

**WESTMINSTER**  
**SCHOOL FOR**  
**YOUNG CHILDREN**

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**EST. 1969**

**PARENT HANDBOOK**  
**2024-2025**

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**Westminster School for Young Children**

Westminster School for Young Children (WSYC) has been sponsored by Westminster Presbyterian Church since 1969. This nurturing Christian environment will offer your child a time to wonder, explore, share and learn!

Our faculty pledges to maintain the highest possible standards throughout the entire school and its program. Each teacher is qualified through education and experience for the task to which he/she is assigned.

Your child’s time with us will be a happy and rich experience. It is our mission that every child be in an appropriate classroom setting and receive the best possible education in an atmosphere of love and understanding. Our faculty is dedicated to this purpose. However, your cooperation is essential to achieving these goals.

**WSYC’s Advisory Board**

Our school is governed by an Advisory Board, who meet with the Director monthly during the year to lend support and leadership. Members serve as a liaison between our program, our parents, and Westminster Presbyterian Church.

This Board is made up of interested parents and members of the church, who are willing to serve a minimum of one to two years. Each Board Member serves on one of the many committees that work throughout the school year to ensure our program runs smoothly.

**Classroom Parents**

Each of our classrooms have one (1) or two (2) parents serving as Classroom Parents. Classroom Parents work with the teacher, Director and Advisory Board to communicate and facilitate classroom needs. Classroom Parents assist the Board with various fundraising events throughout the year. These events are listed on our school calendar and may vary from year to year.

### School Office

The school office is located on the lowest level of the Holderness Mission Center of Westminster Presbyterian Church. This is the administrative center of our program. The school director provides support and guidance to the faculty, parents, and children. The Director is available to schedule a time to meet with you should you have any questions or concerns. The school office is open Monday – Friday during the school year (August – May).

### Registration

Westminster School is open to children of all races, creeds, and national origin.

Registration for the upcoming year opens at the beginning of the calendar year. We do reserve the right to refuse a registration at any time.

Children currently enrolled in our program are guaranteed placement for the coming year. **Registration Forms and a Non-Refundable Registration/ Facility Fees** are required.

In addition to the registration and facility fee, one month's non-refundable tuition will be required and will apply to your child's last month's tuition for the following year. If it becomes necessary for a child to be withdrawn during the regular school year prior to May, a one month's notice must be given to the director in writing or the fee will be forfeited.

An activity/supply fee will be required in September. This fee supports all special activities and events during the school year.

### Financial Aid

Westminster School offers financial aid for partial tuition through the Carol Van Hise Scholarship Fund. Applications for financial aid must be received prior to March 1<sup>st</sup> to be considered for this assistance. Financial Aid Applications and supporting documents are reviewed and awarded by the WSYC Finance Committee.

### Future Enrollment Form

Future Enrollment Forms are for parents who wish to have their children considered for placement in our program. These forms can be found on the school website: [www.wsycdurham.com](http://www.wsycdurham.com). A Future Enrollment Form can be completed any time after a child is born, and parents will be contacted when it is time for enrollment.

### Classes Offered

#### Toddler Classes

Toddler Classes are for children turning one year old by March 31<sup>st</sup>. These classes are held two (2) or three (3) days a week from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Two teachers work with 8 toddlers in a classroom.

### Two-Year-Old Classes

This program is for children turning two years old by August 31<sup>st</sup>. Westminster offers various schedules for class placement. Two teachers work with about 10 children in each classroom from 9:00 am-12:00 pm. Our two- year-olds are not expected to be toilet trained. Our optional Lunch Bunch program available to these children who are fully potty trained from 12:05 pm – 1:00 pm starting October 1<sup>st</sup> if applicable.

### Three-Year-Old Classes

This program is for children turning three by August 31<sup>st</sup>. WSYC offers a three day and a five day programs meeting from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm or 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. Children in our three-year-old program are expected to be toilet trained. Two teachers work with about 12 students in a classroom. Our optional Lunch Bunch program is available to these children from 12:05 pm – 1:00 pm if applicable.

### Pre-Kindergarten Classes (Pre-K)

Our two Pre-K classes meet five days a week (Monday-Friday) from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. This program is for children turning four years old by August 31<sup>st</sup>. We recommend that children enrolling have prior school experience. Two teachers work with about 16 students in a classroom.

### Hours

Our daily school hours are from 9:00am to 12:00pm or 1:00pm. Our school doors open at 8:55am and children must be picked up on time. A LATE FEE of \$5.00 for each five minutes is charged and paid to the teacher if a child is picked up after 12:05 pm or 1:05 pm respectively. If in a carpool, the late fee is charged for each child in that carpool.

