



A nurturing place to play, explore and learn

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

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Dear Parents:

Welcome to another exciting year at Rock Spring Preschool, a nurturing place to play, explore and learn! The Preschool Board and Staff join me in thanking you for choosing our school for your child's early education. Your child is a precious gift, and we take your trust and confidence in us very seriously.

The teachers and I want to extend an invitation to all parents to visit our classrooms, participate in special celebrations, and to be an active member of our parent volunteer organization. As a ministry of Rock Spring Presbyterian Church, we also invite you to participate in all activities and ministries of the church.

Please read the handbook carefully. Our policies, procedures, mission and goals are clearly outlined, and should answer most frequently asked questions. I look forward to getting to know each student and family during the coming year. I am excited to see what God has in store for us! My door is always open. Please let me know if I can help you in any way.

Warmly,

Sally C. LeSage, Director
404-436-4477 (school mobile)
404-875-8270 (school office)
director@RockSpringPreschool.com

History

Rock Spring Preschool has been serving children in Atlanta for over 40 years. An extension of the Outreach Ministry of Rock Spring Presbyterian Church, the “Kids Day Out” (KDO) program originated in the home of parishioner Savilla Gowing. Since then, the program has grown to serve 30 – 50 children each year. Rock Spring Preschool is well-known as a diverse preschool community, drawing international families and teachers to its close-knit family atmosphere.

Mission Statement

The mission of Rock Spring Preschool (RSP), a ministry of outreach from Rock Spring Presbyterian Church (RSPC), is to provide an outstanding early learning preschool service to our community as a reflection of our faith and love.

Love and respect are shown to each child, who is understood to be unique and wonderful. Each child is nurtured through developmentally age-appropriate activities designed to meet their social, physical, emotional, spiritual and cognitive growth in a safe and enriching environment.

We welcome children and families from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. We do this by emphasizing values such as sharing, respect for others, perseverance, love of self and others, cooperation and a sense of stewardship of the world.

Philosophy

- Children learn and develop at their own rate and in their own style
- Creativity and the freedom to explore, experiment and problem solve will foster and enhance a child’s cognitive development
- Children learn best in an environment that is safe and nurturing
- Children learn best when they are viewed as individuals and treated with respect, acceptance and caring
- Learning is enhanced when children are actively involved and encouraged to make choices
- Children learn through play using their senses
- Self-confidence directly relates to the ability to learn

As a vital extension and continuation of the mission and purposes of the Rock Spring Presbyterian Church, the Rock Spring Preschool program shall encourage and stimulate, in an age appropriate manner, the love of God, appreciation for the Christian faith, respect for the traditions of many faiths and strong values such as self-respect, service, protection of the environment, and respect for others.

The manner in which RSP provides this spiritual foundation will be guided by the RSP Director, Pastor, and Board. Possibilities for building essential spiritual foundation include the regular reading of age appropriate Bible stories within the classrooms, monthly character traits and scripture as well as weekly Chapel Service.

GENERAL INFORMATION

School Hours

Monday-Friday 9:00 am - 12:45 pm

- morning drop off is from 9 – 9:15 am and afternoon pick up is from 12:45 – 1pm

Programs

Toddlers

- Must be 1 before September 1, two days/week

Young Two Year Olds

- Must be 2 before December 31; two days/ week until January; then may be able to add days based on enrollment, at the Director's discretion

Two Year Olds and Young Threes

- Must be 2 before September 1, or 3s who are not yet toilet trained; may attend 2 – 5 days per week

Three Year Olds

- Must be 3 before September 1 and be fully, independently toilet trained (with minimal assistance)

Pre-Kindergarten

- Must be 4 before September 1; 5 day class

Pre-Primary

- Kindergarten curriculum for children turning 5 by September 1; 5 day class; may also be used for those with "late" birthdays who are deemed "not ready" for kindergarten, but need an additional year of Preschool before transitioning.

POLICIES

Admission Policy

Admission to Rock Spring Preschool is made without regard to race, color, creed, sex, or national origin. We accept children from 12 months through age 6. All children who are admitted to RSP must provide a current health certificate and immunization record. In addition, the following forms must be completed and submitted prior to a student attending preschool: registration form, financial and media agreement, medical and emergency information form, and parent-preschool agreement.

