



# Parent & Student Handbook

Revised March 2023

First Baptist Church  
450 E Hwy 287  
Waxahachie, TX 75165  
972-937-1940 ext: 110  
firststeps@fbcwax.org

## **Purpose**

First Steps exists to minister to young children and their families in our church and community. Our primary goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment that meets each child's physical, spiritual, social, and emotional needs.

## **General Program Information**

First Steps will meet Tuesdays & Thursdays, from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. The Wednesday program, "Active Adventure Kids", will operate from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., as well. Active Adventure Kids (AAK) is a separate entity, but works in cooperation and coordination with First Steps. If a student is enrolled in First Steps they may also enroll in AAK, but it is not required. Program dates primarily follow the Waxahachie Independent School District calendar and follow their directives for inclement weather and other closures. If Waxahachie ISD is closed, First Steps Weekday Education will be as well.

## **Standards**

First Steps operates as a ministry of First Baptist Church. First Steps admits students of any race, nationality or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin.

## **Policy and Procedures**

Policies and procedures are updated annually to reflect changes in minimum standard requirements, tuition and fees, hours, etc. If a change must be made during the school year, each family will receive notice through a handout and/or newsletter that will need to be read and signed for compliance. To ensure that First Steps operates as effectively and efficiently as possible, policies were set by the First Baptist Church Weekday Education Team, Minister to Children, and Church Staff at the recommendation of the First Steps directors.

Questions and concerns regarding policies and procedures should be brought to the directors. Any changes or exceptions will be decided in cooperation with the Weekday Education Team.

## **Texas State Minimum Standards for Child Care**

<https://hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/provider-portal/protective-services/ccl/min-standards/chapter-746-centers.pdf>

### **Curriculum**

All of our classes offer developmentally-appropriate, hands-on activities that promote spiritual and academic growth. First Steps curriculum will include the following elements: Bible stories, dramatic play, creative art, health & safety, music, language arts, number readiness, science & nature, physical fitness, chapel, outdoor play (weather permitting; students go outside if the temperature is between 40° and 94°)

### **Enrollment & Student Information**

Registration for enrollment in First Steps Weekday Education is open year-round, space permitting. Registration and payment of the registration fee ensures that your child will have a place on the class roster or that your child will be placed on a waiting list if their age group is full. You will be notified of openings as space becomes available.

Please continually update emergency information, as needed, in Brightwheel. This includes emergency contacts and a list of additional persons authorized to pick up your child.

Brightwheel allows us to contact parents, guardians or family members in the case of an emergency. If your child needs immediate medical care and we cannot reach you, Brightwheel and our medical release form authorizes your doctor to administer the necessary care. Your child's records are accessible only to the First Steps Administration, the child's teacher (under supervision by an administrator) and the parent or legal guardian.

### **Brightwheel**

Brightwheel will be used for checking students in and out, communication between parents, teachers and directors, billing, and student record keeping. The Brightwheel app can be downloaded on any smartphone or tablet. If you need an invitation to access your child's account, email: [firststeps@fbcwax.org](mailto:firststeps@fbcwax.org)

All adults who will be dropping off or picking up students must have the Brightwheel app and login prior to dropping off or picking up. It is the parent's responsibility to communicate this with other adults who will be taking care of their child. Once adults are added to the child's profile an invitation from Brightwheel will be sent to the added adult and will allow them to create their own login. Questions regarding the app may be sent to [firststeps@fbcwax.org](mailto:firststeps@fbcwax.org) .

### **Immunization Record (copy from your doctor or clinic)**

**No child will be permitted to begin school without immunizations on file.** Please compare your child's record with the state requirements. If your child does not have the necessary immunizations, we will notify you. Your doctor may email them to:

[firststeps@fbcwax.org](mailto:firststeps@fbcwax.org).

### **Medical Release Form**

This form, which can come from your child's pediatrician, must be signed by your child's physician and returned. By signing, your physician acknowledges that your child is physically able to take part in the daily activities of the First Steps Weekday Education program.

### **Attendance & Fees**

Attendance, health and identification records are kept for each child. There will be no refunds for temporary absences. Continued payment assures that your child's place is reserved for their return to the program. Monthly tuition will be sent via a recurring invoice through Brightwheel. Any questions regarding payment should be sent in a message via Brightwheel or emailed to [firststeps@fbcwax.org](mailto:firststeps@fbcwax.org).

Fees for the fall/spring school year are prorated based on days the program is in session.

- Non-refundable deposit of \$150 due at time of registration.
- Monthly payment of \$230 for 2 days or \$310 for 3 days is due on the 1st of each month.
  - The second child in a family receives a \$25 discount on tuition. The third child receives a \$50 discount on tuition.
  - First responders and military will receive a \$50 discount on tuition. (effective '23/'24 school year)

**A late fee** of \$15.00 will be charged on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month unless prior arrangements are made with the director. If an entire month of tuition is missed, there is a possibility your child will forfeit their spot in the program.

