

# Welcome to Mountain Park Academy

We are glad you have chosen Mountain Park Academy on Old Tucker Road. We understand the importance of your decision to entrust us with the care and education of your child. We are not a daycare, but rather a developmental learning center that strives to stimulate and nurture your child. In any group care setting, good policies are an important part of maintaining proper health and safety. Many of our policies are the result of our effort to ensure strict compliance with state licensing regulations. This Parent Handbook outlines some basic policies that help us to better care for your child. Please read and be familiar with these policies, and do not hesitate to ask us for clarification. It is understood by enrolling your child in our center, you agree to abide by our policies and procedures.

## OUR PHILOSOPHY & THE CREATIVE CURRICULUM

We use the *Creative Curriculum*, a research-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum for preschoolers. Using this framework, our teachers are able to teach in the ways that best match how young develop and learn.

Children learn best by doing, and the *Mountain Park Academy Curriculum* uses a developmental “hands on” approach built around weekly and monthly themes. During each week, we address all areas of development: social, emotional, physical (large and small motor), cognitive and language development. Lesson plans are usually prepared weekly and posted in each classroom. There is a balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Our classrooms are up in a learning center configuration, which allows each child to choose his/her activities in the different classroom areas. The activities in each learning center are planned by the teachers to facilitate discovery learning. Our daily schedule includes large group, small group, and individual activities as well as learning center times. The children are guided and encouraged to learn new self-help skills, think for themselves, make choices, experiment, explore, make mistakes, and have a lot of fun in the process.

# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## **Enrollment**

All enrollment forms must be completed before your child may attend our school. Please inform us immediately of any changes in addresses, work and home telephone numbers, places of employment, or individuals authorized to pick up your child. Additionally, immunization form 3231 is required for each child unless we have other legal documents to support exemptions.

## **Pandemic Procedures:**

### **Procedures to follow on Drop off/ Pickup until Further Notice**

1. All adults must wear a mask upon entering the building and ONLY 1 Family in the Lobby at a time. Please wait outside and social distance.
2. Parents of Infants will be permitted to drop off in the classroom.
3. All other children will be dropped off in the lobby at the Front Door, a staff member will receive and check their temperature of each individual that steps in the building and then walk the child to the class. We will check the temperature of all staff and children in the middle of the day. All staff is checked each time they enter the building.
4. Please remember to sign your child(ren) in/out of the system.
5. All cases of COVID WILL HAVE TO BE REPORTED (MANDATORY) to the appropriate agencies.
6. If your child has any symptoms (Frequent Sneezing, Coughing, Nasal Discharge, Fever, diarrhea, etc)
  - a. Please don't bring them to School.
  - b. If we call you to have them picked up due to sickness you MUST PICK up within 1 hour NO Exceptions.
7. Our staff will have their temperature checked daily, and will be required to wear a mask and wearing gloves throughout the day. We will continue to practice our sanitizing of toys and most importantly hand washing. They too will not be permitted to come to work if they have any COVID related symptoms.
8. If you or anyone in your household has traveled then please follow the CDC guidelines in order to bring your children to the school.

### **Activities and Dismissal**

By enrolling your child at Mountain Park Academy, you as the parent or guardian give permission for your child to be involved in the activities and events at Mountain Park Academy. You further understand that Mountain Park Academy is a private school whose goal is to provide a positive, enriching preschool and after-school environment. Although rare, a situation may arise in which it becomes evident that the needs of a child cannot be met effectively by our center. A decision to dismiss a child will only happen after we feel every option has been explored. Every measure will be taken to meet the needs of a child in question, and our Center Director will assess each dismissal not only with the regard to the individual child's needs, but also the needs of all the children served. The parent will be a central figure in the discussions regarding this issue, but the decision to dismiss a child must be left to the discretion of our Center Director.

