



Westgate Child Center's

Parent Handbook

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Director's Welcome

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Westgate Child Center! Westgate was established in 1973, and has provided over 35 years of invaluable educational service to the community. The Center is a non-profit, preschool and daycare center for children 2 ½ to 12 years of age. Licensed by Fairfax County and The Commonwealth of Virginia, the Center offers a preschool curriculum of learning through play, as well as extended care for school age children.

Our Center is committed to providing a high quality education through carefully planned activities and thematic units of study. Our program strives to nurture each child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs in a stimulating, yet warm and caring environment.

The Center maintains an excellent child-teacher ratio of 5:1 with educators who are qualified, trained, and professional. We are proud of our low child-teacher ratio, which enables our teachers to focus on the needs and talents of each child.

Sincerely,

Lynda Grey
Director, Westgate Child Center

Westgate's Programs: Learning Through Play

Preschool Activities (2 ½ -5 years old)

Classrooms have structured activity areas with a wide variety of interesting materials and activities to provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences. The children are introduced to the alphabet, math concepts, colors, vocabulary, nature, and the world at large. Activities are planned around themes designed to develop their imagination, reasoning skills, and self-confidence. Children develop social skills, including practical life skills, cooperation, respect, and interpersonal problem solving skills. Exposure to art, music, computers, craft, and imaginative expression are all important aspects of our preschool program. Creative movement as well as small & large motor development activities, are incorporated in the classroom and in outdoor play. We have a large outdoor green space with playground equipment, sandboxes, a blacktop, and a large grass field.

Before and After School Program (5 – 12 years old)

The before and after school program is offered to children attending Kent Gardens Elementary School. This program is designed to interest and challenge the school aged child in a fun, club-like environment. The school bus transports the children from the Center after breakfast, and takes them to Kent Gardens Elementary School. At the end of the school day it drops them off at Westgate. Upon their return from school, they have a snack, and can participate in whatever club activities they choose, including a homework group. Club activities center on arts & crafts, group sports, games, cooking, and field trips. Homework group has a dedicated teacher that takes older children (2nd grade and above) into a separate room to work on daily homework assignments. A French tutor is also available on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Summer Program

Westgate's summer program is designed to provide children with a fun, relaxing, and safe summer---full of waterplay, bike riding, visiting musicians & entertainers, and field trips to museums and parks. Below are sample summer program activities. These activities vary from year to year:

Preschoolers

- Upton Pool Day
- Bike Day
- Theater Arts
- National Zoo
- Burke Lake Train Ride

School-aged children

- Port Discovery
- Cookout (parents invited)
- Upton Pool Day
- Pirate Cruise
- Bull Run

Parents, Teachers, and Staff

Parents

Parent involvement is encouraged and welcome. Preschool teachers prepare monthly lesson plans to keep parents informed of school activities, and to provide insight into what occurs during your child's day. In addition, parents receive weekly reports of their child's progress during the school week. Parent-teacher meetings to address specific student concerns can be arranged as needed.

Back to school night, graduation, and regular holiday parties provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and children to socialize after the school day.

Parents are welcome to join field trips, share a hobby or life skill, and participate in holiday events.

Teachers

Westgate is staffed with mature, experienced, and highly qualified teachers. Our average teacher tenure is over 15 years. They are actively involved with ongoing training and workshops to stay abreast of the latest child care tools and techniques. We are proud of our low teacher turnover and of our low child-teacher ratio.

All of Westgate's preschool teachers have (or are working on) colleges degrees and/or a Child Development Credential. Staff attends in-house workshops throughout the year, as well as seminars at George Mason University, and those offered by Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Staff

Director Lynda Grey is a recent arrival to Westgate, bringing a new energy and focus to this well-established program. She obtained her BA in Sociology from the University of California, and her AS in Early Childhood Education from Cabrillo College. After 24 years as a flight attendant, Lynda decided that children were her favorite people, so she started her second career as a preschool teacher and she has been making a difference in the lives of children and teachers through her work with the Child Care & School Readiness Taskforce, Child Care Planning Council, and the Children & Families Commission (Santa Cruz, CA). For the past five years, Lynda served as Director of a preschool in Arlington, Virginia

Director Assistant Leticia Tablante holds a BS in Commerce and Accounting from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. Her experience includes 15 years with the Bureau of Internal Revenue (Philippines), and raising six now-grown children.

