



# Chestnut Grove

## Child Development Center

### Parent Handbook

### 2022 - 2023

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.

Kristal Schuch – 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. Chestnut Grove's school year calendar runs from September to May.

## **Termination**

The school retains the right to dismiss a child. This is done after conferencing with the parent and after reasonable attempts to resolve the issue have been made. 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 late January/early February 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 regarding 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](http://overcomebullying.org))

Our techniques focus on what to do rather than what not to do. All matters of guiding children will comply 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-in', a one-on-one connection between a teacher and child. The goal is to remove the child from a problematic situation, calm the child, focus on what caused the misbehavior or situation, and brainstorm on what could be done differently next time.
- Discuss consistent problems with 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 follows continuing education guidelines of MSDE for all staff. Fingerprinting and a background check are required for all staff members, and the majority of our faculty maintains basic first-aid and CPR certification.

## Financial Policy

There is a non-refundable registration fee due with registration forms. Registration fee is \$50 per child, or \$75 per family (with multiple children). Tuition for each additional sibling enrolled in the school concurrently is discounted by 10%. 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. An additional 5% late fee will be due on the outstanding balance after the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month if payment is not received. If a check is returned, you are expected to cover it immediately, along with any service charges incurred. After two months of non-payment of tuition, if arrangements have not been made with the Treasurer/Director, we reserve the right to request that the child be withdrawn from the school, and your account may be turned over to a collection agency. No refunds will be paid.

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. All related communications will be kept in strictest confidence between the Treasurer/Director and the parent, and the CDC Council if deemed necessary.

Withdrawal requests must be made in writing at least two weeks in advance of your last day. 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 makeup of the class.

## Health - COVID-19 POLICIES AS OF JULY 2022:

Staff or Student/Child with	Guidance for Management
COVID-19 symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff or student/child should not attend or work in a school or child care setting</li><li>• COVID-19 testing is recommended</li><li>• If test is negative, may return when symptoms have improved, no fever for 24 hours without medication, and applicable criteria in the <a href="#">Communicable Diseases Summary</a> have been met</li></ul>
Positive test for COVID-19, regardless of symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff or student/child must stay home for 5 days from the start of symptoms or from the date of the positive test if no symptoms</li><li>• After day 5, may return if symptoms have improved and no fever for at least 24 hours without medication</li><li>• Upon return, must wear a mask for 5 additional days (except while eating, drinking, sleeping or outside)</li><li>• If unable to wear a mask, may return if they have a negative test at day 5 or later; otherwise, they should remain at home for days 6 -10</li></ul>
Close contact with someone with known or suspected COVID-19 but no symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff or student/child can continue to work in or attend school and child care regardless of vaccination status</li><li>• Those who can mask should do so for 10 days from the last day of exposure</li><li>• A test at 3-5 days after exposure is recommended, especially for those who cannot mask (ex. children under 2 years of age).</li></ul>

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.

To ensure the safety of all children, all snacks or food to be shared among children (for birthday celebrations or holidays) must be store-bought and in its original packaging.

### **Safety**

Doors into Chestnut Grove are locked during the school day. If you arrive late or need to retrieve your child early, please call the school at 410-592-9122. We will advise you on which door to enter.

Evacuation Drills – Students and teachers practice for fire, weather-related and other emergency evacuation drills throughout the year. The majority of our faculty maintains basic first-aid and CPR certification. Additionally, the school has an emergency/disaster preparedness plan in effect.

### **Carpools**

Please inform your child's 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. Soiled clothing may be picked up in the office at pick-up time.

### **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 at the main entrance 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.

Each morning, a staff member will be upstairs to watch younger siblings left in cars. Please let the staff member know that you are leaving a child in the car, park close to the building entrance, and

return to your car quickly after dropping-off your preschooler. If leaving a child in the car, please do not leave your car until the staff member has arrived upstairs.

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 – 410-592-9122.

- Two & You class schedule:
  - September to Christmas break: 9:15am – 11:30am
  - January to the end of school in May: 9:15am – 12:00pm
- Two's Drop-Off class schedule:
  - September to Christmas break: 9:15am – 11:30am
  - January to the end of school in May: 9:15am – 12:30pm
- 3's & 4's Morning Program's class schedule: 9:15am to 12:30pm
- Full-Day 3's & 4's class schedule: 9:15am – 3:00pm
- Afternoon Enrichment and Stay & Play schedule – 12:30pm to 3:00pm

### **Snow Emergency Closing**

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
  - Afternoon Enrichment and Stay & Play: 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.
  - Afternoon Enrichment and Stay & Play: 1:00pm to 3:00pm. Parents of children registered for Stay & Play on delayed days are asked to call to cancel; otherwise, we will assume your child is coming and you will be responsible for the Stay & Play 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, place lunchboxes atop cubbies, 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 variety 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. Teachers and students read and explore at least one book a day as part of their literacy curriculum.
- **Gross Motor Skills** – Big blocks, sensory tables, wheel toys, and climbing.
- **Classroom Activities** - Circle time, literature, listening skills, planned teacher-directed activities, and free-choice centers. Clean-up, lunch and outdoor play, weather permitting.
- **Music** – Rhythm instruments, finger plays, dramatic play, singing, and dancing.
- **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 and Afternoon Enrichment classes, and in Stay & Play. 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. All snacks or food to be shared among children must be store-bought and in its original packaging.

## **Stay & Play**

Stay & Play is a planned program offered Monday through Friday 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 \$35 per day. Space is limited, so registering in advance is advised. Payment is due on the day the child attends. Registration is available on the Chestnut Grove website (Sign-Up Genius), in the school office, or by emailing Cassie Brady in the office at [cbrady@chestnutgrovechild.org](mailto:cbrady@chestnutgrovechild.org). Please note that at least two children must be registered for the Stay & Play 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 schedule an appointment.

## **Newsletters**

Newsletters are distributed by email monthly from the office and periodically from the 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 late April  
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 February  
Dads are invited to join their child for part or all of the class day and join in activities.
- **Dad's Night or Day for Four's classes** – held in March  
Chestnut Grove hosts a 'Fun Night or Day' where Dads are invited to spend an interactive time 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 4'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**

Parents often choose to donate a "Birthday book" in their child's honor. The child sits in the "Birthday Chair", 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. Your support of the Chestnut Grove CDC Library enriches the school and fosters a child's love of reading in meaningful and enduring ways.

You may purchase a book from the "Birthday Book" basket (\$3.00) located in the office or bring in a new book of your own. We will place a nametag inside 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.



## **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, staffing 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.

## **Substitute Teachers and Assistants**

Chestnut Grove maintains a permanent list of substitutes who are fingerprinted and 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 many ways in which parents can participate in our program and with Parent Board related events. 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.