



MILLBROOK
COMMUNITY
PRESCHOOL

AT GRACE CHURCH

Family Handbook

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Contents

Letter from the Director

Program Philosophy

School Calendar

Daily Schedule

Communication

General Information

Arrival and Departure Policy

Child Safety

Closing Policy

Tuition Schedule and Payment Policy

Behavior Policy

Health Policy



Dear Preschool Family,

Welcome! At Millbrook Community Preschool at Grace Church, we are dedicated to creating a positive learning environment, where each child is seen as unique, and feels comfortable, cared for and respected. We uphold the central role of play in the early years, and will create many exciting and creative opportunities for your child to learn. We are thrilled to welcome your child to our beautiful school facility—one that mirrors our ethos—as we continue a tradition of excellence in early learning in Millbrook.

There are so many opportunities for you to become involved in your child's school experience, if you so desire. We welcome family members as partners in education. Come read a story, lead a project, teach us a song or a game, join us on a field trip, or share your own talents and family traditions. There are endless possibilities for enrichment from within our school community, and your involvement ensures this. There are also possibilities for greater involvement as class representatives, who support us in planning fun seasonal events, service projects, and fundraising activities.

I hope you will always feel free to talk to me when you have questions, concerns or insights. I thank you for entrusting us with the care of your child's first school experience and will endeavor to make it, above all, a joyful one for your child.

With deepest gratitude,

Deborah Coconis
Director

Program Philosophy

Our philosophy is that preschool aged children are bright and eager learners and should be encouraged to develop their strengths. In an enriching atmosphere, children are encouraged to think of their teachers and their friends as their school family. A friendly and nurturing environment supports our youngest learners as they take their first steps on a lifelong love of learning.

The goal of the Millbrook Community Preschool at Grace Program is to use theme-based, hands-on curriculum to encourage each child's growth in the four major developmental areas: cognitive, linguistic, motor, and social skills. The cornerstone of this philosophy is a whole-child approach to learning through play. Specifically, we strive:

- to encourage each child's natural curiosity about the world, by creating rich learning opportunities every day, fostering a lifelong love of learning
- to create a warm and loving home away from home, a space where children feel included, comfortable and safe to ask questions, take risks, explore their environment, and make connections with the children and adults in their life
- to nurture an environment which supports a child's sense of self-worth, where each child is valued and cherished; where their stories, feelings, opinions, observations, and concerns are treated and respected and validated
- to encourage greater self-confidence and independence, by allowing children to make choices, and develop self-help skills
- to promote empathy and respect for others by guiding children through opportunities to share, take turns, and practice self-control, follow rules and routines
- to provide a variety of activities aimed at developing each child's fine motor and gross motor skills
- to recognize and encourage each child's unique strengths while helping him or her to build additional skills in less developed areas of growth

At Millbrook Community Preschool at Grace, children learn through play. Each morning, children gather with all the teachers in group circle time. Here, language arts and math concepts are explored through age-appropriate morning rituals (songs, children's literature, flag, calendar and weather). Children take ownership of this space with special jobs and themes covered and explored with their teachers. Before and after

this group circle time, children will have the opportunity to move through various learning center activities in the open play area. This is the time that children learn to negotiate with their peers and make choices, while moving between experiences in art and creative materials, tactile exploration, sand and water play, block play, dramatic play, science and fine motor skills and activities, cooking and baking, music and movement. Every day will include outdoor play for the development of gross motor skills, and when weather prohibits playground use, active play opportunities will be created for the children in the large hall space upstairs. Children spend additional time with teachers in their specific age group working on age appropriate skills and learning activities.

Monthly themes enhance the learning and play opportunities for the children. Each month, the theme and centers will reflect our developmental goals for the children. We will keep you informed as these themes evolve throughout the year, and welcome any enrichment through family input.

2021-2022 School Calendar Schedule

| | |
|----------------|--|
| September 9 | Orientation 10:00 |
| September 10 | First Day of School |
| October 11 | School Closed - Columbus Day/Indigenous People's Day |
| November 11 | School Closed - Veterans' Day |
| November 25-26 | Thanksgiving Recess |
| December 24-31 | Winter Recess |
| January 17 | School Closed - Martin Luther King's Birthday |
| February 21 | School Closed - Presidents' Day |
| March 11 | School Closed – Professional Development |
| April 11-15 | School Closed - Spring Recess |
| May 30 | School Closed - Memorial Day |
| June 17 | Last Day of School/Graduation |

