

2026-2027 Parent Handbook



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Welcome to **St. John's UMC Weekday Early Education (W.E.E.) School!**

Thank you for entrusting your child to our care. We are excited to be a part of your child's early learning journey and hope that both you and your child have a wonderful and rewarding experience with us.

This handbook contains important information about our program, policies, and procedures. We ask that you read it carefully, refer to it throughout the school year as needed, and complete and return the **Parent Handbook Acknowledgement of Receipt & Understanding** form located at the back of the handbook.

Our Mission

At St. John's UMC W.E.E. School, our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, Christ-centered environment where children learn, grow, and discover through purposeful play. We are committed to helping each child reach their God-given potential by fostering a lifelong love of learning, encouraging kindness and respect for others, building self-confidence, and helping every child understand that they are a unique and treasured child of God.

Curriculum Statement

At St. John's W.E.E. School, our theme-based curriculum provides children with meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that encourage curiosity, creativity, and a love of learning. Through purposeful play, children develop social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and early academic skills in a nurturing, Christ-centered environment.

Our Christian faith is woven throughout each day through Bible stories, prayer, weekly Chapel, and lessons that teach God's love and encourage kindness, compassion, and respect for others.

Monthly themes help guide classroom activities and introduce children to seasonal topics, holidays, and community events. For example, during October, children learn about fire safety through age-appropriate activities and special visitors. Our curriculum is designed to make learning engaging, meaningful, and fun while preparing children for future educational success.

Enrollment & Hours of Operation

Preschool Hours:

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Class Options

2-Year-Olds:

- Monday, Wednesday, Friday (MWF)
- Tuesday, Thursday (T/Th)

3-Year-Olds:

- Monday - Thursday
- Monday, Wednesday, Friday (MWF)

4-Year-Olds:

- Monday - Friday
- Monday - Thursday

Arrival & Dismissal

Drop-Off: 9:00 a.m. - 9:10 a.m.

Pick-Up: 12:00 p.m. - 12:10 p.m.

Children must be the appropriate program age by **September 1, 2026**. Students enrolling in the 3- and 4-year-old programs must be fully potty trained.

Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch is an extended-day option available for children enrolled in our 3- and 4-year-old classes beginning in September. Our 2-year-old students who are fully potty trained may begin participating in Lunch Bunch starting November 1st.

For an additional fee, children may stay until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and/or Thursday.

The cost for Lunch Bunch is \$20 per month for each day enrolled, regardless of the number of times that day occurs in a given month. Payment is due on the 15th of the month prior along with tuition.

(Example: September Lunch Bunch fees are due August 15th.)

Lunch Guidelines

To help keep our preschool community safe, **no peanuts, tree nuts, peanut/tree nut products, peanut butter, almond butter, or Nutella are permitted in lunches.**

If you send SunButter (sunflower seed butter) or a similar alternative, please place a note in your child's lunchbox so our Lunch Bunch teachers are aware. Without a note, the item will not be served to your child.

All children must be fully potty trained to participate in Lunch Bunch.

Please note: **There are no refunds or make-up days for missed Lunch Bunch days.**

Drop-Off Procedures

Drop-off will take place at the double glass doors on the parking lot side of the building, across from the fire department. These doors will open at 9:00 a.m.

If you arrive after 9:10 a.m., you will need to enter through the door with the burgundy awning and follow the security procedures outlined below.

If you know you will be arriving late, please notify the preschool office at (803) 548-6557. Frequent late arrivals (more than three times per month) will result in a late fee of \$5 for every 10 minutes after 9:10 a.m. These fees may be added to your tuition account. Late arrivals are disruptive to the church office, your child's classroom, and the learning environment.

We encourage families to begin each school day with a positive attitude and a confident goodbye. When you arrive, please say goodbye at the door, and our teachers will help your child transition to the classroom. Long goodbyes can be difficult for children, classmates, and staff. In most cases, tears are short-lived and your child is happily engaged shortly after you leave.

For the safety and attention of all children, please refrain from cell phone use during drop-off.

Pick-Up Procedures

Pick-up will take place at the double glass doors on the parking lot side of the building, across from the fire department, from 12:00 p.m. to 12:10 p.m.

Please make every effort to arrive on time. It can be difficult for children when they see their classmates leave and they are still waiting for their parent or caregiver. A late fee of \$5 for every 10 minutes after 12:10 p.m. will be assessed and may be added to your tuition account.

For the safety of all children, we use a dismissal number system. Each child will be assigned a dismissal number and provided with dismissal cards. You must present your dismissal number/card in order for your child to be released.

