

Hickory Christian Preschool



GROWING TOGETHER AS THE CHILDREN OF GOD

A Ministry of
Hickory United Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Hickory Christian Preschool Parent Handbook

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Welcome to Hickory Christian Preschool

Thank you for choosing Hickory Christian Preschool (HCP) for the first steps of your child's formal education. Our goal is to help parents lay a solid Christian foundation that can be built upon, both academically and spiritually. We believe that as we work together, the Lord will help us to guide the steps of your child as he or she grows into the person God created him or her to be.

Mission Statement

Hickory Christian Preschool is committed to providing a loving and nourishing environment that offers experiences and activities designed to encourage growth in academics as well as an understanding of who God is and the love He has for us.

Purpose

It is our goal at Hickory Christian Preschool to educate the whole child: spiritually, academically, socially, and emotionally. We aim to serve the individual needs of students and teach them within a developmentally appropriate framework so that all students can excel. In addition to our excellent academic program, we offer many enrichment opportunities, including growth and development through exploration and experimentation with various learning materials. Activities are stimulating, age appropriate, and enhance spiritual, social-emotional, physical, and intellectual development.

Preschool Structure

Hickory United Evangelical Presbyterian Church

HCP is a ministry of HUEPC. The HUEPC Pastor and Session provide spiritual leadership and guidance to HCP.

Hickory Christian Preschool Committee

The HCP Committee is the governing body of the preschool, under the oversight of the Session. The Committee consists of HUEPC church members, HCP parent representatives, and the HCP Director (non-voting). All Committee members are Christians by Profession of Faith. Additionally, they are in agreement with the beliefs of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and promise to further the unity, purity and peace of the Church.

Hickory Christian Preschool Staff

The employees of HCP are Christians by Profession of Faith. They are integral to the program as they share the love of the Lord with the children daily. The HCP Director is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school and reports to the Pastor of HUEPC. All HCP staff report to the HCP Director.

Admission and Enrollment

Enrollment

HCP does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, or national or ethnic origin when admitting students. Enrollment at HCP is open to all children meeting the age requirements outlined below. An official application must be completed and submitted to HCP, along with a non-refundable registration fee. Registration for the school year starts in January, prior to the start of the school year, and continues through December 31st of the school year. Student registration may be considered after December 31st based on space availability and an assessment of the student's knowledge, skills, and abilities by HCP staff and with the approval of the Director.

Class Sizes

Enrollment for each class will be limited as follows:

- Ten (10) children in the three-year-old classes with an optimal number of eight (8); and,
- Twelve (12) children in the four-year-old classes with the optimal number of ten (10).

HCP may increase class sizes to accommodate more children, as necessary, with the addition of a classroom aide and a recommendation from the HCP Director.

Admission

Admission is granted upon meeting the following conditions:

- Receipt of the entire registration fee and all book fees;
- Receipt of all completed registration forms including the Pennsylvania CD 51 Child Health Report and immunization records; and,
- Receipt of a copy of the student's birth certificate showing satisfaction of age requirements or approval outlined below.

Age Requirements

Students must be at least 3 years of age on or before September 1st and potty trained to be admitted to the three-year-old program. Students must be 4 years of age on or before September 1st to be admitted to the four-year-old program. Exceptions to minimum age requirements may be made based on HCP staff's assessment of the child's knowledge, skills, and abilities and with the approval of the HCP Director.

Immunization/Health Requirements

HCP adheres to Commonwealth of Pennsylvania laws (PA CODE 23.83, 23.84 and 27.77) regarding childhood immunizations for attendance at all private schools and prekindergarten programs at private academic schools. Attendance at HCP is conditional upon the student's satisfaction of the immunization requirements in PA Code 27.77.

Completed physical forms should be turned in prior to the first day of school.

Financial Policies

Tuition

Annual Payment: Tuition that is paid in full by September 5th will receive a 5% discount (approximately). Otherwise, tuition will be divided into nine (9) equal payments for convenience, with one payment due each month of the school year. As a result, the same amount is due each month regardless of the number of school days, holidays, or snow days in the month.

Monthly Payments: All payments are due by the 5th of each month; a late fee of \$15.00 will be charged for any late payment. HCP may dismiss a student if tuition is more than thirty (30) days in arrears and the family has not made alternate payment arrangements with the HCP Director.

