

# Parent/Student Handbook



## MORNING STAR ACADEMY

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Academy Website: [www.morningstarlions.org](http://www.morningstarlions.org)



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# Section I: Purpose of the School

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Morning Star Academy is a private, independent Christian school located in Bonham, Texas. MSA offers a wide range of high quality academic and childcare programs to meet the unique needs of infants through primary grades.

## Vision

Morning Star Academy will be the school of choice for families desiring a Christ-centered education in Fannin and surrounding counties.

## Mission

Morning Star Academy transforms tomorrow by shaping hearts, growing minds, and empowering Christ-like leaders through Christ-centered education. Our goal is to equip children to become confident ambassadors for Christ in their homes, churches, and communities.

## Core Beliefs

**Bible Based Programs:** We believe that Christ creates a context for all things in our lives and therefore God's word provides the foundation for all of our curriculum and programs.

**Christ-Centered Relationships:** We are honored when parents choose to partner with us in their child's education. We know that at the core of this partnership is building lasting relationships with both parents and students. We believe that through the building of trusting relationships early on, we can overcome many of the hurdles that life, parenting and teaching throw at us. Central to this idea is frequent and honest communication between parents, students, staff and administration.

**Serving Others:** We are committed to inspiring students to become Christ-like leaders in their communities. Servant leadership begins with the example set by administration and staff and continues on through all of our programs. Students begin formally studying what it means to be a person of high moral character early in their experiences at MSA and continue to develop leadership traits through both formal and informal opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.

**Individualized, Hands-On Instruction:** We believe that a one-size-fits-all approach to education does not fit most. The Bible tells us that though we are one body through Christ, each of us embodies different gifts and talents. As educators, it is our job to unlock the potential of each student by honing-in on their individual strengths. All core subjects—English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Bible are taught using multiple methods to ensure student success.

**Building Emotional Resilience:** We believe God is the ultimate healer of broken hearts (Psalm 147:3). While childhood is typically characterized by joyful memories, we recognize that many children come to MSA with past traumas and all will face dark day as they grow into adulthood. At MSA we are committed to providing students with the knowledge of a God who sees them, loves them and is with them, along with the tools to regulate their emotions as they grow and mature.

## Statement of Faith

Morning Star Academy (“Academy”) is a faith based, Christian academy. The academy is interdenominational and endorses the Statement of Faith of the *Evangelical Free Church of America*.

- God** We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.
- The Bible** We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.
- The Human Condition** We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God’s saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.
- Jesus Christ** We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus-Israel’s promised Messiah-was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.
- The Work of Christ** We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.
- The Holy Spirit** We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.
- The Church** We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.
- Christian Living** We believe that God’s justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God’s Word, the Spirit’s power, and fervent prayer in Christ’s name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ’s commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.
- Christ’s Return** We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.
- Response and Eternal Destiny** We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.

## Expected Student Outcomes

Students who **LOVE GOD**:

- Understand creation reveals a God who cares for us.
- See themselves as made in the image of God.
- Believe Jesus is God's son and died for our sins.

Students who **LOVE OTHERS**:

- Care as much for others as themselves.
- Seek to improve the lives of others.
- See life from another's point of view.

Students who **LOVE LEARNING**:

- Achieve a strong academic foundation in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies.
- Seek truth and think logically and critically to solve problems.
- Stay curious about the world around them.

## Non-Discrimination Policy

Morning Star Academy 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. Morning Star Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs and other school-administered programs.

## Hours of Operation

**Infants—Transition School Hours:** 8:30 AM—3:00 PM Monday through Friday.

**Pre-Kindergarten School Hours:** 8:00 AM—3:00 PM (full-time) and 8:00 AM—12:00 PM (part-time)

**Primary School Hours:** 8:00 AM—3:00 PM Monday through Friday.

**Extended Care Hours:** 7:00—8:30 AM and 3:00—5:30 PM during the regular school year and from 7:00 AM—5:30 PM during school holidays and the summer.

## School Closures

Morning Star Academy provides an annual calendar outlining regularly scheduled school closures including holidays and staff development days. In the event of an emergency closure due to severe weather or other unforeseen circumstances, the Academy will notify all staff and parents via Parent Square and Facebook as soon as information is available.



## Section II: Staff

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At Morning Star Academy, we know that each staff member influences the experience students have at our school by what they say, how they say it, and how they live. We strive to hire individuals who love the Lord, love children, and see working with children as a calling. Each potential employee undergoes a lengthy application and interview process to ensure the best fit. During the application and interview process applicants will be asked to share a personal testimony and sign both that they agree with our statement of faith and that they will follow our lifestyle agreement without exception.

### **Additional Staff Requirements:**

- All Early Education and Primary School Teachers are highly qualified and meet certification standards for accreditation through the Association of Christian Schools International. These qualifications include a combination of education, experience, and ongoing professional development.
- In accordance with the regulations of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, each teacher in our school receives at least 24 hours of training in childcare, child development or early childhood education each year. At least 1 hour of the required training must focus on preventing child abuse.
- All staff responsible for the care of children are certified in CPR and first aid.
- A cleared criminal history check.
- The Fannin County Health Department does not require TB testing for child care workers.
- While we recommend staff receive all vaccinations recommended by the Health Department, we do not require them.

# Section III: Policies and Procedures

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## Enrollment

All parents will be asked to complete an annual enrollment packet. The enrollment packet includes the following:

- Enrollment Agreement
- General Information Sheet
- Water Play Release
- Medical Information Form (signed and dated by the child's physician)
- Acceptable Use Policy Acknowledgement
- Release to use pictures
- Statement of Faith
- School Calendar
- Tuition and Fees
- CACFP Income Eligibility Form

## Change of Address or Telephone Numbers

Parents are responsible for keeping all contact information current. Any change of address or telephone number should be provided to the Academy front office in writing or updated in FACTS/Renweb. It is very important for the Academy to have current information at all times.

## Immunizations

Parents are responsible for keeping their child current on all immunizations and for providing an updated immunization record to the office each time their child receives new immunizations. In the event that a parent feels that immunizing their child goes against their religious beliefs or would be hazardous to their child's health due to a medical condition, they must provide the Academy with an *Affidavit Exemption From Immunizations Form*. This form can be obtained from the health department. The Fannin County Health Department does not require students have a TB test in order to be in care.

## Hearing and Vision Screening

All children must have an annual hearing and vision screening within 30 days of their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. In most cases, trained MSA staff will conduct hearing and vision screenings at regularly defined intervals. In the event that MSA staff are unable to conduct hearing and vision for your child, parents must submit documentation to the Academy office no later than 30 days after their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Parental Notifications and Communication

Our school uses Parent Square as our primary form of daily communication and parental notifications. All parents must set up an account and enable notifications upon enrollment. Parents will be notified of any changes to our policies and procedures throughout the school year via parent square.

## **Child Care Licensing**

A copy of our most current Licensing review is available in the front office. For additional information on Child Care Licensing guidelines or if you have any questions or concerns regarding licensing go to: [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Care/Information\\_for\\_Parents/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Information_for_Parents/default.asp) or you may contact the licensing office directly at 214-583-4253 or at 550 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Plano, TX 75074.

## **Toys from Home**

We provide stimulating age-appropriate toys and games for your child. Please do not allow your child to bring toys from home, unless the teacher has specified a special item may be brought.

## **Naps and Rest Time**

All children need time to rest or nap during the day. Our toddlers, Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten students will have a regularly scheduled naptime each day. During this time, some children may not fall asleep, but they must lie quietly and not disturb other children. Children who are not asleep after resting or sleeping for one hour will be provided an alternative, quiet activity until the nap/rest time is over for the other children. School age children will be provided with a quiet time to rest which may include reading or listening to quiet music or books being read aloud.

## **Meals and Snacks**

We strive to provide nutritious meals and snacks so that children will develop healthy eating habits that will follow them throughout their lives.

### **Breakfast**

Breakfast is provided for all Extended Care students and may be purchased by students in our Primary grades. In order to be able to begin preparing lunch and accommodate our lunch schedule, the kitchen will stop serving breakfast at 7:55 a.m. Students arriving after this time should eat breakfast prior to arriving at school. Please do not send donuts, pop tarts, and other sugary breakfasts foods to be consumed in the morning for breakfast.

### **Lunch**

Once they are eating table food, all students in our childcare and pre-kindergarten classes will be provided with lunch Tuesday through Friday. We encourage you to allow your child to eat meals provided by the Academy instead of sending meals with your child, unless your child has special dietary needs that require it. Children will often try new foods at school they would not otherwise try at home.

