








ENCOUNTER PRESCHOOL

2023 – 2024 PARENT HANDBOOK

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Introduction and Welcome		3
Program Objectives		4
Our Learning Environment / Organization		5
Our Program Options:		6
Morning Enrichment Preschool Program		
Morning Enrichment Toddler Program		
Full Day Enrichment Program		7
Early Bird Program		8
Stay & Play Program		9
Toys and Sharing / Lunch and Snacks / Discipline		10
Check List for Parents		
• Purpose	• Communication	11
• Legal Forms	• Arrival and Pick-up	
• Late Pick-up	• Clothing	12
• Car Pooling & Parking	• Emergency Procedure	
• Illness Policy		13
Financial Agreements		14
• How your tuition is calculated		
• Withdraw Policy		
• Tuition Due Dates		
• Delinquent Tuition		
• Returned Checks		15
• Registration & Deposit		
• Tuition & Registration Fees		
Chapel / Disaster Plan		16

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME



Welcome to ENCOUNTER Preschool (Also known as BFC Preschool)! This is the beginning of an exciting time of rapid growth and maturing in your child's life. It is a privilege for us to be a part of this time and share it with you. We look forward to fulfilling our commitment to your family.

We offer this handbook to answer your many questions about the preschool. It is not meant to replace communication, and we invite you to freely ask and share your thoughts as the year progresses.

Our philosophy is to provide a climate in which your child can learn through creative play, in an environment reflecting God's love. It is our goal that your child develops a love of learning and a positive self-image during his first school experience. Through music and stories, through use of a variety of materials, through first-hand experiences, through physical activities, and through exposure to new ideas, your child will have an opportunity to broaden his understanding of God, himself, others, and his world.

We strive to stimulate the spiritual, mental, and physical learning needs of each child. Emotional and social needs are given high priority as well. Attitudes and interpersonal relationships are areas of growth critical to each child's future success in life. Trained staff members, who are committed to reflecting the character of Jesus Christ, work toward these goals for your child.

Children are important to us because they are important to Christ. Luke 18:16 says, *"Permit the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God"*. Our philosophy is that our program first be Christ-centered, and second, child-centered. We offer an environment geared toward success for the child's feeling of self-worth. We feel a child who likes himself can afford to like others. Mark 12:31 says, *"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"*. It is our belief that children who are accepting of themselves can reach out and fulfill their capacity for learning with assurance. Therefore, the program is geared toward success for children by encouraging them to attempt the new as well as risk possible failure in a safely controlled, supportive environment. Our greatest concerns are not with the quick surface changes in behavior, quick mastery of skills or the finished product of the child's work. We are concerned with what the PROCESS OF LEARNING and the VALUE OF EXPERIENCE will be for the child. The growth that comes from experiences such as these is lasting growth. It is our conviction that children belong to the Lord. (Psalm 127:3). Teaching them is a great honor and responsibility for parents as well as teachers. Our staff knows this and feels a deep respect for the children, valuing them for the individuals God created them to be.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES



1. Bring honor and glory to God and to serve our Lord, Jesus Christ.
2. To introduce children to basic Bible truths through integration in our monthly themes.
3. To provide a warm, nurturing environment that reflects God's love. To encourage the development of the "whole child".
4. To offer an environment that encourages children to develop their capabilities and interests at their own pace and according to their individual needs. To offer a program, which recognizes the uniqueness of each child and provides positive encouragement for the child's continued growth.
5. To provide an environment that gives the child the opportunity to learn by doing. Moving from concrete, hand-on experiences to a more abstract concept development.
6. To encourage social development by providing opportunities for sharing, taking turns, making friends, resolving conflicts, solving problems, helping others, recognizing and accepting others, cooperating on projects, and building self-esteem.
7. To encourage emotional development through verbal expressions of thoughts and feelings, experiencing rules and limits, experiencing kindness, justice and empathy, and recognizing and accepting emotions in others. To develop a respect for other individuals.
8. To encourage the physical development of large motor skills through outdoor and indoor games and activities, as well as fine motor development through the use of manipulatives, toys, blocks and puzzles, and other small tools and objects. To facilitate the development of visual-motor skills.
9. To encourage interest and creativity in language through stories, puppetry, music, games, science materials, drama, problem solving, and communication skills.
10. To have a balanced program that will promote the social, mental, emotional, physical and spiritual development of the child.