All Payments: Checks should be made payable to Hickory United EPC. Please write the child's name and month on the notation line at the bottom of your check. You are responsible for tuition whenever your child is out of school for illness, family vacations, or any other reason.

Withdrawal Policy

If you must withdraw your child from school any time after registration is received, we require a minimum of two weeks' notice prior to the end of the month. If notice is not received at least two weeks prior to the end of the month, you will be responsible for paying the next month's full tuition.

Fundraising

HCP is a ministry of HUEPC and, as such, the church provides the use of its facilities as well as utilities and insurance. The congregation also provides support in many other ways. HCP tuition, registration fees, and book fees cover the costs of HCP personnel, curriculum, and teaching materials. The HCP Committee relies upon HCP families to participate in fundraisers in order to fund HCP events, classroom supplies, and other expenses benefitting our students. The HCP Committee must approve all fundraising activities and will work with the fundraising committee.

In addition to our other fundraisers, HCP participates in several different corporate-sponsored educational fundraising programs as follows:

- Box Tops for Education – General Mills sends the school a check twice a year for cut-to-size and scanned Box Tops found on its products. Please send your Box Tops with your student in an envelope or zippered plastic bag. Be sure to read about the new way to “collect” Box Tops for Education.
- Scholastic Book Clubs – Scholastic allows us to pick out books for our Library and teaching tools for the classroom, based on the number of books that are ordered throughout the year. We will send home flyers and instructions for ordering several times throughout the year.

- Giant Eagle Apples for Education – Once your card is associated with HCP, each time you shop at Giant Eagle and use your Giant Eagle Advantage Card, you earn points for our school that we can save and redeem for great educational tools. The points are automatically credited to us through the Giant Eagle Advantage Card once your card is associated with HCP.
- Entenmann’s Little Bites Pouch Recycling Program – Save your Little Bites Pouches and deposit them into the box at the Registration Table. You don’t need to clean the packaging before sending it in, but please remove as much of the remaining product as possible (i.e. large crumbs).

Classroom Policies

Classroom rules

Our classroom rules are as follows:

- Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
- Use walking feet in school.
- When the teacher is talking, I am quiet and listening.
- Raise your *hand* if you have something to say
- Be kind.

Discipline

A simple “stick” counter method will be used for discipline. Rules will be posted in each classroom and will be reviewed daily. At the beginning of every class day, each student will have 3 sticks in an envelope with his or her name on it. If a student is not following a classroom rule, the teacher will redirect the student’s activity and give a warning to the child. If the child continues to disobey a rule after a warning, he or she must take one stick out of his or her envelope and place it in a cup on the teacher’s desk. If the behavior continues, the student will be asked to take out another stick, and then another. If a student has at least one stick left in his or her envelope at the end of the day, the child will be rewarded with a sticker. Students who lose all sticks will not receive a sticker at the end of the day. When all sticks are gone and student is misbehaving, he or she will be separated from the group for a period of time and the parent will be notified.

Dress code

Students should arrive at school in clothing that they can move and play in comfortably. Students will have restroom breaks and should be able to manage redressing independently. Please dress your child modestly for school. Undergarments should not be visible.

Shoes should be easy to walk and run in. Flip flops are not permitted for safety reasons. Boots are not easy to play in so if your child is wearing boots because of the weather, please make sure that he/she has a pair of shoes to wear during class. Rubber-soled shoes are required for gym class. Please label all of your child’s belongings (backpacks, jackets, gloves, hats, etc.).

Student Days

Curriculum

HCP uses Abeka curriculum. This curriculum is chosen for its Christian content and academic standards. Teachers may supplement additional material when appropriate.

- **Three-year-old classes:** “Preschool for 3s” curriculum offers activities in colors, shapes, beginning phonics skills (recognizing letter shapes and sounds), writing practice, listening skills, following directions, eye-hand coordination, and number concepts 1-15.
- **Four-year-old classes:** “Abeka K4” curriculum includes carefully sequenced activities that will teach vowels, consonants, blends, one-vowel words, manuscript writing, hand-eye coordination, motor skills, listening skills, number concepts, formation of numbers 1–20 and counting up to 100.

Special Classes

Along with their regular academic studies, the children will hear Bible stories, and have special times in the library and gym each week. Art is incorporated into classroom activities on a regular basis.