### **Payment Policy**

*Tuition is due in advance each Friday for the following week.* Monthly payments in advance (based upon the number of Mondays in a month) are accepted and encouraged. For those parents paying weekly, if tuition is not paid by Monday evening, a \$25 late fee will be added to the balance due. If tuition is not paid by Thursday evening, an additional \$25 late fee will be added to your balance due. Tuition and other fees are to be paid in full without deduction for absences of any duration or any cause, and without substitution of other days of attendance as "make-up" days. Any tuition refunds are determined on a case-by-case basis by the center owner. In the event that you do not make payments or do not give 2 weeks written notice of withdrawal, you will be given a one-time written notice of charges owed. You will then have 15 days from the notice to pay or resolve disputes with the management of Mountain Park Academy. You agree to pay any reasonable attorney's fees or collection agency fees with interest and court costs, as well as interest legally chargeable per month from the date that payment was first due.

### **Annual Registration Fee**

There is an annual Enrollment Fee of \$75 per child due on the anniversary of your start date.

### **Center Hours**

We are open Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. We ask when picking up your child, you arrive by at least 5:25 so that you may have time to gather your child's belongings and speak to your child's teacher. **We do close at 5:30 pm sharp.** Your child has had a long by this point and so have our teachers. After 6:30pm, there is a late pick-up fee of \$1 for the first ten minutes. If you have not picked up your child by 6:30 pm and all attempts to contact you and your emergency contacts have failed, Mountain Park Academy will call the Gwinnett County Police and the GA Department of Family and Child Service. After repeated late pick-ups, you will be asked to find a center that better fits your needs.

### **Holidays**

Mountain Park Academy is a year round preschool. We do observe the following holidays: New Year's Day; MLK Day; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Thanksgiving Day; the day after Thanksgiving Day; and Christmas Day. We do close early on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Regular rates apply throughout the school year.

### **Full time**

At this time, we are only accepting full time children

### **Pre-K Program – Eligibility and Enrollment Priority**

Currently, Mountain Park Academy does not participate in the Georgia Pre-K Program. We offer a private pre-K program.

### **Notifying the Center of Your Intent to Disenroll**

From the date you start, your child is considered to be enrolled in our school until we receive written notice otherwise delivered on paper or by email. A minimum two-week written notice addressed to the director, is required prior to disenrollment. The two weeks begins on the date we actually receive written notice and issue you a written receipt of such notice. You are responsible for payment for those two weeks whether your child attends school or not. This notice is common among high quality preschools and allows us to notify the family of the next child on our waiting list of an opening.

### **Inclement Weather**

In the event of unusual weather conditions such as snow or ice, there are three ways to find out if we are open or are opening late: 1) Email Communication 2) Website Notice on the Home page ([www.mountainparkacademy.com](http://www.mountainparkacademy.com))

Note: We follow the Gwinnett County School Schedule for weather related closing (.ie snow, ice warnings, flood warnings etc)

### **Computer Check In & Out**

The primary mechanism for ensuring the security of the school is strict adherence to established procedures for your child's arrival and departure, including clocking in and out on the school computer. **We ask that you always check your child in and out using the computer at the front desk.** State regulations require us to know who is in the building at all times. Please do not give others your password. Rather, have them identify themselves at the front desk before picking up your child. If another person will regularly pick up your child, we will be happy to assign them their own password to use. You may use this computer to check your tuition account balance and from time to time, you will receive other important email messages her as well.

### **Child Pick Up**

Children can only be released to parents or legal guardians, or someone authorized in writing by these persons. Please send email (include name, address and phone

number of person) to [mountainparkacademy@gmail.com](mailto:mountainparkacademy@gmail.com) to notify us if someone other than parents or authorized persons will be picking up your child. We ask that changes to your authorized pick up list be made in writing. Anyone picking up your child will be asked for a picture ID, so please make sure that individual has such an ID available when picking up.

### **Access to Your Child's Classroom**

Parents are permitted access to their child's classroom and play areas anytime their child is present unless otherwise governed by adverse circumstances such as pandemic. We request cooperation, however, in not disturbing our program.