Administrative Information

Admission and Registration

Westgate Child Center is non-sectarian, non-profit, private, independent and nondiscriminatory. We believe in equal education, attention and care for all children without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability.

Prior to your child's admission, a personal interview will be arranged, in order to exchange information and to mutually determine if the program meets the needs of your child.

To enroll your child, the following items must be completed and signed:

- Registration Form (including signed contract), with a one-time non-refundable \$50 registration fee
- A current Health Form (signed by physician), including immunization records
- Emergency Medical Authorization
- A copy of the child's birth certificate
- USDA Forms
- A half-month's tuition deposit

Tuition

Tuition payment is made on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Monthly tuition is due on the first of each month. Bi-monthly tuition is due on the 1st and the 15th of each month. Payment is by check only. For payments made more than 10 calendar days late, a \$15 charge is added. Any child whose care is not paid for within the first week the payment is due, is subject to dismissal from the center. There is a \$25 charge for returned checks. Tuition is not refundable at any time, for any reason.

Withdrawal and Termination

Four weeks' notice is required, prior to the child's last day. Parents must notify the Director in writing if they intend to withdraw a child from the Center. Families not able to follow the policies outlined in the Enrollment Agreement and Parent Handbook will be provided with a two-week notice of termination. The Center reserves the right at any time to terminate the enrollment of a child if in the Center's opinion, it is in the best interests of the child or other children in the Center.

Hours of Operation

The Center is open from 7:00am to 6:30pm

Center Liability

The Center may not be held liable for unofficial activities that may involve staff, parents, and children outside of Westgate's normal operations. This includes staff hired as babysitters, as well as parents/staff transporting children to and from the school.

Policies

Arrival and Dismissal

In order to keep your children safe, parents are requested to:

- Park their cars in the parking lot or designated parking areas. Parents parked in designated no parking zones may be ticketed or towed at their own expense.
- Sign in/sign out children upon arrival and departure
- Accompany their children in and out of the building

The Center closes promptly at 6:30 pm. We require that children, accompanied by an adult, vacate the Center no later than 6:30 pm. A late fee is applicable for children picked up after closing time. If both parents and the emergency contacts are unavailable for more than one hour after closing, the local police or Child Protective Services will be contacted. If late pick-ups are habitual, the child's enrollment could be terminated.

Authorization for Pickup

Children can be picked up by parents and designated people only. Authorization is required in writing for the child to be released to anyone other than the child's parent(s) or emergency contact(s). The staff reserves the right to check identification.

Food Service and Nutrition

The Center provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks at designated times. Menus are posted for parents to review. Our menu conforms to all USDA nutrition guidelines. Food from home is permissible under special circumstances, and on field trips. Our food service is provided by the Fairfax County School System and is therefore not available when Fairfax County schools are closed. Parents are required to provide lunches for children on days when Westgate Child Center is open and Fairfax County schools are closed.

Health and Safety

General

All students are required to have updated immunization and health forms on file as required by state law. Parents must notify us in writing if their child has allergies of any kind.

Staff members are trained in first aid and CPR and can tend to everyday bumps and bruises. If a child has an accident or incident during the day, the appropriate form will be given to the parent for signature. For more serious accidents/incidents, we will attempt to notify parents by telephone and/or e-mail. In the event of a serious emergency, the school will secure immediate medical attention as described on the "Authorization for Medical Treatment" form filed in the school office. Every effort will be made to contact parents, guardians, or authorized family members or friends.

Sick Policy

To provide a safe and healthy environment for all of our children, we ask that you keep children at home if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- A fever of 100 degrees or more
- Vomiting within the previous 24-hour period
- Diarrhea within the previous 24-hour period (including recurring episodes of diarrhea at school)
- A heavy nasal discharge indicative of infection
- A constant cough or sore throat
- Fussy, cranky behavior and generally not himself/herself
- Redness and irritation of the eyes
- A skin rash
- Head lice
- Symptoms of a communicable disease

Children may not return to the Center until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours. Parents/Guardians must inform the Center within 24 hours if any member of the immediate household has developed any reportable communicable diseases. Teachers trained in health screening will perform a quick health assessment of each child upon arrival every day.

