



...For the tree is known by its fruit”

Matthew 12:33

Welcome to The Learning Tree Education Program. It is our sincere desire that you find this a comfortable, yet stimulating environment for your child.

We function first and foremost as an extension of the ministries of First Baptist Church. Our aim is to provide quality childcare in a loving Christian atmosphere, while giving support and assistance to families in the important task of child rearing.

You will find information in this handbook about our policies and procedures. This is not an exhaustive collection.

Much of the day-to-day activities of our center can only be learned by experience. Please feel free to ask questions about any aspect of our program.

If you have suggestions to improve our program, whether it be for the children, parents or staff, please share them with our Director Lynn Carroll or Assistant Director, Laurie Jensen.

We ask for your loyalty. We want you to have a positive experience in regard to yours and your child's participation in our center here at First Baptist Church Fairhope.

We're glad you are here!

**The Learning Tree**  
Preschool Center  
A Ministry of First Baptist Fairhope  
Parent Guide

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## **II. OUR GOAL**

The Learning Tree motto, "As the twig is bent, so grows the tree", is evidence of a loving environment whereby Christian teachers can help children develop good "roots" to grow upon. Our desire is to encourage children to become enthusiastic learners through developmental play. Play is the work of young children. Play enables our staff to achieve their goals of our early childhood curriculum.

## **III. The Curriculum Philosophy**

Curriculum for our school is everything that occurs in the learning environment, the room arrangement, the materials on the wall, the resources, the teacher's plans, and most importantly, the children's questions and methods of exploration as they seek to understand the world which they live. Children play as they learn and the role of the teacher is to facilitate that learning in the best way possible. Our school uses "Wee Learn" a Bible based curriculum to "enhance" learning and meet the needs of the whole child.

The Learning Tree Staff seeks to provide an experiential and developmentally appropriate learning environment for young children. Learning centers are designed such that, children at varying developmental levels can successfully perform tasks, but also be challenged to acquire new skills as they are ready. Experiences are also designed to integrate all areas of the child's development; social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual. Because our school is Christian oriented, our curriculum includes those elements of the faith which are common to all Christians with no emphasis on any one denomination. The teaching of these concepts is through both intentionally planned experiences and spontaneous connections which arise in the learning environment.

## **IV. Admission & Registration**

A. Before a child can be admitted to The Learning Tree, the Director must have on hand the following:

1. Personal information form
2. Immunization record (blue health card)
3. Emergency form
4. Permission to or not to photo
5. Notarized emergency care form and a signed statement that you understand and agree upon all policies and procedures at The Learning Tree.

If parents choose to postpone or not have their child immunized, they must present an exempt letter from their primary care physician stating the physician is aware of the parents decision and that the child is under the physicians care.

All enrollment forms, registration fee, supply fee, and 1st month's tuition is due by 8/1 to secure placement at The Learning Tree.

Parents should notify The Learning Tree office when any pertinent information changes. For example, employment, marital status, address, phone numbers, etc.

### **B. Registration Process:**

During February, registration will be open to:

- \* Children currently enrolled and will be returning next year
- \* Children who are not currently enrolled who are children and grand children of members on the active roll of First Baptist Church Fairhope
- \* Siblings of children currently enrolled

Registration forms will be available in January. Forms will be placed in the folders of children currently enrolled or handed directly to the parents. Registration forms for siblings and for children and grandchildren of members on the active roll of First Baptist Church Fairhope may be obtained at The Learning Tree office.

### **C. Registration Fee:**

A registration fee of \$225.00 is to be paid at the time the child is registered for school. The registration fee must be paid annually when registering your child. No space will be reserved if this fee is not paid. This non-refundable fee helps with supplying materials necessary for the children's developmental needs.

### **D. Entrance requirements:**

A child must be 1, 2, 3, or 4 years of age by September 1st to attend The Learning Tree Preschool.

## **E. Fee Schedule**

A \$20 fee will be charged for each check returned by the bank. A second returned check will result in "cash only" status.

The tuition is due the first day of the month. If it is not paid by the 10th of the month, a late fee of \$10 will be added. If the total due is not received by the last day of the month, the child will not be accepted in our program until the account is current.

## **F. Tuition Payments**

Our tuition is based on 10 monthly payments 8/1 to 5/30

2 days per week \$1650 per school year or 10 months at \$165 per month

3 days per week \$1850 per school year or 10 months at \$185 per month

5 days per week \$2150 per school year or 10 months at \$215 per month

\* a 10% discount is given on the second child.

