



2024-2025

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2799 Northside Drive NW
Atlanta, GA 30305
(404) 351-1107

Student Absence Line (678) 642-8446
Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m

The information contained in this Family Handbook is for the sole use of the Northside Methodist Preschool parents and staff. This confidential information should not be used for commercial purposes, nor distributed by any means or form.

Revised 9/2024

Northside Methodist Preschool, founded in 1958 as a ministry of Northside United Methodist Church, is located in the Buckhead section of Atlanta. We are a not-for-profit early learning facility for approximately 200 children ages 18 months to five years old, of any race, gender, national or ethnic origin. As a church sponsored preschool, our purpose is to provide a program that will foster development of the whole child: emotionally, intellectually, socially, physically and spiritually.

Our morning preschool program offers families several class options, depending on the children's ages. NMP has 18 classes sharing space in 16 classrooms. NMP offers extended hours through "Early Birds," an additional hour before and "Stay & Play," an hour after school. The preschool also has an art room, media center, music room, outdoor classroom, and a sensory gym for classes and support services (offered by outside speech and occupational therapists). We have two outside developmentally appropriate playgrounds and full access to the church gymnasium.

Our staff of 46 enjoys the flexibility of teaching classes from two to five days a week. 98% of our teachers are parents and they come to us from all over metropolitan Atlanta. Teaching experience averages 11 years.

The health and safety of our children is of primary importance. We have a Registered Nurse on staff daily to administer medications, first aid and to track children's medical needs. We strive to be a nut free school and discourage foods containing nut products in the building. We also have a security guard on staff daily to secure and patrol the school and church facilities.

We have an active group of parents who want to be involved in their children's education and we have an open door policy to all. To encourage and ensure family involvement, we offer opportunities for parents to serve on various committees and in a variety of volunteer activities, along with volunteering in the classrooms. Our Parents Council has 19 committees of volunteers, who provide valuable services in the life of our preschool. To learn more about getting involved on one or more of our committees, please visit our website preschool.northsideumc.org

Accreditation

Northside Methodist Preschool is accredited by Cognia/Advanc-Ed-Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI). NMP is also a member of the Buckhead Preschool Association and the Georgia Preschool Association.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance is expected on the part of every child. Children may arrive at the preschool beginning at 8:45 am in carpool, and will need to be walked in after 9:00 a.m. Attendance is taken daily.

Notify the preschool if the student is absent from school. Call or text (678) 642-8446 and leave a message. These messages will be checked daily before 9:30 am.

Early Birds (EarlyBirds@Northsideumc.org)

To accommodate early parent schedules, we are pleased to offer an Early Birds program that is a structured and fun-filled learning experience. Supervised by NMP teachers, toddlers – five year olds will enjoy a variety of activities before the official start of their school day from 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 am.

You are welcome to register for Early Birds for one or more mornings each week, but your reservation must be for the entire semester to ensure adequate staffing. Cost is \$15/day.

Stay & Play (Stay&Play@Northsideumc.org)

Stay & Play is an after-school program for children currently enrolled in a three, four, or five year old NMP class. Children participate in many fun activities such as science experiments, art projects, and large group games. In addition, children will eat a snack (provided by NMP) and play outside with friends. The program runs from 12:30-1:30 pm. Carpool is in the same location as NMP carpool. All children must be completely potty trained to attend. Cost is \$15/day and registration must be completed by 5 pm the Sunday prior. No day-of registrations will be accepted.

Carpool

Carpool numbers must be clearly displayed when picking up children. Children are loaded and unloaded from the **driver's side back door only**. **We cannot unload or load children from the rear end of the car** (station wagon, hatchback, or utility vehicle). After pickup, pull up to the access road (please do not block flow of traffic to fasten children in seat belts. If your child is leaving school in a carpool other than his/her regular one, you must notify the child's teacher IN WRITING and delegate in the PikMyKid app. If you send anyone other than the regular driver for your child, please email Margaret Bond (MargaretB@northsideumc.org by 12:00p.m. For your child's protection, we will not put him/her in a car with a driver we do not know. Teachers will verify the driver's name with their license ID. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be enforced if pick-up time of 12:30 is abused. A late fee notice will be sent home with your child the next school day.

