

# **WEEKDAY ED**

**MERCYHILLCHURCH**



## **Parent Handbook**

### **2023-24**

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## **MISSION**

The mission of Mercy Hill Weekday Early Education Program is to provide a Christ-centered, safe and loving environment in which children can grow physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually.

## **PURPOSE**

We believe each child is a gift from God and should develop to his/her full potential. Therefore, we focus on all areas of development: social, emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual. We strive to create an atmosphere where children are guided into new experiences; ones that show the joy and wonder of learning and where the children are accepted and loved for who they are. We invite you to come and experience a place where enthusiastic and loving teachers encourage children to learn **and** have fun.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

- We believe that each child is a unique individual with special talents and abilities and should be treated as such.
- We believe a sound program of early childhood education should focus on all areas of development.
- We see all children as worthy individuals capable of success, and we strive to instill a positive self-image in all children and confidence in their own abilities.
- We believe that learning is a sequential process and that children grow and develop at individual rates and that unreasonable expectations do not tend to be productive. Instead, we lend positive reinforcement to children's attempts to master skills appropriate for their age level.
- We believe that the school and the home must work together, and we encourage parental interest and participation in our program.
- We believe that children have a natural curiosity and desire to learn and that our teaching should capitalize on these characteristics knowing that a solid foundation in the early years is crucial to future success in learning.
- We believe that a teacher should instill a desire for learning in children and encourage them to become independent learners.
- We believe that children deserve to be children and that they should be provided a fun and encouraging environment for learning. Their teachers should be enthusiastic, supportive, loving, and understanding, and that the child should have the same support at home.
- We believe there is only one true living God and that He is loving and just. Jesus Christ, God's Son, died on the cross so that all people who come to know Him through salvation will have eternal life.

## **GOALS**

Based on our philosophy, the following are broad goals of our program:

- To provide positive introductions to an educational environment through physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual growth.
- To promote a positive self-concept and a feeling of self-worth by developing reasoning, thinking and problem solving skills.
- To promote a love of learning through daily activities that are success oriented.
- To meet the needs of the individual by encouraging responsibility, initiative and independence.
- To build each child's faith by developing an awareness of God and His love for them through teaching and example.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Animals:**

No animals are allowed inside the preschool without director approval. Animals that are in vehicles during carpool should be kept at a distance from children walking by to prevent a biting incident.

### **Arrival and Departure:**

Carpool is available at the front of the school and must be entered from the lower entrance. Carpool numbers are assigned and must be displayed in the front window of the car. Because carpool drop off is a much easier transition for children, we prefer no walk-ins for children two and over. Parents are asked to please have the kindergarten children in their classrooms by 9.00 a.m. We have planned very carefully for each day's activities and we need to start promptly. Late arrivals may mean that your child misses an art or learning activity.

At departure, teachers are not allowed to buckle the children in their seat. After we place your child in the vehicle, please pull forward as far as you can in the parking lot to buckle them up.

*Please drive slowly and carefully in the parking lot. We have precious cargo to protect. The security and safety of the children (and adults!) is of utmost importance.*

### **Birthdays:**

This is a special day for your child. Please contact your child's teacher, one week in advance, if you wish to have a birthday snack for the class. We suggest parents furnish a special snack for this day along with birthday napkins. You are welcome to come and share this experience with your child and their friends. Party invitations will only be distributed to the whole class. If you wish to invite an individual child, please do so on your own.

### **Bringing Items from Home:**

Please do not allow children to bring toys or stuffed animals to school unless you receive prior approval from your child's teacher. Items such as candy, gum, and money should not be brought.

### **Clothing:**

Children need to wear comfortable, washable, play clothes to school. Since accidents sometimes happen, please have an extra change of clothing and underwear in his or her backpack. Please send appropriate weather items such as sweater, coats, hats, rain gear, and mittens labeled with your child's name. Remember, many children have similar or identical items, so labeling is very important. Cowboy boots, shoes with high heels and long dresses can be dangerous on the playground and should be avoided. Parents should use their own discretion regarding flip-flops. Remember that the children are running and playing in the gym and outside and our main concern is their safety. **We cannot stress enough that each item should be labeled with your child's name.**

### **Conferences:**

Conferences will be scheduled in January or February for the four year classes and Kindergarten. A conference in any class may be scheduled anytime during the year if you or the teacher feels one is needed. To request a conference, please send a note letting the teacher know of your request in your child's folder or call the school office. Please do not talk with your child's teacher during sessions. Class sessions begin when the first child arrives and ends when the last child leaves.

