

Firefly Academy Parent Handbook

Welcome to the Firefly Academy family! We are so excited for this school year and all the fun and learning it will bring. The staff at Firefly Academy is motivated by our genuine love for children, and a desire to serve God in our daily lives.

About Firefly Academy

Firefly Academy is a ministry of First Family Church and here is how we came up with our name:

Matthew 5:16 says, "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven." We are all called to be lightning bugs, fireflies for Jesus, as the magnificence of his presence shines through our very lives. It is the light from within that makes a firefly attractive. A lightning bug without its light is nothing more than an ugly beetle. It is the light from within that makes a believer attractive. A life enlightened by Him is never satisfied with darkness, but rather seeks to shine in order to draw others from the perils of the night.

Our Mission Statement:

The mission of Firefly Academy is to cultivate a community of families and teachers working together to provide a high-quality, safe, stimulating, positive and Christian environment that enhances and fosters the physical, emotional, cognitive, creative and social development of individual children through play-based learning and discovery.

Firefly Academy Staff

Our teachers are crucial to the quality of our program. Providing a safe, loving environment is just the beginning point in building a trusting, secure relationship with your child and we want them to thrive in our care. Our teachers have been carefully chosen by the Director for their warmth, personality and nurturing skills. All teachers have passed a comprehensive background check. All staff members are CPR certified.

Curriculum

The overall long-term goal of Firefly Academy is Kindergarten Readiness. All classroom curriculum is teacher developed considering that particular group's age and stage of development. The idea is that each year your child returns to Firefly Academy, another level of Kindergarten Readiness will be developed within your child.

Our classes begin as early as 12 months, and continue through Pre-Kindergarten. All students will have the opportunity to learn basic social skills appropriate for their age level, as well as

participate in activities that grow fine motor skills and gross motor skills. They will be introduced to basic Language Arts to help them use their imaginations, experience pre-reading activities and, by Pre-Kindergarten, recognize the alphabet by sight and sound. Students are encouraged to use their own ideas and preferences in completing art projects which promote creativity. Math begins an awareness of numbers and recognition of geometric shapes developed through songs, games, planned play and educational toys.

Students will attend a daily music class. They will learn many different songs that coincide with their lessons in class and as we all know, music is great for our minds and is a great teaching tool. Confidence is gained through singing with a group!

Most importantly, all children will enjoy a 15-minute chapel period in the morning. Our students will hear a Bible story, learn Bible songs, and learn from our Chapel Leader how we can make choices to be more Christ-like in their day-to-day lives.

A calendar will be sent home at the beginning of every month with all of our scheduled activities and a brief overview of lessons the teacher has planned.

Media Usage

Visual media may be used to supplement education, share Bible lessons, or for indoor recess activities. Only movies or shows that are G rated will be shown in the classroom.

Enrollment Policies

Enrollment shall be open to any child without discrimination in regard to sex, race, color, religious or political beliefs. The child must be at least 12 months old by September 1st of that school year to begin our program at Firefly Academy. Exceptions may be made by the Director. Enrollment is based upon classroom availability and if the registration fees have been paid.

Social Media

Firefly Academy has a Facebook page where we frequently post photos of our students doing their day to day activities and special events that they participate in. They are never identified by name. We will have you fill out a form indicating if we do or do not have permission to post them on social media.

Contact Information

If you need to contact us at Firefly Academy, please message the Director, Nicole Smith, on the Talking Points app. These messages go directly to her cell phone. If you do not receive a response during regular preschool hours within 5 minutes, message Melanie Polivoda on the Talking Points app. Again, if there is no response within 5 minutes, call the preschool office at 806-358-0774. Our email address is firefly@amarilloag.org. Please do not call First Family Church. Messaging outside of our preschool hours will be answered at the discretion of who

you are messaging. Please keep your cell phone on while your child is in our care so we can contact you if needed.

Fees

To enroll at Firefly Academy, the following fees must be paid:

- \$75 **non-refundable** registration fee
- \$100 supply fee (this fee pays for all classroom supplies used throughout the year.) This fee is refundable if you withdraw your child from our program over the summer, however, it comes **non-refundable** if you withdraw your child after August 1st of that school year.