Safety of our children is a priority; therefore, please be aware of the following additional requirements:

Morning Carpool (8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.)

All children enrolled in a two year old class and older should be dropped off in carpool beginning the first day of school. If a child is having difficulty adjusting to the new school environment, we will gladly work with you individually. **Do not use cell phones (talking or texting) while in the carpool line** so as to devote full attention to the children and the traffic. **Do NOT allow your child to stand up through sun-roofs, hang out open windows or sit in the driver's lap in carpool lines.**

Afternoon Carpool (12:30 p.m. – 12:40 p.m.)

Hang your NMP carpool tag in your front window and make sure the location services in your phone are turned ON for the PikMyKid app.

If you need to make any changes to your child's dismissal status such as delegation to a different pickup individual, car line to after school program, or any other change, simply do it in the PikMyKid app. You will receive a notification that we received your change.

When you arrive at the preschool each day for afternoon carpool, **press the GREEN Announce button** on your PikMyKid app alerting us that you are in line to pick up your child. This will help us sequence the children in the same order as you have entered the campus, thus speeding the dismissal process even more.

Always hang your carpool number from your rearview mirror. Keep it displayed during the entire carpool process. Carpool line forms from Kingswood Lane INTO the lower level of the parking deck. Children are loaded and unloaded on the driver's side only. Cars continue moving through the line and up the hill near the Chapel to buckle children.

VERY IMPORTANT: If you need to pick up your child **before** carpool, teachers will only dismiss children from their room at 12:15 or earlier to a parent. **PLEASE DO NOT PARK IN THE CARPOOL LINE AND ENTER THE PRESCHOOL, ATRIUM, OR GYM DURING THE CARPOOL PROCESS (12:30-12:40).** Please do not leave children unattended in a car.

We care very much about your children and hope these rules will ensure their safety!

Georgia Booster Seat Law – CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY

Every driver who transports a child **EIGHT YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER** must place the child in a child passenger restraining system approved by the United States Department of Transportation and the child must ride in the rear seat. Only when a child's parent or guardian obtains a physician's written statement indicating that a physical or medical condition of the child prevents the child from being placed in the child passenger restraining system is the child exempt from this requirement. NMP will not dismiss a child to a car without a regulation car seat or booster seat.

Healthy Food Suggestions for Lunches

Each child will be responsible for bringing his or her own lunch each day. Daily lunch brought from home should be healthy and nutritious. Please **DO NOT** send lunches that require refrigeration or heating. Teachers will provide class specific instructions for providing reusable water bottles each day. **LABEL** your child's individual lunch bag/container and send it to preschool in the bookbag. Children may **not share** lunches with others due to allergies.

Our policy at NMP is to encourage our preschoolers to develop healthy eating habits. Suggested foods for lunch:

- Fruit slices
- Cheese sticks, slices
- Crackers and Cheese
- Bananas
- Fruit cups
- Granola Bars
- Cheerios or other dry cereals Crackers
- Veggie sticks
- Carrots, thinly sliced
- Pretzels
- Small Sandwiches

Nut Policy

NMP strives to be a nut FREE preschool. This means we ask parents, children and staff not to bring foods that contain nuts (especially peanuts) to school. The goal of this policy is to provide a safe environment for all preschoolers, teachers and children frequenting the classroom. Food allergy sufferers may react to tactile (touch) exposure, ingestion or even inhalation exposure. Whether or not your own child suffers from a nut allergy, we are asking all to be considerate of those that do and the life threatening emergency of anaphylaxis that is a risk and constant fear for both family and staff alike. After all, anaphylaxis is preventable by avoiding triggers.