Elementary school students have the option to purchase lunch daily, participate in our meal plan, or bring a lunch.

Our kitchen is closed during lunch on Mondays to allow time for deep cleaning, stocking, meal prep, and planning. On Mondays, please help your child pack a nutritious lunch. The state requires that we monitor what children eat while in our care and offer healthy alternatives, if needed. Please use the following guidelines when packing your child's lunch. This is a great time to teach the importance of good nutrition.

<b>Foods to Include</b>	<b>Foods to Avoid</b>
100% Juice, Milk, or Water Only	Sugary drinks (Hi-C, Capri Sun, Fruit Punch, Sodas etc.)
Fresh Fruits & Veggies	Candy
Lean Meats	Peanuts or Peanut Butter
Cheese	
Bread or Crackers	

### **Snacks**

An afternoon snack consisting of at least two food groups is served at the beginning of Extended Care each day.

### **Special Dietary Needs**

If your child has special dietary needs, the Academy is required by the state to have a letter on file from your child’s physician stating the specific restrictions.

### **Animals**

Our curriculum is hands-on. As such, there may be animals present at times. Teachers may choose to have a classroom pet or temporarily house an animal in the classroom so students may make observations. You will be notified in writing if and when your child may come into contact with an animal at the school.

### **Field Trips**

PreK and Primary students may go on field trips from time to time that enhance the curriculum. You will be notified in writing prior to the field trip and asked to sign a permission slip. All children are required to ride the bus to the field trip. Parents attending the trip must provide their own transportation. Parents may take their child home after the trip, but must sign them out with a staff member. Parents may only take their child. No child will be permitted to ride home with another parent.

### **Illness and Medication**

Your child’s health is important to us. A child who becomes ill during the school day will be isolated and the parent notified to promptly pick up him/her. For the protection of all children, keep your child home if they have any of the following:

- Temperature of 100.3 or greater
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Undiagnosed rash
- Discharge from the eyes or ears or profuse nasal discharge
- Symptoms of a possible communicable disease, such as but not limited to, congestion, red eyes, sore throat, headache or abdominal pain

Your child may not return to school until they are free of the above symptoms for 24 hours without the assistance of medication (i.e. Tylenol, Motrin, etc.) and has completed 24 hours of antibiotics (if prescribed).

If your child is absent from school due to a hospital stay, an infection, or contagious disease, such as mumps, measles, chicken pox, COVID, rubella, roseola, Hand Foot and Mouth disease, please notify the school immediately of your child's illness. These illnesses require communication on the part of the school as well as special considerations as to when the child may return.

If your child requires medication while in care, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services requires the following:

- Written permission from the parent or guardian to administer the medication.
- Medication must be in the original container with the child's name on it and the expiration date clearly visible.
- Medication must be administered as stated on the label or as amended in writing by the child's physician.
- Medications other than those that are used to prevent an acute reaction (i.e. Epi-pens, rescue inhalers, etc.) must be taken home at the end of each week.
- Medications, such as antibiotics, that are administered once or twice daily will need to be administered at home prior to drop off.

A medication chart is available to sign as you bring your child's medication. We will document the administering of medication and keep the records on file for the required three-month period. Please use one line for each medication and each dose to be given.

## **Daily Physical Activity**

Physical activity and outdoor play provides for greater freedom and flexibility, fuller expression through loud talk, and a greater range of active movement. Physical activity and outdoor play also extends opportunities for large muscle development, social-emotional development, and small muscle development by offering variety, challenge, and complexity in ways that are not attainable in a confined indoor space.

Children at MSA engage in a variety of indoor and outdoor play activities in both our gymnasium and multiple outdoor play areas. Opportunities for physical activity include both structured and unstructured play times. Activities are based on appropriate developmental stages and include:

- crawling, skipping, hopping, jumping, climbing, and running
- bouncing, kicking, and throwing balls
- building with large blocks
- riding trikes, scooters, and big wheel bikes
- sidewalk chalk

- singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments
- sensory play including scooping and exploring sand and gravel
- gardening
- water/splash play

Infants under the age of 12 months engage in outdoor activities such as strolling for as long as they tolerate the activity. Children over the age of 13 months will spend a minimum of 30 minutes outdoors during the regular school day and 30 minutes as part of the extended care day. Schedules for outdoor play vary depending on the average daily temperature and are modified to accommodate the change in seasons (i.e. warmer afternoons during winter months and hotter afternoon temperatures during the summer).

The following temperature guidelines are adhered to in order to ensure the safety of our students and staff during extreme temperatures. Temperatures listed take into consideration both wind chill and humidity. Staff rely on the “feels like” temperature provided by The Weather Channel for our local area when determining the safety of outdoor play conditions.

- Temperatures between 32 and 89 degrees are considered comfortable for outdoor play.
- When the temperature falls below 32, teachers may take quick trips outside to play in the snow and get some fresh air but may not exceed 10 minutes at a time. Students may not go outside if the temperature falls below 20 degrees.
- When the temperature rises above 90 degree teachers are advised to use caution when playing outside by providing opportunities for water play, encouraging frequent drinks of water, and monitoring for signs of heat induced stress, and decreasing the amount of time outdoors in relationship to the age and tolerance of the children in their care. Children may not go outside when the temperature rises to 110 degrees.

In addition to the clothing guidelines listed in the age specific sections of the handbook, please ensure your child is dressed for current weather conditions.

When outdoor play is limited due to weather conditions, staff utilize the gym to ensure children have the ability to engage in moderate to vigorous physical play. If your child is unable to participate in outdoor play due to health concerns, please notify the teacher so that an alternate activity can be provided for your child.

## **Water Activities**

Our facility has a splash pad. Students will have opportunities throughout the summer to enjoy this feature such as end of year parties and weekly splash days for those who attend our summer enrichment program. All children are required to bring a towel and sunscreen on the days they will be using the splash pad. Girls are required to wear a one-piece bathing suit and all children are required to wear water shoes to prevent slipping. If your child does not have the appropriate attire, they will not be allowed to participate.

## **Sunscreen & Bug Repellant**

At the Academy, we are firm believers that students need to experience nature. However, we are aware of how damaging UV rays from the sun can be to your child's skin and the threat of disease from insect bites. During the summer months, or when necessary, Academy staff will apply sunscreen and/or bug repellant approximately thirty minutes before going outside.

All sunscreen and bug repellant must be provided by the parent and labeled with the child's first and last name. In addition, parents must obtain and sign a permission slip allowing Academy staff to apply the sunscreen and bug repellant provided.

## **Releasing Children and Custody Cases**

The parent who enrolls the child, who signs the forms, and signs the agreement and release, has the right to say who may or may not pick the child up. In the case of shared custody or visitation rights, we must have a copy of the court document. If legal custody stipulations apply to your child, it is required that copies of this information be provided to the Academy.

There is a place on the Admissions Information form to list all persons allowed to pick the child up. A valid driver's license is required for any one listed other than the parent who will be picking up the child. We cannot send a child home with a parent or relative whose name is not listed. If someone other than those listed on the form will be picking your child up, you will need to notify our office staff in writing. A hand written note may be delivered to the front office or emailed to [office@morningstarlions.org](mailto:office@morningstarlions.org).

## **Special Occasions**

We enjoy celebrating birthdays and holidays throughout the year. If you wish to bring a special treat for your child's birthday, you may do so. Please coordinate with your child's teacher in advance so that time can be set aside for the celebration. Store bought treats are preferred as we have many children with allergies. No items with peanuts may be brought to school.

Birthday invitations may be passed out at school only if everyone in the class is invited. If you wish to invite only a few children, please mail or hand deliver the invitations outside of the school setting.

Holiday parties will be held for Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter. In addition, each class will host an end of year celebration. Parents are welcome to attend all classroom celebrations.

## **Discipline Policy**

At the Academy, we strive to integrate social-emotional learning and discipline. We believe it is our responsibility to discipline children in a way that empowers them with life-long skills that will allow them to make healthy decisions in the future. Through praising positive behavior and addressing negative behavior in an appropriate manner, we seek to help students take responsibility for their own emotions and behaviors. Conflict resolution and problem solving are used to encourage children to think of a more positive way to handle a situation the next time it arises. Diversion, re-direction, and recovery time away

from the group are additional techniques used by our teachers. Our goal is to maintain a positive environment where children are building their decision-making skills each and every day.

