towel moistened with a drop of liquid soap.
 - Wipe the child's hands with a paper towel wet with clear water.
 - Dry the child's hands with a paper towel; and toss paper towel into a plastic-lined, hands free covered can.
 - Return child to supervised area.
- Step 7:
 - Clean and sanitize the diaper-changing surface.
 - Dispose of the disposable paper liner used on the diaper changing surface in a plastic-lined, hands free covered can.
 - Clean any visible soil from the changing surface with detergent and water; if a pad is used, wipe both sides of the pad and the changing table surface with a Clorox wet wipe.
 - Dry with a dry single use paper towel.
- Step 8:
 - Wash your hands.
 - Put cleaning and disinfecting solutions away.

COVID-19 PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

Bright Beginnings takes the safety and wellness of every child very seriously.

We will abide by the Health Departments and State guidelines and procedures to maintain cleanliness and prevent the spread of COVID-19 when positive cases are confirmed. Procedures and guidelines are subject to change as needed.

- If a child tests positive for COVID-19, please contact the preschool as soon as possible. The director/assistant director will give the child a return date. They must quarantine for five days. We will need any documentation such as positive test results and/or doctor's notes. They may ONLY return if they are symptom free.
- The director/assistant director will contact parents via Remind.
- If the child who tested positive was present in class, the class will be deep cleaned, and the children's parents will be notified to watch for symptoms.
- If a child is directly exposed to COVID-19, they may attend but if they start showing symptoms, they will be asked to be tested.

Covid-19 Symptoms

- Fever of 100.4 or higher or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea