



# Preschool Handbook

## 2025-2026 School Year

Hickory Grove United Methodist Weekday Preschool  
6401 Hickory Grove Road  
Charlotte, NC 28215

Director - Sharon Freeze  
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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Hickory Grove United Methodist Weekday Preschool. We are glad that you and your family will be joining us as we begin our **67th** year of operation.

This is an important step in the life of your child. We want to help you plan for a good solid foundation, for on this foundation lies the groundwork for his or her future development. We hope this booklet will be useful as you and your child begin our program.

Our goal is to provide a loving Christian environment where children feel secure, grow in self-esteem and gain a love of learning. Our curriculum is strong in the areas of developing social skills, self-help skills, age level readiness skills and learning through play. Because of our deep love for children at HGUMC Preschool, we want to include as many children in our program as possible. In order to best serve all children, placement of any child with special needs will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Preschool Committee.

You, as parents, are a vital part of our program. We need parental support, cooperation and involvement.

Each child entrusted to our care has a special place in our hearts and every child, in whom God has placed great potential, is a member of His family.

It is our prayer that we offer ourselves as God's instruments in helping your child grow to meet his or her full potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon Freeze".

Sharon Freeze  
Preschool Director  
*Established in 1958*

HICKORY GROVE UNITED METHODIST WEEKDAY PRESCHOOL  
2025-2026  
TENTATIVE SCHOOL CALENDAR  
(subject to change)

|                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| August 28               | Open House                         |
| September 2,3           | School starts                      |
| September 8             | Before/After School program begins |
| October 9-10            | Closed – Fall Break                |
| November 11             | Closed – Veteran's Day Holiday     |
| November 26-28          | Thanksgiving – closed              |
| December 18 – January 2 | Christmas Holiday break– closed    |
| January 5               | School reopens                     |
| January 19              | Closed-MLK holiday                 |
| February 16-17          | Closed–President's Day             |
| March 20                | Closed                             |
| April 3-10              | Closed – Easter/Spring break       |
| May 22                  | LAST DAY OF SCHOOL                 |

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**Weather Policy (revised March 2020)**

The Preschool will try to follow Charlotte/Mecklenburg schools to determine inclement weather closings. Please use the ways given below to determine if we will be open or closed during inclement weather of any kind.

**For Closings** – The Preschool will only make up missed days in excess of 5. The Preschool Committee reserves the right to review extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

**For 1 hour delays** – Preschool may open at 10:00 and close at regular time (12:45).

**For 2 hour delays** - the PRESCHOOL May BE CLOSED unless the delay is due to cold weather and not precipitation.

**For all delays** - the BEFORE SCHOOL program will NOT operate! In case of early dismissal, the AFTER SCHOOL program will NOT operate!

In summary, in the case of inclement weather, please do one of the following to confirm that our preschool is closed due to inclement weather:

- Look for a message on the Remind app on your phone if you signed up for this service – **The BAND App is the BEST way to find out if we have delays or closings!!**
- Watch WBTV (Channel 3 news) or WSOCTV or log onto their websites at [www.wbvtv.com](http://www.wbvtv.com) and [www.wsoctv.com](http://www.wsoctv.com) and click on weather, then closings.

**Enrollment:**

All children are admitted to the program on a first come, first served basis. Each year registration is held in the spring. Each family is required to fill out a registration form for each child enrolling in our school. Parents pay a non-refundable registration fee at the time of enrollment. Waiting lists do not carry over from year to year.

**Requirements:**

1-Year Old Class – child must be walking on their own when school starts.

3-Year Old Class- child MUST be fully potty trained. These students are able to indicate their needs verbally and are no longer in pull-ups. Students who enter and we find are not potty trained will be asked to remain out of school for 2 weeks to train while still paying tuition.

For children with special needs: We want to include as many children as possible in our preschool. ALL SPECIAL NEEDS (both diagnosed and suspected) MUST BE REPORTED TO THE DIRECTOR WITH THE REGISTRATION FORM! The Preschool Committee will consider placement of any child with special needs on a case-by-case basis. Decisions will be based on information provided by parents, child development specialists (developmental and educational assessments), as well as observations and input from the Preschool staff. In most cases a trial period of four weeks will be recommended upon admittance to evaluate the child and program in relation to each other.

Questions regarding available openings or the application process should be directed to the Preschool Director.

**Curriculum:**

The curriculum has been developed to provide for the education of the whole child. This includes physical, spiritual, social, emotional and intellectual development. Keeping in mind the importance of play to a child's total development, instruction focuses on the developmental needs of young children, their interests and their learning styles. Classrooms are child centered and activities are provided which are concrete and open ended. Emphasis is on the process rather than the finished product. "Discovery learning" is encouraged because we know that preschool children learn best through hands-on experiences.

Our focus is on social skills and learning through play and exploration. We emphasize listening, following directions, acting independently and learning to interact positively with peers. Children are introduced to math and pre-reading activities in circle time and in centers.

To assist parents in following the curriculum throughout the year, calendars are sent home monthly. You will find that some activities are school-wide and others may pertain to only one age level. Teachers post notes of interest on bulletin boards outside their classrooms. Please take a moment to look over the bulletin board each day.

**Photo Release:**

Signing the photo release gives Hickory Grove United Methodist Preschool staff the right to take pictures of your child and to put the finished pictures on the church or preschool website, Facebook, brochures, newsletters, presentations or in the preschool hallways. We will not a child's name with their picture. These pictures will be accessible to anyone with internet access and may be used in instructional settings.

NO PERSONAL INFORMATION SUCH AS NAME, HOME ADDRESS OR PHONE NUMBERS WILL EVER BE PUBLISHED ON THE WEB.

**Arrival and Departure: (revised 2016, revised for 2020-2021)**

School begins each day at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 12:45 p.m. Children may be picked up between 12:45 and 1:00 p.m. **Late fee charges begin at 1:01 p.m. Late fees are charged at the rate of \$10 for the first 10 minutes or fraction thereof and an additional \$3 per minute after 10 minutes.** Parents will receive notification of the late fee charge the next day the child attends preschool. Fees are due upon receipt of this notification. In the rare instance where the director has not heard from the parent or has been unable to contact someone from the emergency card by 1:30 p.m., the police will be contacted for assistance. The police will be notified that a child is in our care and has not been picked up. Once a child is turned over to the Charlotte/Mecklenburg police the late pickup is no longer a situation to be handled by the Preschool Director.

**Arrival** – Parents/caregivers will walk their child into the building and to their classroom between 9:00-9:15a.m. **YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO ARRIVE AFTER 9:15** unless you have a doctor/dentist appointment and/or inform the director PRIOR to school beginning.

**Departure** –Dismissal will begin at 12:45. All parents/caregivers will walk to the child's classroom for pickup. Once your child is dismissed from the classroom they become your responsibility. Please guide them as they walk with you to the door and on to your vehicle. Be careful of moving vehicles in the parking lot and do not let children run away from you. Someone MUST be here by 1:00 for pickup! Late fees as stated above will be assessed and must be paid the following day.

A written note or email from you is required if there are any changes in the person picking up your child.

**Before and After School Care:**

We offer a "Before and/or After School Care" option. Before care is 8:30-9:00a.m and After Care is 1:00-2:00p.m. Students must arrive at 8:30 for Before School and be picked up at 2:00 sharp for After School. You may register for this option month by month or for the entire school year based on availability. This program requires a minimum number of participants. Please see the director for more information.

**Safety:**

During the year we will have fire drills and one time a year a disaster drill. Our staff also receives training in infant/child CPR. Our doors are locked at 9:15 a.m. and reopen at 12:45 p.m. If you should need to enter the building, please ring the doorbell to the left of the door. A staff member will open the door for you.

During the year if your emergency numbers or pick up person(s) changes, please inform the preschool office. We will need to update your child's file.

**Pets:**

Pets should remain at home! Please do not bring pets into the building at any time unless you have first cleared it with the Director. We have children with pet allergies and some children who are afraid of cats, dogs, lizards, etc. The welfare of all children must be considered. Pets are not allowed on the church campus!

### **Music Class:**

All children will have an opportunity to participate in a music program that combines movement and fun along with musical instruction. Children will be introduced to musical rhythm, activity songs and songs that encourage language development. Songs will be taught through musical games, puppets and traditional instruction. Throughout the year a variety of musical instruments will be introduced to the children. Opportunities will be available for the instruments to be touched and played. Music classes will meet once monthly.

### **Tuition:**

Tuition is due on the first of each month. Checks should be made payable to HGUMC Preschool. Checks may be sent to school in your child's "Take and Go" envelope or placed in the tuition slot found on the Director's office door. **PLEASE DO NOT PUT TUITION CHECKS IN YOUR CHILD'S BACKPACK OR LUNCH BOX** as they tend to get misplaced.

If tuition is not paid by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month **a late fee of \$30 will be charged**. You will be notified of a late charge by a note from the Director. If the 5th of the month falls on a weekend, tuition must be received the prior operating day regardless of your child's schedule.

The tuition payment schedule is such:

|   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1st Payment - due May 1(2024-2025 students) | 6th Payment - due January 1  |
| 2nd Payment - due September 1               | 7th Payment - due February 1 |
| 3rd Payment - due October 1                 | 8th Payment - due March 1    |
| 4th Payment - due November 1                | 9th Payment - due April 1    |
| 5th Payment - due December 1                |                              |

Tuition is due the entire time the child is in school, including holidays. There are no refunds for time missed due to illness, vacations or other reasons. Taking the total amount of tuition due for the year and dividing that number by nine (9) months determines the monthly tuition cost. The amount due is the same each month, including December.

Notice of withdrawal must be made to the director in writing, giving a full 14 day notice. There is no tuition refund.

### **Activity Fee:**

An activity fee will be collected for each child in our program. The fee is payable with the September tuition payment. The money will be used to pay for any special programs or activities that come to our school. The director will handle the collection of any unpaid fees. This fee was created to consolidate and simplify the collection of the money for special activities. Activity fee money is **not** refundable. Collected fees are not part of any fund-raiser activities.

### **Returned Checks:**

A handling fee of \$30 will be charged for all returned checks. The Director will notify you that a check has been returned. **After the second returned check in one school year, all future payments must be paid in cash, money order/certified check or PayPal.**

### **Illness:**

YOU MAY NOT bring your child to school with any signs of illness such as temperature, nausea, skin rash, sore throat, congestion, diarrhea or discharging eyes. If you are called during school hours to pick up your child, it will be because the teacher and Director feel that he or she is either ill or would feel better with you at home. We need to know of contagious diseases in our school so that we may alert other parents.

**NO MEDICINES WILL BE DISPURSED BY OUR STAFF OR DIRECTOR.** Please do not send medicines to school in the book bags for baby-sitters or afterschool purposes without alerting the teachers. Medicines will be held in the Director's office.

We must have emergency cards on file for each child enrolled as outlined in the parent letter. The emergency card may be turned in during open house or brought to school the first day your child attends. The Director will contact you immediately if a card is not on file.

Head lice are often a problem in school settings. Even after treatment, if your child still has nits in his/her hair, the child may not return to school. **We have a no nit policy.**

### **Clothing and Belongings:**

Play clothes are appropriate dress for preschool. Dress your child in clothes that are easily handled in the bathroom. Please remember your child will be participating in activities that may result in his or her clothing becoming wet or dirty. Please send extra clothes in a bag marked with your child's name in case of accidents. **TENNIS SHOES ARE RECOMMENDED FOR THE PLAYGROUND. OPEN TOED SHOES are not recommended for the classroom or the playground. COWBOY BOOTS ARE NOT ALLOWED.**

Bring disposable diapers for the one and two year olds. Threes must be potty trained.

Send jackets, hats and gloves for cold weather. We go outside every day, weather permitting. If your child is recovering from an illness and cannot go outside, your child should remain at home with you.

Your teachers will provide guidelines for what can and cannot be brought in to the class for Show-n-Tell or circle time. **TOYS, GUNS AND DANGEROUS ITEMS ARE NOT ALLOWED AT SCHOOL AT ANY TIME.** Pets cannot be brought into the building without prior approval from the Director.

Your child will need a **FULL SIZE backpack** large enough to carry things to and from school. Each child will need a lunch box or bag to bring finger food type lunches and a drink from home. Please do not send soft drinks in thermos bottles.

### **Conferences:**

Our teachers will be happy to set up a conference time with you. For your convenience, conferences are scheduled during school hours. Please do not ask to meet with the teachers at the beginning of the day or while teachers are getting children ready to go home. We will not discuss the children either in front of them or in front of others. You may also call in and ask to speak with a staff member at any time. Arrangements will be made for the class to be covered while the teacher speaks with you on the phone.

### **Discipline:**

We believe in discipline with love and redirection. We do NOT administer any physical punishment. You will be contacted if we have a continuous problem or concern about your child. It might be necessary to request a conference at this time. In rare cases, when a child is out of control and causes harm to a classmate, staff person or himself, the parent will be called to remove the child from the classroom for the remainder of the day.

### **Lunch:**

Our lunch schedule will vary from class to class. Lunch will last approximately 30 minutes. Please send finger foods that are easily handled by your child. We do not have facilities to cook or warm up food. Foods can be sent to school in a thermos to stay warm. The teacher will assist your child in opening his/her thermos. Children will eat lunch as a group in their classroom. Please do not send soda to school. Some foods should not be sent to school in lunches as they pose choking hazards. **The Red Cross has identified the following as choking hazards for young children – please do not send these items UNLESS they are cut or prepared safely:**

**Hot dogs (especially cut into a coin shape), meats, sausages, and fish with bones**

**Popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, and snack foods**

**Candy (especially hard or sticky candy), cough drops, gum, lollipops, marshmallows, caramels, hard candies, and jelly beans**

**Whole grapes, raw vegetables, raw peas, fruits, fruits with skins, seeds, carrots, celery, and cherries**

**Raisins, dried fruits, sunflower seeds, all nuts, including peanuts**

**Peanut butter, (especially in spoonfuls or with soft white bread)**

**Ice cubes and cheese cubes**

**Foods that clump, are sticky or slippery, or dry and hard textured**

Once allergy concerns for the class have been determined, a "Peanut-free Classroom" may be enforced. Our goal is to keep our children safe.

### **Church Ministry:**

Hickory Grove United Methodist Church provides this important preschool ministry for its members and the community. The church pays for our building overhead and other expenses, which keep the tuition at an affordable level. The children have Bible stories once a month. We say a blessing before snacks and lunches. Simple religious songs and stories are included in the curriculum. We expose the children to the religious meaning of Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. We also enjoy the secular side of Christmas and Easter. You are invited to participate in other activities that this church sponsors and we invite you to worship here on Sundays. Please let the Director know if you would like to have more information on the programs offered at Hickory Grove UMC.

### **Service Projects:**

Several times throughout the year, the preschool family will be asked to participate in a community service project. Participation in any service project is voluntary. We try to work on projects that the children can understand. Projects may be collecting food for the local food kitchens, collecting warm hats, gloves and mittens or collecting toys and school supplies for needy children.

**Field Trips:** All programs come to us. No children will leave the campus for a fieldtrip.



## **Parties:**

Parties or special holiday celebrations are held throughout the year. Parents are asked to volunteer to help with at least one of these events. Teachers will have sign-up sheets available throughout the year. Every effort is made to include working parents in our parties. There are opportunities to send materials in for parties even if work prevents you from attending.

Some children handle parents attending parties better than others. Experience has proven that the one-year-olds do better when parents do not attend. For these children, we ask that parents send in party supplies the day of the event. The teachers then have the flexibility to have the party any time during the day.

For all other ages, simple center activities are suggested. Our staff is prepared to offer advice on planning the party. Please refer to the last page of this handbook for more detailed party guidelines for all ages.

### **October 31- Fall Festival Classroom Parties**

Children are allowed to wear friendly costumes that can be easily removed for using the bathroom. NO masks, weapons or scary costumes are allowed

### **December 12- School-wide Christmas Event**

This event will be held in the Family Worship Center. Parents and guests will join us for a short program presented by the children. Children will leave the program with their parent or other person assigned to pick up that day. This school day ends with the end of our program.

### **February 13 - Valentine Celebration**

In addition to exchanging Valentine Cards with friends, the staff will plan a day full of special Valentine activities complete with a special snack.

### **April 1 - Easter Event**

For this fun day, we will again look to our parents to provide treats for the party and fun activities.

**May 15 – Pre-K Class Graduation Ceremony and Program** begins at 11:00 a.m. in the Family Worship Center. This is a regular school day for all other classes.

**May 22- Last Day of School:** Preschool ends the Friday before the Memorial Day. There is NO After School care on this day.