In the event of severe discipline problems, the school reserves the right to suspend or expel the child from the program. This will only occur if the child's behavior is continually interfering with the learning or safety of the other children in the classroom.

## **Parent Involvement and Volunteers**

We encourage parents, grandparents, and community members to share their special talents and skills with our students. Each volunteer will need to complete a volunteer application and grant permission for the Academy to conduct a background check. In addition, parents are encouraged to become involved by dropping in for a brief visit anytime, or occasionally eating lunch with their child.

Teachers will contact parents in August prior to the start of school to get acquainted. Throughout the year, progress reports will be sent home for all children ages 2 years and up. In addition, a conference will be scheduled for the end of the year to discuss your child's progress and promotion. If additional conferences are needed, your child's teacher will contact you. You may also request a conference by calling or e-mailing your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns. All conferences must be scheduled so as not to interfere with regular school activities.

## **Child Abuse**

Schools, child care centers, and staff members are required by law to report suspected child abuse, neglect, and sexual molestation to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and local police. Failure to report by a staff member or school is a Class B Misdemeanor. Aside from legal implications, the failure to make a report would mean neglect on our part to protect the children in our care.

All staff receive a minimum of 1 hour of training on recognizing and preventing child abuse. This training is typically conducted by a local CASA employee at the beginning of each year. During this training, employees learn of warning signs such as bruising and changes in behavior. In addition to training in recognizing, preventing, and reporting child abuse, staff participate regularly in training on positive discipline techniques, such as Love & Logic and Conscious Discipline.

Parents are encouraged to attend free training at the Children's Advocacy Center on recognizing and reporting suspected abuse. Additional information regarding recognizing, preventing and reporting child abuse is located in the center lobby. In addition, a library of positive discipline strategies is available upon request for both parents and staff.

If you are the victim of abuse or suspect child abuse, you can report it anonymously via [www.TxAbuseHotline.org](http://www.TxAbuseHotline.org), by calling the child abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400, contacting our local CASA Center at (903) 583-4339, or the Fannin County Crisis Center at (903) 583-7694.



## **Drop-off, Dismissal, and Signing In/Out**

Infants, Toddlers, and Transition students should be escorted by a parent and signed in and out of the building. From 7:30 AM —8:00 AM and 3:00 PM —3:15 PM there will be staff supervising drop-off and pick up at the front of the building for PreK and Primary. If you are dropping off or picking up your child outside of these time frames, please accompany your child and sign them in and out.

The driveway is for drop off and pick up only. If you are coming to school for a visit or appointment, please park in the parking lot. **Please do not park in the driveway during drop off and dismissal (7:30 AM —8:10 AM and 2:45 PM —3:15 PM).**

## **Extracurricular Babysitting**

It is natural to develop trust in your child’s teacher or caregiver. Therefore, it may seem like a normal extension of the working relationship to ask your child’s caregiver to “babysit” after hours on nights or weekends. However, Morning Star Academy discourages its staff members from babysitting privately for Academy families.

**Morning Star Academy assumes NO responsibility or liability for employees after their scheduled work hours. The Academy is in no way liable for any occurrences or actions taken resulting from any private babysitting arrangement between staff members and parents.**

Our teachers and caregivers are professionals and deserve to be treated as such and should not be viewed as babysitters by parents. In addition, after spending a busy day with children at the Academy, all staff members and students need free time away from each other.

The Academy must ensure that all children and parents at the Academy are treated equally. Teachers/caregivers who babysit the same children they are responsible for during school hours could naturally, though unintentionally, display favoritism toward those children or parents. Such favoritism would be unfair to the rest of the children and parents.

**Under no circumstances will staff members be permitted to take children home from the Academy or babysit children during Academy operating hours.** Any babysitting arrangements between parents and staff members are prohibited from interfering with the daily operation of the Academy and should be made away from the Academy and on the respective parties’ own time.

The Academy reserves the right to direct any staff member to terminate any babysitting arrangement that the Academy determines is not in the best interest of, or is having a negative impact on, the school, its staff members, or clients.

## **Safety**

The safety and well-being of our students and staff are of utmost importance. During operating hours, all entries to the building are locked. You must come to the front entry. All visitors will be asked to present a valid ID or driver’s License and sign in at the front desk.

Our school uses a system called Raptor. This technology gives us the ability to instantly screen all visitors and faculty to ensure that they are not on the registered sex-offenders list. The first time you enter the building, you will be asked to present your ID. Once you are in the system, we can print a photo visitors badge for you to wear while in the building. You will need to sign in and out each time you visit the school. If you are not wearing a visitor's badge, you will be escorted by one of our staff members to the reception desk to obtain one.

Any offenses involving drugs, alcohol, tobacco, fire-arms or gangs within 1,000 feet of the campus are punishable to the highest extent of the law.

## **Pesticide Treatments**

As part of our commitment to provide your child with a safe, pest-free learning environment, we may periodically apply pesticides to help manage insects, weeds or pathogens. Pesticide applications on Academy property are made only by trained and licensed technicians. Should you have questions about the Academy's pest management program or wish to be notified in advance of pesticide applications, you may contact our office at 903-583-5974.

## **Questions and Concerns**

We have an open door policy at Morning Star Academy, should you have any questions or concerns, please call, e-mail or simply drop by to visit with our administrative team. Should you need more time to address your concerns, contact our front office staff to schedule an appointment. Below is the contact information for our administrative team.

Brandy Burns  
Head of School  
[bburns@morningstarlions.org](mailto:bburns@morningstarlions.org)  
903-583-5974 ext. 106

## **Grievances**

Morning Star Academy is committed to helpful communication during the process of resolving concerns, complaints, or disputes with the school community. Prompt effective resolution of grievances in a Christ-like manner is central to this commitment. Grievances will be treated with seriousness and resolved in a timely and appropriate manner and decisions will be made with impartiality and due care. In the event a parent, student, volunteer, or staff member has a problem that is unresolved and would like to file a formal complaint on the basis of something believed to be wrong, unfair, misleading, unlawful, or of poor quality, the following guidelines should be observed:

- In accordance with the Matthew 18 Principle, concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level. Informal resolution is encouraged but does not extend any deadlines set forth in this policy, except by mutual written consent.

- All time limits shall be strictly followed unless modified by mutual written consent. If a complaint form or appeal notice is not timely filed, the complaint may be dismissed on written notice to the parent, student, volunteer, or staff member.
- The grievant may initiate the formal process described below by timely filing a written complaint.
- Even after initiating the formal complaint process, grievants are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. If a grievant's complaint is resolved, the grievant may withdraw a formal complaint at any time.
- Nothing in this policy shall be construed to create new or additional rights beyond those granted by law or Morning Star Academy, nor to require a full evidentiary hearing or "minitrial" at any level.
- Complaint forms may be filed by hand-delivery, electronic communication, including email and fax, or by U.S. mail. Hand-delivered filings shall be timely filed if received by the appropriate administrator or designee by the close of business on the deadline. Filings submitted by electronic communication shall be timely filed if they are received by close of business on the deadline, as indicated by the date/time shown on the electronic communication. Mail filings shall be timely filed if they are postmarked by U.S. mail on or before the deadline and received by the appropriate administrator or designee no more than three days after the deadline.
- Any conferences between the grievant and Morning Star Academy shall be scheduled at mutually agreeable times. If the grievant fails to appear at a scheduled conference, Morning Star Academy may proceed with the conference and issue a decision in the grievant's absence.

### **Level One**

The grievant should seek resolution, within a reasonable time, through private, direct, informal communication with the person who caused the problem or is involved in the conflict. Such communication should be in a positive and constructive manner. After the grievant has made every available effort to resolve the conflict in an informal manner, formal action may be taken.

### **Level Two**

If the complaint remains unresolved after Level One, the grievant shall, within ten (10) calendar days of the conference with the staff member in Level One, file a formal complaint form with the lowest level Morning Star Academy administrator with the authority to remedy the problem. If the only administrator with the authority to remedy the complaint is the Head of School, the grievant may begin at Level Three. The administrator shall investigate as necessary and make reasonable attempts to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable time. The administrator may set reasonable time limits for the conference. The administrator shall document and record the conference and attempt to aid in the resolution of the complaint.

Following the conference, the administrator shall review and consider the complaint and inform the grievant of his or her decision, in writing, within ten (10) calendar days via hand-delivery, electronic communication, including email and fax, or by U.S. mail. In reaching a decision, the

administrator may consider information provided at Level One and any other relevant documents or information the administrator believes will help resolve the complaint.