Withdrawals

RSP assumes you are enrolling your child for the entire school year, and budgets are set and teachers are hired accordingly. After the school year begins, one month's notice and one additional month's tuition payment are required before a child may be withdrawn. If you withdraw your child in April or May of the school year, you will be responsible for the tuition of these two months. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE REFUNDS OR ALLOWANCES FOR ABSENCES DUE TO ILLNESS OR TRAVEL.

Tuition & Late Fees

Tuition payments may be made on a monthly debit basis using Tuition Express or on a monthly basis by personal check, money order, or cash. If you pay by personal check, please include the \$5.00 check fee, or you will be billed for it the following month. All tuition is due by the fifteenth of the month for the following month (December tuition due November 15). A \$5.00 late fee is made for tuition paid after the fifteenth of the month. A \$25.00 late fee is charged for tuition payments more than thirty days late. A \$30 fee is charged for any returned NSF checks. Failure to make scheduled tuition payments can result in your child's dismissal from the program. Fees for late pick-ups, \$10.00 flat rate for each occurrence, are added to the next month's bill.

Privacy Policy

All information and records concerning your child are considered confidential and will only be accessible to you, our staff, and persons designated by national validation and state licensing agencies. We will provide information to others only with your written consent.

Potty Training

We require that all children in our 3 year old classes be potty trained prior to the beginning of the school year. Our definition of potty trained is any child that can verbally communicate to the teacher that he or she needs to use the bathroom and can (mostly) use the potty independently. Generally, if a child is free of accidents for two weeks at home, he or she is ready for a school setting. We prefer NO PULL UPS be used. Occasional accidents are understandable at these ages. We will continue to work with you and your young three-year-olds as they master this self help skill.

HEALTH, EMERGENCY AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

Health Certificates

Every child admitted to our school must provide a current health certificate and/or immunization record.

Emergency Contact

Please be sure that your emergency contact information is current. We expect to be able to reach you or someone on your emergency call list in a timely manner. Emergency contacts should have local phone numbers and be able to pick up your child from school if you are unavailable. Medical forms and emergency consent forms MUST be on file before a child may be admitted to class.

Illness

If your child shows any signs of illness (fever, vomiting, diarrhea, persistent cough, rash, etc.), please do not bring him/her to school. Your child must be free of the above listed signs of illness for at least 24 hours before he/she can return to school.

If your child becomes ill at school, we will call you. If your child is not well enough to play outside, please do not send him/her to school.

Allergies

If your child suffers from an allergy, please notify us in writing, and we will post this in the classroom for the benefit of the teachers, staff, and substitute teachers. If your child requires medication for allergies, please contact us for an "Authorization for Medication" form. This form must be filled out and returned to school before your child attends class. Without this completed form, we cannot administer Epi-pens, asthma medication, etc.

Injuries

Scratches and scrapes, which are inevitable when children play, will be cleaned and if necessary covered with a bandage. In the case of an accidental injury of a more serious nature, we will make an immediate attempt to contact the parents and to call your child's physician if necessary.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Teachers and staff are required by law to report any suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation or deprivation of a child to the Department of Children and Family Services.

School Records

To ensure that our records and emergency contact information are always correct, please contact the office throughout the school year if your phone numbers or address changes.

STUDENT CONDUCT

Children attending RSP will be expected to show respect for other students, teachers and church personnel. Students are expected to respect and care for school facilities, properties and materials.

Behaviors such as pushing other students, fighting or any careless or malicious action, which results in injury to another person or destroys school or church property are inappropriate. Defiance of authority, disruptive actions and the use of profane, obscene or abusive language are unacceptable.

Discipline

At RSP, children are constantly engaged and involved in activities that interest them. Therefore, negative behavior is seldom an issue. Positive behavior is encouraged through several strategies:

- Redirection and substitutions – we will focus the child's attention on something new, or offer a new activity when appropriate
- Model and Problem Solve – show examples of expected behavior and offer suggestions
- Logical Consequences – match the consequence to the behavior, for example, if a child is throwing blocks instead of building with them, he or she may be asked to move to a different activity center.
- Time Out – have child sit alone to help get feelings under control
- Office visit – if negative behavior continues, a visit with the Director and parent notification may be necessary.