Arrival/ Dismissal

Arrival

Prior to leaving home, parents/guardians should assess to see if the child has a temperature of 100.4 or greater or has any signs or symptoms of illness. Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in children may include:

- Fever 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

Classes begin at 9:00 am. Drop off time is between 8:45 and 9:00 am at the Fellowship Hall Entrance. Parents need to escort students into the building. Doors to the Fellowship Halls will be locked, so an adult will need to press the button to the right of the doors to gain entry into the building. Please observe the markings on the ground/floor inside and outside the building to help maintain social distancing while waiting to sign in.

At the sign in table, parents will be asked the following questions and the student's temperature will be taken:

- Does your child or anyone in your household have flu like symptoms – sore throat, fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, nausea/vomiting or diarrhea?
- In the past two weeks, has anyone in your family (household) or a close contact tested positive for the COVID-19, or are waiting for the results of a COVID-19 test?

If your child has a temperature of 100.4 or above, or if you answer yes to any of the above questions, the child will not be permitted to enter the classroom. After the screening, a teacher will direct your child to hang up his or her coat and wash his or her hands. Parents will exit out of the Fellowship Hall doors.

Dismissal:

- Dismissal will begin at 11:30 am from the Covenant Center (gym) entrance at the other end of the building. Parents should stay in their cars and form a single line to the left side of the parking lot beside the curb by the gym sidewalk. Parents will be given two signs with the student's name on them to display in the driver's side window for pick-up. Students will be escorted to the cars. Parents/guardians must place the child in his or her safety seat and shut the car door. Once your child is placed safely in his or her seat, please pull away slowly so that the next car or two can pull forward. If you need more time to secure your child in his or her seat, or if you need to stay for any reason please pull forward and park across the lot to avoid holding up the line.

Persons other than parents who are picking up students must have ID (driver's license). We cannot dismiss students to unknown persons without written or verbal pre-authorization from a parent or legal guardian.

During winter weather, it may take longer to get your children ready to leave. (Boots, coats, hats, gloves and scarves take additional time.) Your patience is appreciated. It will go faster as your children get older and have mastered these additional winter items with minimal help.

Absences

Please call the preschool office 724-356-7337 when your child will be absent from class.

Tardiness

After 9:00am, doors will be locked and an adult will need to press the button on the right-hand side of the Fellowship Hall door to drop off a student.

School Delays and Closures

HCP follows Fort Cherry School District when there is a delay or closure for weather-related reasons only. If you have given us permission to do so, we will contact using the “Remind App”. Fort Cherry posts operational deviations on its website as well as during TV news broadcasts.

On days with a 2-hour delay, morning classes begin at 10:45 am. Dismissal will be at 12:30 p.m. Students will not have a snack on days with a delayed start.

HCP reserves the right to close the school early or cancel class for the day for reasons other than inclement weather, such as in emergency situations. Parents will be given as much advanced notice as possible if a cancelation or closure is necessary.

When a case of COVID-19 is identified in a school setting, public health staff from DOH or the County or Municipal Health Department (CMHD) will work with school administrators to provide guidance and advice related to cleaning and disinfecting, contact tracing and quarantine recommendations, and closing certain areas of the school or the entire school building if necessary. When an entire school is recommended to close, lengths of closure time will vary by level of community transmission and number of cases.

Snacks

All students will need to bring a nutritious snack each day. Please send a snack that your child will eat and that will satisfy your child until they return home. We are asking that snacks be sent in disposable containers (no lunch boxes please) that can be thrown away at the end of snack time.

VERY IMPORTANT: Due to students with allergies, please do not send any snacks containing peanuts or tree nuts. We are a “peanut aware” preschool.

Back Packs

Each student may bring a standard size back pack to school each day. It is the parent’s responsibility to check the backpack each day after school in order to receive all communications and to know when a change of clothes is needed.

Parent/ Teacher Communication

School Folder

Children will be given a folder with their name printed on the outside. The folder will be sent home at the end of each school week. It is to be returned at the start of the following school week. The folder is a very important tool for you to know about the work that is being done in class. Any correspondence from the school will be included.

We may use email or the “Remind App” to send notes home if we need to give you information during the week.

Assessments

Each teacher conducts ongoing classroom-based assessments. Assessments may consist of formal instruments or informal observations. Results are used only to shape teaching and learning.

Progress Reports

Progress reports will be sent home in November, February and May.

Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences will be held in the fall and in the spring. Parents or teachers may request additional conferences when special attention or communication is needed.