OUR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



Activities are set up in creative learning centers and the child is allowed to pursue areas of interest. The teacher's role is to facilitate self-discovery by the self-directed learner. They are watching for "teachable moments" to interject information without interrupting the learning process. We involve children in their learning process and encourage them to use their time making good constructive choices.

Our learning centers consist of creative art, math-readiness, reading-readiness, natural science, blocks and construction, dramatic play, scribble and writing tables, fine and large muscle motor activities, listening and book centers, music and language arts, daily.

The Bible curriculum is interwoven throughout the entire program to give it the foundation. Prayer is also a part of the child's daily routine. Each class gives thanks before meals, and at the opening of the day. We ask children if they have prayer requests and these are prayed for during their circle time. We will also pray with individual children if they express an interest to pray for a situation they are facing, or if something seems to be bothering them at the time. All the children in the preschool come together every other week for chapel in the main auditorium. To make Bible truths more tangible we use flannel graphs, books, songs and drama. Our focus and approach is simple and concise.

Our goal is to help children understand that God is everywhere and He loves and cares about every aspect of their lives.

ORGANIZATION



ENCOUNTER Preschool admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in admissions policies or scholarships.

A Parent Advisory Council (PAC) which consists of six preschool parents serve as advisors and assistants in providing support in the overall administration of the school. This may include counsel and support related to preschool programming, policy, personnel matters and fund raising projects. These people have graciously offered to volunteer their time to serve on our council.

OUR PROGRAM OPTIONS



MORNING ENRICHMENT PRESCHOOL PROGRAM



Our Morning Enrichment Programs are for preschool age children who are at least three years old by September 1st and potty-trained. It is in operation August to June. We offer a three hour program (9 am – 12 pm) and a four hour program (9 am – 1 pm). Children who attend the four-hour program need to bring a snack as well as a sack lunch to school each day. Children who attend the three-hour program are to bring only a snack. Please bring a nutritious snack and lunch for your child. We provide bottled water.

You may enroll your child:

Three-days a week — Monday/Wednesday/Friday

Two-days a week — Tuesday/Thursday

Five days a week — Monday – Friday

MORNING ENRICHMENT TODDLER PROGRAM



We also offer our Morning Enrichment Program for toddlers who are two years old by September 1st. They do not need to be potty-trained. It is in operation August to June. The hours are 9 am – 1 pm. Children are to bring a nutritious snack and sack lunch to school each day they attend. Please keep in mind finger foods that are safe for toddlers. You may enroll your toddler the same days as shown above for preschool age children.

Our toddler program consists of four hours of flexible structured activities including indoor play, outdoor play, snack, story time, music, lunch munch, and exposure to art media. Social and emotional growth along with interaction with other toddlers is a big part of the daily activities. Here are some items you will want to bring along with your toddler.

Diaper bag with the following items:

- Disposable diapers
- Diaper wipes
- A change of clothes
- A favorite stuffed animal or blanket
- You may bring a bottle or sippy cup with juice or water inside.
- Please do not bring dairy products.

Please label your diaper bag with your child's name on it. If you choose to bring a bottle or sippy cup, be sure to put your child's name on it also.

FULL DAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM



Our full day program is for preschool age children who are at least three years old by September 1st and potty-trained. We have three classrooms for three, four and five year olds. We are open year-around observing the same holidays and breaks as the VUSD calendar. This program is open during the hours of 7 am – 6 pm. We open the morning with learning centers in the classroom and optional outdoor play.

Afternoons include indoor and outdoor play with team sports, obstacle courses and theater play.

We are committed to providing a loving and nurturing program for your child to thrive in. We strive to create a home away from home environment where children grow in self-esteem while learning about their value and importance to God and their world.