### **Level Three**

If the complaint remains unresolved after Level Two, the grievant shall, within ten (10) calendar days after the conference with the administrator in Level Two, file an appeal notice with the Head of School. After receiving notice, the Level One administrator shall prepare and forward a record of the Level Two complaint and conference to the Head of School. This record shall consist of:

- (1) The original complaint form and any attachments.
- (2) All other documents submitted by parent, student, volunteer, or staff member at Level Two
- (3) The written response issued at Level Two and any attachments.
- (4) All other documents relied upon by the Level Two administrator in reaching the Level Two decision.

The Head of School shall make reasonable attempts to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable time. The conference shall be limited to the issues and documents considered at Level Two. The Head of School may set reasonable time limits for the conference. The Head of School shall document and record the conference and attempt to aid in the resolution of the complaint. Following the conference, the Head of School shall review and consider the complaint and inform the grievant of his or her decision, in writing, within thirty (30) calendar days via hand-delivery, electronic communication, including email and fax, or by U.S. mail. In reaching decision, the Head of School may consider the Level Two record, information provided at the Level Three conference, and any other relevant documents or information the Head of School believes will help resolve the complaint. A copy of the written response will be retained in the appropriate student's or personnel member's file, as applicable.

### **Level Four**

In the event that the complaint is not resolved at Level Three, the grievant shall, within ten (10) calendar days after the Head of Schools written decision, file an appeal notice with the Chairman of the Board. The Head of School shall provide a record to the Chairman of the Board consisting of the Level Three record. The Level Three record shall include:

- (1) The Level Two record.
- (2) The notice of appeal from Level Two to Level Three.
- (3) The written response issued at Level Three and any attachments.
- (4) All other documents relied upon by the administration in reaching the Level Three decision.

The Chairman of the Board will consider actions to date, consult with others as required, and determine if any further investigation is necessary. A final decision will be communicated, in writing, by the Chairman of the Board within thirty (30) calendar days via hand-delivery, electronic communication, including email and fax, or by U.S. mail.

## Parental Code of Conduct

At Morning Star Academy we believe education is a partnership and a good working relationship with parents and guardians is essential to enabling us to equip children with the necessary skills they will need for life.

The purpose of our Parental Code of Conduct is to provide guidelines for the interactions between parents, guardians, and visitor to the Academy about their own expected conduct.

At MSA we expect parents, guardians, and visitors to...

- Be responsible for and in control of their own behavior at all times.
- Demonstrate that **ALL** members of the Academy should be treated with tolerance, respect, and kindness and therefore set a good example in their own speech and conduct.
- Model Christ-like character whenever on Academy premises or when communicating directly with Academy staff both on and off campus.
- Understand that Academy staff and parents need to work together for the benefit of **ALL**.
- Seek to clarify a child's version of events with Academy's view in order to bring about a peaceful solution to any issue.
- Correct own child's behavior.

In order to support a peaceful and safe environment the Academy will not tolerate parents, guardians, and visitors exhibiting the following:

- Disturbing Academy staff and trying to speak to them while they are supervising children.
- Breaching Academy security procedures (including but not limited to attempts to gain entry to any part of the Academy with disregard of procedures or without permission and appropriate supervision).
- Using loud or offensive language, swearing, cursing, using profane language or displaying temper.
- Threatening a member of the Academy staff, visitor, fellow parent, caregiver, or child regardless of whether or not the behavior constitutes a criminal offence.
- Damaging or destroying Academy property.
- Abusive, persistent, or threatening e-mails or text/voicemail/phone messages or other written communication.
- Inappropriate use of social media as detailed in the Academy's Social Media Policy
- Approaching someone else's child in order to discuss or chastise them because of the actions of this child towards their own child.
- Use of tobacco of any kind including vaping, smoking, and dipping while on school property.
- Consumption of alcohol or drugs while on school property.

Should any of the above behavior occur on Academy premises or at Academy sponsored events such as fundraisers and field trips, the Academy may feel it is necessary to contact the appropriate authorities and

if necessary even ban the offending adult from entering the Academy grounds. In addition, failure to uphold the parent code of conduct may result in the termination of a family's contract with the Academy.

## **Social Media Policy**

Morning Star Academy accepts that there are a number of benefits offered by a social media presence, to the Academy, its staff, parents and students. However, there are undoubtedly some risks associated, including cyber bullying, protecting confidentiality, and managing personal and Academy reputations. The aim of this policy is to clarify what the Academy believes is safe and appropriate use of social media by both parents and students.

### **Inappropriate Use of Social Media by Students, Staff, and Parents**

The Academy considers the following to be inappropriate uses of personal social media accounts. This list is not exhaustive:

- Making derogatory or defamatory comments about the Academy, its staff or students;
- Making complaints about the Academy, its staff, or students
- Making allegations about the Academy, its staff, or students
- Making offensive or negative comments about the Academy, its staff, or students;
- Posting pictures of children (other than your own) without parental permission;
- Posting discriminatory comments.

Should you have any complaints, allegations, or other concerns regarding the Academy, its staff or employees or its students, please follow the appropriate Academy grievance procedures before taking comments and concerns to social media.

Breaches of this Social Media Policy will be taken very seriously and dealt with appropriately by the Academy. Where there is a breach of this policy by a student, it will be dealt with under the Student Discipline and Anti-bullying Policies. Likewise a breach of this policy by a staff member will be dealt with under the Employee Confidentiality, Harassment and Discrimination, and Social Networking Policies. A breach by a parent will be dealt with as set forth within this policy. Where the conduct of a student or parent is considered illegal, the Academy shall report the matter to the police.

### **Inappropriate Comments on Social Media by Parents**

The Academy has in place a comprehensive Grievance Procedure for Parents, which sets forth guidelines regarding parents raising concerns and the manner in which the academy will handle these concerns. If a parent wishes to file a complaint, this is the procedure that should be followed. The Academy will not formally address complaints made in any other forum other than through the formal Grievance Procedure. If it comes to the Academy's attention that a parent has, knowingly or inadvertently, breached this Social Media Policy by posting on social media something the Academy considers to be inappropriate, the Academy will in the first instance discuss the matter with the parent in order to resolve the matter

informally. These discussions will normally result in the involved parent being required to remove the inappropriate post. If the parent refuses to do remove posts in breach of this policy, or continues to post in an inappropriate manner the Academy will consider taking further action, including:

- Providing formal written notice to the parent that their comment is inappropriate, providing a warning, and requesting that the comment be removed immediately;
- Contact the provider of any networking site to request removal of inappropriate comments; or
- Taking legal advice or legal action where the comments posted are defamatory. Further if the inappropriate comment has been made on the Academy's website or online forum, the Academy may take action to restrict or block the parent's access to that website or forum.

In cases of repeated or severe breaches of this Social Media Policy, the Academy has the right to consider the parent's actions as a breach of the contract between the Academy and the parents. At this point, the Academy may decide to either temporarily or permanently remove the student from the Academy.

### **Cyber-bullying**

All cases of cyber-bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the Academy's Anti-Bullying and Discipline Policies.

# Section IV: Emergency Plan

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It is the primary responsibility of all staff members to assist in moving children to designated safe areas or alternate shelters in the event of an emergency. The purpose of this plan is to ensure both staff and children are informed of how to respond in the event of fire, severe weather, medical emergencies, an intruder, or any other form of emergency.

In an effort to ensure the validity of this plan, the Board of Directors and school administration conduct an annual review of all procedures. In addition, the plan and any changes to the plan are shared with first responders, including the Bonham Police and Fire Departments for input and suggestions.

All staff members are informed of our emergency preparedness plan during orientation.

## Emergency Phone Numbers

School Phone Number: 903-583-5974

Bonham Police: 903-583-2741

Bonham Fire: 903-583-3731

Poison Control: 800-222-1222

Childcare Licensing Office: 214-583-4253

## Communication

In the event of an emergency, mass communication will occur via Parent Square. It is important for families to ensure MSA office staff have the most up-to-date contact information. In an emergency, your first instinct may be to rush up to the school to pick up your child, however, the very best action you can take is to stay close to your phone and watch for updates regarding reunification via Parent Square.

## Essential Documentation

Each teacher has an emergency evacuation bag located in his or her classroom next to the entrance. This bag contains a copy of the emergency preparedness plan, all emergency contact and medical authorizations for the children in their class simple first aid supplies, a flashlight, green and blue cards to be used for indicating if help is needed, and activities for passing time with children while waiting out the emergency. In addition, office staff has access to electronic emergency contact information and medical authorizations for all enrolled students.