All parents are encouraged to attend parent teacher conferences. This time gives an opportunity for you to speak privately with your child's teacher to discuss your child's development, progress, strengths, and allow an opportunity to collaborate on plans to address any areas of difficulty.

Personal Circumstances

It is the responsibility of parents/ guardians to keep school personnel informed of any changes to personal circumstances that may affect their child. Information provided by parents will be kept confidential and only shared with other school staff on a need-to-know basis. If the staff has any concerns about your child's well being during the school day, we will contact you or your emergency contact as soon as possible.

Safety and Building Security

General

For the safety of HCP students, at least two HCP staff members will be physically present in the building at all times when students are present. Doors to the building will remain locked at times when students are in the building. Students will only be released to people authorized by parents or legal guardians *in writing*. Parents are responsible for their children in the parking lot and in the church building until they have been checked in at the sign in table. A teacher must be notified when your child arrives. Teacher responsibility begins once the child has been signed in and ends when the child is given to you at your car.

Transportation

Transportation to classes each day and to field trips is each parent's or legal guardian's responsibility.

Student Pickup

Students will only be released to people authorized in writing by their parents or legal guardians. In the event of unforeseen circumstances after the start of classes, parents or legal guardians may call the school at 724-356-7337 and a staff member will

complete a phone release form. A HCP staff member will call back the phone numbers listed on the registration forms to confirm the arrangement. The child will not be released until an authorized person is reached.

Clearances

In accordance with Pennsylvania law, all classroom volunteers, including parents, are required to have clearances. The following clearances must be on file before volunteers may interact with students:

1. **Child Abuse Certification** (PA Department of Human Services) is required for all classroom volunteers. An application can be found at the following website: <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
2. **Criminal History Record Certification** (PA State Police Reports) is required for all classroom volunteers. An application can be found at the following website: <https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>
3. **FBI Clearance**, a fingerprint-based federal criminal history submitted through the PA State Police or its authorized agent, is required if:
 - The position the volunteer is applying for is a paid position; or,
 - The volunteer has lived outside the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the last 10 years.
 - Appointments to be fingerprinted are not required, but **pre-registration is required** either online or by phone. To register online, please go to www.identogo.com; by telephone please call 1-844-321-2101 and listen to the options menu.
 - A fee payable by the volunteer is required.

Volunteers who are not required to obtain the FBI Clearance because they are applying for an unpaid position and have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years must swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense under §6344. Upon request, the school can provide a form for this purpose.

Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Under the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. HCP staff is mandated reporters. HCP staff is not required to discuss their suspicions with parents or guardians prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under CPSL, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. HCP staff takes this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities.

As mandated reporters, the HCP staff cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in good faith.

Weapons

No weapons of any kind are permitted on HUEPC property while HCP is in session or during HCP programs, events, and activities except by federal, state, and local law enforcement authorities. A weapon is any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, firearm, shotgun, rifle, and anything else capable of inflicting serious bodily injury.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be held monthly during the school year. Parents will be notified in advance of a scheduled drill. We will practice safety drills in a way to cause the least amount of fear as possible.

Court Orders

In cases where a HCP student is the subject of a court order (for example, custody order, restraining order, or protection from abuse order), parents or legal guardians must provide HCP a certified copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. HCP staff must strictly follow court orders unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In that case, where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with HCP, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. HCP cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself, where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, HCP suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

If conflicting court orders are presented, HCP staff must follow the most recently dated court order.

Once presented with a protection from abuse (PFA) order or a restraining order, HCP staff must follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. HCP staff cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a PFA order and/or a restraining order to be violated. HCP staff must report any violations of these orders to the court.

Illness and Medical Procedures

Illness

Parents/guardians should not send children to the school if they have any contagious disease or any of the following symptoms:

- Fever;

- Heavy coughing or congestion;
- Colored discharge from either the nose or the eyes;
- Eye redness indicative of pink eye;
- Rash;
- Diarrhea;
- Vomiting;
- Head lice; or,
- Sore throat indicative of strep throat.

Children should remain at home until they are free from fever (without the use of a fever reducing agent), vomiting and diarrhea for at least 24hrs.

Any child diagnosed with a contagious illness must have a note from a licensed physician stating when it is safe for the child to return to school. HCP staff must contact a parent or guardian if a child develops a fever or becomes ill during class. The parent or guardian must arrange for immediate pick up of the child so that other children and teachers will not be infected. Until the child is picked up, the child will be segregated from other children.