Throughout the day, we help the children to develop an excitement and love for God, life and learning. We recognize and encourage each child's unique and personal differences and learning styles. We also encourage working together to inspire team spirit.

Our program incorporates teaching life skills including manners, listening, asking for help, following directions, sharing, consideration of others, making friends, resolving conflicts, just to mention a few. The days are filled with many opportunities for discovery. Although we have a daily schedule, we are flexible to accommodate and look for those teachable moments. Our environment is set up for self-discovery and development with a variety of educational materials including use of our natural resources.

Our program is child centered, providing educational materials for the development of the whole child, spiritually, mentally and physically. We believe children learn best through hands on experiences with interaction, class discussions and language arts.

We have a cozy rest period with cots and "Rollee-Pollee" blankets and pillows, which the preschool provides. The children can relax and look at a book while teachers rub their backs and listen to soothing music.

The parents bring a healthy sack lunch and two snacks each day. Please put an ice pack in your child's lunch if it needs to stay cold during the day. Sometimes we will pack it all up and go for a picnic out on the grass or on our picnic tables. We work creatively and effectively, striving for a sweet, family like environment.

It is most important to us that each child go home feeling they have had a happy and successful day at preschool.



EARLY BIRD PROGRAM

Monday – Friday, 8 – 9 am, **for preschool age children in our 3 & 4 year old classrooms**

Our Early Bird Program is offered to our children who are enrolled in our morning enrichment preschool classes. You may bring your little one to Room 110 from 8 – 9 am on the days he attends school. At 8:55 am, your child's teacher will pick him up and take him to his own classroom to begin the 9 am Morning Enrichment Program. Sorry, this program is not available for our Toddling Turtle's class.

The morning will be a time for free play with a variety of options for your little one to start the morning off on a positive note and a warm good morning.

We hope this will be helpful to you on those mornings you feel a little rushed and a fun time for your little one to gradually start their day at their own pace.



How Does It Work? It's Easy!

1. At the preschool office, purchase a card with five Early Bird credits for \$25. You receive one **FREE** Early Bird morning after you have used five. You may purchase an Early Bird card for a sibling at half price for \$12.50. **We will be happy to refund your money at the end of the school year for any unused credits.**
2. We will stamp the date on your Early Bird card for each time your child stays. The cards will remain in the preschool Office and you will be notified when you run out of credits.
3. You will need to purchase one Early Bird card per child. Please no sharing cards.





STAY & PLAY PROGRAM

Monday – Friday, 1 – 3 pm, **for preschool age children in our 3 & 4 year old classrooms**

Stay & Play is intended to be just what its name suggests: an opportunity for your child to stay longer at school and play with friends. Stay & Play is for children who are enrolled in our four-hour morning enrichment preschool classes. Sorry, this program is not available for our toddler class. The climbing structure that we use for Stay & Play is not age appropriate for two year olds. There will be free play with a variety of options available. Always check the calendar in your monthly newsletter for days when the preschool has evening events and we may not offer Stay & Play.



How Does It Work? It's Easy!

1. At the Preschool Office, purchase a card with five Stay & Play credits for \$50. You receive one **FREE** Stay & Play day after you have used your five days. You may purchase a Stay & Play card for a sibling at half price for \$25. **We will be happy to refund your money at the end of the school year for any unused credits.**
2. Write Stay & Play in the comment box by your child's name on the sign-in/out sheet on the day your child stays for Stay & Play. We will stamp the date on your Stay & Play card for each time your child stays. The cards will remain in the preschool office and you will be notified when you run out of credits.



TOYS AND SHARING



The teachers will let you know when your child's share day is. Sharing is a wonderful opportunity for each child to develop verbal expression. Please do not allow your child to bring toys from home. When it is their share day, it is preferable that they bring items that follow the theme of the class. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO BRING MONEY, PLAY WEAPONS, ROPE, CANDY, GUM OR SUPER HERO TOYS to school, even on their share day. These encourage non-constructive, aggressive play at school.