These same late fees also apply if your child is picked up after 1:00pm from Lunch Bunch if applicable. (See Lunch Bunch Late Fees)

### Arrival and Departure Procedures

An adult must accompany each child to their classroom door upon arrival. There will be a one-way traffic flow in our hallway for arrival. Please enter through the columns in the covered area (do not go up the steps) located in the middle of the circular drive. WSYC's front door is in the basement of the Holderness Mission Center. After dropping off your child at their classroom door

(parents should not enter the classroom), please proceed to exit the opposite door closest to the playground. Our faculty will greet your child and settle them in their classroom.

It is important that the children arrive for class on time. The teachers have activities planned for the entire morning. When children arrive after 9:00am, it disrupts the entire class. It is important training for a child to learn to be punctual. If you arrive after 9:15am, the school entrance will be locked and the bell must be rung to be admitted into the building.

NOTE: It is important to let the director and teachers know if your child has a morning appointment and will be arriving after the usual 9:00am time.

Westminster Presbyterian Church has a security system therefore, you will find our doors locked. There are security cameras at the entrances and overlooking the playground.

Upon departure, we will be using a car line. Our traffic flow is one way with a 5 mph limit. Always enter the parking lot from Shannon Road, at the Westminster Presbyterian Church sign, swing around the back of the parking lot by the wooded area, and stop prior to proceeding down the hill toward the school entrance. No parking is allowed in the unauthorized area – including the firelane along the fence near the cabin.

Authorization is required in writing when anyone other than the parents pick up a child. (See Carpool Change Form)

Children must never be left unattended. Please be sure your children are with you upon entering and leaving the building. Always hold your child's hand when crossing the parking lot. Never leave children unattended in cars at any time.

### **Carpooling/Transportation**

You will be asked to complete a general carpool form at the beginning of the school year located on the Acquaintance Form. This form will indicate the name(s) of persons who will be allowed to pick up your child. If there is to be a change in pick up, WSYC staff must be informed in writing. We do not allow children to go with persons we do not know and reserve the right to request proper photo identification.

Inform anyone who drops off or picks up your child know of our traffic flow plan.

### **Lunch Bunch**

Lunch Bunch is offered from 12:05 pm until 1:00 pm Monday-Thursday if applicable. We do not offer Lunch Bunch on the days when we dismiss early.

Children must bring their lunch and water or juice. Please label the outside of their lunch boxes

and any individual containers. Remember to provide necessary eating utensils. After finishing lunch, the children will go outside to play (weather permitting) or remain in the classroom. We do not put children down for naps.

Please make sure that your child is signed in for Lunch Bunch by adding his/her name using the link provided for Lunch Bunch. An hourly fee is charged for this service. Please pay for Lunch Bunch along with your monthly tuition or when you sign up your child. If any Lunch Bunch fees are not paid, the remaining amount due will appear on your next invoice.

You will be charged whether or not your child uses this service if you do not remove his/her name from the list once they are signed up. If your child will be absent, please remove their name from the list. This should be done prior to 9:30am.

A Late Fee of \$5.00 per child per 5 minutes will be charged if you do not pick up at 1:00pm. Should you fail to pick up on time on two occasions in one month, Lunch Bunch will no longer be an option for your child. Should you fail to pick up on time on four occasions in two months, Lunch Bunch will no longer be available.

### **Toilet Training**

Children in our Toddler and Two-Year-Old classrooms are not required to be toilet trained.

Diaper changing is not a routine part of our Three-Year-Old program. Three-year-olds must have the appropriate independent skills in this critical self-help area. To enhance your child's success potential with using the toilet independently, we suggest pants without zippers/belts, and no overalls. We know that occasionally accidents will happen. If your child still has frequent bowel accidents, then they are not toilet trained.

For children to feel their independence, they should be able to manipulate (on/off) their own clothing.

It is usually just a matter of time before the child will have these routines well integrated. It may, also, be the case that the child is not ready to be in a classroom. In such cases, it is usually best not to push.

Parents are encouraged to talk with their child's teacher or the director if they have questions or concerns. In our resource library we have a number of books, handouts, and other information on various techniques and strategies for toilet training. These are available for parents to check out and use.

### **Clothing**

Children should be dressed simply, comfortably and sensibly for play. Closed-toe shoes with non-

skid bottoms should be worn by children all the time to avoid accidents, particularly on the playground. Crocs, cowboy boots, and sandals can be dangerous. We do not recommend these for school. Socks are encouraged.

Please mark all your child's clothing. Many times, a child will not recognize his/her own jacket or sweatshirt. More than one child will often have the same outerwear as someone else in the class or school. A name on everything is helpful. If your student wears rainboots, please provide a change of shoes.

Children need to wear clothing that is washable. This enables them to participate in lots of fun (and sometimes messy) learning experiences.

Our one through three-year-old students should have a change of clothing with them each day. This can be kept in their backpack. If your child is in a one piece outfit, please make sure they have snaps in the leg area.