## **G. Withdrawal**

Thirty days written notice is required to withdraw a child from the program. This enables the school to process an application from the waiting list. If withdrawal takes place after the start of the school year, payment is required for the 30 days following the withdrawal notice, whether or not the child continues to attend the school during this period.

## **V. Arrival and Dismissal**

Our school day is from 9:00 am till 1:00 pm. A clipboard is provided for the teacher to sign the child in. All parents must sign the child out at 1:00 pm, pickup time.

**No child will be released to a person not authorized by the custodial parent/guardian.**

### **A. Arrival**

Parents are asked to bring their children no earlier than 9:00 am. Car line is for ages 2 to 4 from 9:00 till 9:10 am. Please bring your child to the office after 9:10 am. Class begins when the first child arrives and there are a variety of activities in which each child may participate. Parents are reminded that a child who constantly arrives late will feel left out of the activities enjoyed by the other children in their class.

### **B. Dismissal**

Dismissal time is 1:00 pm. It is very important that the child be picked up on time by the expected person. A child becomes concerned and fearful when all the other children have departed and he/she is the only one left. Promptness and consistency on the part of the parent is how the child learns the concept of trust.

### **C. Tardy Pickups**

Pickup of the children at the stated departure time is important not only for your child but also for the daily schedule of the school. Teachers have scheduled work time after the departure of the children. They must clean up, set up for the next day and spend some time in planning before their work ends for the day. Failure of parents to pickup their children on time causes an unnecessary hardship on the teachers.

Parents who have not picked up their child by 1:10 pm will be considered tardy. A tardy fee of \$10 (0-5 min) and \$20(6-15 min.) will be imposed for each infraction. Failure to pay the tardy fee(s) by the next month's tuition due date will result in termination of the child from the Weekday School.

A *Tardy Record* showing the date and the time of the tardy infraction will be completed each time the parent is late. This form will be signed by the parent at the time of the pickup and will be filed in the child's record. Time will be determined by a clock on the hallway wall.

In case of emergency or unavoidable delay the late fee can be negotiated. The parent should call prior to 1:00 pm and leave a message for the Director(s) or teacher concerning the emergency or delay.

## **VI. Special Needs:**

Children who have special needs will be considered on an individual basis as The Learning Tree is neither staffed, nor equipped to provide special educational services to children with significant disabilities. The decision to enroll a child with special education needs will be based on a “goodness of fit” between the child’s needs and the school’s capacity to meet these needs.

When a child has been identified with special needs, the director of the school will schedule a meeting with the parent(s) and the child in order to gain a better understanding of the child’s strengths and areas of need. If the child is currently enrolled in Early Intervention, family is encouraged to invite their child’s Service Coordinator, Early Intervention Specialist or therapist to the meeting. Following the meeting with the family, the director will consult with the teacher of the age appropriate class and with such professional people serving the child whom the Director believes would be helpful in evaluating the needs of the child.

The decision of “goodness of fit” will be made by the Director. The Director will inform the parent(s), the Children’s Minister and the Session member responsible with oversight of The Learning tree program of this decision.

## **VII. Discipline**

Positive techniques of discipline are used at The Learning Tree. Praise and encouragement is given for appropriate behavior. A child may, however, need to be removed from a situation temporarily if he/she is unable to act in accordance with the established rules. Under no circumstances will The Learning Tree approve use of physical punishment or any other procedure that might humiliate, hurt or frighten the child. If a child deliberately inflicts harm to another child or teacher, the parents will be noticed immediately for appropriate intervention.

## Discipline Policy

### Someone once said, "Discipline is the gift of responsible love"

When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. They learn to take responsibility for their own behavior. Based on this belief of how children learn and develop values, this school will practice the following discipline and guidance policy:

#### WE DO

1. Praise, reward, and encourage the children. We also give hugs.
2. Reason with and set limits for the children and give gentle reminders
3. Model appropriate behavior for the children
4. Modify the classroom environment in order to anticipate trouble and motivate productive behavior
5. Listen to the children and offer choices
6. Provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior
7. Provide the children with natural and logical consequences of their behavior
8. Treat each child as a person and respect his/her needs, desires, and feelings.
9. Overlook small annoyances
10. Explain things to the children on their level and try to clarify issues
11. Use short supervised periods of "time out" or "renewal time". This would only be used when the child is feeling out of control and needs help calming down and focusing. A teacher is always near by
12. Inject humor
13. Stay consistent in our behavior, and guidance and discipline