**Late Pick-up Fee:** \$5.00 per child will be charged to you at 2:15 *p.m.*. There will be one late pick up without charge viewed as a grace period. Any late pick-up thereafter will be charged through Brightwheel. Charges may be sent with or without notice. **Late fees must be paid upon receipt of invoice.**

**Withdrawing from the Program:** The Weekday Education administration appreciates as much notice as possible if you plan to withdraw from the program (preferably 2-4 weeks). This allows families on the waiting list to be notified of the opening. If your child is absent for 4 or more consecutive program days with no communication from the family, his enrollment status will be changed to inactive. At this point, if the next tuition payment is not received or if your child does not return by the first Tuesday of the next month, he will be automatically withdrawn from the program, requiring re-enrollment and submission to any forms and/or fees required for re-enrollment. When leaving the program for any reason, there will be no refunds for paid tuition and all outstanding fees will be due.

### **Arrival & Departure**

A car line will be utilized for drop off and pick up. This system is highly effective in ensuring processes take place safely and efficiently.

#### **Arrival (8:45 am - 9:00 am)**

- **No parents may enter the building at drop off time.**
- All children will have their temperature checked in their car before entering the building.
- Children will be escorted to the door and to their classroom by a staff member.

#### **Departure (2:00 pm)**

- **No parents may enter the building at pick up time.**
- All children will be dismissed directly to their car, escorted by a staff member.
- If you need to pick up your child before the dismissal time of 2:00 pm, please notify the directors and teachers in the morning upon or before arrival via Brightwheel.

### **By law, we are not allowed to release a child to anyone who is not listed in our records.**

directors and staff will only release children to persons whose names are listed on the child's **Authorized Pick-up List** in Brightwheel. The directors and staff members will ask to see a photo I.D. if they do not know or recognize the person intending to pick up your child.

### **Special Events**

Throughout the year, there will occasionally be special events to which parents and other visitors are invited. If these events fall on a school day, there may be special instructions for drop off and/or pick up. Any stipulations or restrictions of our building, classrooms, or hallway are put in place for the safety and security of our students and staff. We thank you for your cooperation.

## **Bad Weather**

If inclement weather creates a need to cancel MDO, notifications will be sent via Brightwheel. If Waxahachie ISD closes, we will close as well. If WISD schedules a late opening, we will begin class at 10:00 AM. If severe weather arrives while we are in school, we will take all the necessary precautions and possibly call for an early dismissal. In the event of inclement weather, there will be no refunds or credits to tuition, and billing will proceed as normal.

## **Emergency Drills**

Emergency drills will be scheduled periodically. This will allow our directors, teachers, students, and church staff to be thoroughly prepared and knowledgeable if an emergency were to arise. This also allows our students to not be caught off guard or afraid if action needs to be taken.

## **Discipline**

We are committed to providing a positive learning environment for all children. As a basic rule, we use positive reinforcement practices, modeling and redirection from teachers, and intervention from a director if needed. A strong teacher-parent partnership will be one of the most vital tools in helping our students. If disruptive, negative, destructive, or aggressive behaviors are continual, parents will need to meet with the teachers to devise a plan to help their child be successful in the classroom setting.

## **Aggressive Behavior Policy**

When a child shows any aggressive behavior a notification will be sent to the parents via Brightwheel. If aggression is shown towards another student, both of the children's parents will be notified, and both children involved will remain anonymous to the other family. Aggressive behaviors include, but are not limited to: hitting, kicking, and biting.

When a child shows aggressive behavior, he/she will be sent home if:

- There are two or more instances of aggression, unprovoked in one day
- The child bites/hits/slaps/kicks on the face
- The child leaves a bruise or bleeding wound

Additionally, If a child has 3 aggressive instances in 1 semester, they will be sent home.

The length of time the child must remain at home will be decided on a case by case basis and may range from 1 day to 1 month, and is at the discretion of the director.

Upon their return, if a child continues to be aggressive, despite the teachers' and the parents' efforts to stop the behavior, the child may be removed from enrollment. Age, severity of wounds, temperament, cooperation of parents and teacher documentation will be considered

when making the final decision. Readmission will be considered after a period of six weeks, based on a case by case basis and if there is an available spot in the class.

### **Health & Wellness**

The decision to send a child home due to illness is at the discretion of the director. If there are any questionable symptoms of a contagious illness observed, the parent will be asked to take the child home. It is also at the discretion of the director to request receipt of a medical release letter from the child's physician prior to the child being readmitted to class. First Steps Weekday Education may find it necessary to modify the illness policies during flu or other outbreaks.

Children cannot be kept in their classroom while their class is outside on the playground. If a child is too sick to go outside, they must be kept at home.