Daily Schedule

| Time | Activity |
|---------------------------|--|
| 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. | <p>Drop-off and free play outdoors</p> <p><i>Please enter from Franklin Avenue and pull into the drive, stopping in front of the Parish Hall. A teacher will meet your car and escort your child into the playground. Alternatively, you may park in the lower lot and walk your child to the playground. However, <u>do not pass cars unloading in front of you. Please wait until the car ahead of you has proceeded before parking in the lower lot. Do not park and leave your car in front of the building at arrival time. You will block the flow of traffic.</u></i></p> |
| 9:30 – 10:00 a.m. | <p>Circle Time (approximately 30 minutes). Songs, stories, creative movement, finger plays, sharing time, calendar, weather, flag, exploration of curricular theme through group numeracy/literacy/science/social studies activities.</p> |
| 10:00 - 10:30 a.m. | <p>Movement through Learning Centers (approximately 30 minutes). Literacy/language arts, math/science tables, creative play centers (dramatic play, blocks, trains), sensory/sand/water play.</p> <p>Self-guided play in small groups with peers and teachers. Children will engage in these activities through self-led rotations, but will be encouraged to try a variety of activities. Children will also engage in gross motor activities or special enrichment classes (art projects, music and movement, cookery workshops, etc.) during this time.</p> |
| 10:30 – 11:00 a.m. | <p>Clean-up, Hand-washing, Snack (approximately 30 minutes).</p> |
| 11:00 - 11:30 a.m. | <p>Group activity with class (approximately 30 minutes). Scholastic, handwriting practice, holiday crafts, tricycles upstairs, etc.</p> |
| 11:30 - 11:50 a.m. | <p>Playground Time (approximately 20 minutes) or physical fitness activities indoors in Parish Hall (in inclement weather) to encourage large motor development and social skills.</p> |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 11:50 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. | Pick-up by Parents <i>Please STAY in your car and drive up to the playground gates (if children are outdoors, or school sidewalk (if children are indoors)). Your child's teacher will bring your child to your car. This is required of all families for safety/security reasons. DO NOT PASS CARS IN FRONT OF YOU WHO ARE LOADING CHILDREN! You should enter from Franklin Ave.</i> |
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Communication

We endeavor to maintain closely connected to all parents throughout the year. Please never hesitate to reach out to your child's teachers at any point if you have a question, concern, or insight to share.

Phone Calls

Staff do not answer or make calls from their personal cell phones during the hours of 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., except in the event of an emergency. To report an absence, please call the school landline at 677-5325. There is an answering service attached to this phone, and it is checked daily by staff.

If you wish to speak to your child's teacher with any questions and concerns, please feel free to send a note, request a call during drop off or pickup, email the director, or call the school number before or after the children are in session. We will do our utmost to speak to you as soon as possible, but ask you to respect our need to be fully present to the children in our care while school is in session.

Communication Folders

Your child will bring a communication folder to and from school each day. Please check this for newsletters and artwork, and please use it to send tuition payments in.

Please also use folders to send written requests to add a designated pickup nominee. We must receive this in writing, or cannot release a child from school. Anyone coming to pick up your child should be prepared to show official photo ID.

Newsletters

Monthly newsletters, delivered electronically, will give families an overview of the themes we will be exploring in school, as well as information about any special events. Please reinforce our school curriculum at home by reading around these themes with your little one.

remind.com

We will be using the remind.com service to deliver text communication to your phone for short school announcements. We will also be able to occasionally send photos of your child enjoying their school day! Please sign using the enrollment codes given by the school.

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General Information

Contact Phone Numbers

It is vital that, in case of an individual or national emergency, we are able to reach you or someone you designate during the hours that your child is at MCP at Grace. Be complete and accurate when providing contact numbers, and please update information as it changes. Cell phone numbers should be provided as well. Please notify the director when phone numbers or addresses change so that records can be kept current.

Extra Clothing

An extra set of clothing (socks, underwear, shirt, pants), is required to be kept at school. You should put the clothing into a large (clear) Ziploc bag and clearly label the bag with your child's name and class. Remember to promptly replenish any clothing sent home soiled. Also, a pair of grip soled slippers or house shoes/sneakers, suitable for indoor play, must be kept in school at all times.

Appropriate Clothing

Your child should be dressed appropriately for outdoor play as it is a part of our daily program. During the winter, your child needs a hat, mittens, boots, coat, and snow pants. During other seasons, your child needs appropriate outerwear and boots for rainy or muddy days. **Children must at all times be dressed safely and appropriately for comfort, movement, play and art activities.** Smocks will be used for messy art projects, but preschool is not the place for 'best' clothes. We want children to experience play without concern for keeping their clothes perfect. For safety reasons, please do not send your child to school in flip flops, heels or open-slippers/house shoes/or sneakers provided by you. These will remain in school for the year, in an effort to keep our floors clean for play.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special in preschool. We welcome you to be a part of your child's day. If you wish to send in a special birthday snack, let your teacher know in advance in order to avoid double celebrations in the same day on the same class. **We do ask that birthday treats be kept small** (e.g. mini cupcakes, muffins, or cookies). We will celebrate all summer birthdays on scheduled days during May/June.