Again, we ask you not to send nuts and nut containing foods regardless of the allergies in your child's class. **Products that contain nuts include but are not limited to:**

- Nuts (peanut and tree nuts)
- Fruit and nut bars
- Some biscuits and cake
- Peanut butter/almond butter/cashew butter
- Chocolates and other candies with nuts

While we have action plans in place should an exposure occur, our first priority is prevention. Based on the information submitted by parents/guardians in their child's annual Health Form, our school nurses maintain a list of both anaphylactic food allergies and food intolerances. This list is provided to all classroom teachers, specials, Early Birds and Stay & Play staff. Additionally, a master list is posted in staff common areas including but not limited to the staff break room, gym, and teachers' carpool cards.

If a child has an anaphylactic/life-threatening food allergy, the parent/guardians of everyone in his/her class will be notified of that allergy. Still, we ask that all parents/guardians avoid sending nuts and nut products throughout the school year, just as our staff will continue to reinforce appropriate avoidance and management strategies. We seek to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of our school community. The best care is collaborative so we ask for your involvement in the education and support of NMP Staff and the promotion of self-care with your child at home. NMP believes an effective partnership between home and school will promote the safest environment. We are committed to responsible and achievable management practices in reducing foreseeable risks associated with the support of students with anaphylaxis within the school environment.

Inclement Weather Policy

The preschool follows a hybrid policy on school closings due to inclement weather:

- Day One of Inclement Weather: Follow Atlanta Public Schools closings
- Day Two of Inclement Weather (and subsequent days): NMP/NUMC to determine based on local conditions.

All preschool staff and parents will be notified by a **Remind text** as soon as a decision is made. A weather contingency protocol will be used by NMP administration, in addition to this plan, to assess the conditions at NMP. This protocol would give the administration an option to keep NMP closed in case of unique hazards. If Atlanta Public Schools are delayed an hour, the Preschool will be delayed an hour. However, if there is a two hour delay, the preschool will be closed. We do not make up missed days.

Safety & Security

In order to maintain a secure facility for our children, all parents and staff must adhere to the following security procedures:

- B No child shall be left unattended at any time.
- B All visitors and parents arriving at the preschool other than during carpool times **MUST SIGN IN** at the Reception Desk.
- B All visitors and parents must wear a nametag while visiting the school. You will receive a nametag when you sign in at the Reception Desk.
- B Exterior doors in the preschool area shall remain locked at all times. Doors may not be propped open.
- B No person other than the child's parents or additional drivers listed on a child's emergency contact form may pick them up from school **UNLESS** written permission is given by the parents. Said person must be prepared to show a picture I.D. upon request when picking up the child if they are not listed on the carpool emergency card.
- B If a carpool change occurs after your child is at school, please email Margaret Bond (MargaretB@NorthsideUMC.org) by 12:00 p.m.

In the event of an emergency evacuation, Atlanta Police will notify MARTA and arrangements will be made for the safe transportation of all children and staff to Northside Drive Baptist Church. Parents will be notified as soon as possible and will be given instructions for collecting their children. As a matter of course, we have a crisis control plan which includes guidelines for a lock-down situation. In an emergency situation which is outside the building, we will lock down our building and no one will be allowed to enter or exit until it is safe. We are prepared to keep children secure in the building even past carpool time and up to several hours if necessary. We have extra food, diapers and water and our teachers will make sure all children feel safe and secure. In any emergency situation, NMP will send updates via Remind texts.

Emergency Procedures

The preschool has a formal written emergency plan that covers a wide array of possible events. Each year, the school conducts monthly drills to include fire, tornado, lockdown, missing child, evacuation, and AED procedures. Drills are designed to ensure efficiency so children and adults will know what to do. Additionally, all staff members are provided First Aid training and maintain current CPR certification. A licensed officer is on staff five days a week.

