



FIRST IMPRESSIONS ACADEMY
POLICY HANDBOOK
2023/24

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Values, Vision and Mission

Welcome to FIA! Since as far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a teacher. My career took me to various schools and gave me the opportunity to teach a variety of grades and academic levels. Although teaching was amazing, the settings and lack of imperative core values were missing. I was not willing to give up on my dream; however, I refused to be a part of something that was broken. I had a vision and I made it my mission to create a school that encompassed all of the components that make learning and teaching successful.

First Impressions Academy combines small class sizes along with experienced, degreed educators that have a talent for teaching and a passion for education. We use differentiated instruction to guarantee that each child is being taught at their level. A well thought out structured learning environment has been constructed to invite students to learn at their own pace. Goals and objectives are tiered; and we use an assortment of curriculum to ensure progress in each subject area. Arrays of assessments are implemented to measure growth daily. The FIA staff takes pride in our parent communication and collaboration; we promote participation and value the educational partnership that is shared while your child attends FIA.

At First Impressions Academy we feel that preparing your child academically is simply part of our mission. Our caring teachers and staff focus on teaching the entire child. We do this by instilling confidence in our students and building on their strengths. The family environment that FIA creates gives the children a sense of comfort and security. We want our students to have a positive image of school, and view education as a success in their lives. Good character traits are practiced and instilled; and our zero-tolerance policy makes for a peaceful and happy educational experience. We strive to ensure that every child reaches their highest potential!

Hours of Service

Preschool hours:	8:00 am-11:30 am or 12:00 pm-3:30 pm.
Preschool before care:	7:00 am-8:00 am or 7:30 am-8:00 am
Preschool full day hours:	7:30 am- 5:30pm or 7:00am-6:00pm
K-5 th Grades-School hours:	8:30 am-2:15 pm
Middle School Hours:	8:20 am- 3:00 pm
Grade school before care:	7:30am-8:30am or 7:00 am- 8:30 am
Grade school full day:	7:30 am-5:30 pm or 7:00 am-6:00 pm

A late pickup fee of \$1.00 per minute per child will be charged after the first five minutes your child is scheduled to be picked up. Please try to respect pick up and drop off times as we try to always open our doors on time.

Preschool teachers teach two classes per day, and their lunch breaks fall between classes.

To assist us in making our day run smoothly, we ask that you do not ask questions pertaining to your child during this time. Please schedule appointments to meet with teachers about your child's progress in school.

Grade School Attendance Policy

As the owner and Director of FIA, attendance is important to me for many reasons. First and foremost being in school is where the learning takes place. In addition, as the owner and founder of a school I love dearly, I do not want to find my doors closing or state investigations taking place due to the fact that I allow non excused absences without good reason.

As a reminder the children are allowed 10 unexcused absences for the entire school year.

- After 3 absences, a letter will be mailed home advising you of the dates of the absences. The policy concerning attendance will be added as a reminder to keep track of future absences and to send in any doctor's notes to change the status of the unexcused absences.
- After 6 absences, a notice will be sent home stating your child's absence and the dates, at this time we may also set up a date to meet to discuss a plan to try and avoid any further unexcused absences.
- After 10 absences a notice will be sent home as well as a request for a second meeting. We will talk about the reasons for absences; if I find that the absences are unknown, unexcused, or a continuation of the same issues that we have discussed in the prior meeting, a letter will be sent to the magistrate's office; we both will have to meet with the judge and a warrant may be issued for your arrest.

Again, due to this being a huge issue and me not wanting FIA to be under investigation for such a simple situation, I am strictly abiding by the state law. This has nothing to do with your child's teacher, therefore if you have a concern please email or make an appointment to speak with Ms. Foerster, our school attendance coordinator at mrsbritt.fia@gmail.com.

The State has an "understanding" with the military that when a parent comes home or is leaving for overseas, we allow 1 excused absence prior to and 1 excused absence after a deployment; you are allowed 10 absences over R&R; however, you cannot go over 10 total. Again, this is not when there is a four day, nor does it apply to any other family member other than a parent.

