

*This Handbook is your guide to the policies and procedures of Gateway Christian Academy.*

*“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me”*

~Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:5)

## **Philosophy**

It is our goal at Gateway Christian Academy to provide families a safe, nurturing place for their children to learn and grow. We believe that in such an environment, children will explore the possibilities of the world around them. Gateway Christian Academy teaches children to trust in God, to love others, and to believe in themselves. We believe God has created every child with unique abilities and gifts. It is our responsibility as educators and parents to guide our children toward the life that God has planned.

## **Programs and Curriculum**

**Mother’s Morning Out** is a program designed for children 6 weeks to 24 months. Our goal is to provide a nurturing environment for children with a climate of Christian love and acceptance. This program allows children of similar ages to play and learn together. Each Mother’s Morning Out room has age appropriate toys, high chairs, swings, and activity saucers. Our infant room also has cribs for those mid-morning naps. Mother’s Morning Out is staffed with loving mothers and grandmothers with many years of experience.

**Gateway Christian Academy** is a program designed for 2, 3, 4, 5 year olds along with a 1<sup>st</sup> -5th grade cooperative. We use the HighReach Learning Curriculum for 2K through 4K classes. All HighReach Learning curriculum programs are based on the philosophy that children learn best through hands-on activities that address the needs of the whole child. In addition, each HighReach Learning curriculum reflects the belief that children need a balance of child-initiated and teacher-facilitated activities each day. Themes are used to introduce information, and learning takes place as a child explores and manipulates real objects and events. In addition to HighReach Learning, the 4K-5th grade classes use the *A Beka* program for language arts. *A Beka* is phonics based curriculum teaching children to read by sounding letters and words. Each classroom is staffed with a lead teacher and an assistant.

## **Admission Requirements**

For your child's safety, and to comply with state regulations, all required forms must be completed and on file with the school prior to your child's first day of attendance. These forms include the Enrollment Form, Emergency Medical Authorization, and a current 3231 Georgia immunization certificate. *Please note: your child will not be permitted to begin until these completed forms are on file.* Enrollment fees are required.

## **Mother's Morning Out**

### **Classes**

Nursery – 6 weeks to 24 months

### **School Hours**

We operate on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Early drop off is not permitted. If you arrive after 9:00 you will find our doors locked. Please ring the bell, and a staff member will let you in. Due to our schedules and routines, please arrive before 10 AM. Prior approval is needed to drop your child off after 10 AM.

### **Sign-in and Sign-out**

We ask that you escort your child to his or her classroom. Every child must be signed in each morning. An approved adult must sign out your child before the child leaves the premises. Pick up your child at their classroom. If you also have a child in our school program, please pick your child up from MMO first and then proceed to the school pick-up car line. MMO ends at 1 PM, please arrive before or at this time to pick up your child. Our first priority is your child's safety. After 1 PM our parking lot will be more congested with school pick-up.

### **Late Fees**

A late fee is charged to anyone arriving after 1:15 PM. If you arrive late, your fees will be \$1 per/minute after 1:05. Please call ahead if you are running late. We must have prior written approval to release your child to another parent to avoid a late fee. Payment of this fee must be paid before your child can return to MMO.

### **Lunch**

All families are responsible for sending well-balanced lunches and drinks for their child. Your child's lunch needs to be packed in a labeled lunch box or container that

will not be refrigerated. Please pack a cooling element in your child's lunch. If necessary, in Nursery I & II, we are able to heat a portion of your child's lunch in a microwave.

All food must be prepared and ready to feed. In preparing your child's food, we need all food cut into bite size portions and your child's spill proof cup filled. Be sure your containers that will need heating are microwavable. You may want to send a one snack cup and one lunch cup. No juice boxes or Capri-suns please, all cups must be spill proof and labeled. If your child is 12 months or older please be sure a majority of their lunch is self-feeding. As always, your child will be assisted with feeding as needed. All bottles must be labeled and mixed ahead of time.

We will provide an early morning snack. Children in Nursery II will not be allowed to eat breakfast in the classroom. Please make sure everything is labeled.

**\*State guidelines restrict us from serving peanuts, hot dogs, raw carrots, popcorn, fish with bones and grapes to children less than 3 years of age.**

## **Dress and Diaper Bags**

Please dress your child in play clothes. Dress your child according to the weather, outdoor play may be provided for Nursery II Tuesdays and Thursdays. If the temperature is below 40 degrees, we will remain inside. Please have your child fully dressed at drop-off. Diaper bags should be fully stocked with disposable diapers, diaper cream, and a complete change of clothes. If you use cloth diapers at home please have them in a disposable diaper at the time of drop-off. Please make sure all items are labeled.

