



# Chestnut Grove

## Child Development Center

### Parent Handbook 2016 - 2017

This handbook has been prepared to acquaint parents with the policies and procedures of Chestnut Grove Child Development Center. Please feel free to ask questions about any of the enclosed information.

#### **Chestnut Grove CDC Mission Statement**

Our mission is to help children develop a love of learning, a readiness for their school years and a foundation for academic and life skills, empowering each child beyond the classroom. We encourage joyful moments and take advantage of teachable moments that occur daily in the classroom, where our children become more socially-rounded and developmentally-balanced preschoolers. Our program reflects the needs and goals of children and families, and is supported by strong research that indicates how early childhood play-based learning can lead to more successful college students and adults.

Micheline Sottile-Jackson – Director

Cassie Brady - Treasurer/Office Administrator

Ann Matthews - Registrar/Office Administrator

## **Introduction**

Chestnut Grove Child Development Center is a non-profit ministry of the Chestnut Grove Presbyterian Church. The school follows standards established by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for non-public nurseries and kindergartens. The school is staffed by trained professionals experienced in early childhood education or an allied field. We seek to nurture young children by providing an environment of love and acceptance. The school philosophy emphasizes the development of the whole child.

Our school exists to provide a quality, developmentally and educationally appropriate program for a child's physical, social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth. We believe children are natural, curious learners who have an extraordinary gift for understanding the world through play. Play is the essential work of children; it is their learning language. Our preschoolers are guided every day to become self-confident, independent learners through an engaging, nurturing and structured play-based environment. Our creative curriculum promotes hands-on exploration and discovery, and helps children learn by doing. We appreciate the participation of families, teachers, and staff volunteers who are a vibrant part of the Chestnut Grove Community.

## **Admissions**

Chestnut Grove admits children regardless of race, color, sex, religion or national origin, who are two, three or four by September 1st of the year they enroll. (Fall birthdays are placed on a case-by-case basis.) Chestnut Grove operates on the traditional school year calendar – September to May.

## **Termination**

The school retains the right to dismiss a child. This is done after a reasonable length of time, and conferencing with the parents. Cause may be, but is not limited to, developmental delays, behavior issues, failure to submit tuition as contracted, or other concerns that may indicate the child is not ready for the program or group activities. Final decisions regarding inclusion in the program rests with the director, and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

## **Registration**

Registration begins in January for in-house families. Those parents may enroll children already attending CG, and any siblings who will enter school in the fall. A non-refundable registration fee to process forms is due at the time of registration. Upon completion of in-house registration, priority for remaining spaces is then given in the following order:

1. Children of members of Chestnut Grove Presbyterian Church
2. Returning school families (Those families who previously had children attend Chestnut Grove, but currently have no one enrolled.)
3. New families

## **Special Needs Policy**

Chestnut Grove welcomes children with special needs using the following protocols:

- Full disclosure by the parents in regard to diagnosis, evaluations and special requirements,
- Release of Information form signed so the director/teacher may have the opportunity to conference with therapists and special educators working with your child,

- Reviews at monthly intervals to determine if the placement at Chestnut Grove is working for the child,
- Final decisions regarding inclusion in the program rests with the director.

### **Discipline Policy**

The goal of guidance at Chestnut Grove is to encourage children to learn self-discipline. This includes learning in a safe environment and demonstrating respect for each other's feelings, person and property. Any behavior that could endanger another person physically or emotionally will not be tolerated. Bullying will not be tolerated. Bullying is chronic, frequent behavior that has, at its core, the intention to harm or intimidate\*. Bullying involves a real or perceived power imbalance. (\*Bullying definition source: overcomebullying.org)

Our techniques focus on what to do rather than what not to do. All matters of guiding children will be in compliance with the licensing of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the philosophy of Chestnut Grove.

The faculty and staff will:

- Set clear, consistent limits for children,
- Offer praise and encouragement freely,
- Redirect and apply logical consequences,
- Use time-out only as necessary,
- Discuss consistent problems with the parents and the director to implement a specific action plan.

