

Johnson County
Head Start/Pre K
Handbook, Resource Guide
& Important Milestones for 3 & 4 Year Olds
2026-2027



Johnson County Head Start/Pre K Office
211 North Church Street
Mountain City, TN 37683
(423) 727 - 2640

Dear Parent,

Welcome to our Head Start/Pre-K program! We are excited to begin this school year with you and your child. We know this is an exciting time, and we are honored to be a part of your child's early learning journey.

Johnson County Schools employs dedicated teachers and assistants who are highly trained in early childhood education. Our classrooms are warm, safe, and welcoming environments where children can learn, explore, and grow. Through developmentally appropriate, hands-on learning experiences, we strive to help every child reach their full potential.

While we are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience, we know that parents and families are a child's first and most important teachers. Your involvement plays a vital role in your child's success. We encourage you to participate in school activities, attend meetings, ask questions, and volunteer whenever possible.

Head Start/Pre-K staff and families work together as partners to support children's growth and development. We are committed to providing comprehensive services in the areas of education, health, nutrition, mental health, social-emotional development, family engagement, and special needs support.

We are delighted to welcome you to the Johnson County Head Start/Pre-K family and look forward to making this a wonderful year for you and your child. We hope this handbook helps answer many of your questions. If you need additional information or assistance at any time, please contact your child's teacher, school principal, or the Head Start/Pre-K Director.

Be sure to follow our Facebook page, Johnson County Schools Head Start/Pre-K, to see updates and photos of the exciting learning activities taking place throughout the year.

Together, we can make this a successful school year for every child!

Sincerely,

Nikki Porter, Johnson County Head Start/ Pre K Director

Parent Information

Attendance

Regular attendance is important for your child's success in Head Start/Pre-K. We encourage all children to attend school every day unless they are ill.

Please help us by:

- Letting your child's teacher know in advance if your child will be absent.
- Sending a parent note, doctor's note, or other documentation when your child misses school.
- Understanding that excessive absences without a valid reason may result in your child being withdrawn from the program.

If Your Child Is Sick

If your child is sick and will not be attending school, please call or message the classroom teacher before 9:00 a.m.

If your child is sent home with a fever, they must remain home until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, unless a doctor's note states otherwise.

For additional illness and exclusion guidelines, please refer to the Health Policy located in the back of this handbook.



Authorization for Pick-Up and Arrival/Pick-Up Procedures

Your child's safety is our top priority. To ensure every child is released only to authorized individuals, please follow the procedures below:

Authorized Pick-Up Persons

- Upon enrollment, parents or legal guardians must complete an authorization form listing the individuals who may pick up their child.

- If staff members are unfamiliar with the person picking up your child, a valid photo ID will be required. The name on the identification must match the name listed on the authorization form.
- Children will not be released to individuals who are not listed as authorized pick-up persons.
- Parents or legal guardians may add or remove authorized individuals at any time by notifying the program and updating the authorization form.
- In cases of shared custody, each parent may maintain a separate authorized pick-up list for their custodial days, as permitted by legal documentation on file.

Arrival and Pick-Up Procedures

Your child's teacher will provide arrival and dismissal times during Open House. Regular attendance and punctuality help children benefit from all learning opportunities.

- Children must be signed in and out of the classroom each day by an authorized adult.
- If you arrive after the scheduled start time, you must sign your child in with the classroom teacher or assistant.
- If you need to pick up your child before dismissal time, you must sign your child out with the classroom teacher or assistant.
- Only individuals approved by the parent or legal guardian may pick up a child.
- In the event of an emergency, if a parent or authorized emergency contact is unable to pick up the child, the parent must notify the classroom teacher. Any alternate individual picking up the child must present a valid photo ID.
- For the safety of all children, no child will be released to anyone under 16 years of age.

We appreciate your cooperation in helping us maintain a safe and secure environment for all children.

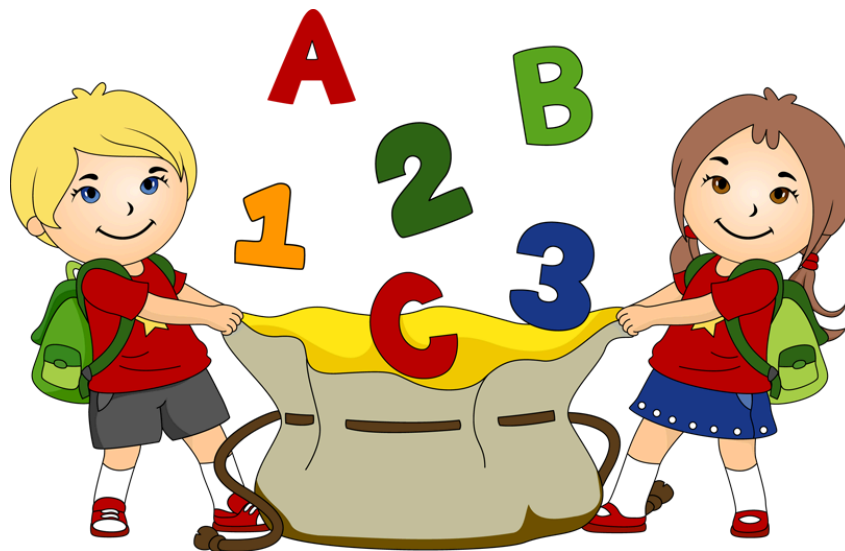
[Education and Early Childhood Development Services](#)

Our staff works closely with all program areas to support the development of the whole child. Families play a vital role in their child's education, and parent involvement is one of the most important factors in a child's success.