#### WE DON'T

1. Spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap or otherwise physically punish the children
2. Make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity or otherwise verbally abuse the children
3. Shame or punish the children when bathroom accidents occur.
4. Relate discipline to eating, resting, or sleeping
5. Deny food or rest as a punishment
6. Leave the children alone, unattended or without supervision
7. Place the children in locked rooms, closet, boxes as punishment
8. Allow discipline of children by children
9. Criticize, make fun of or otherwise belittle children, their families or ethnic group

## **VIII. Behavior Support Policy**

The Learning Tree Weekday Preschool Staff will use supportive guidance strategies when teaching young children how to manage their own behavior. Child guidance practices will promote positive social skills, foster mutual respect, strengthen self esteem, and support a safe environment.

Positive behavior strategies that we will use every day with each child are:

- Encouragement
- Positive Praise
- Offer Choices
- Set Limits
- Daily documentation
- Redirection to a safe space

In the event that these strategies are not working and we are having further classroom behavioral difficulties we will:

- Talk with the parents/guardian
- Use Observational Timelines
- Have a parent/Guardian Teacher Conference to inform and discuss the classroom behavior and to inquire about home behavior
- Create a plan for home and school
- Continue documentation

If after all these methods are tried and the child is not responding we will acquire parental/guardian permission to:

- Call in a Behavior Specialist to observe
- Make recommendations and referrals for additional community resource agencies and Physicians

Our primary goal is to make sure that your child is successful in a classroom setting. Our staff is trained to handle most behavior situations, but we cannot do it without our support families. If the parents/guardians are not willing to assist us in this process, refuse to follow up with our recommendations, or the child begins to harming themselves or others, and we have tried all measures that we have available, we will provide you with a notice and we will assist you in finding another preschool which may meet the needs of both your child and family.

Thank you for your cooperation in helping us to make all children feel safe and loved in this environment. As a team, we can make this a great year for everyone!

**PARENTS ARE ASKED TO SIGN THE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT POLICY  
AND RETURN TO THE DIRECTOR.**

## **IX. Health and Safety**

**Parents are asked to keep a child at home under the following conditions:**

If he/she has a fever or has had one during the previous 24 hour period

If he/she is on an antibiotic, wait at least two days (48 hrs) or until the child is feeling better before returning to school.

If he/she has a heavy nasal discharge.

If he/she has a constant cough.

If he/she is fussy, cranky, and generally not up to par or just really tired.

If he/she has vomited or had diarrhea in the previous 24 hours

If he/she has symptoms of a possible communicable disease.

(lice, impetigo, strep throat, chicken pox)

Parents are asked to call the school if the child has a communicable disease or has been absent from school for more than two days so that staff and parents can be alerted to watch the other children. Children may return to school after all symptoms have disappeared and the doctor has released the child in writing. We will notify parents when a communicable disease has been introduced into TLT.

If a child becomes ill at school the parent will be notified to come and pick up the child. Current emergency phone numbers must be provided for each child. Your child must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to TLT.

In case of accidental injury, the parent will be immediately notified. If the parent cannot be reached, the person listed as an emergency person or the child's physician will be contacted. If necessary, an ambulance will be called. Until the arrival of a parent or emergency person, the physician, or an ambulance, the Director will be in charge and make all decisions about the care of the child. Parents are expected to assume responsibility for any resultant expense.

The Director will be responsible for seeing that some members of the staff have completed children's CPR training and first Aid certification within the previous twelve months.

### **A. Medication**

The Learning Tree does not administer medication unless it is for a life threatening condition such as asthma. A written signed and dated request must be given to the Director. It must be in the original container.

## **B. Safety**

Children's safety is our top priority. Therefore your child will not be released to anyone unless we have written or verbal confirmation from you, or they are on your list as someone who may pick up your child. Everyone will have their identity checked prior to our releasing your child. In case of an emergency situation children will not be released to anyone except their own family without verbal confirmation by phone.

Fire drills are conducted once a month during the school year. Staff will lead children through the appropriate steps in vacating the building in case of fire. The children will be led to a safe place where they are counted and given further instructions.

In case of a tornado warning, the teachers will move the children to a safe area of the building where they will remain until the warning is lifted.

