

# Learn & Play

## Christian Early Learning Center Parent Handbook

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**Welcome!** The Learn & Play Board of Directors, Director, and teaching staff would like to thank you for choosing our school to join you in nurturing your child's early development. We look forward to supporting you and providing your child with a warm and memorable school experience.

**Mission Statement:** As an outreach of The United Methodist Church, Branford, the mission of Learn & Play is to provide young children with a quality education that is grounded in the Holy Scriptures and exemplified by the love and teachings of Jesus Christ.

**Philosophy of Education:** The educational philosophy of Learn & Play is God centered and supports our statement of faith and mission statements. We believe that each child is unique and created in the image of God. Therefore, every child is accepted, honored and loved. Our aim is to incorporate Biblical principles throughout all learning opportunities and provide a Christian perspective of the world. We firmly believe that the love of Christ can be experienced early in a child's development. Our team of early childhood educators strives to use developmentally appropriate practices, focusing on the child's social, emotional, academic, spiritual, physical and aesthetic growth. Small class sizes allow for individual success during whole class, teacher-directed instruction. Child-directed activity centers, enriched with hands-on experiences, engage each child's natural curiosity and encourage exploration of God's world at a child's own pace. While we believe that education is the responsibility of parents, Learn & Play works cooperatively with parents to implement the process of a Christian education. As a Christian early learning center, we welcome a diversity of children who can experience God's love, grow in it and carry it into the world.

**Faith Statement:** We believe that Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are the inspired Word of God and contain all things necessary for salvation. We confess belief in the triune God-eternally existing in three persons-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe in Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human, who lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins and the sins of the world, was resurrected from the dead and offers salvation to everyone who puts their faith and trust in Him. We believe that the Church is the community of all true believers under the sovereign Lordship of Jesus Christ whose purpose is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, to the glory of God.

**Learn & Play Board:** The Learn & Play Board oversees and governs Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center. It is comprised of United Methodist Church members, the Pastor and the Director of Learn & Play. Rosalie Robinson is the Chairperson of this Board. If you have any questions or concerns, you may reach her at 203-453-4407.

**Staff:** Learn & Play employs Christian individuals who are experienced and nurturing. Staff members include the Director, Teachers and Teacher Assistants. In accordance with State regulations, staff members continue their education by taking college courses or attending a variety of early childhood workshops. Robin Costa, the Director, can be reached in the office at 203 488-4028 or on her cell phone at 203-260-5189.

**Consultants:** An education consultant, dental consultant, nurse consultant and social services consultant is contracted annually by Learn & Play. Please consult our Licensing Board, located in our foyer, for a current listing of each consultant.

**Class Sizes:** Our rooms are designed for groups of up to fourteen children. State Licensing requires that a 10:1 ratio be maintained at all times for children age 3 and older. Children under the age of 3 have a 4:1 ratio maintained at all times.

**Open Door Policy:** Although we keep our doors locked for security, parents/guardians may visit at any time. You are welcomed to observe a session, assist in classroom projects or attend a variety of special events announced throughout the year. You may use your code for the door and enter anytime. For security reasons, please do not give this code out to anyone. A doorbell is located to the right of the entrance for anyone needing to enter without a code.

**Parent Obligations:** The parent or guardian, prior to the child's starting date at Learn & Play, must provide:

- Completed Enrollment Form.
- Signed Parent Financial Agreement outlining your child's schedule of days and hours at Learn & Play and your financial obligation.
- Completed Emergency Medical Permission Card.
- Current Physical Examination Form, signed and dated by the child's physician. This form must be updated as necessary so that it is current, within one year of each exam.
- Signed Handbook Acknowledgement Statement, agreeing to comply with all policies and procedures as outlined in this Handbook.

**Registration Fee:** Each year parents are asked to register their child for the upcoming school year. A registration fee will be collected annually in May.