### **Arrival and Departure**

It is important that your child's day begins on a positive note. Upon arrival, make sure your child's teacher knows your child has arrived so that we may mark them present. An authorized adult must accompany a child into and out of the building. From time to time, your child may experience some separation anxiety. Please understand that this is normal. Experts suggest you hug and comfort your child, let them know you are leaving and will see them later, and promptly leave the classroom. While leaving a crying child can be a difficult thing, most children stop crying within five minutes and your lingering in the classroom most often makes matters worse. Upon departure, please make sure your child's teacher knows you have picked up your child so we may mark them off the role.

### **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

Please label all clothing with your child's first and last name. We will make every attempt to locate any missing items however, we cannot be responsible for lost articles.

3 Year and older Pre-School students are required to wear a uniform. Khaki Bottoms and Navy Blue Collar Polo Shirts (no logos). Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, sand, weather, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One particular aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

## **Personal Belongings**

### **What to Bring**

- **Infants:** enough bottles with pre-mixed formula/breast milk labeled and dated for a day's use, Enough diapers for the week we will notify you when we need more, and at least 4 changes of clothes per day.
- **Toddlers:** 2 spill proof cups (one for water, one for milk. enough diapers for a week, we will notify you when we need more and at least two full changes of clothes per day.
- **Older Toddlers:** at least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program.
- **Preschoolers:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the center.

### **Cubbies**

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with your child's name .

### **Toys from Home**

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity.

### **Food and Birthdays**

Birthdays are important days for young children and we share your desire to make your child's day a special one. However, birthday celebrations often over-stimulate young children and we ask that some limitations be respected. We celebrate birthdays during regular afternoon snack times. Parents may provide a special snack for all the children, with advance notice and approval of your child's teacher, and are encouraged to participate in the celebration. Due to the fact that certain children have severe food allergies, please speak with your child's teacher ahead of time about the appropriateness of the snack. Peanuts, peanut butter, and snack with peanuts in them (i.e. candy bars, etc.) are prohibited due to the severity of allergies associated with that food. All juice must be 100% juice.

### **Television Time**

Our normal daily routine does not include television watching, but from time-to-time.

### **Teachers Qualification**

All teachers are required to complete.

1. First Aid/CPR every 2 years

2. State Required Health and Safety Orientation (6 hrs) with 3 months of hire date.
3. Mandated Child Abuse Reporting
4. School Staff orientation

#### Ongoing Training Requirements

1. Completed Annual 12-14 hours of continuing education including but not limited to learning concepts, curriculum, hygiene, safety and supervision.

#### **Procurement Fee for Hiring Our Teachers**

Hiring of our teachers by parents is highly discouraged because it presents a conflict of interest for the teacher. You must realize that the performance of that teacher is due to the regulations, school curriculum, group setting and supervision of the directors. There is no guarantee that you will receive the same performance if you hire that individual as a caretaker.

#### **Babysitting**

If you arrange with a staff member for off-premises care of your child, that staff member undertakes such service on her own behalf and not as a staff member of Mountain Park Academy, Mountain Park Academy offers no assurance of the fitness of its staff members for performing these services and none should be implied or inferred under any circumstances.

#### **Admission and Inclusion Policy**

We have an open enrollment policy. Our services are offered to everyone regardless of race, creed, sex, religion, disability or national origin.

## **Respectful Behavior**

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

## **Cell Phone Usage**

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with one another about your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child, other children and adults who may wish to communicate with you, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center.

## **Smoking**

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

## **Prohibited Substances**

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

## **Dangerous Weapons**

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.