## Drills

To ensure that staff and children are aware of emergency preparedness procedures, regular drills will be conducted. Documentation of these drills are located in the school office and will be conducted as follows:

Fire: Monthly

Severe Weather: Quarterly

Lockdown: Quarterly



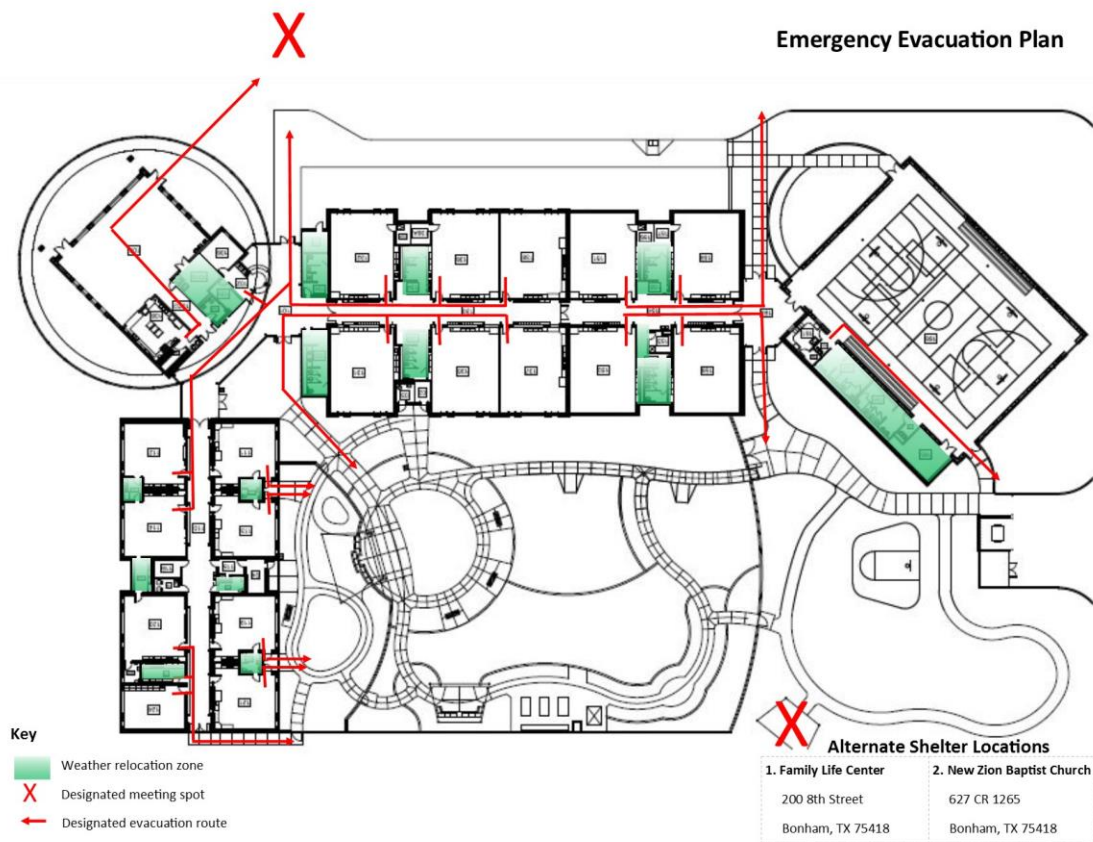
## Fire Evacuation Procedures

Students are to remain quiet and listen for their teacher or caregiver’s instructions. If in the classroom, teachers should take their emergency evacuation bag and proceed to the nearest exit as designated on the emergency evacuation diagram located near the entrance to the classroom. Each infant room is equipped with two evacuation cribs for use in exiting the building. Any staff members who are near the infant and toddler rooms and are not responsible for other children when the alarm sounds should assist in moving these children to safety.

Individuals exiting the north side of the building should stop on the north side of the fire lane. Those exiting the south side of the building should cross the parking lot and stop in the grass to the south of the parking lot. Students should face away from the building and remain silent. Teachers should use green and blue cards to indicate if all students are accounted for (Green = all students present, Blue = student(s) missing) so that missing students can be located. Office staff will take walkie-talkies so that communication can occur between the north and south sides of the building.

## Severe Weather Relocation Procedures

In the event of a severe weather warning, students will be relocated to areas of the building that are designed to withstand the greatest levels of wind strength. Each room has a map located next to the door indicating the nearest safe location. Teachers should proceed to these areas with their children in a safe and orderly fashion while remaining calm and reassuring children. Staff and children are to remain in these areas until administration announces “All Clear”.



## Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency, Academy staff will assess the situation, call 911, and administer first aid and CPR, as appropriate. Parents will be notified as soon as possible of the situation.

For the privacy of the injured party, an announcement will be made instructing teachers to keep students in their classrooms. Until instructed otherwise, teachers should allow students to leave the room only if escorted by an adult.

## Lock Down Procedures

In the event that administration feels that any person who has entered the building is a threat, an announcement will be made for teachers to “lock down” their classrooms. All staff are annually trained in emergency response procedures in the event of an intruder or medical emergency. Emergency responders will have a key to enter all safe locations. Staff are to remain with children until they are cleared by emergency response personnel only.

## Alternate Shelter

In the event that students and staff must move to an alternate location, the relocation site will be either the First United Methodist (“FUMC”) Family Life Center or New Zion Baptist Church. Children will be loaded into Academy buses first for transportation. Employees may be asked to use their personal vehicles to transport remaining children. Infants and toddlers under the age of two will be transported in personal vehicles. Students will be checked out of our care using KidCheck or a manual sign-out list.

### Option 1: Family Life Center

**Pastor:** Dana Coker

**Church Secretary:** Patty Felmet

**Address:** 200 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Bonham, TX 75418

**Office Phone:** 903-583-3314

**Parsonage Phone:** 903-583-5035

**Secretary’s Cell Phone:** 903-449-0074

### **Directions from the Academy to FUMC Family Life Center**

1. Start out going east on FM 898.
2. Take the 1<sup>st</sup> right onto TX-121.
3. Turn left onto W. 10<sup>th</sup> St.
4. Turn right onto Willow St.
5. Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> right onto W 8<sup>th</sup> St.
6. The Family Life Center is on the right across from the First United Methodist Church.

## Option 2: New Zion Baptist Church

**Pastor:** Rodney Sprayberry

**Youth Pastor:** Dax Brunner

**Address:** 627 CR 1265, Bonham, TX 75418

**Office Phone:** (903) 961-2027

**Pastor's Cell Phone:** (903) 718-1574

**Youth Pastor's Cell Phone:** (903)227-3196

### **Directions from the Academy to New Zion Baptist Church:**

1. Start out going west on FM 898.
2. Take a right on CR 1265 (*just past Diamond C Ranch*)
3. New Zion Baptist Church is on the left.

*Hint: If you make it to HWY 82, you have gone a little too far.*

## **Transportation Emergency**

In the event of a transportation emergency, drivers are to move the bus off the road as far away from traffic as possible. Children should never be left unattended and strangers should never be allowed to assist in vehicle maintenance or first aid for children.

If there are injuries as a result of an accident, 911 should be called immediately. Staff should insure that children are safe and calm and apply proper first aid, if needed. Staff should have the emergency binder with medical releases and emergency contact information ready and available for paramedics and first responders.

Staff should notify the Academy director as soon as possible of the nature of the emergency. If vehicle maintenance is needed, all children must be relocated to a safe waiting place. No maintenance may be done while children are loaded on the bus.

# Section V: Tuition, Fees and Discounts

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## Tuition

Tuition and fees are included in your annual enrollment packet. Parents will be required to sign a financial agreement upon enrollment, regarding tuition payment. All tuition payments are managed by FACTS Tuition Management. Families are required to set up an account with FACTS at the time of initial enrollment. More information about FACTS will be provided in your enrollment packet.

We have several different payment options available to meet the needs of families, which are outlined in the tuition agreement. If your child begins attending the academy after the start of the school year, arrangements will be made to pro-rate the missed time.

The Academy requires two weeks advance written notice if your child will be dropping from the infant and toddler program, transition program, or extended care program, otherwise you will be charged for the full month. This notice must be submitted to the Admissions Coordinator at the Academy. In order for the Academy to continue meeting our operating expenses, we must be assured, in advance, of required annual income from tuition. Students enrolled in our Pre-Kindergarten and Primary School Classes, per the Enrollment Agreement, are *enrolled for the entire school year*.