**Deposit:** A deposit is also necessary to enroll your child. Your deposit is due at the time of registration and is equal to your one-week tuition fee. This deposit will be applied to your child's last week with Learn & Play.

**Tuition and Late Fees:** Payment is due the first scheduled day that your child attends school each week. If payment is not made by Wednesday, a \$10.00 late fee will be added each week until your payments are made current. If tuition becomes past due for more than three weeks, your child may be asked to leave the program until your balance is made current. Full payment is required each week, even if your child is absent for any reason.

**Returned Check Fees:** A returned check fee, as established on your Parent Financial Agreement Form, of \$25.00 will be charged to your account for checks marked "insufficient funds." If you have more than two returned checks, you will be asked to pay by money order.

**Sibling Discounts:** A family with two or more children in attendance at Learn & Play is eligible for a 10% sibling discount. This discount is applied to the lowest priced child's tuition. No other discounts apply.

**United Methodist Church Member Discount:** Families who are active UMC members in the tradition of prayers, presence, gifts, and service can write a letter to the Board of Directors each year, requesting a UMC discount. Once the request is approved at a Board meeting, the letter will be kept in your child's file and your discount will be put into affect. Our UMC member discount is 15% of the annual tuition and is subject to review each August. No other discounts apply.

**Referral Tuition Credit:** The best advertising is word of mouth. To show our appreciation when you recommend Learn & Play to your friends, we will credit your tuition account \$25.00 for each new family that signs up for part time hours and \$50.00 for a new full time family (8 hours a day, 4+ days a week). Credit will be deducted from your account after your recommendation family attends for two (2) months and their account is in good standing.

**Scholarships:** Learn & Play is an outreach of the United Methodist Church. Families choosing Learn & Play may request financial assistance from the Board of Directors. To do so, please request a Scholarship Application from the Director. Once the request is approved at a Board meeting, the letter will be kept in your child's file and your scholarship award will be put into effect. Applications must be reapplied for annually in August. No other discount applies. Scholarships need to be resubmitted each August for review and approval.

**Fundraisers/Community Outreaches:** We do conduct fundraisers during the school year as well as numerous outreaches within our community. Family participation in our fundraisers is appreciated. Fundraisers benefit all children in such ways as the purchase of classroom supplies or special presenters. Community outreach is a way for our children to learn how to give to others as well as showing empathy.

**Transportation:** Parents/guardians have the responsibility to transport their child to and from school. To ensure the utmost safety, please secure your child into a car safety seat and hold your child's hand in the parking lot. An adult must escort the child into the building and out of the building. Please keep children with you at all times. Do not leave siblings unattended in your vehicle. **DO NOT LEAVE ANY CHILD ALONE IN YOUR CAR** while dropping off or picking up. Connecticut State Law Sec. 53-21a. states that:

*“(a). Any parent, guardian or person having custody or control, or providing supervision, Of any child under the age of twelve (12) years who knowingly leaves such child unsupervised in a place of public accommodation or a motor vehicle for a period of time that presents a substantial risk to the child’s health or safety, shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.”*

**Procedure for Dropping Off and Picking Up Children:** Parents should enter the school by using the code for the door on the side of the building. An adult should sign the child into Learn & Play on the Attendance Sheet located in your child’s classroom. Please make every effort to have your child in class by the time that you have designated on your Financial Agreement Form so that teachers may plan their activities accordingly. Please inform the staff in writing if you give permission for your child to be picked up by someone other than a parent. This

includes the people on the emergency contact list. This person must have a photo ID in order for the child to be released to their custody. If no written note has been provided, the child will not be released until a parent can be contacted for verification. Please do not give the door code out to anyone. Other adults picking up a child should ring the doorbell at the side door.