### **Staff/Parent Interaction**

All staff and parents are expected to treat each other and their property with respect. Electronic and personal communication between parents and staff should be conducted on a professional level. Quick questions may be answered with brief emails, but it will be our policy not to entertain long discussions via email. We feel a phone call or face-to-face contact is much more personal and effective.

### **Faculty**

Chestnut Grove requires continuing education for all teachers and assistants, and for the director. Fingerprinting and a background check are required as well, and faculty must maintain basic first-aid and CPR certification.

### **Financial Policy**

There is a non-refundable registration fee due with registration forms. If multiple siblings are enrolled, the registration fee for each additional sibling is discounted by \$5.00. Tuition for each additional sibling enrolled concurrently is discounted by 5%. If tuition rates for the multiple siblings differ, discounts will be applied to the lower rate(s).

Tuition payments made after the 15th of the month will incur a 5% late fee, with an additional 5% late fee being added after the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month if payment is not received. If tuition is not paid within 30 days of the original due date, we reserve the right to request that the child be withdrawn from school.

Chestnut Grove has a treasurer on staff for the specific purpose of addressing the financial needs of the school and the parents. Please contact the treasurer if a tuition payment must be delayed or financial difficulties arise. We will attempt to work out an equitable financial arrangement which is satisfactory to both the parent and the school.

Withdrawal requests must be made in writing. If withdrawing from April 1 to May 31, one month of tuition is forfeited. If withdrawing from June 1 to July 31, two months of tuition is forfeited. If withdrawing from August 1 to August 31, three months of tuition is forfeited. If withdrawing from September 1 to January 1, four months of tuition is forfeited, plus payment for any days already attended. No refunds will be granted after January 1st. There will be no refunds for school days missed due to holidays, inclement weather, or illness. The payer is responsible for all tuition regardless of changes in the make-up of the class.

### **Health**

Keep a child home if he/she has an elevated temperature, is vomiting, has diarrhea, or shows any signs of infection. Children are to remain fever-free for 24 hours (without medication) before returning to school. If a child is sent to school with vomiting, diarrhea, nasal discharge or a heavy cough, they may be sent home at the discretion of the office. Please call the office at 410-592-9122 or email us at [office@chestnutgrovechild.org](mailto:office@chestnutgrovechild.org) if your child will be absent. If you call before 9:00am, please leave a message. As soon as you know, inform the office if your child has a contagious disease. Health forms must be returned before or during the first week of school. A child may not continue in school without health reports completed by your family pediatrician.

### **Safety**

Doors into Chestnut Grove are locked during the school day. If you arrive late or need to retrieve your child early, please press the buzzer at the top of the main staircase and you will be admitted once you are identified. If no one answers the buzzer immediately, we may be with your children. Please call the school number – 410-592-9122.

Evacuation Drills – Students and teachers practice for fire and weather-related evacuation drills monthly. Staff members are trained in CPR and basic first-aid. Additionally, the school has an emergency/disaster preparedness plan in effect.

### **Carpools**

Please inform the teacher of dismissal arrangements. If a new caregiver is picking up, we must be notified in writing. We will not allow a child to leave with a stranger not listed on your Child Pick-Up Authorization Form without parent confirmation.

### **Clothing**

Children should come to school dressed for play. Because of concerns for playground safety, sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are required. Children should wear clothing that they are learning to manage by themselves (buttons, snaps, zippers, etc.). Since we go outside every day - weather permitting, clothing appropriate for the season is suggested. A small clothing bin is located atop each child's cubby. Please replenish the child's bin with seasonally appropriate clothing or clean clothing as needed.

## Arrival/Dismissal

Be timely! Returning at the same time each day prevents your child from worrying if you have forgotten him/her when you are late. This makes drop-off the next day easier; your child trusts you will not leave him/her at school forever.

Please wait in the upstairs foyer until a staff member opens the door. Accompany your child to their cubby and assist them if needed. Please leave quickly – it allows us to begin our opening program on time, and it truly helps the children separate more easily. Each class has a roster which parents are required to initial when they drop-off and pick-up their child each day.

At the end of the school day, your child is dismissed from the cubby outside of his/her classroom, or from the classroom. When the door is opened, please go to your child for pick-up. If you must be late picking up your child, please call the office.