### **Diaper Changing/Restroom:**

Gloves, wipes, and changing pad paper are used for each child when changing a diaper and replaced between each changing. The changing surface is cleaned between each use. Children are never left unattended while having a diaper or clothing change. Teacher will have another adult or open door policy when changing a diaper or helping with clothes. Two and three year old children are accompanied by a teacher or assistant when going to the restroom. The four year and kindergarten children may go to the restroom without assistance. If a child has a problem and needs some sort of assistance, there must be two teachers present and/or bathroom door is open. Children will be encouraged to do as much as able on their own.

### **Discipline:**

Guidance and discipline of children is a step-by-step task for parents and teachers. Teachers are expected to help children learn about appropriate behavior by explaining and modeling what is acceptable, and by arranging and structuring the classroom in a way that facilitates this learning. Every part of the school day is considered a teachable moment, and we approach each situation as such.

When unacceptable behavior occurs, the teachers will use redirection as the primary method for guiding the student to a more acceptable behavior. When redirection does not work, or the child continues to exhibit unacceptable behavior, the teacher might choose to remove the student from the situation. This might include moving the child to a quiet spot in the room like the reading center or other place that is more calming. The teacher will also talk with the student about making a more appropriate choice before returning to the group. If behavior continues, the child will be sent to the assistant director or director to have a conversation about behavior.

If a child is continually struggling with a particular behavior that is interfering with his/her ability to succeed within the classroom, the teacher will ask for a conference with the parents to gain insight and to collaborate on ways to guide the child in a more positive direction. Having everyone on the same page is often all it takes to create a different path for the child. The director might attend this conference if requested.

Under no circumstance will threatening words, withholding of food, corporal punishment or unsupervised isolation be utilized as a method of discipline.

Biting Policy – Biting by toddlers and young two’s is usually an expression of frustration because the child does not have sufficient command of language to explain why they are upset. While teachers make every effort to avert these situations from happening and to redirect behavior, repeated biting cannot be tolerated because of the health and safety concerns of all the children in the classroom. We will deal with biting by toddlers and two’s in the following way:

- 1st offense – Child is separated in the classroom and given an opportunity to rejoin activities after being spoken to. Parent will be notified of incident.
- 2nd offense – Child is removed from classroom and parents are called.
- 3rd offense – Child is suspended from the program for two weeks.

A subsequent bite after returning from a suspension will result in an automatic dismissal from the program. As extenuating circumstances may occur, the teacher and director have the option to make changes or exceptions to the policy.

Biting by older children will be handled on a case by case basis.

Bullying Policy – Bullying will also not be tolerated and will be dealt with immediately. Any child who is bullying another will be removed from the situation and the teacher will speak with the offending child stressing how we treat others with respect and love. If the behavior continues, the parent will be notified of the situation.

#### **Donating Time:**

If you would like to donate time and be a parent volunteer, please contact your child’s teacher. We value you, our parents, and would love for you to be a part of school activities. There are many opportunities for you to be involved!

#### **Early Arrival/Early Pick-Up:**

Children may not be dropped off early. Mercy Hill Weekday Early Education is not required to be licensed by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and is exempt from licensure requirements; as such, we cannot legally operate more than 4 hours per day. Your understanding and cooperation in this area is needed and fully expected. Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

If possible, please avoid picking your child up early, as it is a disruption to the classroom routine. If an early pick-up is unavoidable, please send a note or call to let us know.

#### **Entrance Requirements**

The child’s age as of September 1 of the current school year will determine the child’s eligibility for each class. The children will remain in the same classroom for the entire year, growing up with the other children in the class and with the same teachers.

- Kindergarteners must be 5 by September 1, 2023
- Four year olds must be 4 by September 1, 2023
- Three year olds must be 3 by September 1, 2023
- Two year olds must be 2 by September 1, 2023

**Evacuation:**

In the event of a school or classroom evacuation, children will be escorted to a “safety zone” in or near the school. Attendance will be taken and parents notified of the situation. Teachers take an emergency bag which contains emergency phone numbers for each child to their destination; therefore, it is important that parents keep emergency forms updated at all times.

**Exceptional Students:**

Exceptional children will be admitted to our program only if they can be mainstreamed into the regular classroom appropriate for their age level. Admission of students with exceptionalities will be considered on a case by case basis after discussion with the Director. We welcome assistance from Cobb County Schools, Marietta City Schools, as well as, the private sector for students that have been through the assessment process and have received an IEP; however, due to the nature of our program, we may not be able to adhere to all the criteria, goals, and expectations.