Head Start/Pre-K is committed to providing a high-quality learning environment where children can grow, learn, and thrive. Staff regularly assess children's development and use that information to plan meaningful, age-appropriate learning experiences that meet each child's individual needs.

We define school readiness as having the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for success in school and throughout life. Our program focuses on whole child development. These areas work together to help children develop the skills needed for success in kindergarten and beyond.

- Social and Emotional Development – refers to skills necessary to foster secure attachments with adults, maintain healthy relationships, regulate behavior and emotions, and develop healthy self-concepts.
- Approaches to Learning – refers to observable behaviors that indicate the way children become engaged in social interactions and learning experiences and the ability to stay focused, interested, and engaged in activities.
- Language and Literacy – refers to emerging abilities in receptive and expressive language; knowledge and skills that lay the foundation for reading and writing, such as basic concepts and found in books and other printed materials, alphabet, and letter-sound relationships. The domain of English Language Development refers to the development of receptive and expressive English for children whose home language is one other than English. This domain is incorporated into Language and Literacy.
- Cognition and General Knowledge – refers to logic and reasoning, science, mathematics and social studies knowledge and skills.



Measuring Growth and Development and Health Services

A complete physical examination and up-to-date immunization record, or religious exemption, is required before children can start school. We partner with the Johnson

County Health Department and ETSU to complete screenings under the supervision of the Johnson County Schools Health Services Coordinator.

Within the first 30–45 days of program enrollment, development and health screenings, as well as assessments, will be conducted. The information gathered from these screenings and assessments assists us in determining your child's specific needs and helps the teachers determine the developmental milestones that a child has achieved and which milestones he/she is ready to learn. The following are a list of screenings and assessments we conduct:

- Vision
- Hearing
- Speech –
- Dental – the Dentist from the Health Department will perform a dental exam on each child (this is to check to see if further treatment is necessary)
- Lead – students should have received a Lead screening from their doctor; this usually occurs around the age of 2.
- Developmental Screenings and assessments – teachers will perform these

Parents will receive a copy of their child's developmental screenings, and a staff member will contact you if further screenings or referrals are necessary.



Head Start/Pre-K Welcomes Children of All Abilities

Head Start/Pre-K is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment where all children can learn, grow, and succeed together. Children with disabilities participate fully in classroom activities alongside their peers and receive support based on their individual needs.

- Children with disabilities learn and play alongside all children in the program.
- At least 10% of enrollment opportunities are reserved for children with disabilities, as required by Head Start regulations.
- We assist families in accessing services and resources that support their child's development.
- We collaborate with agencies and service providers that are currently working with your child to ensure continuity of care and support.

If your child has a diagnosed disability, developmental delay, or receives special services, please inform your Family Services Worker. Our Disabilities Services team will work with you to develop a plan to meet your child's needs.

We can make appropriate accommodations to teaching materials, classroom environments, and equipment to ensure every child has the opportunity to participate fully and have a positive learning experience.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's development, please speak with your child's teacher. .

For additional information regarding special education services, please contact Johnson County Special Education at the Central Office at (423) 727-2640.

Nutrition

- Head Start/Pre K provides nutritious meals and snacks. Therefore, we request that you not send meals and snacks to school.
- Please bring your child on time and ready to eat, so that he/she may enjoy the meal with classmates.
- If your child has food allergies or special dietary needs, please bring a note from your doctor, and these needs will be met according to the school/center policy.
- Please realize that we CANNOT change your child's menu without a doctor's note.

Nutrition Education:

- Nutrition classes are offered to parents to encourage healthy eating habits for themselves and their families.
- Your child is also involved in classroom experiences that teach general nutrition principles appropriate for their age.

If you have any nutrition concerns, please let your child's teacher know. You know your child best, and we want to work together to ensure your child has a healthy and successful school year.



What Children Learn From the Environment?

Children learn from the environment in which they are. The classroom and outdoor areas are important to our early childhood curriculum. We plan these areas very carefully to enhance children's learning.

- We create distinct interest areas – blocks, housekeeping, science, music, art, library, and table toys to provide children with clear choices.
- We select a variety of learning materials for each area in keeping with curriculum goals, so regardless of the choice's children make, they are learning.
- We try to keep shelves neat, labeled, and uncluttered so children make appropriate choices and participate, and the area tidy.
- Materials are grouped to teach children sorting, classification, and other skills that develop early math, reading, and higher-order thinking skills.