LUNCH AND SNACKS



We are asking our parents to provide a healthy lunch and snack for their own children each day they attend preschool. Please put an ice pack in your child's lunch if it needs to stay cold during the day. Please keep in mind the child's nutritional needs. Crackers, raisins, fruit, vegetables, cheese, or applesauce, are all good choices. We ask that you avoid sweets, candy, and snacks high in sugar content. Birthdays are fun and children love to share their special day with friends at school. You are welcome to bring a pre-packaged healthy birthday snack as part of the celebration. The teachers will schedule your child's birthday snack day closest to his birthday to the day he attends school.

DISCIPLINE



A major responsibility of the staff is to assist each child in learning what is appropriate behavior at school and what is not. Behavior modification is practiced as emphasis is placed on positive behavior. Praising the child for positive actions sets a good example that the other children desire to follow. School rules are repeated daily during the first months of school. Constant positive limits are set in a loving way. Inappropriate behavior is curtailed by:

1. Speaking to the child on a one to one basis and redirecting the child to a positive activity or task.
2. Removing (not isolating) the child from the group for time out.
3. Communication in the form of a written notice and/or a phone call informing the parent of the child's behavior.
4. Conference with a parent.
5. Calling the parent to pick up child from school early.
6. Withdraw child from school if he/she becomes a risk to others or themselves or it is not in the best interest of the child to attend school.

Corporal punishment is not administered at our school.

CHECK LIST FOR PARENTS



1. **PURPOSE:** Learn the school’s purpose, philosophy and policies to see if you are in complete agreement.
2. **COMMUNICATION:** It is important to every aspect of the child’s welfare that communication occurs directly between the parent and school staff members. We will extend information to you in the following ways: Fall orientation, bulletin boards, monthly newsletter via email, reminder notices, parent conferences, and availability by phone and in person. Please be sure to read your monthly newsletters. You will find them a wealth of information. They will keep you informed on all up-coming events, scheduled field trips and activities in your child’s classroom. Please communicate openly your thoughts and needs.
3. **LEGAL FORMS:** All forms must be completed and on file with the Director before admission. Please keep emergency information up to date. Upon enrollment, you must file a health form signed by a physician. The State of California requires that we keep health immunization records on file for each child. A child’s physician’s form showing his immunization record needs to reflect that the child has been immunized for the following:

3 polio shots	4 DTP shots
1 MMR (measles, mumps and rubella)	1 HIB
3 Hep B	1 Varicella or the date child had
1 TB test (if risk factors present)	chickenpox

4. **ARRIVAL & PICK-UP:** Please be sure an authorized adult (18 years or older) signs your child in and out every day with a full signature (a California State Licensing requirement under code 101329.1 and 101326.1). Please feel free to inform your child’s teacher of any special circumstances that might be significant in your child’s day. If you have made special arrangements for someone other than yourself to pick up your child from the school, please give that person’s name to the school. Otherwise, children will be released only to those adults whose names appear on the enrollment form as authorized persons.

Our Stay & Play program begins at 1:10 pm on the large playground. We ask that after you pick your child up from class, not to stay past 1:10 pm on the playground. For the safety of our children who are signed up for Stay & Play and to best supervise them, we can only have those who are signed up to stay. We have a beautiful park next door to us that you may also take your children to play after school.

5. **LATE PICK-UP:** We understand that sometimes you may run into traffic or something unexpected may come up. We do provide a grace period for those occasions. The school has a policy to charge a late fee to compensate the teacher for supervising after program hours.

The late fees are charged as follows:

- Morning programs — \$1.00 for every minute after 12:10 pm
- \$1.00 for every minute after 1:10 pm
- Stay & Play program — \$1.00 for every minute after 3:10 pm
- Full day program — \$1.00 for every minute after 6:10 pm

You will receive a late fee notice in your parent file the following day your child returns to school. Please pay this at the preschool office. Any unpaid late fees will be added to your monthly tuition statement. We hope you will be a part of a positive and smooth transition at pick-up time by being prompt.