FIA no longer accepts educational absences as excused absences. We work very hard as teachers to meet and exceed the age-appropriate academic standards in the classroom. It is not possible for a student to meet the same standards and the same amount of material that is covered in the classroom in one day.

**After 20 days of absences, both excused and unexcused, your student will be up for retention of that grade level.

The following are examples of excused and unexcused absences:

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

- Unknown
- Sick without a note
- Vacations
- Car Troubles

EXCUSED

- Sick with physicians note.
- Medically fragile students with follow up appointments.
- Doctor appointments (dentist, shots, etc.) with note
- Military parent is leaving or coming home from deployment.
- Death of immediate family member (2)
- Sent home sick by school administration.

Withdrawal & Change of Schedule

PRESCHOOL

When you register, you are registering for a year-round school with traditional holidays. If your child is in the *Preschool class or Kindergarten Prep class*, please note that you may withdraw from school before April 1st with two weeks written notice; you may take your child out sooner, however tuition is still due for the two weeks. After April 1st there will be a 500.00 early termination fee (April through July). If you would like to modify your schedule, please understand that it can only be done at the time of request, if there is space available. This process may take a while; if in this time you would like to withdraw your child until your desired slot opens up, two weeks' notice will need to be given in writing. Please keep in mind that this change may take months before it can go into effect. If you plan to leave after April, you have two options. You may pay the early termination fee or pay out the rest of the year based on the schedule that your child is registered for (whichever is less).

GRADE SCHOOL

When you register for grade school, the registration and curriculum fees are nonrefundable or transferrable for any reason. If you withdraw for any reason before school begins after June 1st, you are responsible for September's tuition of \$650.

Once you begin the school year, your slot has been designated to your child. We stick to

a strict ratio of 12 students to a class in K-4th and 15 students in 5th-8th. If you choose to withdraw at any point in the year, no matter the reason, you are responsible for paying out the remaining school year's tuition. If you were registered on a 12-month basis, you will have to pay out the remaining year as well as the difference in the previous month's tuition that you have already used. For example: The 12-month plan is \$541.67 each month and the 10-month plan is \$650 monthly (K-5th) You would owe the \$108.33 for each month that your child attended FIA.

Behavior Expectations

FIA's educational goals are most successfully attained in a structured and safe environment –In which no student is allowed to disrupt the learning process of others. FIA expects students to develop and use self-control and personal responsibility as a core character value. The following is a list of some of the *most important* rules for students and families at FIA. It is by no means a comprehensive list.

General School Rules

- Respect others and their property.
- No bullying or any form of intimidation.
- No weapons, tobacco, alcohol, or drugs on school property.
- No chewing gum in school buildings.
- Be punctual to class and school activities.
- No fighting or threatening to fight.
- Use no obscene or profane language.
- No inappropriate touching of self or others
- Respect school property and grounds.
- **Students may not bring electronic gadgets, games, smart watches or mobile phones to school.** If such items are brought to school, they will be confiscated and held for a parent to collect. Exceptions for phones include students with identified medical conditions that warrant emergency use.
- Students may only enter offices, teacher workrooms, closets and teacher's lounge with permission from school employees.
- No cheating or plagiarizing.
- Be prepared for class and actively participate.
- Abide by the school dress code policy.
- No smoking on school property at any time to include in your vehicle on property.

Parents are expected to use decorum and courtesy when on school property. They will address all employees, other parents and all students with reserve and in a polite and professional manner. Raised voices, threats, interference with instruction or school activities will warrant removal from the school property by civil authorities. Severe problematic behavior incidents will result in restrictions from school property and possible expulsion of entire family. We ask that if there is any issue that you feel needs to be addressed, please bring it to our staff and/ or administration. Do not in any case complain to other parents without registering necessary complaints with the teacher or administration

following the principle of good character. We expect your full cooperation to keep doctrinal controversy out of the school and ask you to support the school with a positive attitude.