**Late Pick-Up Fee:** Please be prompt when picking up your child. It undermines your child's sense of security when children are picked up late. The Late Pick-Up Fee, designated on your Parent Financial Agreement Form, will be enforced as follows:

6-15 minutes late \$7.50	16-30 minutes late \$15.00
31-45 minutes late \$25.00	46-60 minutes late \$35.00

**End-of-Day Procedure:** If a child has not been picked up within 15 minutes of our closing time, a staff person will attempt to reach the parent at one of the numbers on our emergency contact sheet. If they cannot be reached, an authorized contact person will be called. If after one hour no one has been reached, the police will be contacted. At that point the child will be released to the police.

**Inclement Weather Policy:** In the event of inclement weather, Learn & Play will make every effort to open. If it is not safe for staff or parents to be driving, Learn & Play will post a closing or delayed-opening notice on Channel 8 News – WTNH and also on our Facebook page. There are no refunds of tuition for missed days due to inclement weather.

**Extreme Weather/Air Quality Policy:** In the event that an extreme weather advisory, heat/cold weather advisory, or air quality alert is issued for New Haven County, outside play will be moved indoors to Herr Hall.

**Crisis Management Plan:** Please see separate provided “Crisis Management Plan” packet.

**Health Policies:** Our primary consideration is for the well being of all the children and staff. Children with the following symptoms must be kept home or will be sent home:

Vomiting	Diarrhea
Strep/sore throat	Ear Pain
Lice	Rashes or any type of skin eruption
Congested cough	Apparent yellow or green discharge from eyes or nose
Conjunctivitis	Chills
Elevated temperature (100°F)	Very pale or flushed
Listlessness	Fatigue
Cannot function normally	

If the symptoms develop while your child is in attendance at Learn & Play, you will be contacted to pick up your child. Our consulting physician will be called for advice or emergencies in the event that a parent or child's physician is temporarily unavailable.

**Illness Forms:** In the event that your child is sent home from Learn & Play due to illness, a form detailing their symptoms, when they may return and if a doctor's note is required will be filled out and require your signature and sent home.

The child may return after being symptom free for 24 hours and fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications. In some cases, a note from the child's physician may be required as proof that the child is not contagious and it is safe for him to be in a school setting.

There are no make-up days for missed sessions due to illness and tuition remains the same. Your child may be able to make up his time only if space is available and ratios can be maintained.

**Communication:** Parent/school communication is very important to us. Our partnership supports your child's growth and development. Please provide the teacher with pertinent information about home situations and the teacher will provide you with information about your child's activities during school. The Director can support you by discussing and working through any concern you may have or any situation that may develop during the year. Confidential matters will be handled as such.

**Facebook:** Learn & Play has two Facebook sites.

- *Public Page:* "Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center"
  - "Like" our Facebook page where we post general announcements.
- *Closed Facebook Group:* "Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center!"
  - Request to join our private Facebook group where we frequently post announcements, event information, photos and more.
  - Only current Learn & Play parents and grandparents are granted access to our closed Facebook group.

Please do not take personal pictures of children other than your own or post pictures on Facebook that include other children.

**Email System:** An email communication system has been developed at Learn & Play for the furthering of parent/teacher communication. Email addresses for each specific classroom are as follows:

**Infant Classroom:** InfantClassAtLearnAndPlay@yahoo.com  
**Waddler Classroom:** WaddlerClassAtLearnAndPlay@yahoo.com  
**Toddler Classroom:** ToddlerClassAtLearnAndPlay@yahoo.com  
**Threes Classroom:** ThreesClassAtLearnAndPlay@yahoo.com  
**Fours Classroom:** FoursClassAtLearnAndPlay@yahoo.com

As time permits, teachers will check emails in the morning before students arrive, at nap time, and at the end of the day. After sending an email to a teacher, you should expect a response within 24 hours or the next business day. As usual, the best way to contact a teacher for an immediate issue or question is by calling Learn & Play at (203) 488-4028. Please note that this communication is strictly related to individual classrooms. Anything related to schedules, tuitions, vacations, hours, program concerns should still be directed towards the director at LearnandPlay@snet.net.