- Two & You class schedule:
  - September to Thanksgiving break -- 9:15am – 11:30am
  - December through end of school year -- 9:15am – 12:00pm
- Two's Drop-Off class schedule:
  - September to Thanksgiving break – 9:15am – 11:30am
  - December to early March -- 9:15am – 12:00pm
  - Early March through the end of the school year – 9:15am – 12:30pm
- 3's & 4's Morning Program's class schedule: 9:15am to 12:30pm
- Full-Day 4's class schedule: 9:15am – 3:00pm
- Afternoon Enrichment & Extended Day schedule – 12:30pm to 3:00pm

## Snow Emergency Closing

Check the voice mail message on the school phone – 410-592-9122

Check your email or check for a Facebook posting from the school.

- **Chestnut Grove follows the BCPS schedule – *not* the Hereford Zone.**
- If Baltimore County Schools are **closed**, Chestnut Grove is closed.
- **One hour delay** for Baltimore County Schools -- Chestnut Grove opens at 10:15am.
  - Half-day sessions: 10:15am to 12:30pm. Lunch time included
  - Full-day sessions: 10:15am to 3:00pm. Lunch time included
  - Extended day: 12:30pm to 3:00pm.
- **Two hour delay** for Baltimore County Schools -- Chestnut Grove opens at 11:15am.
  - Half-day sessions: 11:15am to 1:00pm. Lunch time included.
  - Full-day sessions: 11:15am to 3:00pm. Lunch time included.
  - Extended Day: 1:00pm to 3:00pm. Parents of children registered for Extended Day on delayed days are asked to call to cancel; otherwise, we will assume your child is coming and you will be responsible for the Extended Day fee.

## Early Closings

In the event we need to close school once classes have begun, an emergency voice message & email will be sent to all parents. The message will give details on the reason for closing, and instructions on getting your child. If such a message is sent, your child must be picked up as soon as possible. This is for the safety of everyone. You may pick up your child early if you are concerned about weather or road conditions.

## Typical Day

- **Arrival** – Children greet teachers and put their lunchboxes and coats, gloves, etc. in cubbies (Note – please leave all toys at home). They then go to classrooms to use manipulative equipment, read books, listen to music, and interact with their teacher and classmates before curriculum begins. There are often group openings in the big room.
- **Developmental Task** – Reading and math readiness skills are presented with the teachers setting the tone and theme for the day’s specific lesson. Teachers and children may talk about any one of a number of topics – shapes, sizes, animals, self-esteem, safety, art, language, science, math, seasonal activities, holidays, and their interests. A five to ten-minute discussion is followed by related activities which involve eye-hand or small muscle coordination, or a small skill such as cutting, pasting, drawing, painting, stringing, sorting -- all helping to build perception and encourage developmental areas of learning in language/literacy, math/science, social/emotional, and music/art.
- **Gross Motor Skills** – Big blocks, sensory tables, wheel toys, and climbing. Four’s classes participate in an enrichment movement/yoga program.
- **Classroom Activities** - Circle time, literature, listening, or activity of teacher’s choice. Clean-up, lunch and outdoor play, weather permitting.
- **Music** – Rhythm instruments, finger plays, dramatic play, singing, and dancing. Three’s classes participate in a music program twice a month.
- **Bathroom** – At appropriate time or in small groups – 3’s & 4’s classes do not go as a complete class, except to wash hands prior to snacks or lunch. 2’s Drop-Off classes go as a class and as needed.
- **Snack time** – Snacks are served to the full-day classes and in Extended Day. Parents are welcome to send in snacks or the ingredients to make something special. Parents may also send in special treats for holidays, birthdays and special occasions. Please check with your class teacher for any allergy or special dietary considerations.

## Extended Day

Extended Day is a planned program held on most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at Chestnut Grove from 12:30pm to 3:00pm. Children may participate in story time, science experiments, art activities and free play. Sign-up is on a monthly or drop-in basis and is first come-first served, at a cost of \$25 per day. Space is limited, so registering in advance is advised. Payment is due at the time of sign-up. Registration is available on the Chestnut Grove website (Sign-Up Genius), in the school office, or by emailing Cassie Brady at [cbrady@chestnutgrovechild.org](mailto:cbrady@chestnutgrovechild.org). Please note that at least two children must be registered in order for the Extended Day program to run each day.