In the event that we have an unsafe visitor on the grounds or a child custody battle concern, the school will go into lock down mode. This means that teachers will close all classroom blinds and lock all classroom doors. All external building doors will be locked and the police will be called immediately. The director will communicate with the teachers via phone if necessary.

## **C. Parking Lot Safety**

The safety of children while in the parking lot is a major concern. Parents must be responsible for their children when they are being brought to school, picked up from school and anytime a parent comes with a child during the day.

Children in the one year old classes are brought to the classroom by their parent or other responsible adult and left in the care of the teacher in the classroom. Ages 2-4 may come through the car line. At the end of the day, teachers will keep the children in the classroom until the parent or responsible adult comes for the child. Children must be signed out on the clipboard each day. See Map concerning car line entrance, exit and parking. We will have a one way in and one way out policy.

\*While outside the building and in the parking lot, the adult should hold the child by the hand so that the child cannot dash out in front of a car.

Children should never be left alone in a car. Cars can pop out of gear too easily. Please bring all your little ones inside the building each time. We must all be proactive in our attempts to keep our children safe.

## **X. Child Abuse and Neglect**

By Alabama law, teachers are required to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. If such cases arise, the alerted staff member will report to the Director(s). The Director(s) will then notify the DHR of the County Department of Social Services. The Director(s) will keep the Chair of the Weekday School Committee and the Children's Minister informed of the action and the results.

If a parent accuses a member of the staff of The Learning Tree of child abuse and/or neglect the following procedures will be followed:

- \* The report of abuse and/or neglect with the Baldwin County Department of Social Service will be made by the parent. The Director(s) and /or the Chair of The Learning Tree Committee or the children's Minister will assist the parent in reporting if necessary.
- \* In addition to the investigation by the Baldwin County Department of Social Services there will be an internal investigation by the Director(s) and/or the Chair of The Learning Tree Committee/Children's Ministry.
- \* The staff member will be relieved of duties until the internal investigation is completed. The staff member will continue to receive her/his regular salary during the time of the investigation.
- \* If the abuse and/or neglect charge is substantiated, the staff member will be terminated immediately. The salary of the staff member will end as of the date of termination.

## **XI. Miscellaneous Information**

### **A. Birthdays**

Birthdays will be recognized at school. If you wish to provide birthday snacks, please make arrangements with your child's teacher in advance. As a safety precaution for all children, balloons and candles are not allowed in the classroom.

### **B. Bringing Items to School**

Children should not bring toys, real or toy guns and knives, money, jewelry, chap stick or makeup to school. Age appropriate toys may be brought on show and tell days.

The Learning Tree will not be responsible for any item that is broken or lost. For sanitary reasons pacifiers are not allowed.

## C. Cell Phones

Our school is a **NO** cell phone zone, when bringing a child into our facility and picking up your child from school.

## D. Clothing

Children are expected to wear comfortable, washable play clothes and sneakers that will allow the child to climb and run safely. Children should wear clothing that allows for self-dressing. For safety reason, cowboy boots are not allowed.

Smocks are used for art and water play but accidents do happen. Each child is expected to have a complete change of clothes at school. These should be placed in a plastic zip-locked bag and updated seasonally. They will be kept in the child's cubby. All change of clothes must have child's name.

Parents of children in diapers or in the process of toilet training should have:

- \* 2 extra diapers in the child's cubby and package of 1 package of hypoallergenic wipes
- \* Extra training pants and pants in the child's cubby in a plastic bag with child's name on it.

## E. Emergency Closings

The Learning Tree will close during times of threatening weather. You will be called to pick up your child as soon as possible. We will follow the closings of the Baldwin County school leadership. Please stay tuned to any information that they release. Listen for your closing on local television stations, and WKRG radio and directors text via Remind.

## F. Field Trips

The 3 and 4 yr old classes will take field trips throughout the year to places the Director and staff feel will be of benefit to the children's learning experiences. These trips are carefully planned and safety is a top priority. When a field trip is planned, the parents will be notified and several parents will be asked to accompany the group in order to provide adequate supervision.

A first aid kit for each group will be provided by The Learning Tree.

A form allowing the child's participation in the school-sponsored field trips need to be signed by the parent/legal guardian before the child is allowed to attend the field trip. Four year olds will ride the church bus.

## **G. Fund Raisers**

We have fund raisers throughout the year to help keep the cost of tuition as low as possible. Please help the school by participating in each fund raiser.