If someone other than a parent or regular caregiver will be picking up your child, they must have the dismissal card in order for us to release your child. If an emergency prevents you from arriving on time, please contact the preschool office as soon as possible at (803) 548-6557.

For the safety and attention of all children, please refrain from cell phone use during pick-up.

Safety & Security

The safety and security of our children and staff is a top priority at St. John's UMC W.E.E. School. In today's world, we take every precaution to help maintain a safe and secure environment for everyone in our preschool community.

All church doors remain locked at all times. If you need to enter the building for any reason, please use the door with the burgundy awning and press the buzzer located to the right of the door.

The church administrative assistant will ask you to provide your child's dismissal number through the camera system, as well as your name and the reason for your visit. Access to the building will only be granted once this information has been provided.

After entering the building, please stop at the small table near the church office to sign in. For the safety of our children and staff, please allow the church administrative assistant or preschool director to escort your child to the classroom.

We appreciate your cooperation and partnership in helping us maintain a safe and secure environment for all of our students and staff.

For the safety of our children, families, staff, and your pets, please refrain from bringing pets to the door during drop-off and pick-up.

Dress & Personal Items

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes each day. Our preschool activities include outdoor play, painting, play dough, and a variety of hands-on crafts and activities that may cause stains. Please avoid sending your child in clothing that cannot get dirty or messy.

We strongly recommend that children wear closed-toe, strap-on, or tie-on shoes. Sandals, flip-flops, and Crocs can be unsafe on the playground and may make it difficult for children to participate comfortably in activities.

Please label all coats, sweaters, backpacks, and personal items with your child's name.

Each child should keep a change of clothes in the labeled Ziploc bag provided at Meet the Teacher. The change of clothes will remain in your child's backpack and should be updated as the seasons change or as your child grows.

Children should bring a backpack to school every day. Backpacks should be large enough to hold your child's folder and personal belongings. When selecting a backpack, please

choose one without strings, as strings can pose a choking hazard. Rolling backpacks are not permitted due to safety concerns.

Snacks

We provide a mid-morning snack each day. Snack options may include pretzels, cheese crackers, club crackers, plain or cinnamon graham crackers, animal crackers, vanilla wafers, Pirate's Booty, or popcorn (served to 4-year-olds). These snacks are purchased from Aldi.

We are mindful of food allergies and take appropriate precautions when preparing and serving snacks. Occasionally, cooking activities will be incorporated into our lessons. On those days, the food prepared during the activity may be served as the children's snack.

If your child has a food allergy or dietary restriction, your child's teacher will communicate with you at the beginning of the school year regarding snack accommodations and any necessary precautions.

Allergies

We understand the seriousness of food allergies and are committed to providing a safe environment for all of our children. If your child requires allergy-related medication, such as an EpiPen or Benadryl, you will be required to complete the appropriate authorization forms allowing preschool staff to administer medication if needed.

For your child's safety, we are unable to administer any medication that has expired. If allergy medication expires during the school year, it will be sent home and must be replaced with a current, unexpired medication.

Immunizations

A current immunization record is required before your child's first day of preschool. An updated copy must be provided each school year to ensure our records remain current.

Special Health Conditions

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to inform the preschool at the time of enrollment, or whenever changes occur, regarding any health conditions, special needs, developmental delays, allergies, or other concerns that may affect their child while at school.

Providing this information allows us to better understand your child's needs and provide the safest and most appropriate care possible.

Illness Policy

To help protect the health of all children and staff, your child should not attend preschool if they have any of the following:

- Green or yellow nasal discharge
- Fever of **100.0 degrees or higher** within the past 24 hours
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Any contagious illness or disease
- A spreading rash
- Excessive coughing
- A red or sore throat

Please be considerate of our preschool community and keep your child home when they are sick. Children must be **symptom-free (including fever, vomiting, and diarrhea) for 24 hours without the use of medication to control symptoms** before returning to school. In some cases, a doctor's note may be required before your child may return.

Our teachers follow daily cleaning and disinfecting procedures and work diligently to provide a healthy classroom environment. However, keeping our school healthy is a team effort, and we appreciate the partnership of our families.

If your child becomes ill during the school day, we will contact you and request that your child be picked up promptly.

Depending on the illness, a doctor's note confirming that your child is no longer contagious and may return to preschool may be required.

Realm Communication

Realm is our church's secure online communication platform and serves as an important tool for connecting W.E.E. School teachers and families. Through Realm, teachers can share important updates, announcements, pictures, and messages to help keep families informed and engaged throughout the school year.