We reserve the right to send home any student who shows signs of illness at school. Any student who becomes ill at school will be made comfortable until his/her parent can be notified and the student is picked up from school. A parent or authorized adult must pick up the child within one hour of notification.

Medication

The following rules apply in order for Westgate Child Center staff to administer medications to children.

- All oral medications must have a doctor's prescription. A medication release form signed by the parent/guardian must accompany the medication. The form must specify the dosage to be administered, the time to be administered, and the length of time that the child is expected to be on the medication.
- Written authorization from the parent or guardian is also required in order for us to apply topical products, such as insect repellent or sunscreen.
- Medication must be in the original container and prescription medication clearly labeled with the full pharmacy label.
- Medication must also include the insert with all potential side effects and counter indications.
- Medication must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name, the name of the medication, and the directions for use.

- Prescription medication shall be used only for the child named on the label.
- Medication is not allowed in cubbies or book bags.
- The school cannot administer medicines or perform procedures requiring specific skills or prior medical training.

Discipline

The safety of the children is the foremost concern of the school. Classroom rules are designed with this in mind, and positive discipline will be used. Children are told what they *can* do, rather than what they cannot do. Children emotions are validated, but behavior will be redirected to acceptable means of expression. If needed, a child will be directed to a short period of “thinking time” to regain his/her composure before re-entering play with others. If the child is having difficulty adjusting to the guidelines, the parent will meet with the staff to discuss the situation and resolve the problem together. If the behavior of concern cannot be resolved, we reserve the right to suspend or dismiss the child.

Personal Belongings/Clothing

While at school, children are asked to wear comfortable, washable clothing. They should also have outerwear that is suited to the weather in order to allow for outdoor play. Please furnish a labeled bag with an entire change of clothing (including socks) for your child, to be kept at school for emergencies.

All sweaters, hats, coats, mittens, boots, etc. must be labeled with the child’s name. For safety reasons, clogs, sandals, open-toe and slick-soled shoes may not be worn.

Candy, gum, war toys, toy weapons, jewelry and money are not allowed at school. Toys should be sent only on designated share days.

School Closings

Holidays

The Center follows the US Federal Government Schedule for federal holidays and closing. Information on the Federal Government’s status is available at the following site: <http://www.opm.gov/status/>

Teacher Workdays

Westgate has 2 teacher work days in the school year.

Emergency and Inclement Weather Policy

The Center has an Emergency Response Plan in place in the event of emergencies that may occur during school hours. Fire and Shelter-in-Place Drills are held as required by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Center follows the US Federal Government Inclement Weather Policy in general, but reserves the right to close the school if conditions are determined to be too dangerous for the children or staff. The Center will send out school closing notification via email and will update the phone message to include up-to-date information on school closings.

Communication

For general information, news, and announcements check our website www.westgatechildcenter.com. Parents should provide the most up-to-date contact information for Center communications. This includes home, work and cell phone numbers, as well as an e-mail address that can be checked regularly throughout the day.

Staff and administrators will also use bulletin boards, newsletters, phone messages and the Center web site for alerts and information, so Parents are encouraged to check the Center surroundings regularly.

Westgate Child Center Email List

The WCC e-mail list is an update program designed to deliver important WCC-related information to parents. Most information regarding Center business will be distributed primarily through the email list; however, there will be times when you will also receive information via your child's cubby or clipboard. To make sure you don't miss critical information regarding the Center and your child(ren); please make sure you are signed up.

To sign up, simply submit your email address to the Director or Assistant Director.

Parent Acknowledgement

Student Name (Please Print)

Student Social Security #

Address

Phone #

This Parent Handbook was created to promote an understanding of the policies and procedures at Westgate Child Center.

The information in this Parent Handbook applies to all activities occurring on school grounds, school buses, and during any school related activity. It is important that parents and students are familiar with these expectations.

Please remove this page, sign it, and return it to the Director. It will be added to your child's permanent file. Your signature means that you have received this Parent Handbook and understand the policies and procedures of Westgate Child Center.

I have read and understand the policies and procedures in the Westgate Child Center Parent Handbook. I agree to abide by them as will my child(ren).

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Date