Tuition

Tuition is \$200 per month, per child. We offer a \$25 sibling discount for a 2nd child. A 3rd child and beyond pay regular tuition. Your enrollment fees are a separate charge outside of your tuition. Firefly Academy is 100% cashless and paperless and we only accept tuition payments online. A link will be sent to you on the Talking Points app on the 1st day of the month. Click the link to open the payment portal.

You can pay with a credit/debit card or you can pay by ACH. Please note a convenience fee is added as a separate transaction that is out of Firefly Academy's control. The fee is lower if paid by ACH (bank routing number and checking account number.) You can even program your payment to come out monthly so you never even have to think about it. Please make sure you list your child's name when you input your payment information.

Tuition is due on the 1st of every month and late after 2:00PM on the 5th of the month. If tuition is paid after 2:00PM on the 5th a \$25 late fee will be assessed. Late fees must be paid before your child can attend school the following school day. Habitually late payments may result in the dismissal of your child from our program at Firefly Academy. Full monthly tuition is due regardless of how many weeks Firefly Academy is in operation for that month, and regardless of how many days your child attends.

The Director reserves the right to raise tuition at any time to fit the needs of the preschool. You will be notified of any increase in writing and well in advance.

Schedule and Class Times

Classes are conducted on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 2:15. We follow the Amarillo ISD calendar and guidelines with regard to bad weather days and holidays. However we also take Canyon ISD's recommendations into consideration as well. Firefly Academy may cancel classes at the Director's discretion regarding weather and or road conditions even if the school districts do not close. We will announce any delays or closures on the Talking Points app and Facebook. Closures will not be made up nor will a refund on tuition be given.

Drop Off

Children may begin arriving at 8:50am. Our doors will remain locked until 8:50. Before this time your child's teacher is busy preparing for the day and children will not be admitted to the classroom. Please arrive no later than 9:10am. We lock our doors at 9:10am and they remain locked the remainder of the day until just before pick up.

We understand some mornings are harder than others with small children, but dropping your child off late is a distraction to staff, teachers and other students that have already begun their day. Please make every attempt to be on time. Our entire school attends chapel from 9:15 to 9:30 and we are unable to hear the doorbell while we are in chapel.

If your child has an appointment in the morning, you can still bring them after 9:30! Just ring the doorbell and we will let you in.

We understand there may be separation anxiety the first couple of weeks of school. We will do our very best to comfort your child until they get acclimated. Often, the child will almost always stop the tears once the parents are out of sight, and the teacher is able to engage them. Our best advice is to make drop off a very quick process; a fast hug goodbye and hand them over to their teacher. Lingering tends to make things worse. You may message your child's teacher on the Talking Points app any time through the day to check on your child, however do not expect a quick response as our teachers stay extremely busy. If your child does cry without stopping for more than 30 minutes, we will contact you, but we ask that you give us 4-6 weeks to work with your child. It is not uncommon for a child experiencing initial separation anxiety to joyfully go to class after a few weeks without a single tear.

We will do everything to make this an easy transition, but if a child is unable to adjust to the program after a reasonable amount of time and the behavior becomes a disruption to the class we will need to remove the child from our program. We will make every attempt to communicate with you regarding this issue before we reach this decision.

Pick Up

Parents need to pick up children promptly at 2:15. If your child is picked up after 2:25 a late pick up fee will be assessed. Our fee is \$5 for every 5 minutes you are late past 2:25. This will be a separate charge outside of your tuition and must be paid before your child is allowed to attend school the next school day. If you are going to be late, please message your child's teacher AND the Director on the Talking Points app. Habitually late pick ups will result in your child being removed from our program.

ONLY those you have listed on your registration form as authorized individuals will be allowed to pick up your child. If you need to make any changes, you must submit these changes to the Director in writing.

ANYONE THAT PICKS UP YOUR CHILD IS REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR DRIVERS LICENSE BEFORE WE WILL RELEASE YOUR CHILD. ABSOLUTELY NO EXCEPTIONS!

If you need to pick up your child early, please message the teacher and the Director on the Talking Points app so we can gather their belongings. When you arrive ring the doorbell and we will let you in.