## **Child Custody**

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

## **Illnesses**

Please understand that for your child's protection and the protection of our staff and other children, we strictly enforce our illness policy. We kindly request your full cooperation by not bringing in sick children and picking up sick children within *one hour* when you are called to do so. **We cannot allow children with communicable diseases in the center. A child with fever, diarrhea, vomiting or nausea must go home.** You understand that if your child is ill, including, but not limited to a severe cough or sore throat; undetermined rash or spots, boil, congestion, non-clear runny nose, pink-eye, head lice, temperature over 100 degrees, severe headaches or upset stomach, **he/she cannot be accepted into the center until well or has been without fever or other symptoms for 24 hours.** In the event your child has a communicable disease, please notify the center immediately so we may notify other parents; a release form from the doctor may be required before your child can re-enter the center. Mountain Park Academy will notify parents if a communicable disease has been introduced into the center. A child who, due to a temporary health condition, cannot play outside should remain at home. For safety reasons, we are simply not staffed to watch a single child inside while the rest of the class plays outside. A child who is too sick to go outside is too sick to be at school.

## **Medicines**

Mountain Park Academy is not required by law to administer medication, but may do so as an accommodation to parents. We prefer that parents give medicine at home and that we not be asked to give medicines at our school. Should we decide to administer medication, we will make every effort to administer medication properly; however, you agree to hold us harmless regarding this matter. We administer medication only twice daily, at 11 am and 3 pm. Our assumption is that you are administering medicines at home at 7 am and 7 pm if needed. *If your child needs medicine more than twice daily or at another time, please consider keeping them at home until they are well.*

State regulations require that all medications be: 1) in their original prescription containers or over the counter container; 2) clearly labeled with the identity of the medicine and a prescription number and/or written dosage instructions; 3) the child's

name must appear on the container itself. All medicines are to be signed into the Medicine Book at the front desk each week. The Medicine Form is valid for a 5-day period only. You agree to provide the center with all necessary information pertaining to administering medicine to your child(ren).

### **Immunizations**

We ask that your child's immunization record (Form 3231 which can be obtained from your pediatrician) be presented with enrollment forms. At the latest, it is due within 10 days of enrollment. After 10 days, we cannot continue service. This is a requirement from the Georgia Health Department and the Department of Human Resources.

### **Food and Nutrition**

Meals are included in the price of your tuition. Meals include breakfast for those who arrive before 8:30 a.m., a hot lunch, and an afternoon snack. Our meals comply with the State Minimum Nutrition Standards. We use a menu that reflects the cultural and ethnic diversity of the children in our school. Menus are prepared and displayed each week so that the parents know what their child is being served. Children are encouraged to take at least one bite of each food offered; however, they are not forced to eat. For safety reasons (i.e. children with severe allergies, etc.) and behavioral reasons (it is better all children are served the same food), no other food is allowed in the center unless there is formal agreement. If you miss your child's class breakfast or lunch, we kindly ask that you please provide a meal for your child before dropping them off, and that they finish that meal before entering the school. If your child's class is finishing their meal when you drop off, you may be asked to sit with your child in our café until they have completed their meal, after which you can escort them back to their classroom.

In the case of special dietary needs as prescribed by a physician, parents must furnish the food items. Please notify the Center Director and your child's teacher of any food allergy your child may have, including the severity of such an allergy, and what to do in the event a child accidentally ingests such food. Understand that we will make every reasonable effort to accommodate children with food allergies, but there are limits to what can be done in a large group care setting.

### **Biting Policy**

Even in the best preschool settings, periodic outbreaks of biting occur among infant and toddlers, and sometimes even among preschoolers. This is an unavoidable occurrence in groups of young children. When biting happens, it can be very scary, frustrating, and stressful for children, parents, and teachers. Understand that this is not an unusual phenomenon among children who are going through the oral stage of their development. It is also not something to blame on children, parents, or teachers and there are no quick and easy solutions.