**Parent Bulletin Board:** Located in the foyer, please check the Parent Board on a regular basis. Copies of the Learn & Play school year calendar, tuition rates, newsletters, office memos, a variety of public announcements and photographs from school events will be displayed in our foyer for your convenience.

**Monthly Newsletters:** A newsletter containing the concepts that were covered each month, announcements of upcoming events and a classroom news section will be distributed each month. Please read it and find a special place at home to post it so that your family will be aware of what is going on at the Center.

**Lesson Plans:** The teachers will post their lesson plans on their classroom doors. Review the plans to see how monthly concepts, themes and Bible stories are being introduced to your child's class and how you can reinforce these areas at home.

**Incident/Accident Reports:** Teachers will document incidents (i.e., hitting a peer) or accidents (i.e., a scraped knee) relating to your child while at school. These reports will be shared with you at the end of the session. Parents are contacted immediately if a situation requiring parental/medical attention is necessary.

**Parent/Teacher Conferences:** We hold Parent/Teacher Conferences in March for our preschool and Pre-K classes. This provides an opportunity for parents to meet with their child's teacher and discuss the child's progress and development at that time. If desired, arrangements may be made with the teacher of any of our classes for a conference at any time during the school year.

**Parent Annual Meeting:** Each year Learn & Play will conduct a parent meeting. Representation from the Board will also be present. Parents are encouraged to use this forum to voice their thoughts about their experiences at Learn & Play, as your opinions are valuable to us. This will also be a time to share any new experiences we have planned for the coming school year.

**Adjusting:** Your positive outlook regarding school will encourage the same attitude in your child. A more relaxed parent makes a more relaxed child. During the first weeks of school your child may:

- Be shy and cling to you.
- Not say much about the school day.
- Tire easily and cry more than usual.



- Be aggressive and have difficulty sharing.
- Resist using the school bathroom and/or have "accidents."

These behaviors are in response to the stress of a new situation and should slowly disappear as your child becomes familiar with the staff, classroom routines, and other children in the group.

Families can be understanding and emotionally supportive by:

- Having a positive, cheerful attitude when bringing their child to school.
- Ensuring consistent bedtime rituals and a good night's sleep each and every night.
- Allowing lots of time for personal routine, a nourishing breakfast and a pleasant ride to school.
- Asking specific questions regarding school such as: "How did you create this artwork?" "What was your favorite part of morning circle?" or "Who did you play with on the playground today?"
- Allowing children time to adjust to the new routines of school.

**Dismissing a Child From the Program:** We plan for success for each child in our child care program. We will work together, as a team, to support a positive learning experience for everyone. In the event that it becomes necessary, Learn & Play reserves the right to dismiss a child from the program. Some of the reasons this action may be initiated include:

- Financial obligations are not met.
- A child becomes a constant disruption in the class affecting the atmosphere for all others.
- It is determined that Learn & Play is not a good fit for the expectations of the parents.
- Parents are not in compliance with Learn & Play policies.
- A child becomes a serious danger to himself or others.

In the event that Learn & Play dismisses a child from the program and there is prepaid tuition, you will be reimbursed for the unused amount of prepaid tuition within ten business days of the withdrawal date.

**Discipline Policy:** Teachers plan a balance of quiet and active times, as well as individual and group involvement during each session. We consider what is appropriate for each developmental stage of your child and believe proper planning reduces the need for disciplinary action. However, sometimes discipline is necessary for all of us to live in the world together. The ultimate discipline comes from within and does not depend on external reward or punishment. An important part of teaching involves helping children develop self-discipline. At Learn & Play we empower children with responsibility for their own behavior by:

- Using a gentle, objective speaking voice and being attentive with our presence.