Every precaution is taken to keep the children safe and well at school. Parents sign an emergency release form in order for us to provide your child with optimum care while at school. The school will make every reasonable effort to contact a parent and/or other emergency contact named on the emergency release form. In the event an injury or illness does not appear serious but medical treatment is deemed necessary, treatment will be given by the nurse or other qualified person. In the event an injury or illness appears serious and medical treatment is deemed emergent, paramedics will be contacted immediately. The paramedics will decide whether they can administer treatment at school or whether the child should be taken to the nearest hospital for emergency care. Emergency treatment at that time will be given by the paramedics and/or hospital to which the child is taken. Should an epinephrine auto-injector be administered, 911 will be phoned immediately after administration and parents notified promptly thereafter.

Health & Wellness Policy

Our health policy is defined in order to protect the well child and promote the best environment for the sick child. Children in good health are welcome to attend school each day. If a child shows behavioral or appetite changes which could precede an illness, please consider keeping your child at home. Children should also be kept at home when they have symptoms of a cold, eye, ear or throat infection, or contagious diseases. *Please let the school know if your child does contract a contagious disease so that we may notify other parents.* Children will be sent home if they have a temperature over 100.4° or any other symptoms of a contagious disease or virus, including any symptoms of Covid-19. A doctor's certificate may be required if your child has chronic allergies.

Should a child exhibit any of the following symptoms within 24 hours before school, the child must remain at home:

- B Fever (greater than 100.4 F)*
- B Diarrhea
- B Nausea or vomiting
- B Rash or boil of unknown origin
- B Persistent cough
- B Red eyes accompanied by discharge
- B Head lice
- B Suspected infectious disease

**Child must be fever free for 24 hours without medication before they can return to school*

Medication Policy

We will administer emergency medication including but not limited to epinephrine auto-injectors (i.e. EpiPen JR, Auvi-Q, or Epinephrine 0.15mg) and rescue inhalers (i.e. Albuterol). Parents must complete both a Medication Authorization Form and an Action Plan complete with physician signature. Forms may be requested by contacting the school nurse. Forms should be submitted within the first month of school or the first month after a new diagnosis to provide optimum care for your child.

For all medications, parents are asked to provide medication in its original packaging, labeled legibly with the student's name. Information regarding medication name and strength, dosage, indication for administration, expiration date, and name of dispensing pharmacy should be included. For most medications, this information is available on the medication label so please take care not to remove this before providing to school. For inhalers, we ask that the appropriately sized spacer be provided along with medication.

All medications provided will be stored in the Nurse's Nook in a locked cabinet free of moisture, food and drink, and maintained at room temperature. Keys are kept secure with either the school nurse or at the desk of the office manager. Should a medication require refrigeration, a small refrigerator is maintained within the same cabinet. For allergies that require use of an epinephrine auto-injector, NMP requires two current medications be sent in with the child, one to be kept in cabinet in the Nurse's Nook while the other, along with its appropriate forms will be provided to classroom teacher, to be placed in the class specific First Aid bag so that it accompanies the child throughout the day. Stock medicines such as topical medications, Benadryl, and Tylenol are also stored in the secure medicine cabinet. These may be given if written medication authorization was given by parent. Verbal permission may be given for emergent incidents, followed by written authorization as soon as possible.

Lice Policy

If live lice are found on your child while at school, we ask that they are picked up and treated with a lice killing treatment and hair thoroughly combed out to remove lice and nits. This may be done at home or by a professional lice removal service. Your child may return the following day after treatment.

If nits are found on your child while at school, we will notify you. While we prefer that your child be picked up early, they may remain in school until the end of the day, if necessary. They must be treated with a lice killing treatment and hair thoroughly combed out to remove lice and nits. This may be done at home or by a professional lice removal service. Your child may return the following day after treatment.

Birthdays & Holidays

If your child celebrates a birthday during the school year, please do **NOT** send birthday party invitations to school. Invitations should be mailed or extended by telephone to eliminate hurt feelings of those not invited. Teachers will not be allowed to put invitations in school bags. Your child's teacher will communicate class-specific celebration needs and procedures to parents during the year.

We prefer that Holiday Parties be kept very simple. Holiday napkins and 100% fruit juice are acceptable. We prefer that parents' efforts be spent in reading to the children, playing games, etc. and to end the party with simple refreshments.