Snack

We ask that you please provide your own child's snack and a filled water bottle daily. Snack time is a wonderful opportunity for children to develop social skills, table manners, and practice self-help skills. We will focus on hand washing with soap and water (not hand sanitizer) before eating.

We feel that it is important that snack be a modest, child-sized portion of a healthy and nutritious snack. Cut up fresh fruit and vegetables, string cheese, yogurt, whole grain crackers with cheese, cereal, raisins, seed and nut butters, and small homemade muffins are ideal choices.

Absences

Please call us at 845-677-5325 if your child is not going to attend on a scheduled day.

Bags and Totes

Please send a tote or backpack with your child. We will send communication from the staff and your child's projects home in their bag.

Personal Belongings

Please encourage your child to leave their toys at home. We have many fun and educational toys for your child to play with at MCP at Grace. We cannot be responsible for lost or broken toys sent to school.

Conferences

One day during the school year is set aside for parent/teacher conferences. However, if at any time during the year you have any concerns about your child, please feel free to approach your child's teacher to arrange a phone conversation or meeting. A note in your child's bag, or a quick request at drop off or pick up will be honored with a prompt follow up with a phone call and/or meeting. **Please understand that, in the interest of providing the best possible classroom experience for every child enrolled at MCP at Grace, all teachers must be in the classroom between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. and cannot meet with families during these hours.**

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Arrival and Departure Policy

Arrival (from 9:00-9:15 a.m.)

- We recommend that you use our “drop off” system for morning arrival. To do so: Enter the church parking lot off of Franklin Avenue. Stay in a single line of traffic. When your car is near the front sidewalk, we will come to assist your child out of the car and onto the playground.
- Please pull as close to the car in front of you as you can. This will help alleviate traffic flow problems that sometimes spill out into the parking lot. We need everyone’s cooperation to keep morning arrival safe.
- Do not pass the car in front of you. We want to get every child into school safely and as efficiently as possible.

You are welcome to park and walk your child to the playground. To do so, wait until the car in front of you has proceeded and do not pass cars in line. Proceed to the lower parking lot and hold your child’s hand as you escort them to the playground. You may not park in front of the building, no matter how brief your stay, as you will be blocking the traffic flow.

Departure (11:50 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)

Departure takes place between 11:50 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. ALL preschool children must be picked up no later than 12:10 p.m.

Children are dismissed from the playground gate into waiting vehicles, or walked from the school to the car by a staff member after the driver has been positively identified. We will check driver’s licenses if necessary until we are familiar with your child’s designated pickup driver, nominated by you on your dismissal form.

A member of the teaching staff will bring your child to your car when you arrive. Alternatively, you may park your car on the lower lot and walk up to the playground gate (or school entrance if we are indoors) to pick up your child.

The safety of dismissal requires that you stay in the line of traffic. You may not pull out and pass a car in front of you.

If you have a need to drop off or pick up your child earlier than the normal drop-off time or after regular pick-up time, please contact the preschool director. If there is a pattern of late pick up (after 12:10 p.m.) which is not previously communicated with the preschool staff, a fee of \$20 per day will be applied to the family's account at the discretion of the preschool. A chronically late pattern will result in the preschool contract being terminated by the school.

Release Policy

MCP at Grace will release your child **only** to the following:

- parents/legal guardians indicated on your child's contract
- persons specified in writing on an authorized pick-up list on the enrollment form

If someone other than the above is to pick up your child, written permission from the parent must arrive with the child at school that morning. We will ask the person to provide proper identification upon arrival. You may update this list at any time by sending a written note or seeing the director.

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Child Safety — Please Be Advised

Car Seats/Seat Belts

All children are required to be secured in the back seat of a vehicle. Children under age 4 are to be in a properly fitted child safety seat. Children ages 4 and over should be in a booster seat appropriate to their height and weight. Failure to comply is a violation of NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law.

Children in Unattended Vehicles

It is a violation of NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law and the Penal Law (Endangering the Welfare of a Child) to leave your child alone in a vehicle. The seriousness is compounded when the child is left in a running vehicle. For the sake of a bit of extra time, your child's safety should never be compromised. Moreover, you risk being reported to Child Protective Services or the police when you leave a child alone in a vehicle.