- Using positive verbal comments such as: "I like the way you shared the blocks with your friends." In this way the child's good feeling about his own behavior is reinforced and he serves as a role model for other children.
- Being consistent and setting limits because helping children know what is expected of them leads to their success.
- Setting clear limits while stating the expected behavior in positive terms. For example, "You need to walk indoors." rather than "Don't run!" Sometimes the combination of acceptable behavior and specifying the unacceptable behavior is used. For instance, "Blocks are for building, not throwing."
- Redirecting the child's attention when behavior is becoming inappropriate. On this occasion, we help the child to see choices and options available to them. We allow the child to make a choice for self-redirection. This teaches children to problem solve appropriately and to eventually follow rules and make appropriate choices throughout the day.
- Giving the child an appropriate task to complete. Occasionally the child may make inappropriate choices that require the teacher to make a choice at that instant for him. The teacher redirects the child from one specific area to another. The teacher then communicates with the child as he makes attempts towards appropriate behavior; for instance: "You're molding your piece of clay and sharing ideas with your neighbor."
- Removing the child from an activity if he has caused harm to another child. We want to help children understand there are consequences for their actions. We will provide some time and space for him to refocus. The affected child will be attended to. Then, teacher and child together will discuss the incident before the child returns to the activity. Incident and Accident Reports will be given to parents at the end of the day.
- Never, under any circumstances, using abusive, neglectful, corporal, humiliating, or frightening punishment, or any kind of physical restraint, unless such restraint is necessary to protect the health and safety of the child or other people.

**Child Abuse/Neglect:** Background checks are conducted on employees working directly with the children. Should an employee be suspected of child abuse/neglect after they are hired, the employee will be immediately removed from the school for the duration of the investigation period. Parents will be notified in writing if such an instance occurs. The outcome of the investigation will also be communicated to parents in writing.

As educators in the State of Connecticut, we are mandated to report all suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect. "Mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected, or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm by a person responsible for the child's health, welfare or care, or by a person given access to the child by the responsible person." (CT General Statutes 17a-101a).

As a result of the above Statute, the following procedure will be put in place for anyone suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- A. If it is suspected that an adult that is transporting a child is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, an attempt will be made by the Director or designated teacher

to approach the adult to determine if alternate driving and care arrangements can be made.

- B. If the adult is belligerent, combative, or non-compliant to the school's request for alternate arrangements, the police will be called for assistance.
- C. All encounters will be documented and filed in both the child's file and the school's file.
- D. If suspected incidences continue to occur, the Department of Children and Families will be contacted, as required by State Regulations.

**Personal Belongings:** Please label all of your child's belongings, including lunchboxes, food containers, cups, backpacks, nap bags and clothing, especially hats and gloves. This avoids confusion and the loss of items.

**Dressing for School:** Comfortable clothing is important for learning and playing. Please do not send your child to school in any clothing that you will be heart-broken if it gets dirty or stained. We will be messy! Proper footwear is vital for outside play. Closed-toe shoes with rubber soles are recommended for staying safe. Sneakers are a GREAT choice. If you should not choose to have your child wear sneakers for inside play, please bring them along so your child can change into them for outside play. Please dress your children in appropriate clothing for the seasons. We try to go outside daily even for a short while.

Please provide a set of labeled clothes in a Ziploc bag to be kept at Learn & Play.

Under the recommendation of the State of Connecticut Department of Health, our policy states that all soiled clothing is to be sealed in a Ziploc bag and returned home AS IS. Learn & Play is required to wear gloves when cleaning up any bodily fluids (i.e., urine, feces, vomit, mucus, blood.) Learn & Play staff is not required to rinse out or wash soiled clothing. This is to protect children and adults from transmitting bacteria and viruses.

**Medication:** No medication of any kind including non-prescription drugs will be administered to any child without a completed authorization form—signed and dated by your child's doctor and yourself. These authorization forms are available from your teacher or the Director. Medication must be supplied in the original container with the original container prescription label bearing the child's name. This container will remain at Learn & Play for the length of the prescription—it cannot go back and forth from home. Parents will provide any special tools or equipment (i.e., measuring spoon, nebulizer).