Field Trips

Field trips vary by grade level based on the goals and objectives for each level. Preschool students are not transported and will have field trips offered on school premises. Grades K-8th grade will attend a minimum of two field trips outside of the school each year. Due to FIA's inability to provide transportation we ask that parents/or chaperones attend with them. The sole purpose is to transport students safely to these educational experiences. Because field trips are considered an academic day of school, we ask that siblings do not attend. **No sibling over the age of 1 or that is a walker (whichever comes first) may attend due to the distraction to our students and the content of the field trip.** We ask that parents arrange for their student to have a chaperone transport them for each field trip if they are unable to attend. If a parent chooses to drop off the student, please ensure that the teacher is made aware that they are fully responsible for the child during the event. Any chaperone that attends with a student is knowingly responsible for the well being of that student for the duration of the field trip.

Health Policy

Preventing the spread of disease begins with careful observation. If your child exhibits any of the following symptoms, please follow these instructions:

If your child's temperature is above 100.4 orally or 99.4 under the arm, the child should stay home until they are fever-free for 24 hours without medication. Alternatively, a doctor may provide a note stating the child is not contagious and may return to the center.

If the child's temperature is 99.0-99.8 degrees with any of the symptoms listed below, or if any of the symptoms marked with a (*) are present, the child should stay home.

- o *Diarrhea, defined as two or more loose, watery bowel movements within a one-hour period.
- o *Reddened eyes with a discharge or crusted eyelids (requires doctor's note to return)
- o *Nausea and/or vomiting.
- o *Rashes in any form on the face or abdomen
- o Earache (sometimes indicated by the child rubbing or pulling at the ear)
- o Sore and reddened throat, possibly with a raspy cry, other problems required the child to stay home may include:
- o Lice – A small, gray/white insect on the scalp. Usually accompanied by eggs attached in groups. Child may return as soon as treatment has begun.

- o Scabies – A mite living under the skin surface, appearing as small red dots, usually between the fingers and causing intense itching. Child may return as soon as treatment has begun.
- o Ringworm – A fungus of the scalp or body causing intense itching. Must remain covered after treatment has begun. If on the scalp, child should stay home until treatment has begun.
- o Impetigo – A single or cluster of small blisters that will break or drain and become crusted. Child should stay home until treatment has begun.

Tuition policy

Tuition is due on the first of the month for K-8th or the first class that the child is scheduled to attend in a new month for all preschool students. Each day that tuition is late a 5.00 fee will accrue (this includes weekends). A 30.00 fee will be charged for any funds that are returned.

Preschool: You are responsible for tuition when your child is absent, and we are open. This is for any reason including illness, vacations etc. You are also responsible for tuition involving inclement weather closings.

Grade School: Tuition is a flat rate for 10 months out of the year. (Sep-June) 12-month payment options are available without interest charged. You are also responsible for tuition involving inclement weather closings. Once you start the school year, you are responsible for the entire school year's tuition; no exceptions to include military orders. Prepaid tuition is nonrefundable at any time for any reason. This includes registration fees, curriculum fees, and tuition payments that are paid in full.

Testing Fees 3rd-8th: Standardized testing starts in 3rd grade and to offset the cost of those fees, we will invoice each student's account \$50 in April each school year.

Scholarship Recipients: Any students who attend and receive scholarships or grants from any organization or the state of NC will be expected to follow all policies concerning tuition and withdrawal procedures. If you withdraw, you will be fully responsible for the full amount of tuition that the scholarship will not cover, to include past months' tuition. All tuition balances not covered by scholarships or grant money will be the responsibility of the parent and is expected to be paid on time each month.

School Closings

We follow Cumberland County schools' closings initially but may not stay closed the same length of time depending on the circumstances. We **DO NOT** follow their delay schedule or their early release. We will announce all closings via email/ FIA Facebook page and through teacher's correspondence. Also visit WRAL closings for updates.