Birthday Books

If you wish, you may honor your child's birthday by participating in the Preschool Birthday Book Program. The book we select will be hardbound, library quality, and will be specially selected for our curriculum. An inscription label will be placed in the front of the book. Please contact the Parents Council Birthday Books Chair with any questions.

Dress Code

So that your child can be safe and comfortably participate in all activities, we ask the following:

- Children should wear comfortable clothing that will allow for active participation in program activities and also allow for independence when potty training.
- Please dress children in washable play clothes and tennis shoes. Always assume that your child will be involved in "messy" projects. Make sure the clothing is comfortable and allows for self-help.
- Please LABEL all removable clothing, such as gloves, sweaters, hats, etc., with your child's name.
- Preferably, sneakers or closed shoes should be worn.
- Flip-flop shoes, sandals, jelly shoes, Crocs, cleats, cowboy boots and long dresses are discouraged for safety reasons.
- Jewelry, small beads and other fashion accessories are unsafe and are discouraged
- Coats and jackets should be appropriate to allow children to play freely on playground.
- Students wearing diapers need extra diapers and a change of clothing in their school bags daily.
- No insect repellent or sunscreen will be applied to children at school. Parents who wish to use such products should apply them to their child at home before the school day begins.

School Behavior

At Northside Methodist Preschool we are committed to providing the best possible environment for each child. Appropriate school behavior is discussed with all children. Concentrating on the positive will result in good behavior. The most effective way to build good behavior is to shape it with praise.

Discipline is not a one-time effort. It must be constant and consistent to be lovingly effective with the child. When necessary, the following behavior management process will result:

- B STEP 1: Teacher will conduct age appropriate communication with the child. Parents will be informed if necessary.
- B STEP 2: Upon second occurrence, the teacher will notify the parent and an individual behavior management plan will be determined by the teacher.
- B STEP 3: Upon third occurrence, the Director is notified and a conference is scheduled with the parent.
- B STEP 4: If the behavior does not improve with time, it may be necessary to temporarily withdraw the child from preschool until the inappropriate behavior is corrected or modified

Biting Policy

Some young children go through a biting phase that is troubling to parents. Biting happens for many reasons under a variety of circumstances, but usually stops when a child can express needs and feelings with words. If biting occurs at school, staff will work to determine possible reasons, provide re-direction and teach more appropriate behavior. A note will always be sent home to the parents of both the biter and the child who is bitten.

If biting continues, the parents, teachers and the Director will have a conference to discuss the situation and to work together toward a solution. Parents may be asked to pick up the child from school immediately or to keep the child home for a period of time. If the problem persists, the child may need to be removed from the class.

Child Abuse

The Preschool is required by state law to report any suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or deprivation to the Department of Family and Child Services.

Preschool Board

The NMP Board is the governing body of the Preschool. The members of the Board are parents, church staff members, teacher representatives, the Preschool Director and the Assistant Director. The Board follows the guidelines specified in the Northside Methodist Preschool By-Laws and the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church. The Board's responsibilities include:

- B Overseeing all policies of the preschool
- B Approving all funds, including yearly budgets and fundraising monies
- B Approving personnel matters

The Board consists of voting and non-voting members who meet throughout the school year. The majority of the Board members are elected to a two-year term.

NMP Parents Council

The purpose of the Parents Council is to organize parent volunteers, as well as lead all fundraising efforts, on behalf of the preschool. The Parents Council leadership team provides oversight and assistance to ensure each event or activity runs smoothly. All parents are highly encouraged to participate in any of the following committees:

Annual Fund

Holiday Gift Show

Scholastic Book Fair

Bi-Annual Auction

Donuts with Dad

Muffins with Mom

Birthday Books

Spirit Wear

Room Parents

Hospitality Team

Carpool Volunteers

School Prayer Team

New Family Liaisons

Care Committee

Community Service

Little Hands Art

Teacher Appreciation Week

Parent Parties