Application of non-prescription topical medications/preparations such as insect repellents, sunscreens and diaper rash ointments do not require a physician's authorization; however, a written parental consent is necessary.

Apply any topical such as sunscreen and/or insect repellent at home BEFORE coming to Learn & Play. If your child is sensitive to the sun or insect bites, it is your responsibility to notify us and provide appropriate sunscreens, protective clothing and/or insect repellent. We will re-apply on an as-needed basis.

There is a certified staff member available to dispense the medications.

PLEASE...Advise us if your child has any allergies to insect bites or bee stings.\*\*\*

**Toys:** We provide developmentally appropriate toys for the purpose of enhancing your child's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social growth and development. A "security item" such as a stuffed animal, doll, blanket, or special photo may be brought to school. Please do not send in any other toys. We do not want children to lose or break a favorite item from home.

Show and Tell may be a monthly activity in some classes that permits and involves a selection from home. Classroom teachers will offer you direction each month. Items of a super human or violent nature are never allowed at school. We do not allow pretend shooting, threatening physical actions toward children, or harmful physical contact between children at Learn & Play.

**Meals/Snacks:** Most children will have their breakfast at home. Children arriving before 8:00am may have breakfast on an as-needed basis at Learn & Play. Infants, of course, have their own individual feeding plans.

Parents will provide all the food for their child(ren). An icepack is necessary to keep food fresh. Depending on the hours your child attends, you may need a morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack along with appropriate beverages. Please send only healthy choices, especially for snacks. **No candy, cupcakes, donuts or sugary juices.** Good choices would be fresh fruit, vegetables and dip, cheese and crackers, yogurt and water to drink. Teachers reserve the right to send home inappropriate food choices.

Before we eat our meals, we say Grace and thank God for the food He has provided for us.

We try to have the children eat the most nutritious portions of the meal first. We encourage good table manners and have children clean up his/her spot after meals, allowing children to share in classroom responsibilities.

\*\*\*\*Please notify us about any FOOD ALLERGIES your child might have.\*\*\*\*

\*Due to the possibility of nut allergies, please do not send any nut products (peanut, almond, cashew) to school (PB&J, crackers, granola bars, cookies).\*

**Holidays:** Learn & Play is closed Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, the day after Christmas, New Year's Eve (early closing), New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, July 4th and Labor Day and three teacher development days per year (February, June, and August). No fee adjustment is made for these closings.

**Birthdays:** You may choose to send in a healthy treat to celebrate your child's birthday. Good choices would be mini muffins, bagels and cream cheese, fruit and dip or popsicles. Please make plans in advance with your child's teacher. You may need to be made aware of allergies of the children in the classroom. Parents wishing to donate a book in honor of their child's birthday are encouraged to do so. We'll share the book on the day of your child's celebration and we'll place a name plate inside as a remembrance of this happy occasion. Thank you for your donation as we build a special Learn & Play library of our children's favorite books.

**Holiday Celebrations:** Holidays may be celebrated in your child's classroom. If you have a special celebration or tradition within your family that you would like to share with us, please let your child's teacher know. Your classroom teacher may request items or a helping hand or two at these times.

**Withdrawal & Schedule Changes:** Two weeks notice is required if it becomes necessary for you to withdraw your child from Learn & Play. A parent or guardian is responsible for the tuition for that two-week period, even if their child does not attend. Two weeks notice is also required for a change in your child's schedule. Changes should be made in writing and given to the Director.

**Thank you for taking the time to read your Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center Parent Handbook. Please sign and date the handbook acknowledgement on the next page and return to the Director.**

**Thank you!**



*"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."*

Matthew 19:14

**Parent Handbook Acknowledgement**

I have received, read and agree to follow the terms and policies as outlined in the  
Learn & Play Christian Early Learning Center Parent Handbook.  
I understand and have had the behavioral policy of Learn & Play explained to me.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date