Snack/ Hot Lunch

Snack time is offered each class day. FIA does not provide snack for any students. You may provide them with snack; however, it may not be candy or soda. Please note that any items that you bring in may not contain **ANY KIND** of nut. Please feel free to bring in snacks for your child's birthday! If you would like to come in to celebrate, please give your child's teacher at least 48 hours' notice.

Hot lunch menus are provided for all students in the full day preschool program, lunch bunch and all grades K-8th. Hot lunch menus are posted at the beginning of each month and order forms are sent home every two weeks. Please provide at least 24 hours' notice for a lunch order. All same day orders will incur an extra charge.

Staff Contact/Communication Information

All First Impressions employees can be reached at firstimpressions@rocketmail.com, unless otherwise stated by your child's teacher. Simply put your child's teachers name in the subject line. Please feel free to contact your student's teacher or Academy Administration by telephone, email or in person to discuss any questions you may have. If in person, please make sure that it is not during class hours, or during pick up and drop off; this is a safety rule. Teacher's attention needs to be focused on the children when they are in our care.

Dress Code Policy

FIA **requires all** students to abide by the Dress Code Policy. The First Impressions Academy dress code is designed with neatness, modesty, simplicity, and efficiency in mind. Slovenliness will simply not be accepted, because sloppy dress leads to sloppy work habits and sloppy thinking. **Preschool students** may dress in casual wear with closed toed shoes or sandals with straps attached to the back of the heel.

FIA **grade school students** wear approved uniforms while on school property during normal school hours. The approved clothing is worn throughout the academic school year. Please review the guidelines carefully with your child(ren) to ensure compliance

with the **Uniform Policy**.

- Students shall dress modestly, maintain a clean, orderly, and neat appearance, and exercise good grooming and personal hygiene habits.
- Dresses and skirts should be no more than 3” above the knee.
- All clothing items must be in good condition, e.g. clean, no holes, rips, or frayed edges and pressed.
- Girls are permitted to wear a pair of shorts (similar to biker shorts) under their skirts or jumpers. Pants may not be worn under skirts or jumpers. **Leggings are not allowed, stockings and tights only.**
- Pants or shorts are to be appropriately sized and worn from the waist. Low-rise pants are not allowed. Shorts and or skirts may not be shorter than 2” above the knee cap.
- Jackets, hooded,), sweatshirts, gloves, vests, hats, snow or otherwise pants or overalls, and sweatbands may be worn **outdoors** only.
- The only items that may be worn under blouses or shirts are **plain short or long sleeved white or navy t-shirts** or undershirts.
- No undergarments, except **white or navy under-shirts**, shall be visible at any time, other than at the neckline.
- Top two buttons on a shirt may remain opened. All other buttons **must** be fastened.
- Pants will not be too tight, low, or short. Pants must fit so that they reach to the shoe but do not drag on the ground.
- When free dress days occur, clothing may not contain vulgar, sexual, or profane words, phrases, pictures, or other representations.
- Clothing may not contain words, phrases, pictures, or other representations that refer to drugs, tobacco, weapons, alcohol, and gangs.
- Fake Tattoos are not allowed on the face as they are a distraction.
- Students are not required to purchase every item on the approved clothing list.

Makeup

Students are not allowed to use any makeup that is visible with the exception of clear lip gloss. Color decals, glitter and face painting are not allowed.

Parent Cooperation

FIA is a PREP school that assists each child in meeting their highest potential. In order to accomplish this, external services may be recommended in order to help your child reach their age-appropriate skill set, either behaviorally, socially, and/or academically. If your child is recommended for any services or testing to include, but not limited to Speech, OT, Etc. and you do not follow through with the testing or services, you will not be eligible to register the following school year.

Uniform Ordering Information

All of our uniforms are ordered through Lands End. Because of their quality, excellent customer service and their guarantee on all of their clothes, we have chosen this company to be the only provider for our uniforms. Uniforms are for all grades K-8th.