Biting

Occasionally, some children will bite or scratch because of their inability to verbally communicate well. Our teachers are trained to handle this type of behavior (generally in the 2 year old classes.)

If a child bites or scratches once or infrequently, then it will be handled in the classroom and notes will be sent home with all children involved. If behavior continues, director may have a "child shadow" sit in with the child for several days in order to stop the behavior before it happens. Parents will be charged the substitute rate to pay for this service. Parents of all children involved will be notified of the incidents. If the behavior does not improve in a reasonable amount of time, parents may be asked to take the child out of school until he/she can learn to control the behavior.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Curriculum

RSP curriculum is based on the best teaching practices from multiple disciplines. Because our teachers are trained in a variety of well-respected programs such as Creative Curriculum, Montessori, Orton-Gillingham, Emilio-Reggio, and Handwriting Without Tears, they use a combination of best teaching practices tailored for each classroom. Our curriculum includes weekly music, art and drama. In addition to the fine arts, we are also teaching using a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) perspective to encourage critical thinking skills, problem solving and self-motivation.

Ratios

At RSP, we pride ourselves on our small class sizes, and strive for our teacher-to-student ratios to remain below the state standards. Our ratios may vary slightly during the year, at the Director's discretion, but we will always monitor class sizes to affect the best possible learning environment for children at every level.

Teachers

Our teachers are trained and experienced in working with children. Lead teachers bring a variety of talents and education to our program. Educational credentials include Child Development Associate (CDA), Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, and Master's Degree. These educational achievements include Early Childhood Education and related areas of study. All teachers are required to maintain current CPR and First Aid certificates. All staff members participate in ongoing continuing education classes and workshops throughout the year.

Questions, Concerns, & Feedback

Our goal is always that your child will be treated with the utmost respect and care. The most positive experience your child can have will be influenced by the relationship between parents and school staff. Parental input is very important to us. Periodically, we may send questionnaires asking for your ideas and suggestions. If there is input you would like to share at another time, please communicate that to the Director in writing. There is a suggestion box located just inside the office door for your convenience.

Communication

We encourage parents to be involved as much as possible in their child's classroom as well as with school-wide activities. Communication between parents and teachers is vital to maintaining a partnership for a child's development and learning. Please always feel free to speak to your child's teacher(s) about any concerns you may have. If an issue is not resolved, please contact the Director for assistance. Parents can volunteer to be secret readers, to help with classroom activities, help with special celebrations, help with school-wide activities and fundraisers. You may sign up for volunteer opportunities at parent orientation, or throughout the year by contacting your child's teachers.

Teachers will often give parents their cell phone numbers and email addresses so that they can be reached easily. We ask that you not contact teachers between 8:45 a.m. and 1 p.m. If you need to get a message to a teacher, please contact the Director at 404-872-8270 or the school mobile phone at 404-436-4477, or the school email at director@RockSpringPreschool.com and the director will be happy to get the message to the appropriate teacher. If the director cannot be reached for some reason, and your message cannot wait until after school hours, please call the church office at 404-875-7483. Teachers are asked not to use their cell phones during the school day for the safety of your children.

Volunteer Opportunities

We encourage all parents to sign up for one or more activities during the first week of school. The following is a partial listing of openings:

- Room parent - communicates with other class parents to coordinate classroom activities such as parties, mystery readers, etc.
- Fundraising - volunteer to work with committee chairs to help with various activities
- Potluck/Supper with Santa Coordinators- recruit committee members to plan and implement fall potluck supper and/or Supper with Santa
- Teacher Appreciation Chair – plan and implement teacher appreciation week in the spring
- Library Parent – volunteer once a month or more often to replace books in bins, label new books, make book recommendations, and more
- Mystery Reader (read to your child's class). All parents and other family members are encouraged to sign-up!
- Sandbox Parent – bring sand and refill sand boxes on the small playground as needed

Security

For security purposes, the door to the children's building will be locked after morning drop-off. Please ring the doorbell or knock loudly and wait for someone to let you in. If no one is available to admit you to the children's wing, you may go to the front (red) door and ask for admittance from the church office manager.

Visitors

Whenever your child is present, you are welcome to visit. Please check in with the Director upon entry, and please do not be offended if a church or preschool staff member asks you to identify yourself for the safety of our students. Please be aware that our younger children may be upset with a parent in the classroom, especially early in the school year. Check with your child's teacher to make arrangements.