## Additional Fees

\$25 Application Fee	One-time fee due at time of initial application
\$20 to \$46 FACTS Tuition Management	This is an annual fee per family
\$50 Supply Fee (Transition and up)	Annual fee due by August 1 <sup>st</sup>
\$30 Late Fee	Assessed on all late payment plans and incidental billings
\$2 per minute late starting 5 minutes after the end of your child’s program	You will be asked to sign and acknowledge the time you picked your child up and will be billed for the late fee.

## Tuition Discounts

Tuition discounts apply to tuition only.

Family discount of 5% off lesser tuition when 2 siblings are enrolled; 10% off least tuition when three or more are enrolled.

25% Pastor (applies to first child only)

10% Local ISD employee

10% First Responders & Active Military

Tuition paid in full prior to August 1<sup>st</sup> will receive an additional 2% discount

## **Past Due Accounts**

It is very important to keep current with your child's tuition and fees. Tuition and fees are to be paid as agreed in the Enrollment Agreement, Childcare Service Agreement, or other activity fee document in strict compliance with the deadlines stated therein. If an account is delinquent by six days, the account is considered past due. Payment reminders will be sent home with students each week once an account becomes past due.

In the event that an account becomes 30 days past due, the family will be dismissed from the program unless prior arrangements for revising the payment schedule have been made. Further, grades, testing results, transcripts, report cards, etc., of the student shall not be released to the PARENT or any other party, including other schools and/or colleges, for any past due account, until such time as the tuition, fees and activity accounts are current or paid in full. This includes any account for which the remainder of tuition and fees for the current school year are required to be paid in full by the terms of the Agreement.

Families with past due balances will not be permitted to reenroll until their balance is brought current.

# Section VI: Infants, Toddlers and Transition

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## Philosophy

We believe a child's first relationships with adults play a vital role in their growth and development. Our Infant, Toddler, and Transition programs are designed around the latest early brain development research and focus on enhancing the simple joy of childhood while nurturing curiosity through exploration to evoke a sense of awe and wonder of our Creator.

The Infant, Toddler, and Transition curriculum is built on the following developmental domains:

**Language Development:** A language-rich environment essential for developing both receptive and expressive language skills. The program includes high-interest books, stories, songs, poems, and chant.

**Physical Development:** Fun physical challenges, action songs, and games build coordination, balance, and muscle strength.

**Cognitive Development:** Engaging activities support cause-and-effect relationships and problem solving to develop foundational academic skills in math and science and instill a lifelong love of learning.

**Social Emotional Development:** Confidence is built, impulse control is strengthened, and social skills are developed through trusting relationships with teachers and opportunities to interact on-on-one, with a partner, and in small-groups.

**Spiritual Development:** Opportunities to hear God's word, worship, and serve others provides a foundation for later spiritual growth.

## Diapers

Please be sure to maintain a regular supply of diapers, wipes, and creams (as necessary) in your child's basket. Please label all with your child's name. You must provide diaper rash creams if you wish for caregivers to use them. You may choose to send them as needed or leave one in their basket to be used throughout the year at the discretion of the caregiver.

If a child runs out of diapers, we will furnish diapers at the rate of \$1.00 per diaper. This charge will be added to your account.

## Pacifiers

When your child is promoted into the transition class, we ask that pacifiers be left at home, not only for sanitary reasons, but many educators believe pacifiers are a hindrance to language development.

## Feeding and Schedules

Since infants each have a unique rhythm, parents will need to submit feeding instructions until your child is ready for table food. Feeding instructions must be reviewed and updated once a month with caregivers. Once your child begins eating snacks and lunch provided by the school, this schedule will no longer be necessary.

If you are a nursing mother, you are welcome to nurse your baby throughout the day as your schedule allows. Each of our nurseries are equipped with many of the comforts of home including gliders, Boppy Pillows, and nursing covers.

The academy provides store brand milk based formula, however, you may choose to provide your own formula or breastmilk.

## **Safe Sleep**

Infants under the age of 12 months must sleep in a crib, free from any obstructions. No blankets, pillows or stuffed animals may be in their crib while sleeping. Infants who cannot independently roll over will be placed on their backs when sleeping as research indicates this is the safest position. Sleep positioners, wedges and other modifications to the crib are prohibited.

## **Daily Routines**

Daily routines include playtime, reading, singing, trips outside, and lots of cuddles and hugs. Toddlers and two-year-olds will be introduced to more organized small group activities such as art and dramatic play to encourage cooperation and imagination.

## **Clothing Requirements**

Young children should be dressed and ready to participate in the many experiences provided during the day. Comfortable, washable, play clothes are the most suitable. All children need to wear tennis shoes, tie shoes or Velcro shoes every day. Please, no boots or sandals as these may limit students' participation in outdoor and active play activities. A change of clothing is to be kept in your child's bag at all times in case of an accident or spill. Please mark all clothing, especially coats, sweaters, and hats with your child's name.

## **Toilet Training**

Potty training is an exciting time for you and your child. We have found throughout our experience, that if your child is ready to master potty training, it will only take a few weeks. If it takes longer, they may not be ready and we may want to try it again a little later. We want this to be a successful time in your child's life, not a frustrating one for all. We know that in order for this to be successful we need to partner together for your child's best interest.

The following are a few of the signs we see when your child may be ready to potty train:

- Shows an interest in the toilet
- Can recognize when their diaper is wet or soiled
- Stays dry for a long period of time
- Can undress and pull up his/her own pants
- Wants to be independent
- Can use consistent words and gestures to communicate
- Can try to wipe themselves

***Morning Stare Academy staff will agree to:***

- Encourage, support and praise all success that your child achieves during their potty-training experience.
- We will expect accidents and treat them as teachable moments. We will watch for and identify signals that may help us make it on time next time as well as encourage children to be independent in changing their own clothes.
- We will take children to the bathroom at regularly scheduled times during each day and on demand when necessary.
- Communicate to parents daily regarding our bathroom experiences. The communication will come in a way as a personal conversation or writing a note home.

***Parent's agree to:***

- Provide at least 3 changes of clothes, including pants, underwear, and socks **daily**. Please have an extra pair of shoes in their basket as well. Soiled clothing will go in the child's basket to be taken home.
- **Have their child wear elastic waist clothes.** No buttons, snaps, belts, or one piece clothing. Leggings, sweatpants and elastic waist pants are best. No dresses for girls, it's hard to coordinate holding up the dress and sitting on the toilet at the same time. The children should be able to easily pull up and down their own clothing.
- Potty training should begin at home the weekend before we start the process at school. We ask that underwear rather than pull-ups be worn, as pull ups don't let the child "feel" wet.
- Provide pull ups or diapers for naptime.

We will communicate with the family as to how potty training is going. We will potty train for a period of 3-4 weeks and then assess how the child is doing. If we are not feeling that the child is ready, we will put them back into diapers or pull ups and try again at a later date. If the child is ready, it should only take a few weeks.

## **Promotion**

We strive to provide continuity of care for infants aged 6 weeks to around 18 months. Each baby is assigned to a caregiver or team of caregivers depending on the length of time they are in care allowing babies to form a strong bond with their caregiver. This arrangement enables babies and toddlers to feel more confident and secure in their environment. Promotion to the toddler and transition classrooms is based on development rather than age. Readiness for promotion will be indicated by your child's physical development, daily rhythms, and feeding habits. Babies who are walking, weaned from a bottle, eating table food and taking one nap a day will be considered ready for the toddler program. Toddlers who are at least two-years-old and showing interest in potty training may be promoted to the transition program should a spot be available. Children who are three by August 15<sup>th</sup> and are fully potty trained and independent in the restroom will be considered ready for our PreK program.



## **Aggressive Behavior**

At Morning Star Academy, we recognize that aggressive behavior such as biting, hitting or kicking are, unfortunately, not unexpected when very young children are in group care. We are always upset when children are hurt by another child in our program, and we recognize how upsetting it is for parents. While we feel that aggressive behavior is never the right thing for toddlers to do, we know that they bite and hit for a variety of reasons including teething, limited language skills, and attention seeking. Our teachers are trained to deter aggressive behaviors and teach positive social interactions using a variety of strategies and techniques including, but not limited to:

- Providing lots of language such as “biting hurts, we use our teeth for food” or “hands are not for hitting, we use our hands to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- Providing teething toys and crunchy snacks for infants and toddlers who need something to chew on.
- Engaging students in hands-on lessons that promote healthy social behaviors such as Baby Doll Circle Time.
- Shadowing aggressive students so that he/she is always within arm’s reach of the teacher or aid.
- Removing the aggressive child from the situation and focusing on the victim. This may include placing the child in the classroom safe-place, another classroom, or the office for a brief period.