## **H. Toilet Training**

Toilet training is not a prerequisite to entering the school. However, all 2 year olds must be potty trained before entering the 3 year old class. We do not have changing tables in our 3 year old classes and we are not equipped to handle accidents.

## **I. Items to bring to school**

- \* Please send your child's folder in a backpack everyday. It is helpful to have the name on the outside of the backpack
- \* Please send a snack and lunch to school with your child every day, please check with your child's teacher; some classes do not have snack - they opt for an early lunch.
- \* 1's and 2's should place snack and lunch in separate bags
- \* Communication is very important. Please send and check your child's folder everyday. We will communicate mostly via email and "Remind". Please make sure we have your correct email on file.

## **J. Security System**

Each parent will receive a security code to enter our facility at Parent Orientation. This is for the safety and protection of our children.

## **K. Volunteers**

Please sign up for various activities through the year. we need your help with Trunk or Treat, Art Walk, Feast and Teacher Appreciation. We can't do it without you!  
Parents of children enrolled in The Learning Tree are invited to make suggestions for improvement of service at any time. Suggestions should be made in writing to the director. Your suggestions will be thoughtfully considered and implemented as appropriate.

If you have a message for the teacher, please see her in person or telephone the office, or send a note in the child's folder. We cannot accept verbal messages given by the child.

Parents are encouraged to inform the Learning Tree of situations at home such as a new baby, death, illness of a family member, etc. which might upset the child's behavior.

## **L. Allergies**

We must have notification if your child has any allergies. If a child has peanut allergies then peanut products will not be allow in the classroom. We will notify all parents in the event of a peanut allergy.

## **XII. Extended Day Program Policy**

### **A. Attendance:**

To ensure the safety of all children in attendance please notify Laurie Jensen at The Learning Tree office of dates your child will not be attending.

\*Please note that no credit will be given for students who do not attend the program on days they are regularly enrolled.

### **B. Release of Children:**

*Children will be dismissed only to their parents or designated caregivers*

Please make sure your TLT registration form lists all individuals who may be picking up your child. If the adult picking up your child is not known by the staff, they will be asked to show photo ID/Driver's License upon arrival at school. All parents and caregivers must sign the student out.

### **C. Forms:**

The Parent Acknowledgement form must be completed before the child enters the Extended Day Program.

### **D. Behavior and Discipline Policy:**

Our policy is to encourage positive behavior through redirection and reasonable rules that are age appropriate. In the event that a child's behavior fails to follow the guidelines of respect and/or safety within the program or activity, his/her parent will be consulted on the appropriate action to be taken. We reserve the right to dismiss any student from the participation in the program if these guidelines are not met. In such events, there will be no refunds.

### **E. Tuition**

5 days per week (M-F) \$135. Monthly

3 days per week (M-W-F) \$85 Monthly

2 days per week (T-Th) \$60 Monthly

Checks must be payable to: TLT Extended Day

\*Parents may also take advantage of our "drop in" service fee \$10 per day.

If you are interested in our Extended Day Program, please sign and return the parent acknowledgement form. Please note that even if you use the drop in service we must have a signed form on file.

## **F. Inclement Weather conditions:**

The Extended Day Program may need to be cancelled due to inclement weather conditions. Please listen to the local news and radio for closings due to weather. If school is dismissed early due to unsafe weather conditions we will also cancel the Extended Day Program.

## **G. Late Pick-ups:**

TLT Extended day ends promptly at 3:00 p.m. It is understood that from time to time parents may be late picking up a child. A fee of \$5 for every 5 minutes will be owed to the preschool teacher with your child. **THIS POLICY WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED.**

## **H. Rest Time:**

All students will participate in a short rest period. Please send a nap mat that is clearly marked with a black pen and blanket for your child to sleep/rest on. This will need to be kept in a labeled extra-large, zip-lock bag. This will be kept at the preschool during the week and sent home with the child on Thursday or Friday to be washed and returned the following week.

## **I. Extended Day Program Contact Numbers:**

If you need to contact the Extended Day Coordinator please contact The Learning Tree Office @ 251.928.0496 or you may contact the teachers directly:

Laurie Jensen 251.508.9921

Melia Schacherer 937.626.0985

We are looking forward to a wonderful school year!  
Any questions or concerns, please call or email Lynn Carroll , Director  
@251.928.0486 or TLT@fbcfairhope.org