Tours

Throughout the school year, tours are conducted for prospective parents to observe the school. Prospective parents may pick up an application packet and receive information on the admission process following each tour. Applications are mailed upon request.

Student Guests

Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate siblings, relatives, or friends in our classrooms (due to insurance and ratio requirements). If your child has a friend or relative in town, it might be best to plan a day at home together. For the same reasons, we cannot accommodate too many visitors (siblings, relatives, or friends) during class parties. We do host several special occasions during the year where family members and friends are welcome, such as our International Potluck Dinner, our Santa Supper, our Christmas program, and our spring fundraiser.

Attendance

We encourage you to strive for regular, punctual attendance. A child who is frequently absent misses opportunities for developing social skills and academic readiness. If your child is absent, please notify the director or the teacher as soon as possible.

Tardiness

It is important that children get in the routine of arriving at school on time. When a child arrives late, other students may be disrupted, and the late arriving child may have more difficulty joining into the routine of the day. Arrival time for children is 9:00 – 9:15 am. Your child is considered tardy after that time. Morning work is done between 9:15 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. each morning. If you are running late, please try to time your arrival for 9:30, the time we all leave the classrooms for Gathering Time, so that morning work is not interrupted.

Nutritious Snacks and Lunches

Please send a nutritious snack and lunch with your child. Lunches cannot be heated or refrigerated. We have a “no sharing food” policy that is strictly enforced with our students so that students only eat what their parents prepare for them.

Rock Spring Preschool is a peanut free program. Because of severe allergies, no peanuts or peanut products may be brought into the building.

You may find food items left in your student’s lunch box at the end of the day. Our policy is to return uneaten items so that you can determine what your child has eaten that day. Sometimes, preschoolers are simply not very hungry, sometimes they do not care for an item you placed in their lunch. We want you to have the opportunity to discuss it with your child and make informed decisions. If an item is not spill proof – we will throw it away along with other lunch/snack trash.

Field Trips

The Pre-K children may be taken off-site occasionally for field trips. We will also be inviting educational performers, community helpers, animals, etc. to visit throughout the year. If you have suggestions or ideas for these special visitors, please let us know.

Show & Tell & Sharing

Teachers may assign your child a specific day for bringing or sharing. Please do not bring belongings from home unless they are for Show & Tell. **Toy guns, knives, light sabers and other weapons are not permitted at school. In addition, please do not allow your child to bring candy, gum, balloons or money to school.** Please help your child select an item for show and tell and sharing that reflects the theme of the week or begins with the letter of the week. We ask that all other toys be left at home.

Gathering Time

At RSP, we have a special time each morning at 9:30 a.m. where all students and teachers come together as a school to learn the “letter of the week,” American Sign Language, and character traits; read special books; celebrate birthdays; sing and learn music; and more.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are very exciting, and we encourage opportunities for children to celebrate their growth. RSP will recognize and sing Happy Birthday to children during Gathering Time on or near their special day. Please follow the celebration policy found in the pocket of your handbook for planning classroom celebrations.

Clothing

Please send your child to school in comfortable clothing, which they can manage when using the restroom. Children should also wear appropriate, rubber-soled shoes. NO sandals, Crocs, clogs, flip-flops, boots of any kind, or cleats, which make it hard for children to participate in preschool activities. Please mark all outerwear with the child’s name.

As the temperature drops outside, remember to send a jacket or sweater. **All children should keep a complete change of clothing at school (in a plastic zip-lock bag), which will be placed in their cubby. Please replace this change of clothing with the seasons and as the child grows.**

Inclement Weather

Rock Spring Preschool will follow Atlanta Public Schools (APS) decisions during inclement weather days. APS schedule will be announced on radio and television. If there are problems that pertain only to our church or school, someone from your child’s class will call you. Inclement weather days will not generally be made up. RSP may schedule a make-up day in a case where many days of school were missed, and if make-up days are available in the school calendar.

Severe Weather/National Emergencies

In the event of a tornado, severe weather or crises while the children are attending school, we will follow our emergency procedures. The school will maintain an adequate supply of water, food, bedding, etc. in the event parents are unable to pick up their children during regular hours or if students and staff must stay overnight at the church. In the event of an emergency, your child’s teacher or a parent from the classroom may contact you.