We will help in the process of potty training your child, when all parties are in full agreement of the commitment. During potty training, please do not send your child to school wearing overalls, jumpers, or onesies, as these are difficult to manage for both the teacher and child. Pull-ups with re-closable sides are also required.

# Preschool and Hybrid Elementary Program

## Morning Welcome

Morning drop off is located at the east covered entrance. Morning drop off begins at 8:50 am and ends at 9:00 am. Please do not bring your child to the classroom before 8:55 as our teachers are busy preparing for the day and may be in and out of the classroom. Please try to arrive by 9:00. After this time, our doors will be locked for safety reasons. For late arrivals, please ring the bell on the outside entrance, and a staff member will let you in the building.

## Tardiness:

It is important that students arrive on time to school each day. If your child cannot be present by 10:00 AM, they will not be admitted for that day without a doctor's excuse. Please make an extra effort to have your child to their classroom before 9:00 AM. Occasional, unexpected circumstances may cause tardiness, but habitual late arrival at school is unacceptable. Not only does it diminish the importance of punctuality, but it is also disturbing to the child and the class, as they do not have time to become prepared for the day in the classroom. If you are unable to have your child at school on time on a regular basis, we may ask you to withdraw your child to make room for someone who wants their child to be in a structured learning environment.

## Absences:

Gateway Christian Academy believes that students will reach their maximum potential if they attend school consistently, missing only when illness prohibits their coming. Consistency in attendance helps the child build academic skills, social skills, and responsibility. Since classes are based on hands-on practices, classwork is hard to make up at home. Students who have missed a great of school are in danger of not progressing to the next grade. In such cases, a conference between teacher, parents, and the director will allow all involved to devise a plan of progression.

If a child is tardy or absent more than 10 times per semester, the family will be referred to a committee who will review the situation and determine the necessary action. This action may include make up hours. The school will review the child's attendance before offering reenrollment for the next school year.

## Afternoon Pick-up

Pick up your child at the carline located at the covered east entrance of the building. Teachers will escort each child out of the building one at a time for pick up. It is your responsibility to ensure your child is properly seated and buckled.

***Your child will only be released to those individuals listed on the release form.***

We will be charging a late fee for anyone arriving late to pick up their child. If you arrive late in the following time brackets, your fees will be:

5 minutes late	\$5 per child
More than 5 minutes	\$10 per child

Anyone picking up their child more than 30 minutes late will be charged an additional \$15 for each 15 minute interval until your child is picked up. Payment of this fee must be made before your child's return to Mother's Morning Out or the School.

## **Lunch**

All families are responsible for sending lunches for their child packed in lunch boxes or containers that will not be refrigerated. We are unable to heat food in a microwave. Please pack any warming/cooling element in your child's lunch and any utensils necessary. Please send food that your child normally eats at home. State guidelines restrict us from serving peanuts, hotdogs, raw carrots, popcorn, fish with bones and grapes to children less than three years of age. Children older than three years of age may be served these foods provided that the foods are cut in such a way that would minimize choking.

**No peanuts or tree nuts or products containing peanuts and tree nuts.**

## **Dress**

Please dress your child in play clothes. Please dress your child according to the weather, and apply sunscreen to protect them from the sun during outside play. We will not go outside on days with extreme conditions. Please be sure to send an extra set of clothes in your child's bag. All clothing items need to be labeled with your child's name.

Children are not expected to be potty trained prior to 4 years of age. We will assist in potty training throughout the school year. If your child is not fully potty trained, please pack in your child's bag enough diapers/pull-ups and baby wipes to allow for a multiple of diaper changes throughout the day. Due to health & sanitary reasons, cloth diapers are not allowed.

## **Toys from Home**

Toys from home are only allowed on show and tell days. When a child brings a toy from home it causes a number of concerns. Sharing, damage, loss and distraction are just a few problems that may arise. Please be considerate.

## **Assessments**

Assessments determine each child's skills inventory and are used to reach our end-of-the year objectives. Seasonal assessments are administered in the fall and spring and are used to show growth over time. The fall assessment is used at the beginning of the year to determine what each child already knows and to determine areas of need for each child. Parent/teacher conferences may be scheduled at any time throughout the year to discuss a child's progress. A teacher must not be detained from any responsibilities immediately before, during, or after school. Teachers are happy to arrange for conferences with parents at convenient times, and will return all calls and emails within 24 hours.