Parents can also use Realm to communicate with their child's teacher regarding attendance, ask questions, or share important information and concerns. This two-way communication helps strengthen the partnership between home and school while supporting each child's growth, success, and well-being.

A step-by-step guide for setting up your Realm account is included in the back of this handbook.

Birthday & Holiday Celebrations

We love celebrating birthdays at W.E.E. School! If you would like to send in a snack to celebrate your child's special day, please speak with your child's teacher in advance to choose the best day and to discuss any classroom allergies or dietary concerns.

Please remember that **peanuts, tree nuts, and peanut/tree nut products are not permitted** in birthday snacks or treats.

For the safety of all children, please do not send balloons (inflated or deflated), as they can be a choking hazard.

To help ensure a positive and inclusive classroom environment, we ask that party invitations, gifts, or other personal correspondence not be distributed at school. If you would like to contact classmates outside of school, the preschool office can provide a class list with parent contact information, or you may connect with families through Realm.

Your child's teacher will communicate with families regarding holiday parties and will provide information about any items or volunteers needed for these special celebrations.

Toys & Show and Tell

We ask that children leave toys and personal items at home unless they are specifically requested for Show and Tell. Teachers will provide children with a theme or guidelines for Show and Tell activities.

For the safety and comfort of all students, Show and Tell items should never be weapons, violent in nature, or contain inappropriate themes. Items brought for Show and Tell should be small enough to fit inside your child's backpack.

Thank you for helping us keep our classrooms focused on learning and ensuring that all children have a safe and enjoyable preschool experience.

Holidays, Inclement Weather & Extended Closures

A W.E.E. School calendar is included in the back of this handbook for your reference. Please note all scheduled holidays, breaks, and school closures listed on the calendar.

Inclement Weather Procedures

In the event of inclement weather, W.E.E. School will follow the lead of **Fort Mill School District 4**.

- If Fort Mill School District 4 is **closed due to inclement weather**, W.E.E. School will also be closed.
- If Fort Mill School District 4 operates on a **1-hour delay**, W.E.E. School will open at our regular time.
- If Fort Mill School District 4 operates on a **2-hour delay**, W.E.E. School will operate from **10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

On days with a 2-hour delay:

- All children must bring a lunch from home.
- Please remember that **no peanuts, tree nuts, peanut/tree nut products, peanut butter, almond butter, or Nutella are permitted in lunches.**
- Lunch Bunch will not be extended on 2-hour delay days.
- All children will be dismissed at **1:00 p.m.**

Families will be notified of preschool delays or closures through **email and/or Realm**.

If inclement weather develops after the preschool day has begun, we will again follow the guidance of Fort Mill School District 4.

Emergency Closures

In the event of an emergency during preschool hours, we will dismiss children early only when it is safe to do so. If an immediate dismissal is not possible, children will remain in the safest available location, such as our basement, until the situation is secure.

Due to the nature of our preschool schedule, days missed due to inclement weather or emergency closures **will not be made up or refunded**.

Student Assessments & Progress Reports

Student assessments help us understand each child's individual growth, strengths, and areas where additional support may be needed.

Children in our 3- and 4-year-old classes will receive two assessments during the school year. The first assessment will take place in September and will provide your child's teacher with a baseline of the skills and knowledge your child brings to W.E.E. School. The second assessment will take place in early January, prior to parent/teacher conferences.

During conferences, your child's teacher will compare the September and January assessments to share your child's progress, celebrate areas of growth, and discuss any areas that may need additional attention.

Children in our 2-year-old classes will receive an assessment in January prior to parent/teacher conferences.

All children will receive a progress report at the end of the school year outlining their growth and development.

Children in our 2-, 3-, and 4-year-old programs may have the option to repeat the program based on assessment results, teacher recommendations, and the discretion of the W.E.E. School Director.

Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences are held in January each school year.

Please note that drop-off and pick-up times are not appropriate times for conferences. These times are focused on safely transitioning children into and out of the classroom.

Both parents and teachers may request a parent/teacher conference at any point during the school year. Conferences provide an opportunity to celebrate your child's successes, share important information, and discuss any questions or concerns that may arise.

Open communication between families and teachers is an important part of supporting each child's growth and development.

Discipline & Behavior Guidance

Discipline is an important part of helping children learn and grow. It includes nurturing, teaching, guidance, encouragement, and support. Our goal in guiding children's behavior is not to punish, but to help children develop self-control, problem-solving skills, and an understanding of appropriate choices.