Our policy for handling a biting incident is as follows:

- 1) The biter is immediately removed from the group with a firm "NO." The bitten child is consoled and the bitten area washed with soap and water. If necessary, ice is applied to reduce any swelling or bruising. The biter is not

- allowed to return to play and is talked to on a level that he/she can understand, then redirected.
- 2) A written incident report is given to parents of all children involved when they are picked up that day. The name of the biting child is not released because it serves no useful purpose and can make an already difficult situation more difficult.
  - 3) We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for patterns, in an effort to prevent further biting behavior.
  - 4) We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in an appropriate manner.
  - 5) We try to adapt environment and work with parents to reduce any child stress.
  - 6) We make special efforts to protect potential biting victims.

We try to make every effort to extinguish the behavior quickly and to balance our commitment to the family of the biting child to that of other families. Only after we feel we have made every effort to make the program work for the biting child do we consider asking a family to withdraw the child.

### **Boo Boo Reports**

Although many precautions are taken to ensure a safe environment, occasional incidents do and will occur as children explore the world around them. If an incident occurs, first aid is administered and a Boo Boo Report is filled out and a copy is given to you. This report will describe the nature of the incident and the follow-up care that was provided. Please understand that in a group care setting, we do witness most incidents, but occasionally there may be an incident that we do not see.

### **Emergency Information**

Keeping updated emergency contact information is extremely important. This includes all work, home, and cell phone numbers for both parents and any other emergency contacts. We strive to maintain a safe environment for your child and make every attempt to be prepared to handle emergency situations. Our staff is trained in first aid and CPR. An emergency plan is posted in each classroom. We conduct regular fire drills and tornado drills. The local fire department makes annual inspections with recommendations for improved safety.

### **Emergency Medical Care**

Should your child become ill during the time that he/she is in the care of Mountain Park Academy or suffer an accident of any nature, the center shall undertake to contact the parent or guardian immediately and shall be authorized to secure such medical attention, transportation, and care for the child as may be necessary. (The parent shall assume responsibility for the cost of any such care.) Mountain Park Academy uses Emory Eastside (Snellville) as its designated emergency care center; however, the Emergency Staff would determine where to transport the child based on what has happened to the child. You agree to keep the center informed in writing as to changes in your telephone numbers (cell, pager, work, home) as well as those of emergency contacts.

### **Naptime / Rest Time**

Adequate rest or quiet time is a very important part of a young, growing child's day. Infants are always allowed to nap as needed, but as your child graduates to one nap per day beginning in our toddler rooms, a rest period will follow each day after lunch. All children one year or older are assigned their own mat and are encouraged to sleep or rest for a period of one to two hours or longer if needed, depending on the individual child. Blankets and/or stuffed animals that are special to your child are encouraged to help your child feel more comfortable and secure. Children who do not nap are allowed to quietly read a book or have a soft toy but must lay on their mats.

### **Mandated Reporting Information**

Teachers and Directors are required by law to report evidence of child neglect and abuse. Those who fail to report according to state regulations can be held accountable under the law. No one, including school management and/or a child's parents can interfere with this reporting requirement.

### **Toilet Training**

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

### **Ratios**

#### **Children are supervised at all times. We adhere to state ratios**

<12 months	6:1
13-26 months	8:1
27-35 months	10:1
36-PreK	15:1

### **Parking Lot Safety**

Please drive slowly and cautiously in our parking lot for the safety of our children and their parents. It is recommended that you hold your child's hand or carry them as you walk to your car. Please do not park in or block the Fire Lane and be mindful of parking in front of the school and blocking other cars. If you plan to be in the school for a while, please park in a designated space to keep traffic flowing smoothly.



# PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

## **Daily Reports**

Each day in most classrooms, you will receive a Daily Report that has details about your child's day including how they ate, slept, played, and what they learned. For younger children, the report includes information on diaper changes. Since everything about a child's day cannot be put on paper, we encourage you to contact your child's teacher if you have any specific questions.

## **Lesson Plans**

Each classroom has weekly lesson plans posted for parent review. These lesson plans detail the classroom activities for the week.

## **Parent Grievance Procedure**

If an issue arises that your child's teacher cannot address, we ask that you notify the Center Director. If you still feel your issue has not been addressed properly, please feel free to contact the owner.