When we experience ongoing aggressive behavior in a toddler or transition room, we develop a plan of action with strategies, techniques, and timelines to work on the problem. Removing the child from the program is a last resort.

## **Milestones & Developmental Delays**

At Morning Star Academy we believe early intervention is key for later school success. Our goal is to come alongside parents and support them as they learn and grow. In our infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms, individual milestones are monitored during daily interactions and assessed a minimum of three times per year using the Frog Street Developmental Check List which is correlated to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. When a developmental delay is suspected, MSA staff work closely with parents to coordinate all necessary resources. Often this includes referring the child to Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI) for further assessment. More information regarding ECI Services can be found in our lobby as well as on their website (<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services>).

## **Technology Use in Transition Classrooms**

We recognize the critical roll technology plays in our world today. We want to come along side families in maximizing the benefits of educational technology and creating boundaries for promoting a healthy balance of technology consumption.

Any use of media or technology in the classroom must be previewed by the teacher and approved by the Child Care Director to ensure the use of media or technology is:

- age appropriate
- appropriate in length in respect to the attention span of the children
- enhances the effectiveness and values of the program
- serves as an occasional supplement to daily activities rather than a significant part
- promotes active engagement
- does not exceed one hour per day
- is not used during mealtimes, snack times, naptimes, or rest times

*With the exception of chapel participation which includes short engaging video clips, children under the age of two do not have access to screen time or other forms of passive media.*

# Section VII: Pre-Kindergarten & Primary School

## **PreK Philosophy**

Our PreK program is designed around the latest brain development research and current best practices in teaching and learning. Hands-on learning experiences focusing on beginning reading and math skills and exploration tap into God's unique design for little learners and provide a strong foundation for later academic success. Special attention is given to not only academic school readiness, but also a focus on creating a sense of awe and wonder in our creator and learning to live and love like Jesus.

The PreK curriculum is built on the following developmental domains:

**Language Development:** A language-rich environment is essential for developing both receptive and expressive language skills. The program includes high-interest books, stories, songs, poems, and chant.

**Physical Development:** Fun physical challenges, action songs, and games build coordination, balance, and muscle strength.

**Cognitive Development:** Engaging activities support cause-and-effect relationships, problem solving, and foundational academic skills in math, reading, and science and instill a lifelong love of learning.

**Social Emotional Development:** Confidence is built, impulse control is strengthened, and social skills are developed through trusting relationships with teachers and opportunities to interact on-on-one, with a partner, and in small-groups.

**Spiritual Development:** Opportunities to hear God's word, worship, and serve others provide a foundation for later spiritual growth.

## **Primary School Philosophy**

Our Primary School curriculum is built on the premise that each child is born with God given talents to be used for a very specific purpose for God's kingdom. Our job as educators and parents is to unleash those talents as they discover the path God has created for them. The curriculum is built on best practices and research-based techniques that include hands-on experiences and individualized learning pathways in the following core areas:

**Bible:** The fundamental purpose in life is to know and glorify God. The primary goal of Morning Star Academy is to aid students in developing a lifelong relation to God the Father, through His son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Since all truth is God's, it is imperative that students know truth. Furthermore, Morning Star Academy's aspiration is to facilitate students' growth in Biblical convictions and to establish them with a distinctively Christian worldview, so they can defend the truth of Christianity and impact the world around them. Bible instruction at school is an extension of the discipleship process begun at home and fostered in

the church. Therefore, courses are built upon the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things and the infallible and inerrant Word of God.

**Language Arts and Reading:** God is the author and creator of all language. Throughout time, God has chosen to communicate with His people, whom He loves, through His written word. Therefore, it is important for children to receive instruction in language arts and literacy, so they may comprehend, develop, and apply the necessary skills to express their own thoughts clearly and effectively while mastering grammatical concepts. Furthermore, as students develop their comprehension skills in reading, they will successfully analyze literature with a Biblical worldview in order to impact other cultures for Christ.

**Science:** The primary objective of science education is to pursue a greater awe and wonder of our Creator through a disciplined study of the created universe. Christian believers who study science recognize Christ's supremacy over his creation. Because science involves the study of God's wondrous creation, the discipline provides an infinite number of teachable moments to reinforce the character and nature of God. In addition, science involves a pursuit of knowledge through a disciplined approach called the scientific method. This approach is efficient and reliable, because it demands handling facts with integrity. Science instruction dedicated to the scientific method allows students to acknowledge the character qualities of truthfulness, honesty, and integrity. Students are challenged to obtain facts without bias, and to analyze and draw logical conclusions from the experimental data.

**Social Studies:** The primary objective of social studies education is to discover the significance of society and history within a Christian worldview, thereby helping children to understand the world by God's sovereign purpose over it. Part of this belief entails communicating God's revelation side by side with world events. History can and should provide instruction to enable students to make wise decisions today as they analyze the story of what man has done. Thus, students are taught who they are in light of who He is and what will be in light of what has been.

**Math:** Students are prompted to think in a systematic and orderly manner, which parallels with the beauty and order we see in God's creation. They are equipped with the skills necessary for as they become confident, independent learners, capable of critical thinking and problem solving. As students practice solving problems based on mathematical precepts, they are internalizing the process of living real life using God's absolute truth.

## **Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners**

At MSA, we believe each child has a unique educational pathway that includes both strengths and weaknesses. At the core of our program is the idea that learning should be tailored to meet the needs of each child. To create this unique pathway for learning, monitoring and assessment are part of our daily routine with children as we work with them in small groups and one-on-one. Data collected from multiple sources including informal observations, standardized assessments, and student portfolios provide staff with a means for creating a pathway of learning that is unique to your child.

In addition, to this ongoing progress monitoring, MSA works closely with the Fannin County Special Education Coop (FCSEC) and other contracted support specialists to provide diagnostic and support services. Should there be concerns from either a parent or a teacher with regard to learning differences that could be inhibiting a child's academic growth, MSA staff work closely with parents to coordinate necessary services. This can include providing information for parent contracted private providers such as physicians, psychologists, and counselors, as well as, engaging FCSEC to observe and/or evaluate students.

As part of our partnerships with FCSEC and other support specialists, qualifying students may receive the following services while a student at the Academy:

- Speech and Language Therapy
- Multisensory Teaching Approach for Dyslexia
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Individualized Education Plan

If you have concerns regarding your child's academic progress, we encourage you to voice your concerns with your child's teacher as soon as possible.

## **Technology Use in PreK & Primary School Classrooms**

Educational technology plays an important role as a tool for learning and instruction. Preparation for all of life includes skill development in the Christ-honoring use of technology. Technology resources are approved through a formal review process to ensure the requested resource aligns with the philosophy of Morning Star Academy. Our goal in integrating technology into the curriculum is to reinforce skills, provide avenues for differentiating learning, and promote creativity, collaboration, innovation, research skills, problem-solving, and digital citizenship.

Any use of passive media in the classroom must be previewed by the teacher and approved by the Elementary Principal to ensure the use of media is:

- age appropriate
- appropriate in length in respect to the attention span of the children
- enhances the effectiveness and values of the program
- serves as an occasional supplement to daily activities rather than a significant part
- promotes active engagement
- does not exceed one hour per day
- is not used during mealtimes, snack times, naptimes, or rest times

## **Dress Code**

One of the ideas we strive for as a Christian school is to promote Biblical standards of behavior and to reflect a positive image to those around us as representatives of Christ. Recognizing that the manner in which we dress often reflects our attitude as well as the way that others perceive us, the school has adopted certain guidelines regarding appropriate dress for students. The basis we have used to establish

these guidelines are Biblical principles of modesty and self-discipline, which are reflected by neatness and cleanliness.

Please recognize that the guidelines below are not exhaustive, nor do they address all possible combinations of dress.

The administration reserves the right to determine the acceptability of fashion trends and has the final judgment regarding what is modest and appropriate dress at school or at school functions.

In order to maintain a consistent appearance among our students based upon the above principles, the school has selected certain acceptable types of clothing. The clothing may be purchased through French Toast, Lands' End, JCPenney, Wal-Mart, Old Navy, Children's Place, Gymboree, or Target unless noted otherwise.