When behavioral challenges arise, teachers will use positive guidance strategies to help children learn and make better choices.

St. John's W.E.E. School does not use corporal or physical punishment, humiliation, verbal abuse, or leaving a child unattended without supervision as forms of discipline.

For age-appropriate behaviors, we use a positive behavior management approach that may include:

- Redirection
- Positive reinforcement
- Problem-solving
- Intervention and guidance
- Behavior modification strategies
- Anticipating and preventing challenges
- Supervised removal from the group when needed
- A supervised "thinking chair" or time-out period when appropriate

Each teacher will establish classroom expectations and behavioral goals for both the classroom and Lunch Bunch.

We understand that self-control is a skill that develops over time. However, the safety of all children is our priority, and we cannot allow a child to remain in the classroom or Lunch Bunch if they are intentionally harming others. For behaviors such as biting, hitting, or other physical aggression, the following steps will be followed:

1st Offense:

The behavior will be addressed by the classroom or Lunch Bunch teachers using appropriate guidance strategies, such as redirection and/or a supervised thinking chair.

2nd Offense:

The child will be brought to the Director's office. The parent/guardian will be notified by phone, and an Incident Report will need to be signed by the parent/guardian acknowledging the behavior at pick-up.

3rd Offense:

The child will be brought to the Director's office, and the parent/guardian will be contacted for immediate pick-up.

If a child continues to display harmful behaviors after appropriate interventions have been attempted, the child may be removed from the program at the discretion of the W.E.E. School Director.

Families play an important role in supporting their child's success. We encourage parents to talk with their child about the behavior expectations at St. John's W.E.E. School, maintain open communication with teachers, and work together with us to help children develop positive social and emotional skills.

Enrollment Termination

We strive to provide a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment where each child can learn and grow. However, there may be times when our program is unable to meet the needs of a particular child.

When this occurs, parents/guardians will be notified and given appropriate notice to make other arrangements for their child's care.

If a child's behavior or needs create a situation where they pose a safety risk to themselves or others, immediate dismissal from the program may be necessary.

Social Media Communication

To maintain professional communication and protect the privacy of our teachers and families, please refrain from using personal social media platforms to contact or message your child's teacher regarding W.E.E. School business.

If you have questions, concerns, or information to share regarding your child or the preschool program, please communicate with your child's teacher through Realm or contact the preschool office.

Payment and Fees

Tuition payments are due by the **15th of each month for the following month.**
(*Example: September tuition is due August 15th.*)

Tuition accounts must remain current. If tuition is not paid, your child will not be permitted to attend preschool until the balance has been paid in full. **A \$25 late fee will be added for each week** that tuition remains unpaid.

Tuition payments are required in full regardless of absences, vacations, illness, or other missed school days.

Payment Options

- We accept cash and checks made payable to **St. John's UMC**. The preferred method of payment is to place your payment in your child's folder. All payments should be submitted in an envelope labeled with your child's name.
- Online payments may be made through our website: www.sjumcweeschool.org. Due to online service fees, **sibling discounts cannot be applied to online payments.**
- If you use online banking, please send payments to:

St. John's UMC
PO Box 1298
Fort Mill, SC 29716

Please allow sufficient time for your bank to process and mail your payment.
Online banking payments typically take **5-8 business days** to arrive.

Discounts & Additional Fees

We offer a **\$20 sibling discount off the lowest tuition rate.**

Please note: Sibling discounts are not available for tuition payments made online.

Checks returned to the church due to insufficient funds will be assessed a **\$20 returned check fee** to cover bank charges.

Tax Forms & Registration Fees

If you need tax documentation, please contact the W.E.E. School office. We are also happy to complete and sign Dependent Child Care Forms.

A non-refundable registration fee is due at the time of registration:

- \$150 for non-members
- \$125 for members

A written **30-day notice** is required if you choose to withdraw your child from the program.

Thank you for entrusting your child to St. John's UMC W.E.E. School. We are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of your child's early learning experience and look forward to a wonderful year together. Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions, concerns, or needs throughout the school year. We are always happy to partner with you in supporting your child's growth and success.

Parent Handbook

Acknowledgement of Receipt & Understanding

I acknowledge that I have received the St. John's UMC W.E.E. School Parent Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and become familiar with the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the handbook and to follow them throughout the school year.

I understand that handbook policies and procedures may be updated or changed as needed. Any changes will be communicated by the Director through email.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Please sign and return this form to the Director by **September 11, 2026**.