All efforts will be made to assist your child in reaching the year end objectives. If your child is not adjusting adequately to our program, or if we feel we cannot meet the educational, social, or behavioral needs of your child, we reserve the right to withdraw your child from the school program.

## **Homework**

Homework is vital for student development; it stimulates independence, self-direction, and self-discipline. Homework assignments reinforce classroom practice and provide the opportunity to acquaint parents with a child's learning experiences. The purpose of homework is to support work already taught and learned; it does not involve new concepts. All homework assignments must be completed and submitted to the teacher on the due date assigned.

## **Transportation**

Gateway Christian Academy does not provide transportation to or from school.

## **Parking, Drop Off, and Pick Up**

Parking for Gateway Christian Academy is located at the east covered entrance. Participants may park in any designated parking space.

The safety of the children is our primary concern. For this reason, we ask that you maintain a safe speed during school hours and honor the directional flow of traffic as dictated by traffic arrows and signage.

## **Inclement Weather & School Closings**

In the event of inclement weather, please listen to your local radio station. If Fulton County Schools are closed, we will also be closed. If delayed for more than one hour Mother's Morning Out and the School will be closed. No make-up days will be scheduled for three or less days missed due to closing.

## **Health**

Except for first aid, we will not dispense prescription or non-prescription medications to your child without specific written authorization from your child's physician or parent. Parents will need to complete an Authorization for Distribution of Prescribed Medicine form that includes the date, child's full name, name of medication, time(s) medication is to be given, and dosage of medication to be given. Medicine must be given to child's teacher in its original container labeled with your child's name.

If your child shows symptoms of illness during the day, we will move your child to a quiet area away from other children where your child will be supervised and provided the necessary attention until you or an individual listed on the authorized release picks up your child.

Should an accident or incident occur at the school, our procedure is:

- The staff will provide first aid to minor injuries such as cuts, scrapes, etc.
- The staff will notify the parents of an injury that might require medical attention
- The staff will notify 911 in the event of serious injury or illness then notify the parents
- All accidents or incidents will be documented on an Accidents Form. Parents are to read the form and sign it. This form will be secured in the office.

## **Biting:**

A notice will be sent home with each child involved. No names will be exchanged as per HIPPA. Every effort will be made to prevent biting situations in the classroom. If biting occurs, parents will be counseled with ideas that will help the problem. If biting becomes chronic, parents will be contacted immediately after the incident to remove their child from school.

1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> offense – an incident report will be completed and signed by both parties and a phone call will be made.

3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> offense – a parent/teacher conference will be scheduled, in addition to an incident report being completed.

5<sup>th</sup> offense – The child must go home the remainder of the day.

### **When to keep your child home from school.**

Your child must be fever free 24 hours before returning to school. Please keep your child home with any of the following symptoms:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat
- Runny nose with green discharge
- Ear ache
- Pink eye or other eye infections
- Head lice

A child who is sent home for any of the above conditions must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. Please notify the school if your child contracts a contagious disease.

### **Immunizations and Physicals**

Per state law, Gateway Christian Academy must have a copy of your child's current 3231 Georgia Immunization Certificate signed by a medical doctor on file at all times. Please have your physician give you an updated 3231 Georgia Immunization form after each visit in which your child receives immunizations. Failure to provide the required information may result in suspension from the program.

### **Emergency Procedures**

**Hospital Procedures** In the event that your child has been severely injured, 911 will be called and your child will be transported by EMS to the nearest medical center (South Fulton Medical Center).

**Fire and Tornado** Fire evacuation routes are posted outside every classroom. Routine fire and tornado drills will be conducted.

### **Discipline**

Our policy on discipline is that of "positive redirection". Communication is the key to resolving any problem that may arise. Please notify your child's teacher of any pertinent information that may affect your child's behavior. We are here to help in any way possible. If there are concerns about your child's ability to participate in the activities of his/her class, we will ask for a conference with you. In most cases, cooperation between parents and teachers ensures success in the program.

### **Communication with Parents**

Any information that we need to get to the parents will either be sent home on paper or handled through email. Therefore, we must be sure to get the best contact number for you to receive such messages. Information specific to your child will be communicated through a personal phone call or through direct conversation with your child's teacher.

## Volunteering

At Gateway Christian Academy, we welcome parent volunteers. Families are required to volunteer for a minimum of hours each school year.