- There are different uniform styles for grades K-2nd, 3rd -5th, and then Middle School
- You can accessorize anyway that you want; i.e: any color socks, tights, hair bows, shoes, ties, etc.
- One day of the week your student will have P.E. They will need one set of P.E. clothes to wear TO SCHOOL for the entire day along with sneakers. Girls have the option of sweatpants, yoga pants or mesh shorts along with the basic T-shirt or one of our spirit wear shirts sold at school. Boys can wear sweatpants, mesh shorts and one of the T-Shirt options, long or short sleeved. There are also sweatshirts available online and fleece jackets.
- You can wear any outerwear to and from school and outside for playtime, however any warm outer clothing worn inside school (sweaters, sweatshirts, jackets) must be from Lands End. There are a wide variety of sweaters, sweatshirts both zip up and hoodies as well as fleece jackets.
- Our uniform colors are White and Navy for Polos and Khaki and Navy for shorts and pants. Uniforms have Heather Gray and Navy options for both shirts and bottoms. The Oxford shirts come in a blue and White color. Skirts have a plaid option for most grades.

The uniform ordering process:

- Go to www.landsend.com Click on the tab along the top that says “School”. Then go to “Find Your School”, look up First Impressions Academy or put in our school code which is 900148818.
- Make a profile for your student, name, age, grade, etc. This will give you access to the approved list for your student’s grade level. Do this for all your children if you have more.
- There is also a downloadable list form to access all approved items for each grade level on the site when you sign in.
- All uniform questions can be directed to Teresa Clayton at fristimpressions@rocketmail.com.

The FIA Way

Thank you for being a part of the First Impressions family. The staff at FIA will assist each student in reaching their highest potential. Each child is different, behaviorally, socially, and academically, therefore their highest potential will also look different.

Whether due to nature or nurture, we acknowledge that each child is unique and therefore their ability to learn is also just as unique. Communication is imperative to me and at FIA you may hear things that you would not hear at another academic institution.

With over 21 years in education and a variety of degrees in child psych and special education, I am a firm believer that it takes a village and sometimes that village includes additional testing, services and/or resources for a child to reach their own personal best. I also believe that each child is entitled to be taught in their least restrictive environment, that does not only mean that children with special needs should learn among their peers if they are capable, but it also means that a student should not have their education interrupted by another child's behavior whether intentional or otherwise.

FIA is built on tradition and was created to provide a fair and equal education to all children whose parents allow them this opportunity. We focus on education and character. We are non-denominational (not to be mistaken for Atheist) I am Catholic and have a beautiful relationship with God, but I do not see how that relates to education. We celebrate all things...Hallmark loves me ;) Life is short, and I will spend it creating all the core memories with all the students' lives' I am lucky to teach. FIA is a legacy for me and I love to share my family traditions with yours. We will have egg hunts; we will have Santa (I am NOT trying to convert you) I am sharing with you. Please share your traditions with us.

I have seen the world change so much since I started teaching, in both positive and negative directions. It is my goal to maintain consistency in all that is good in this world. FIA will teach science and SS; subjects will not be modified to fit social situations or beliefs.

FIA is a huge part of my family and who I am. There are many things here that represent my past. The names of the buildings, our mascot as well as our school colors. In addition, so are some of our policies. "All great things come in time", "If you get everything now you will have nothing to look forward to." These are some phrases my mom use to say; FIA will preserve youth and innocence. We do not allow "boyfriends" or "girlfriends," cell phones are not allowed on a student at any time (they must be stored, with staff, once a student arrives and will be handed back right before they leave), we do not ignore cursing, or unkindness and we teach children conflict resolution, a rare commodity these days. On the reverse side, we do not label all things "bullying," although there are times this may be the case; there are many times kids can say mean things, or older kids can seem to be bluntly unkind; we will always fix these issues, but we will also view them from a non-biased perspective.