6. **CLOTHING:** Children should wear sturdy, washable clothing, shoes they can safely run in and be dressed appropriately for outside play. Thongs and boots can cause problems when running. In order for the full benefit of our program to be experienced, it is important that children not be fearful or distracted with getting “dirty”. Wet days usually mean mud too! A change of clothing can be kept at school in a labeled bag for emergencies. Jackets should be marked with your child’s name also.
7. **CAR POOLING AND PARKING:** We urge you to use seat belts and to keep all doors locked. Please observe the handicapped parking spaces and the red curb areas for no parking. Never leave children or babies unattended in a parked car. Parents may ask other parents they know to supervise siblings in the car while they pick up their children. No matter how tempting it is to let a child rest while picking up another, this is a health and safety violation. Daycare providers pick up some children. It is important to remember to pick up papers and jackets of the children you transport, and report any information to the parent concerning bulletin board items and sign-up sheets.
8. **EMERGENCIES:** In case of accidental injury, we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent. If we cannot reach the parent, we will call those listed on your emergency form. After those resources have been exhausted, if necessary we will call an ambulance or paramedics. Until the arrival of a parent, the director or person in charge will make all decisions about the care of the child. You will be expected to assume responsibility for expenses not covered by the insurance. **It is for your child’s benefit that you keep your child’s file up to date with emergency phone numbers and other pertinent information to help us locate you at all times.**

9. **ILLNESS POLICY:** Children who become ill during school hours will be moved from the classroom to rest in the office until a parent can pick him up to take the child home. If a child does not appear to be well at drop off the teacher may request that the child not attend school that day. We ask that parents assist us by keeping sick children at home if they have experienced any of the following symptoms within the last 24 hours:



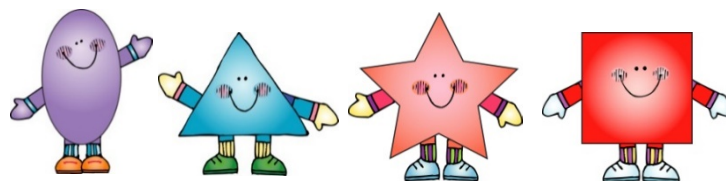
- a. A fever over 100
- b. Signs of a new cold or severe coughing
- c. Diarrhea, vomiting or upset stomach
- d. Unexplained loss of appetite, fatigue, or irritability
- e. Thick or colored discharge from nose
- f. Discharge from eyes or ears, or open sores

We do not administer medication to children while at preschool. You may want to schedule your child's medication before and after school and you are always welcome to come to school and give your child their medication during preschool hours. Please do not send any type of medication or cough drops to school with your child in their lunch box or drop it off with a teacher. We will store EpiPens and Albuterol Inhalers at school for allergic emergencies with a permission slip completed attached to the prescription.

If your child is ill with a communicable disease, please notify the preschool. I know this is an area of difficulty for all of us. However, we are concerned about what is best for everyone, both the sick child and other children who might be exposed to the illness. We will follow Ventura County Health Dept. guidelines.

10. **READINESS:** Age is not the sole determining factor in whether or not a child is ready for preschool. For this reason, during the first month, the child will be assessed and if the teacher feels that the child has not made an adequate adjustment, she may suggest he attend at a later time. It is important that this first school experience be a happy one.

We reserve the right to make final class placements.



FINANCIAL AGREEMENTS



1. **HOW YOUR TUITION IS CALCULATED:** The year's tuition is calculated by how many days the school is in operation and divided into equal monthly payments. Therefore, the same amount of tuition is charged for months that have holidays, breaks or in-service days. We allow for four in-service days during a school year. You are not charged for these days the school is not open. Tuition covers the cost of running the school based on a non-profit budget. It cannot be altered for vacation or illness or in the case of a natural disaster and we are required to close the preschool due to the safety of the children.
2. **WITHDRAW POLICY:** In case you need to withdraw your child before the school year is up, a two-week written notice is required. You may pick up a withdrawal form in the preschool office.
3. **TUITION DUE DATES:** Tuition is due the first of each month. Though it is not overdue until the eighth, please pay as close to the first as you can. If we have not received your tuition by the eighth of the month, a 10% late fee will be added to your balance due. If the school is not in session during this time, you may mail your tuition payment to:

ENCOUNTER Preschool
6950 Ralston Street
Ventura, CA 93003



You may also make payments online at:
MyProcare.com

If you pay your tuition in person, please drop it off at the preschool safe deposit box located next to the office window. **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE TUITION WITH A STAFF PERSON, IN YOUR CHILD'S LUNCHBOX OR DROP IT OFF IN YOUR CHILD'S CLASSROOM.** All checks should be made out to **ENCOUNTER Preschool**. If your last name on your check is different from the child's name enrolled, please write his/her name in the bottom left hand corner. This helps us to credit your tuition to the proper account. You may also pay by cash or your debit Visa, MasterCard or American Express.

4. **DELINQUENT TUITION:** If your tuition is over two week's delinquent, your child may be dismissed from the program. After one-month delinquent, we may turn your account over to the collection agency. If you have questions or you are having financial difficulties, please call the preschool Office. We are happy to arrange for payments or answer any questions you may have.

5. **RETURNED CHECKS:** There is a \$15 charge for returned checks. We will return your check to you and you may write another check with the added bank charge. After two returned checks, cash payments will be required for the remainder of the school year.
6. **REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** At the time of enrollment an annual non-refundable registration fee is due as well as a two-week deposit. Your two-week deposit is credited toward your child's last month of school. This must be paid in full to assure your child's enrollment for the fall. If notice is given two-weeks before the first day of school, you will receive a full refund of your two-week deposit.



TUITION & REGISTRATION FEES

REGISTRATION AND TUITION FEES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Annual Non-Refundable Registration Fee for returning students: \$115.00
 Annual Non-Refundable Registration Fee for new students: \$130.00

Preschool HALF DAY FOUR-HOUR Program 9 am – 1 pm	Monthly Tuition	2 Week Deposit
Mon/Wed/Fri	\$434.00	\$217.00
Tues/Thurs	\$311.00	\$155.50
Mon – Fri	\$745.00	\$372.50
Preschool HALF DAY THREE-HOUR Program 9 am – 12 pm	Monthly Tuition	2 Week Deposit
Mon/Wed/Fri	\$324.00	\$162.00
Tues/Thurs	\$233.00	\$116.50
Mon-Fri	\$557.00	\$278.50
Toddler HALF DAY FOUR-HOUR Program 9 am – 1 pm		
Mon/Wed/Fri	\$446.00	\$223.00
Tues/Thurs	\$321.00	\$160.50
Mon – Fri	\$767.00	\$383.50
Preschool Full Day Program 7 am – 6 pm		
Mon-Fri	\$837.00	\$418.50

*** Siblings receive a 10% discount on monthly tuition.**



CHAPEL



We have chapel every other week. We focus on simple Bible truths through stories in the old and New Testament. To make the Bible more tangible we use flannel graphs, books, songs, puppets and drama. Our focus and approach is simple and concise. We focus on who is God, who is Jesus, and what is the Bible?

Prayer is integrated throughout the child's daily routine. Each class prays before meals, and at the opening of the day. We also pray with individuals if they want to pray for a situation they are facing, or whatever seems to be bothering them at the time. We ask children if they have prayer requests and these are prayed for usually during their circle time.

Our goal is to help children understand that God is everywhere and that He loves and cares about every aspect of their lives. The children are learning that God is always available to listen.

DISASTER PLAN



The school will retain responsibility of all children on the premises until they are released to a parent, guardian, or other designated person or until they have been transported to an official evacuation center, in which case, selected staff will remain with the children until all have been reunited with their families.

The preschool provides an emergency survival kit for every child. This kit is to sustain life for three days. The school conducts fire, earthquake and lock-down drills periodically. An evacuation plan is posted in each classroom.

MANDATED REPORTERS

All our preschool teachers at ENCOUNTER are mandated reporters and are required to take the Child Abuse Mandated Reporter training.



ENCOUNTER Preschool

6950 Ralston Street
Ventura, California
93003

(805) 644-7607

encounterpreschool.org

Debbie Keegan — Director
Teri Rogers — Assistant Director

Facility license # 561700027
Tax ID # 95-2473493