### Working in the Classroom

**BE PROMPT AND DEPENDABLE:** The teachers count on you, and appreciate your promptness and reliability. If you know in advance that you will not be able to make it during your designated volunteer time, make arrangements to have another parent cover for you. If it's at the last minute and you can't arrange coverage, please contact the teacher so she can make necessary accommodations in her lesson plan.

**BE FLEXIBLE:** Be willing to do what the teacher asks of you. There may be times that you will not directly work with the children, but instead the teacher needs you to staple papers for an hour. Sometimes, a job that seems tedious to you is a big timesaver for the teacher and allows her to get more effective teaching time in. Please be open and flexible about whatever the teacher asks you to do.

**BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THE TEACHER NEEDS YOU TO DO:** If you aren't sure, feel free to always ask for more clarification.

**NO CELL INTERRUPTIONS:** Turn off your cell phone. It would be inappropriate and disruptive to make or receive phone calls during your classroom volunteer time.

**HOLD OFF ON CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER PARENTS:** Please do not socialize with other parents in the classroom during your volunteer time. There may be other parents present or volunteering in the classroom during your time; it would be disruptive to the class if the parents socialize or chat during class time.

**BE CONFIDENTIAL:** Confidentiality is crucial and is the cornerstone of a successful classroom volunteer program. Information about every child is CONFIDENTIAL. All conversations with teachers and staff, test scores, behavior, etc. must remain within the classroom. For example, if you are working with a child on spelling words, and that child is struggling and not doing well, it would be wrong for you to report that later to the child's parent. Comments about children's progress (or lack of) and behavior in class should be addressed by the teacher.

Please give each child the same respect you would want shown to your child by others.

**BE POSITIVE:** Make specific, positive comments about the children.

Use phrases such as ("Johnny, you worked really hard on that math problem!"). Catch the child when he is doing something good and then praise him.

**OFFER FEEDBACK TO THE TEACHER:** If you have a concern about a specific child or feel there is a need for some negative comment or disciplinary action, please tell the teacher and let her decide the appropriate action to take with a child.

You may have observed something she did not see, and your feedback is important in helping her do her job.

**DRESS APPROPRIATELY:** The classroom isn't the place for skimpy or distracting clothing, or outfits that draw the children's attention to you rather than to the teacher.

**PREPARE YOUR CHILD FOR YOUR ARRIVAL:** Let your child know that when you are volunteering in the classroom, you are there to help the teacher and the other children in class as well as your child. One way of explaining this is to say, "We have the same job...to do what the teacher tells us to do."

## USE THESE TECHNIQUES WHEN WORKING WITH THE CHILDREN:

- Use a quiet and controlled voice that will encourage and help children feel confident.
- Avoid comparing children and their work.
- State directions in a positive tone.
- Be sure a child understands what you are saying.
- Reward good behavior with a smile or compliment.
- In small groups, offer each child a chance to participate; quiet children can sometimes be overlooked.
- Try to be consistent in helping all of the children.
- Let children try to do as much as possible without your help; children learn by doing.
- Respect children's differences and personalities.
- Remember that you are an example of appropriate behavior such as sharing, not talking when the teacher is talking, showing respect, talking quietly and taking turns

## **Tuition**

Tuition is paid monthly from August to May. Tuition is the same each month regardless of the number of days attended. All payments are due at the first of each month. Please make checks payable to Gateway Christian Academy. Tuition envelopes will be sent home with your child at the end of each month. Please return these envelopes to your child's teacher.

Balances not paid by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month will be charged a \$25.00 late fee. No accounts will be carried after the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. Delinquent accounts will be placed on financial probation, and your child will not be able to attend class. All returned checks are subject to a \$35.00 processing fee. Three or more returned check charges will result in the family being placed on financial probation and will mandate payment in the form of either cash or cashier's check.

Enrollment fees and the first and second month's tuition are non-refundable should your child be withdrawn for any reason. A 30 day written notice of withdrawal must be given to your child's teacher.

## **Termination of Enrollment**

Gateway Christian Academy reserve the right to terminate a student's enrollment when the Administration and/or Advisory Board determines that the student and/or the parent(s) of the student does not conform to the policies, standards, philosophy, or purpose of the school.

All parents/legal guardians of students must be in harmony with the aims and purposes of Gateway Christian Academy. The school may request the withdrawal of a well-behaved student if the parents/legal guardians of that student become excessively disruptive, slanderous, abusive, disorderly, or uncooperative.