**Do not bring your child to school when any of the following symptoms exist:**

- **Fever of 100°F or higher**
- **Vomiting**
- **Diarrhea**

**Your child must be free of ALL of these symptoms for 24 hours without the aid of medication before returning to the program.** Parents must inform the director if their child was given any type of medication prior to coming to school. Signs and symptoms that indicate a student should stay home include, but are not limited to:

Cloudy, green or excessive runny nose, common cold – from onset through one week, conjunctivitis(pink eye) or other eye discharge, difficult or rapid breathing, draining wound (open wounds must remain covered), head lice (must be nit free.), persistent cough or croup, skin infection: hand-foot-and-mouth disease, chicken pox, boils, ringworm, impetigo, thrush, skin rash of any kind, sore throat, any other communicable disease.

### **Illness At School**

If your child becomes ill during the day, they will be isolated from the group, and you will be notified to pick up your child as soon as possible. In a non-life-threatening illness or accident, our first attempt will be to contact the parents. If we are unable to contact the parents, we will start contacting people on your emergency contact list. Please make all of your emergency contacts aware that they may be called and expected to pick up your child in case of an illness or accident. **A continual problem of not being able to reach a parent when a child is sick or hurt could result in the child being withdrawn from the MDO program.**

## Social Media

It is important to remember that not all parents, guardians, and foster parents share pictures of their children on social media. With that in mind, we ask that you share pictures of **only** your child, unless given permission from the other parent, guardian or foster parent.

The director reserves the right to take action on any shared or posted information that conflicts with First Steps policies.

## Birthdays & Holidays

Birthday treats MAY be sent from home. All treats must be store bought with ingredients listed on the packaging. You must contact your child's teacher, via Brightwheel, before sending a birthday treat. First Steps has special days set aside for holiday celebrations. Parents will receive sign-up lists for class party days.

## Diapering & Toilet Training

Toilet training should start when a child exhibits physical and intellectual readiness. Parents and teachers will work together in this stage of achievement. Children will also be properly trained on hand washing. Children partially toilet trained must be in disposable diapers or pull-ups with velcro sides. Please keep in close contact with your child's teacher in regard to potty training, so your child has the best chance for success. General age level guidelines:

- All babies should be in disposable diapers.
- Children in the toddler classes may begin potty training if their parents are having a great deal of success at home. This is early for many children, so any potty training in the toddler classes must be done in diapers or pull-ups.
- Many children begin the potty training process while in the 2 year old classes.
- Children in the 3s class must be actively potty training at home and wear pull-ups or underwear to class. **No diapers are worn in the 3s class.**
- Students in the PK4 class **must be completely potty trained.** This includes wiping themselves.

## Clothing & Footwear

Students should wear clothing that is loose enough to provide comfort and freedom of movement and large enough to pull on and off easily. Ensure students are wearing clothes suitable for the weather for outdoor play. All garments should be washable; we get messy! For girls - shorts **MUST** be worn under dresses and skirts. Tennis shoes or shoes with rubber soles are the best choice for our program. Flip flops, sandals and other open toe shoes are highly discouraged.

## **What to bring daily**

All personal belongings coming to school with your child must fit in a bag or backpack.

### **Personal toys are not allowed.**

- Bottle fed babies need to have pre-filled bottles with lids.
  - Formula should be premixed.
  - Breastmilk should already be thawed and in bottles.
  - Bottles are placed in our fridge upon arrival.
  - Send as many bottles as your child will need for 6 hours, plus one extra.
- Snack
  - This should be a small, healthy and easy option that does not require clean up.
- Lunch in a disposable bag or lunchbox.
  - Cut food into small bite size pieces.
  - All food must be ready to eat from the lunchbox; no food that requires heating
  - No carbonated drinks allowed. Water and fruit juices are best.

Lunch and Snack time are also times of learning. We will take time to teach your child how to feed themselves as well as open their food and drink items. Don't forget to practice with them at home. All bottles, cups, lunchboxes, thermoses, reusable bags, forks, spoons, tupperware should be labeled clearly with your child's name.

## **Contact**

Teachers can be reached via Brightwheel on school days from 7:00am-4:00pm. Unless there is an emergency, all messages sent after hours will be answered the following day. Brightwheel is monitored during the day for parent communication, but if there is a true emergency, please call the church office at: 972-937-1940, to ensure the message is received in a timely manner.

Directors can be reached via Brightwheel or email at [firststeps@fbcwax.org](mailto:firststeps@fbcwax.org)

In most cases, we are able to respond the same day. If the need arises, and the teacher has availability, you can reach out to schedule a phone call or meeting.

Our teachers and staff are dedicated to making your child's school experience positive, uplifting, and educational. We do everything in our power to ensure your child feels loved and safe, and enjoys coming to school. To help ensure this happens, we encourage teachers to "unplug" when they are home and focus on their families when the day is over. Thank you for supporting our phenomenal teachers as they work tirelessly to plan and prepare each week for your children.



**First Steps MDO**

**Parent Acknowledgment**

I have read, understand, and agree to follow the rules, policies, and procedures outlined in the First Steps MDO Policy Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Child(ren) Name and Date of Birth

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_