Absences

If your child will be absent, please contact your child's teacher on the Talking Points app to let them know so we do not plan for their activities that day. Tuition is not pro-rated for absences.

Emergency Procedures

At Firefly Academy, we have emergency drills every semester. These include fire drills and tornado drills.

Classroom Management and Discipline Plan

Appropriate behavior is encouraged by positive verbal rewards. This reinforces the child's good feeling about behavior and serves as an example to other children to act in such a way to receive this praise. For a child not cooperating or making a poor choice, they are reminded verbally by the teacher of acceptable behavior. If the behavior continues, he/she will be placed in time out. This time out is an opportunity for the child to calm down and remember what behavior the teacher is asking for.

If a child continues to display poor behavior after 3 attempts made by the teacher, they will be brought to the office to speak with the Director. Your child will NEVER be physically punished while in our care at Firefly Academy and will always remain in eye sight of a staff member. If behavior problems persist past speaking with the Director, a parent will be called to pick the child up for the day.

Our staff will make every possible effort to work with your child, however, continuous disrespectful, destructive and violent behaviors will not be tolerated. Firefly Academy reserves the right to remove a student from our program at any time and without notice.

Biting Policy

If a child bites a classmate or teacher, an incident report will be filled out and both parties will be informed of the incident. The child will be put in time out.

If a child bites a second time, parents will be called to pick up the child for the remainder of the day. An incident report will be filled out and both parties will be informed of the incident.

If a child bites a third time, they will be removed from our program.

Clothing and Belongings

Children are encouraged to wear play-clothes and closed toed shoes. Daily activities include active outdoor messy play, and children should feel comfortable enough to participate without worrying about their clothes. Children will be going outdoors daily, weather permitting so please send a jacket when necessary. Be sure LABEL ALL BELONGINGS. Always include two extra changes of clothes in your child's backpack. Remember accidents (paint, spills, etc.) do happen and we do not have a supply of clothes. It is extremely embarrassing for the child to not have a change of clothes available if they have an accident. If your child is not potty trained please provide an adequate number of diapers and pull ups. We provide baby wipes.

Please make sure your child leaves all toys at home. Personal toys cause disruptions and the preschool cannot be held responsible for lost or broken toys. The preschool has adequate play equipment and toys to utilize throughout the day.

Younger children may bring something to comfort them (pacifier, blanket, etc.) if they are struggling to adjust. The teacher will let them have it when needed but otherwise will be put away.

Lunch

Your child will need to bring a nutritious lunch with a drink in a labeled lunch box. Drinks should be self contained or leak proof. Everyone must bring a separate spill proof cup for water throughout the day. DO NOT SEND RED DRINKS. If spilled they stain our carpets. Please make sure that you send food that your child can easily feed themselves. Cut toddler's food into bite sized, manageable pieces. Please do not send food that needs to be heated as we do not have access to a microwave. If you have forgotten your child's lunch we will call you to drop it off by lunchtime.

SOME CLASSES MAY BE REQUIRED TO BE PEANUT AND TREE NUT FREE DUE TO ALLERIGES. IT IS IMPERATIVE TO ADHERE TO THESE POLICIES FOR THE SAFETY OF OUR STUDENTS!

Rest Time

Our toddler, 2's and 3's class participate in Rest Time. Please bring a nap mat, blanket, pillow or any other reasonable items that bring your child comfort when they rest. Teachers may play gentle music or a quiet movie during this rest time. Nap items will be sent home regularly for laundering.

Bathroom

Children enrolled in our 4's class and Pre-K classes must be 100% potty trained before attending Firefly Academy. Potty trained preschool children:

- Must no longer wear diapers or pull ups.
- Must be able to communicate to the teacher that they need to use the restroom.
- Must be able to attend to their own hygiene (we do not wipe a child in the 4's or Pre-K)

If the student has more than one accident in a one week period they will be considered “non-trained.” If they are non trained, you must choose one of the following options:

- Withdraw your child from our program and place him/her on our waiting list.
- Continue to pay monthly tuition to hold your child’s spot until potty training has been completed.