**Faculty:**

Each teacher on our staff is a Christian who is committed to teaching your child in a loving way. Continuing education workshops are attended annually so teachers may be better informed on current trends and better teach your child. All teachers and assistants are required to be trained in pediatric CPR and First Aid. Staff must also periodically submit to a comprehensive background check.

**Field Trips:**

Class field trips may be taken throughout the school year. Sometimes parents may be asked to participate by driving. Parents assume full responsibility and should have current insurance coverage. Each child should be buckled individually into a seat belt or booster, if needed. Permission slips must be signed and turned into the office before any child may leave church property. If you drive and help supervise, younger siblings may not attend with you. Full attention needs to be given to the children in your care.

**Holiday Parties:**

Each classroom will participate in holiday parties. Each teacher will let parents know if volunteers are needed to help with parties and if parents need to send in any items for the parties.

**Holidays and Teacher Workdays:**

Our holidays and teacher workdays follow the Cobb County Schools calendar, with the exception of Good Friday.

**Immunizations:**

All children need to have a valid Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231) or an Affidavit of Religious Objection to Immunization (Form 2208) on file in the office in order to attend the program. Form 3231 can be obtained from your child’s doctor or the Health Department. Children entering kindergarten will also need Form 3300.

**Inclement Weather:**

In case of severe weather, we will be closed any time Cobb County Schools are closed.

**Injuries and Accidents:**

If a child has an accident at school, an accident report will be completed and sent home for the parent to sign and return. All staff members have been trained in Basic First Aid; therefore, we will administer first aid to minor scratches, bumps, and bruises. Should we question the severity of an injury, we will call the child's parent and ask the parent to come and make a decision on whether or not the child needs medical attention.

When emergency injuries arise, one parent will be contacted immediately to take the child for treatment. In the event of a severe injury where child needs immediate care, we will do the following:

1. The Director or Assistant Director will call 911
2. Follow advice of emergency medical personnel
3. Contact parent or emergency contact

**Licensing:**

Mercy Hill Weekday Early Education is not a licensed childcare facility. This program is not required to be licensed by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and is exempt from state licensure requirements.

**Loss of Water, Gas or Electricity:**

In the event of a water, gas or electricity outage, school may have to be canceled or the school day may need to end early. Parents will be contacted by a staff member if this becomes necessary.

**Messages:**

If you need to send a message to the teacher, put it in your child's folder. A reply will be returned the same way. You may also call (770)422-5450 ext. 121 to leave a message. Messages may also be emailed to [iana@mercyhill.com](mailto:iana@mercyhill.com).

**Notice of Non-Discriminatory Policy:**

Mercy Hill Weekday Early Education welcomes and admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

**Plants:**

All plants located in the preschool area will be safe and non-toxic. Plants located inside the classroom will be approved by the director.

**Registration:**

Registration for the next school year will begin in late January or early February with existing school families registering first and then registration will open to new families. Registration will be on a first come, first serve basis. A child will be placed on a class list once the enrollment form and registration fee has been received. Once classes are full, names will be added to a waiting list. Should space become available at any time during the year, families whose child is on the waiting list will be contacted to fill that space. The classes offered are subject to change based on enrollment.



**Release:**

The preschool will only release your child to the people you have listed on your release form. Please list the names of anyone who has your permission to pick up your child. If there is anyone that you **do not** want your child released to, please make a special notation. Your child will be released to either parent unless a court order is on file preventing parent from picking them up. Notifications of any changes should be made in writing. Any changes due to a special circumstance should be done in writing and only by phone in case of an emergency.

**Safety Drills:**

All classes will participate in monthly fire drills. In the first two months of school, they will be announced, and we will carefully explain to the children why we are practicing leaving the building quickly & quietly. For the remainder of the year, the drills will be unannounced. The children will also practice what to do in the event of severe weather, gas or water leak, and community crisis situations.

**Security:**

The building will be locked at all times for the safety of your children. If you need access into the building during school hours, please ring the doorbell and we will assist you in signing in for admittance. All visitors will be monitored.

To ensure the safety and security of all children and staff members, our building is equipped with a video surveillance system and security cameras are in classrooms. The cameras are intended to help promote safety and security and can assist in reviewing an incident not seen by a teacher or director. Because we insist on protecting the privacy of all children, parents, and staff, our surveillance system/security cameras are for internal purposes only. Security camera recordings will be periodically deleted, as they are on a system with a limited amount of storage.

**Schedule:**

The doors are open at 8:55am. A staff member will be available to take children to their classrooms until 9:15am. If you arrive after 9:15am, please walk your child to the front door and ring the doorbell. A child may not come into the building unsupervised. If you are going to be late for pick up, please call (770)422-5450 ext. 121 and let us know. This may help alleviate any anxiety your child may experience. A late fee of \$2.00 will be incurred for every 10 minutes that you are late beginning at 1:10pm. This fee will need to be paid either when your child is picked up or on the next school day.