After School and Extended Day Policy

RSP is a half-day preschool program, and as such, is exempt from licensing by the State of Georgia. We are registered as an exempt preschool and have met all requirements of Georgia DECAL (Department of Early Care and Learning.) RSP holds liability insurance and a current Certificate of Insurance is on file.

All after school activities or extended child care will be approved by and responsible to the Building Use Committee of Rock Spring Presbyterian Church. RSP Director will advise and monitor outside service providers for the purpose of making sure these programs fit the overall philosophy of our school. These services are not, however, under the protection of Rock Spring Preschool or Rock Spring Presbyterian Church. Any liability is accepted by the vendors providing the service. If your child participates in an after school activity, our Hold Harmless Agreement must be signed and on file.

Staff Members Providing Child Care Services off the RSP Property

It is recognized that preschool parents often hire teachers for child care outside the school property. This relationship can be beneficial to parents because they are hiring a trusted caretaker for their child/children and beneficial to teachers who may wish to supplement their income by providing child care to known and trusted families. The services are not sanctioned by RSP, and do not fall under any protection of RSP. Parents and staff members who engage in these services will be asked to sign a hold harmless agreement, protecting RSP from any liability.

CARPOOL

Families are encouraged to use the carpool line to drop off and pick up children. It's convenient, fast and safe. Many children find it easier to say goodbye from the car, than at the door of the classroom. If a child is having difficulty saying goodbye and getting out of the car, we may ask you to pull into a parking place and walk in with your child. Each family is encouraged to do what is best for your own children regarding carpool or walking in.

A few carpool reminders:

- 1 Teachers will open the door to admit students at approximately 9 am. If you arrive after the door has closed, please park your car in a designated parking space and walk your child to his/her classroom. **DO NOT LEAVE SIBLINGS UNATTENDED IN YOUR CAR.**
- 2 The carpool line is a **NO CELL PHONE ZONE**. No cell phone use (even hands-free) from the time you enter the parking lot until you exit the parking lot. This will be strictly enforced by the RSP staff and director. Repeat offenses may cause your carpool privileges to be suspended. If you must take or make an important call, pull out of line and park in a parking space.
- 3 The driveway used for carpool is a **TWO WAY** driveway. **PLEASE BE CAUTIOUS and DRIVE SLOWLY** when entering and exiting the parking lot.
- 4 Teachers are not allowed **BY LAW** to buckle your child in his/her car seat. If you use the after school carpool line, we will place your children in the car, and you must drive to a parking place, stop, and buckle your child in yourself.
- 5 Carpool time is not a time for a mini-conference. We have time to briefly say what kind of day your student had, but if you wish to speak to your child's teacher about an issue, please make an appointment to do so at another time.

PARENT – ROCK SPRING PRESCHOOL AGREEMENT

By signing below, I agree that I have been advised and understand that:

- (a) Rock Spring Preschool is exempt from licensing by the State of Georgia, and that
- (b) Rock Spring Preschool holds a current liability insurance policy, and that
- (c) I have read and understand the policies and information presented in the RSP Parent Handbook for 2016-17.

Child(ren)'s Name (s) _____

Parent Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Date _____

HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT

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I (we), _____, have read and understand the policies and information contained in the RSP Parent Handbook regarding after school extracurricular activities, after school child care, and off-site child care provided by Rock Spring Preschool Teachers. We agree that neither Rock Spring Preschool, Rock Spring Presbyterian Church nor any representatives or employees of these two entities may be held liable in any way for an occurrence in connection with the activities or child care described above, which may result in injury, harm or other damages to you or your child(ren). I(we) further agree to save and hold harmless and shall indemnify the preschool, church and it's representatives and employees from any claim arising out of or in connection to above described activities. I(we) acknowledge that we do not have a generally liability insurance policy in effect as of the date of the activity described above because I(we) are not a corporation which is required to have such insurance. I(we) further state that I(we) am/are authorized to sign this Hold Harmless Release, I(we) understand that the terms herein are contractual, and that I(we) have signed of my/our own free will and am/are at least 21 years old and a competent adult(s).

Child(ren)'s Name (s) _____

Parent Signature _____

Parent Signature _____

Teacher Signature _____

Teacher Signature _____

Date _____