All children must be ready to start their day at drop-off. Visibly soiled children will not be allowed into the classroom until a parent has cleaned them and put them into dry clothes if necessary. If they have gone to the bathroom in the car, they are still considered your responsibility. Our teachers are responsible for greeting our students in the morning and they are unable to defer from their job duties to change a child. A changing table is available in the music room bathroom to use if needed.

All diapers must be disposable. We do not allow cloth diapers.

Parties

We celebrate holidays throughout the year and all items needed to celebrate are the responsibility of the parents such as drinks, special snacks, paper goods, etc. An online volunteer sheet will be messaged a couple of weeks prior to the holiday. We also welcome if a parent would like to spearhead party planning. Contact your child’s teacher if you would like to be a classroom parent.

Birthdays will be celebrated at the end of the day if arrangements are made with your child’s teacher in advance. All treats need to be allergen friendly if your class has allergy restrictions, and must also be handheld, ready to eat and do not require paper goods or utensils - for example donuts, cookies, donut holes, cupcakes. No cakes.

Illness

Please keep sick children at home! This includes but is not limited to a cloudy or green runny nose, a persistent cough, impetigo, rashes, vomiting, diarrhea, fever (100.4 or higher) or any other communicable disease. If your child vomits between bedtime and the next morning, do not bring him/her to school. A child who arrives at school noticeably ill WILL NOT be admitted on that day. We reserve the right to send home a child who is ill. If your child has exposed others to a contagious disease please notify the Director so other parents can be informed if necessary. A doctor’s note may be required to return in case of a communicable disease such as chicken pox, for example. If your child is sick, they have to be symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of medication before they can return to school.

Medication

Firefly Academy will not administer prescription medication unless it is a life saving medication such as a prescribed epi-pen or an inhaler. An asthma action plan must be

established with your child's teacher and the Director. An allergy action plan must also be established with your child's teacher and the Director.

Allergies

Parents must make the school aware of all allergies and provide us with all the necessary information associated with your child's allergy. If your child has to have an epi-pen, please make sure your child has it with them every single day. If it is a food allergy please make your child's teacher and the Director aware and provide us with a list of acceptable snacks so we may purchase them. Our daily snacks include but are not limited to Goldfish, Cheeze-Its, Vanilla Wafers, Teddy Grahams, various cereals, fruit snacks and for the toddler class, puffed cereal that easily dissolves. If none of these work for your child, contact the Director.

Injuries

The school makes every attempt possible to provide an environment that is safe but bumps and falls do happen. If a minor injury occurs, first aid will be administered and documented. If an injury is serious the school will notify the parent or the emergency contacts if the parent cannot be reached. If the injury is life threatening, 911 will be called. The parent or designated person will assume responsibility for securing further treatment for the child.

Airing a Grievance

If you have a question or concern about your child, please address your child's teacher first. If the communication between parent and teacher is unsuccessful, the Director will intervene. We may arrange a conference during the school day to have a one on one discussion if needed. All communication between parent and teacher is relayed to the Director. We all want to be on the same page so we can best serve your child!

Modification of this Agreement

This handbook may be modified by the Director by written notice to the parents whenever circumstances covered by the handbook change.

Withdrawing Your Child

If you would like to withdraw your child for any reason, you must submit your request in writing (an email is sufficient) to the Director. There will be no penalty or fee assessed for withdrawing your child. Monthly tuition that has already been paid can be pro-rated and a check issued. Supply and registration fees are not prorated or refunded.

Termination of Care by Firefly Academy

Firefly Academy reserves the right to terminate our care of a student without notice for any reason we see fit. Grounds for termination are included but not limited to:

- Failure to pay tuition by the required due date.

- Routinely late to pick up your child.
- Failure of child to adjust to the program after a reasonable amount of time.
- Violent or disruptive behavior that interferes with the performance of our staff and impacts the well being of other children in the class.
- Inappropriate parental behavior.
- Failure to abide to any of Firefly Academy's policies and procedures.

The Director of Firefly Academy will decide what is in the best interest of the preschool, staff and students.

Final Thoughts

Our goal and absolute intention is to strive for excellence at Firefly Academy. Staff invites input from our preschool parents and hopes that each family will take a personal interest in what we are doing. If you have a concern please talk with the Director so that your concern can be addressed and resolved quickly. We truly only have your child's best interest at heart. Be blessed!