Home Visits and Parent/Teacher Conferences

Head Start requires that we make every effort to meet families in their homes twice a year. The first initial visit is so we can get to know your child in their environment and go over any paperwork as well as answer any questions you may have. We are here to support you in the best way we can. The last visit is to go over your child's progress throughout the year and let you know if your child needs any updates to their file before the coming school year. This allows for a seamless transition into the new school year.

Teachers are required to conduct 2 parent/teacher conferences each year. Your teacher will schedule a time for you to come in and meet with her and discuss your child's education and goals. Parents are expected to participate in both conferences.



Dressing your Child for Center Activities

Your child should wear comfortable clothing suitable for indoor and outdoor play. They are encouraged to help themselves as much as possible; therefore, clothing should be easy to put on and take off. Clothing worn to school will get dirty as children participate in activities of the day, and should be easily washable. Each child should have a change of clothing (underwear, shirt, pants and socks) at the center to be used for emergencies. All clothing should be marked with the child's name.

Volunteering in the Classroom

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom. Your involvement can make a big difference for your child, your child's school, and your community. Younger children are not allowed in the classroom due to Day Care Licensing Guidelines.

Appropriate activities that a Volunteer may perform include, but are not limited to:

- Listening, reading, singing, or playing games
- Supporting and participating in lessons or long-term projects
- Assisting the teachers in carrying out or preparing for lessons
- Sitting and eating the meal served with children during mealtime
- Preparing activities for the teacher
- Working with a small group during group time

Weather and School Changes

We follow the Johnson County School District policy regarding closings and delays. At the beginning of the school year, your number will be added to a callout list. Callouts can be for multiple things, such as your child's school and district announcements. One thing that is very important for call-outs is that we have your correct telephone number. When school is closed, on a delay, or letting out early, there is a district call-out to notify every parent. If we do not have your correct phone number, you will not receive these calls. Head Start and PreK typically dismiss 30 minutes for the stated time.

Personal Safety Curriculum

The Department of Human Services requires programs serving children ages 3 and up to implement a personal safety curriculum. Our Program implements "Second Step Child Protection." The lessons include the following:

- Fire Safety
- Gun Safety
- Ways to Stay Safe
- Always Ask First
- Touching Safety
- Never Keep Secrets
- Reviewing Safety Skills

Parents are welcome to review the curriculum, observe its implementation in the classroom, and must provide written permission for their children to participate.

Classroom Behavior

Our program operates with the mindset that all children can learn, and when taught problem-solving strategies, should be able to use these skills to resolve conflict. Our teachers and staff use redirection and modeling to teach children how to get along with their peers. However, there can be times when a child's behavior becomes severe enough that teachers and staff must take action to keep all children safe. All reasonable efforts will be made to assist the child to regain control in a timely manner. However, if a behavior becomes violent and/or unsafe, families may be asked to come pick up their child for the remainder of the day. See Behavior Policy at the back of the book.

Corporal Punishment

The use of corporal punishment and/or total isolation of a child is strictly prohibited in Head Start/Pre K. Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force as a form of discipline. This includes spanking, slapping, pinching, jerking, pulling hair, etc. Isolation refers to separating the child from normal association with classroom activities. Isolation in which the child is left totally unattended is unacceptable. Using the deprivation of meals is also forbidden. The use of verbal abuse is also not allowed, this includes yelling, embarrassing or talking down to a child in any way. This is a form of emotional abuse and will not be tolerated.

At no time will a parent or any other person ever hit, slap, jerk, shake or yell at a child on school property. All adults must follow the corporal punishment rules and the child abuse law. If any Head Start/Pre K personnel observes any abuse, he or she will report it to the child abuse investigator immediately.

According to public Law 93-247, which is the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Treatment Act, it is the responsibility, by law, of the Head Start/Pre K personnel to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Head Start/Pre K will maintain the confidentiality of records concerning child abuse and neglect.

Transition

Transition involves children moving from one program to another, such as Head Start/Pre K to Kindergarten. We strive to make transitions as smooth and seamless as possible. Parents are vital to this process and are encouraged to participate in all transition activities. Staff will provide information and resources to help parents and children adjust to the new environment. Children entering kindergarten will be provided with at-home activities at the end-of-year Transition Meeting. During this time, a kindergarten teacher will meet with parents and discuss what to expect in kindergarten. Staff and parents should work together throughout the year to insure smooth transitions.

Additional Information

Johnson County Head Start is a delegate agency of Upper East Tennessee Human Development Agency, UETHDA. UETHDA is required to monitor all records for compliance with Federal Regulations. Johnson County Head Start utilizes the approved Child Plus database to store and document application, enrollment information and attendance for federal reporting purposes. Johnson County Head Start is also required to follow all federal, state, and district policies.

We look forward to meeting your child and family! As always, when we work together, we can expect a successful year. We want to make this year the best it can be for you and your child.

As the Head Start/Pre K Director, please know that I am available to help in any way I can. Please feel free to call our office at (423) 727-2640, or email me at ncampbell@jocoed.net.



Johnson County Head Start / Pre-K Handbook

I agree have received an electronic copy of the Johnson County Head Start / Pre-k handbook and I understand that I can request a hard copy at any time.

To be signed electronically at first family visit

Parent / Guardian Signature: _____