Administering Medication

HCP students are not permitted to carry or administer medications without the supervision of a HCP staff member. Medications are to be given at home when possible.

Prescription Drugs

- Written authorization from either the parent or legal guardian requesting and permitting the administration of the specified dosage of medication is to be presented to the school. This authorization must be renewed each time there is a change in instructions.
- The parent or legal guardian must provide a signed order from the prescribing physician to the school.
- The parent or legal guardian must provide prescription drugs in the original pharmacy-labeled container directly into the custody of the HCP Director or designated HCP staff member. Each container must be labeled with the patient's name, dosage, and administration schedule.
- The HCP Director or designated HCP staff member must administer all physician-prescribed medication.
- Parents or legal guardians of any student requiring first-time, long-term medication must meet with the HCP Director or designated HCP staff member.
- Parents or legal guardians must administer the first day's dose of any new medication at home.
- Parents or legal guardians must only send one day's supply of medication to the school. If the student must take medication daily, parents or legal guardians may send a month's supply to be stored in the HCP office under control of the HCP Director or designated HCP staff member.

Non-Prescription Drugs

- Written authorization from either the parent or legal guardian requesting and permitting the administration of the specified dosage of medication is to be presented to the school.
- The parent or legal guardian must provide non-prescription drugs in the original manufacturer container directly into the custody of the HCP Director or designated HCP staff member. Each container must be labeled with the student's name, dosage, and administration schedule.
- The designated HCP staff member must administer all non-prescribed medication.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of an illness or accident that requires immediate medical treatment, HCP must make every attempt to contact the parents or legal guardians, the child's physician, and other persons listed for emergency contact. If a parent or legal guardian cannot be reached, HCP staff or HUEPC staff may authorize emergency treatment including transport of the child to any hospital reasonably accessible.

Food Allergies

Parents or legal guardians must record any food allergy in HCP registration forms. Parents or legal guardians of students with a severe food allergy must send a separate letter to the HCP informing them of the severe food allergy. Classes having a student with a severe food allergy remain allergen free for snacks, parties, and/or special events.

Parents or legal guardians must provide a healthy snack for each day of class. If a parent or legal guardian does not provide a snack for their child, HCP staff will attempt to contact the parent or legal guardian for permission to provide a snack supplied by the school. If the parent or legal guardian cannot be reached, unless the student has a severe food allergy, HCP staff will provide the alternate snack after assessing the ingredients of the alternate snack. For students with severe food allergy, if the parent or legal guardian does not have alternate snacks stored at the school and the parent or legal guardian cannot be reached, HCP staff will not serve an alternate snack to the student.

Participation in Physical Activities

Parents or legal guardians must record any illnesses, injuries, or physical restrictions that may limit their child's participation in physical activities in HCP registration forms. If activity is limited by a temporary condition, the parent or legal guardian must communicate any restriction in writing to the child's teacher. Children will be excluded from prohibited activities until receipt of a written release by the parent or legal guardian. If HCP receives a physician order restricting activity, restoration of activity may only occur with physician release.

Special Activities and Events

****Parties***

Parents will help to plan school parties with input from the teachers. HCP typically schedules parties at the end of the school day so the children can better maintain focus.

****Field trips***

Throughout the school year, our classes will go on educational and fun field trips. Each parent must arrange for transportation and a responsible adult for your child. Parents are encouraged to attend the field trips. At no time is the school responsible for your child's actions and safety outside of the HCP property.

Permission slip, directions, and costs for the field trip will be sent home. Permission slips must be returned to the school by the deadline. It should include the number of attendees and any applicable fees in an envelope with your student's name on the outside. If your child cannot attend, please notify the HCP team and understand that classes will not be held that day.

*Due to COVID-19 field trips and the number of parents permitted to attend parties will be dependent upon current mandates and the phase we are in at the time of the event.

Songs, Pledges, and Prayers

HCP students will begin each day with a devotional reading and prayer. Throughout the school year students will learn additional prayers and pledges including:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Who art in heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name;
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors;
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom
And the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag

I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

My Country, 'Tis of Thee

My Country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrims' pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!

Pledge to the Christian Flag

I pledge allegiance to the Christian Flag and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands. One Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again, with life and liberty to all who believe.

Pledge to the Bible

I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path and will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God.

Jesus Loves Me, This I Know

Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.