## Conferences

Scheduled conferences are held in January, but teachers are willing to meet with you at any time if you have a concern about your child. Once conferences are completed, office personnel will be available to discuss placement concerns before registration. Please stop in, or schedule an appointment.

## **Newsletters**

Newsletters are distributed by email monthly from both the office and teachers. Please read these carefully as they contain important information regarding school activities, closings and special events.

## **Field Trips/Cultural Events**

Off-campus activities and on-campus enrichment activities are determined by curriculum, and are listed on the school calendar. For field trips, each child must be accompanied by a parent or adult, and must have a signed permission slip.

## **Dad's (or Special Guest) Activities**

- **Dad's Week for Two's classes** – held in May  
Dads are invited to experience the class with their two-year-olds and help the children prepare gifts for Mother's Day.
- **Dad's Week for Three's classes** – held in late February  
Dads are invited to join their child for part or all of the class day and join in activities.
- **Dad's Night for Four's classes** – held in March  
Chestnut Grove hosts a 'Fun and Games Night' where Dads are invited to spend an interactive evening with their child and enjoy a light meal.

## **Mom's (or Special Guest) Activities**

In mid-May, three-year-olds hold a tea and the four's classes help host a brunch, present a musical program and honor Mom for Mother's Day. Invitations are distributed for both events. Children in the 2's program celebrate Mom's Day by making lunch for mom and giving the gifts they made with Dad's help during Dad's week.

## **Birthday Book Celebrations**

Chestnut Grove has a happy tradition for celebrating a child's birthday. Parents often choose to donate a "Birthday book" in their child's honor. The child opens a wrapped book and presents it to the school during morning gathering in the Big Room. The birthday book is read in that child's class and then the child may take it home for a week. When it is returned, the book is officially cataloged and becomes part of the school's library.

You may purchase a book from the "Birthday Book" basket located in the office, or purchase your own. We will place a nameplate in the cover with your child's name, birth date and year of presentation, and will gift-wrap the book for you.

Two's children can participate in this tradition by celebrating in their own classroom. These books will be placed in the Two's library.

Please speak with office staff for more information. Children with summer birthdays may celebrate at any time during the year. Your support of the Chestnut Grove CDC Library enriches the school and fosters a child's love of reading in meaningful and enduring ways.

## **Holiday Celebrations**

Holiday celebrations are planned with the help of room parents. More information will be provided for these special occasions.

### **Vision and Hearing Screenings**

Screenings are offered once a year by the Maryland Society for Sight and a Baltimore County audiologist. Permission slips and results are sent to parents.

### **Summer Camp**

Our summer program runs for up to three weeks after our school year ends. The scheduled dates are flexible due to the calendar and enrollment. We encourage the use of our summer program as an introduction to preschool for incoming children, a fun time for those already in preschool and a positive way to spend part of the summer. Registration begins in March.

### **Substitutes**

Chestnut Grove maintains a permanent list of substitutes who have cleared a background check. Parents who wish to be substitutes are welcome to speak with the director.

### **Volunteer Help**

The director and teachers of Chestnut Grove are always eager for volunteer help. Although Chestnut Grove is not a co-op, we believe it is beneficial for children to see their parents take an active interest in school life and their school. There are a number of ways in which parents can participate in our program with their child, such as classroom assistance, library help, cooking assistance, and help with the repair of various pieces of equipment. Please speak to the director about your desire to volunteer. Class visits should be coordinated with the teacher, and may depend on how well your child is adjusting to school, particularly early in the school year.

### **Room Parents**

Room parents are requested for each class. A meeting is held in September for volunteers to review ways in which a room parent can be of assistance.

### **Parent School Board**

Chestnut Grove Child Development Center has a volunteer Parent Board, which is responsible for fundraising, helping to equip the school and maintaining the playground in conjunction with the professional staff. The Board also acts as a liaison between the faculty and parents, and works closely with staff to provide special activities for the children. The school director sits on the board as a non-voting member and keeps the board informed of policies, procedures, activities and staffing.