**Snack and Lunch:**

Please send a nutritious snack, lunch and drink each day for your child. Lunchboxes should be labeled. Please remember to provide fork/spoon as needed. Also please send a LABELED water bottle with your child.

**Social Media:**

Due to the sensitive nature of content for social media, we request that parents NOT post pictures of other children or our teachers on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc. without their permission. You are welcome to post pictures of your own child, as that is your choice. Likewise, we would expect that any comments posted about our school would only be positive in nature.

**Tuition:**

Tuition is due in advance by the 1st day of each month. Checks should be made to Mercy Hill. Each month the payment envelope will be sent home in your child's folder. Please place your tuition check inside the envelope and return it to school. **Tuition is late if not paid by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month and will be subject to a \$25 late fee.** Be sure to talk to the Director if there are emergency circumstances. A \$30.00 charge will be added for returned checks and any future payments may be required to be paid in cash. If for any reason your child must be withdrawn, one month's notice in writing is required or one month's tuition must be paid. Mercy Hill Weekday Early Education operates solely on tuition and each child is considered enrolled for the entire year from August to May unless otherwise notified in writing. Exceptions for absence due to illness, vacations, etc. cannot be made. **The total tuition for the year can be divided by ten so that equal payments are made each month of the school year.**

Registration fees are payable upon enrollment and are non-refundable.

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>REGISTRATION FEE</u>	<u>TUITION</u>
Babies/Toddlers -2 day	\$205	\$2050 yr/\$205 mo
Two's – 2 day	\$205	\$2050 yr/\$205 mo
Two's – 4 day	\$255	\$2550 yr/\$255 mo
Three's – 2 day	\$205	\$2050 yr/\$205 mo
Three's – 3 day	\$235	\$2350 yr/\$235 mo
Three's – 5 day	\$285	\$2850 yr/\$285 mo
Fours – 5 day	\$285	\$2850 yr/\$285 mo
Kindergarten – 5 day	\$305	\$3050 yr/\$305 mo

**How Parents Can Help!**

- See that your child has adequate sleep.
- Encourage your child to eat breakfast. We realize children may not want food early, but they need nourishment in order to be at their best.
- Strive to maintain a pleasant emotional atmosphere in the mornings both at home and in the car on the way to school.
- Make sure your child attends school regularly and is on time. Try to get your child up early enough so he/she is not rushed. Let us know of any unusual situation or stress at home that may affect your child.
- Send a jacket with your child daily if needed.
- Daily check your child's school folder in order to stay updated on what they are learning and what is coming up at school.
- Talk with your child about their school day and reinforce what they are learning at school.
- Communicate with your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns.
- Do not send a child who is not feeling well to school.

## GUIDELINES CONCERNING SICKNESS

In conjunction with the privilege of teaching, we have been given the responsibility for the safety and well-being of each child in our care. The health and safety of each child is of the utmost priority to our staff.

In a group setting such as ours, parents rely on our staff to determine if children within our care are sick, showing signs of sickness, or have been exposed to other children with sickness. Therefore, in order for the welfare of ALL children to be considered, the following guidelines have been set for our program:

### Preschool Well Child Policy

A well child has:

- No fever over 100 for the last 24 hours
- No vomiting or diarrhea currently or for the last 24 hours
- No runny nose
- No cough or sore throat
- No unexplained rashes
- No skin infections (impetigo, ringworms, etc.)
- No eye infections
- No other conditions with specific diagnosis including but not limited to streptococcal infection, head lice, ringworm, chicken pox, mumps, measles, rubella, etc.

**\*\*If a child has any of these symptoms, the teacher will not be able to accept him/her into any preschool classroom.**

If a child becomes ill while in class, parents will be notified to pick him/her up immediately. Sick children will be kept in the office until a parent arrives. We cannot administer medication of any kind.

All classroom surfaces and objects that are frequently touched will be cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis. Our staff practices, teaches and reinforces healthy hygiene practices.

If a contagious disease is discovered in any of our classrooms, parents will be notified, as well as, local health officials will be consulted if needed. Mercy Hill Weekday Early Education has the right to close classrooms temporarily for intense cleaning and disinfecting.

## Parent Agreement

I have read and agree to the policies as set forth in the parent handbook of Mercy Hill Weekday Early Education Ministry.

Name of Child (Printed)

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Parent Name (Printed)

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PARENT SIGNATURE:

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Date

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Please detach and return this page to your child's teacher.