Alcohol Policy

It is illegal for a child to ride in a vehicle with an adult who is intoxicated. Be advised that if a staff member suspects that a parent or other authorized person who is picking up a child from the preschool is intoxicated, our staff will not release the child until another designated family member or emergency contact comes to the school. We will also be obligated to report the suspected driver to the police immediately.

No Smoking Policy

The building and grounds of Grace Church are smoke-free zones. These include the facilities used by MCP at Grace. You must extinguish all smoking materials prior to entering the Grace Church property.

As preschool educators at MCP at Grace, our staff are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Please cooperate with the above laws of New York State and practice child safety.

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Closing Policy

Snow/Weather Closings

MCP at Grace is CLOSED when Millbrook Central School District announces a 3 hour delay or closing due to inclement weather. Please refer to www.cancellations.com for up-to-the-minute reports. All families will be informed by the Remind app when there is a delay or cancellation.

The school will open from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. when the district is on a 2 hour delay. In this instance, children must bring a packed lunch to school.

The school will open from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. when the district is on a 1 hour delay.

Emergency Closings

If ever there were an emergency evacuation or closing, we would inform all families. We will rehearse emergency evacuations throughout the year with all children.

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Tuition Schedule & Payment Policies

Monthly tuition payments are due on the **first school day of the month**. **Please make all checks out to MCP @ Grace Church.**

2021-2022 Tuition Schedule:

2 days per week \$225 per month

3 days per week \$330 per month

4 days per week \$410 per month

5 days per week \$495 per month

If more than one sibling is enrolled simultaneously, a 10% discount is applied.

Please note:

- As per the contract terms, deposit payments are applied to the June tuition
- \$25 charge for returned checks may be applied
- \$25 charge for payments received after the 15th of the month may be applied

If there is ever a situation which is leading to financial strain in the home and affecting your ability to meet payment, please do not hesitate to contact the director.

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Behavior Policy

As children develop and grow, they may engage in physical ways to express their emotions, wants or needs. As they begin to master language, we try to work with each child to encourage the use of verbal communication and important social skills, such as sharing and compromise.

Each child has the right to feel safe and secure at MCP at Grace. We encourage the children to treat their teachers and their peers as friends. There are certain behaviors that are unacceptable in our program. These include:

- biting, hitting, kicking, punching, pinching, spitting, or other non-accidental physical injury to another child or staff member;
- foul or inappropriate language; • disregard for basic safety rules;
- a child's inability to follow teacher directions/basic rules of the program.

If unacceptable behavior occurs, the teacher or staff members will address it first with the child, carefully reviewing the rules and what better alternative behaviors the child could use next time. Usually, the problem will not continue or escalate. However, if the behavior does not improve, we will follow this protocol:

First, the teacher discusses the situation with the parent(s) or guardian(s) and the director is advised of the situation. If the problem continues following a conversation with the parent(s) or guardian(s), the director will confer with the parents regarding strategies to address the behavior. A time frame will be established for the behavior to cease. A written summary of the meeting will be provided to all in attendance.

If the problem behavior persists beyond the time frame established, it becomes apparent that there is an incorrect match of child and program. The child is unable to follow basic MCP policies and contracted services will be terminated.

The staff at MCP at Grace makes every effort to work in partnership with families when dealing with behavioral issues. However, the well-being of the entire class must be maintained and serious behavioral problems which cause injury will not be tolerated.

Please understand that, in the interest of providing the best possible classroom experience for every child enrolled at MCP at Grace, the director and staff must be in the classroom between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. and cannot meet with families during these hours. Conferences between family members and staff at MCP at Grace must be scheduled in advance for times in which school is not in session.

Health Policies

Our health policies serve an important purpose: to protect and benefit all children who attend the preschool program. As a parent or legal guardian, you have the obligation of understanding and complying with these policies.

*Part of the partnership between MCP and our families involves being able to reach a responsible adult in case of an emergency or a child's illness. **Please provide us with correct daytime or cell numbers and useful, reachable back-up numbers to call if you are unable to be reached.** If you do not have adequate back-up support, you should have a reliable cell phone or pager number.*

Repeated failure to comply with our health policies will be considered a breach of contract and will result in termination of service.

Children who develop symptoms of illness during the day will be isolated. The parents will be called to arrange prompt pick-up. We are not staffed to care for a sick child in isolation for an extended period of time. Telling the teacher or director that you'll be there "in an hour or two" is considered unacceptable. If you work a significant distance from the preschool, you should have an active back-up system in place to deal with potential illness or injury.