- Shirts—Short and long sleeve shirts must be navy, white, or light blue collared shirts. Shirts should be solid in color with the MSA logo on the left-hand side. If a long-sleeve undershirt is worn it must be solid navy, white, or light blue as well.
- Pants—Pants and shorts for all students and skirts, skorts, and capris for girls are to be khaki or navy. In addition, girls may wear blue gold plaid skirts from "French Toast."
- Shoes—Shoes with rubber soles are required. Examples include tennis shoes, Mary Jane style shoes, slip on shoes so long as they do not easily come off the foot. No open-toed shoes, sandals, clogs, mules, or flip-flops.
- Spirit Wear-- Students are permitted to wear denim capris, denim jeans, or denim shorts that comply with MSA uniform guidelines with MSA t-shirts or MSA apparel.
- Chapel Days—All students are required to wear the formal Chapel uniform on Chapel days.

### **Boys**

Navy polo with logo and khaki pants or shorts

### **Girls**

Navy polo shirt with logo and blue gold plaid two tab skooter (French Toast)

- Sunglasses, hats, caps, visors and bandanas on the head are not to be worn indoors.
- Hair must be kept neat, clean, and out of the child's face.
- Jewelry and hair accessories must not cause a distraction to the learning environment.
- Skirt, skort, and short length shall be no shorter than 4 inches above the floor when kneeling, and modesty shorts are to be worn underneath skirts at all times.

## **Attendance**

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day's learning on the previous day's, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student's mastery of the

instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences.

Make-up work will be given when your child returns to school. Your child will be given one day for each day missed to complete assignments. Because of the hands-on nature of our curriculum no make-up work will be sent home prior to planned absence.

### **Attendance for Credit or Final Grade (Primary School Only)**

To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit or a final grade lost because of absences.

All absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- If makeup work is completed, absences, for the reasons listed below as Excused, will be considered extenuating circumstances for purposes of attendance for credit or the award of a final grade.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will review absences incurred based on the student's participation in board-approved extracurricular activities. These absences will be considered by the attendance committee as extenuating circumstances if the student made up the work missed in each class.
- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit or a final grade.

### **Official Attendance-Taking Time (Primary School Only)**

Official attendance is taken every day at 10:00 AM, which is during the second instructional hour. A student absent for any portion of the day, including at the official attendance-taking time, should follow the procedures below to provide documentation of the absence:

### **Documentation after an Absence (Primary School Only)**

When a student is absent from school, the student—upon arrival or return to school—must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with

the parent's permission, will not be accepted. A phone call from the parent may be accepted, but the district reserves the right to require a written note. Office staff will document in its attendance records for the student whether the absence is considered by the Academy to be excused or unexcused.

### **Doctor's Note after an Absence for Illness (Primary School Only)**

Upon returning to school, a student absent for more than 3 consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's extended absence from school. Otherwise, the student's absence may be considered unexcused.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the Head of School may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's absence from school in order to determine whether the absence or absences will be excused or unexcused.

### **Excused Absences (Primary School Only)**

All absences are unexcused until a note signed by the parent/guardian is brought to school or an email is sent directly to [office@morningstarlions.org](mailto:office@morningstarlions.org). If the note is not brought within one week, the absence will remain unexcused. The district accepts the following reasons for excusing students from school:

1. Illness of the student with a parent or doctor's note should be brought within five days of the absence or will be counted as unexcused
2. Medical or Dental appointments. Sickness or death in the family.
3. Educational reasons approved by the School Board.
4. Observance of a religious holy day including travel. Clergy documentation is required.
5. Any extenuating circumstances excused by the Head of School.

Absences that do not fall within these guidelines may be marked unexcused. Checking students out of school early to attend dance classes, extracurricular lessons, club sport practices, etc. will count against perfect attendance.

Dental and medical appointments should be made after school hours, if at all possible. The Academy's students are urged to reserve vacation trips for the designated holidays. An absence for a vacation will be considered unexcused.

Academy administration will accept written excuses from parents not to exceed a total of five days within the school year. One note equals one day, but you do not need to send separate notes for each day of a consecutive absence. For example, a four-day illness without a medical note will be considered as four parent excused absences, but only one note needs to be sent in. After the five accepted written excuses, students will begin accumulating "excessive absences" and a parent note will no longer be accepted for consideration as an excused absence. Absences that do not fall within these guidelines will be marked unexcused. A student is not automatically excused just because a parent writes a note for an absence.



## **Promotion**

It is our belief that a strong foundation in basic academic and social skills is necessary for later school success. For this reason, promotion will be based on the child's attendance, academic performance, and social emotional development.

## **Records Requests**

Morning Start Academy is committed to ensuring the privacy of our students. As such requests for student records are limited to receiving schools and parents.

Requests for education records should be directed to the Admissions Department. If your child needs records sent to another school, the school requesting records should fax or mail a request to the attention of the Admissions Department. The office will make a copy of the student's records and send it directly to the receiving school. The Academy will not forward records for students who withdraw with an outstanding balance.

Parents may request records for their child(ren) by contacting the Admissions Department. A cost of ten cents (\$0.10) per page will be assessed prior to pick up or delivery of the records. If a Parent would like any records mailed, the cost for postage will also be assessed prior to mailing. Office staff will contact the Parent with the total cost for the records, Parents may pay over the phone or in person via FACTS.

Please note records will only be released to receiving schools, parents/legal guardians, and as required by law. Nothing in this provision shall be interpreted to obligate Morning Star Academy to respond to any other requests for records.

## **Classroom Schedules**

Your child's teacher will provide you with a daily schedule during orientation. You may also find this schedule on your child's class page on our website and posted by the classroom door.

## **Bullying**

Bullying is defined as a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that:

- (1) Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property;
- (2) Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student;
- (3) Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or school; or
- (4) Infringes on the rights of the victim at school.

Bullying includes cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined as bullying that is done through the use of any electronic communication device, including through the use of a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an Internet website, or any other Internet-based communication tool.

Bullying is prohibited by the Academy and includes, but is not limited to, hazing, threats, taunting, teasing, confinement, assault, demands for money, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, name-calling, rumor-spreading, or ostracism.

If a student believes that he or she has experienced bullying or has witnessed bullying of another student, it is important for the student or parent to notify a teacher, administrator or another Academy employee as soon as possible to obtain assistance and intervention. A report may be made orally or in writing. The Head of School or designee should reduce any oral reports to written form. The administration will promptly investigate any allegations of bullying or other related misconduct. The Academy will also provide notice to the parent of the alleged victim and the parent of the student alleged to have engaged in bullying.

A student who intentionally makes a false claim, offers false statements, or refuses to cooperate with an Academy investigation regarding bullying shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying has occurred, the Academy will promptly notify the parents of the victim and of the student who engaged in bullying. The administration will take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action reasonably calculated to address the behavior. Correction actions may include, but are not limited to, a training program for the individuals involved in the report, a comprehensive education program for the school community, follow-up inquiries to determine whether any new incidents or any instances of retaliation have occurred, involving parents and students in efforts to identify problems and improve the school climate, increasing staff monitoring of areas where bullying has occurred, and reaffirming the Academy's policy against bullying. The administration may notify law enforcement in certain circumstances. Disciplinary or other action may be taken even if the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying. Available counseling options will be provided to these individuals, as well as to any students who have been identified as witnesses to the bullying. A student who is a victim of bullying and who used reasonable self-defense in response to the bullying will not be subject to disciplinary action.

Any retaliation against a student who reports an incident of bullying is prohibited. Upon the recommendation of the administration, the board may, in response to an identified case of bullying, decide to expel a student found to have engaged in bullying.

# Section VIII: Extended Care & Summer Care

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## Philosophy

Our extended care program is designed to meet the unique needs of families who are in need of childcare that extends beyond the regular school day and calendar. Our focus is on providing children with a positive environment where they can extend their learning, relax, play, socialize, and grow in their relationship with others and the Lord. Our extended care staff members are chosen to serve as Christian role models for each of the children in our care.

## Extended Care

Before school, children are provided with quiet play activities that may include reading, puzzles, coloring, and listening to music. After school, children are provided with time to play outside, quiet playtime, reading time, and time to complete homework.

## Holiday & Summer Care

Activities will include opportunities for academic enrichment, character development, worship time, splash days, and special activities. A schedule of daily and special activities will be provided at the beginning of each summer.

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