If a child is seriously injured or becomes seriously ill very rapidly, the Rescue Squad is called. The parent is notified and consulted (*hence, the great importance of accurate contact information*) about treatment. If your child requires transportation to a hospital, a staff member accompanies the child and brings his/her file as completed with the contract.

Medication Administration

NO medications can be administered by MCP at Grace staff.

Contagious Conditions Prohibiting Preschool Attendance

Covid-19

The director will provide up to date, written guidance (based on CDC recommendations) as to the school's current Covid-19 policies and procedures.

Vomiting

If your child has a bout of vomiting, he/she may not attend preschool until the vomiting has ceased for 24 hours. If a child begins to vomit while at preschool, the parent or guardian is called to pick up the child immediately. The child may not return to preschool until the vomiting has ceased for a full 24 hours.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be a highly contagious condition in a group setting. If your child has diarrhea, s/he may not attend preschool until it has ceased for 24 hours. If your child has diarrhea while at preschool, the parent or guardian is called to pick up the child immediately. The child may not return to preschool until the diarrhea has ceased for a full 24 hours.

Fever

If your child develops a fever, do not send him/her back to preschool until 24 hours after the fever stops. If a child appears to develop a fever while at preschool, we will take his/her temperature under the arm. If the child's ancillary temperature is 100°F or higher, the parent or guardian is called to pick up the child immediately. The child may not return to preschool until the fever has ceased **WITHOUT MEDICATION** for a full 24 hours.

Rashes

Your child will not be admitted to preschool with an undiagnosed rash. A doctor's note certifying that the condition is not contagious is required in order for your child to return to school.

Chicken Pox

Your child may return to the preschool when all blisters are dry and scabbed over.

Strep (including strep throat and scarlet fever)

Your child may return to preschool after a full 24 hours of antibiotic medication has been administered.

Impetigo

Symptoms include golden, crusty sore or pimple-like spots that develop watery heads, break, and form crusted areas. Impetigo often occurs on the face, hands, legs, feet, or buttocks. It spreads rapidly if not treated and is highly contagious. The child may not attend preschool until the treatment has begun and a doctor's note certifies that s/he is no longer contagious and may attend our program.

“Pink Eye” (Conjunctivitis)

Symptoms include red, irritated, itchy eye(s) and a yellow/green mucous discharge that makes the eye stick. Often a child will wake up with the eye(s) stuck shut. “Pink Eye” is highly contagious and must be treated with prescription eye drops. If our staff suspects that your child has “pink eye,” you will be called to come get your child immediately. It is in everyone's best interest (children and teachers) to be honest about treating your child

at home for pink eye. Using old drops and sending the child to school puts everyone at the preschool in danger of catching pink eye. PLEASE let our staff know when you are treating your child for “pink eye.” Bring a doctor’s note giving the date that the child is able to return to preschool, or, if medication was prescribed over the phone, bring the bottle of medicine to show the date when the prescription was ordered to verify that treatment has begun. The child may not return to preschool until a full 24 hours after the treatment has begun.

Head Lice (Pediculosis)

It is not unusual to discover a case of head lice in a child who attends school. It is not a reflection of personal hygiene or living conditions. ***Head lice is an extremely contagious condition.*** If your child contracts head lice, it is your obligation to notify our staff immediately. If it is discovered at preschool, you will be contacted to pick up your child promptly. **Treatment** steps for head lice are outlined below:

A pediculocidal shampoo can be used to kill the lice and nits (eggs). Follow the exact directions on the box. After using the shampoo, olive oil is helpful in loosening the nits. Nits must be removed by using a metal fine-tooth comb. Mechanical removal of lice and nits is the most effective means of ridding the condition. Pesticidal treatments often fail. Diligent combing, several times daily, until the scalp and hair are clear is the only real solution. This combing should continue for several weeks to address the possibility of recurrence.

Machine wash all clothing and bedding on the hot setting. Soak combs and brushes in hot, soapy water. Put non-washable pillows in a dryer on high for 2 minutes. Vacuum your home thoroughly, including all rugs, mattresses, upholstered furniture, your car and car seats. Put all stuffed animals, etc. in sealed plastic bags for 2-3 weeks. You should be very diligent in this effort, as lice will reappear if not totally extinguished. Examine all family members. Use the special shampoo only when lice are found, not as a preventative. Keep a close watch for 2-3 weeks.

In order to return to preschool, your child must be free of all nits. You must bring your child to the director, where s/he will be checked to make sure that all nits are gone. This may require an earlier arrival than usual. Please pre-arrange with the director for an available time for her to check your child.