If your toddler or two-year-old is in diapers, please have a supply of diapers in their backpacks daily and bring a container of wipes for the teachers to use. Pull up type diapers should have Velcro sides. (See also Toilet Training)

Your child will participate in a physical fitness program, Fit Kids, and will need closed-toe tennis shoes on these days.

### **Backpacks**

Each child should arrive daily with a backpack. Many children like to pick cute backpacks; however, small ones will not hold the items your child will be bringing home. Students will need to bring home artwork, information from the office or teacher, etc. Please label your child's bag clearly on the outside with their name. Many of our classes will furnish laminated name tags, featuring the class logo for this purpose.

Please check your child's bag every day to see what "treasures" might be coming home. No rolling book bags are allowed because of the space that takes up.

### **Preparing Your Child**

We want the transition to school to be a smooth adjustment. Prior to the start of school, begin to develop a regular routine at bedtime. Getting to bed on time in the evening and rising early enough to have a good breakfast is important for all children.

- Arrive on time! It is important for each child to attend school each day they are scheduled for class, and to arrive on time.
- Have your child walk into the building and be responsible for carrying their own backpack.
- Please do not enter the classroom once you have said your good-byes to your child. All



classes have a “Kiss and Go” line at the door. We offer a loving morning filled with discovery and age-appropriate learning experiences for your child. We will call you if we see a separation problem.

- Inform us if your child is showing signs of unhappiness at any time. There may be days when they do not want to come to school, but it is best to keep up the routine. Be positive! Problems often work themselves out in a few days.
- Speak of the wonderful times that will be experienced and the new friends they will meet. Your child will be quick to sense your emotions. We want this to be a wonderful experience for both you and your child.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

As an extension of your home, we want to hear any concerns you have regarding your child. Please feel free to speak to the teacher briefly before or after school, via email, or by telephone. Holding a lengthy conversation at arrival or dismissal is disruptive.

Communication between the school and parents is very important to us. Our director is always available to meet with parents. We can, also, set aside a time for you to meet with the Director and your child’s teacher upon request.

Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled in October and January. However, we will set up a time for you to talk with the teacher when you feel it is necessary. If your child’s teacher has concerns, she will ask for a time when you can meet together.

### **Discipline Policy**

At WSYC, we view discipline not as a means of punishing a child who has behaved inappropriately, but rather as a means of teaching a child. Positive discipline teaches children where limits are set, how to maintain control over their bodies, and how to problem solve in the event of conflict. When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults around them, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving skills and self-discipline.

Based on this belief of how children learn and develop, we implement the following discipline and behavior management techniques:

- The environment is a place designed especially for children.
- Each class has clear and simple rules which are stated positively and posted in each room. The children are encouraged to help make these rules so that they can become familiar with what is expected from them.
- Positive behavior is reinforced through our We Care Rules which children are encouraged to follow in age appropriate ways.

1. We listen to each other.
  2. We use our hands for helping.
  3. We use words that show we care.
  4. We care about each other's feelings.
  5. We are responsible for what we say and do.
- Redirection is used often as a means of interesting a child in a more constructive activity.
  - Positive reminders are used to tell the child what we want them to do (rather than constantly using "no" or "don't").
  - Renewal time – when a child loses control, is disruptive or destructive, the teacher may give the child a brief "renewal time".
  - In the event the above strategies are not successful, a parent/guardian may be called to pick up the child early for the remainder of the day.

**Note: No child will be subjected to corporal punishment of any kind.**

Should a discipline problem arise that the teacher and director cannot handle without advice and support from the parents, a conference will be held with all involved parties. Written documentation will be provided restating the problem and informing the parties of the improvements or regressions seen to date. A follow-up conference will be held, if needed.

In the event the discipline problem does not improve, affects the welfare of the other students, and/or cannot be adequately counseled by the faculty, the situation will be reviewed by the Director. He/she will decide if dismissal is in the best interest of all parties.

### Health Issues

Please notify the school office when your child is sick or absent for any reason.

We will isolate any child who becomes ill at school and call the parents to come pick up the child as soon as possible. The child will need to abide by the 24 hour rule before returning to school.

### The 24 Hour Rule

If your child receives a diagnosis that requires antibiotics, please keep them home until you have the results of the culture and/or antibiotics have been administered for 24 hours.

In addition, children must be kept at home for a full 24 hours after the following symptoms have resolved (without medications or other interventions): fever, vomiting, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, coughing or heavy, discolored nasal discharge.

We will send a message to the classroom if any of our children has been exposed to a communicable disease. Please notify the office any time your child is ill.

Establish the kind of “going to bed, waking up, resting and playing” routine at home that is conducive to good health and good habits. Children share everything – especially germs! Please be considerate and fair to the other children in class and our faculty by not allowing a sick child to come to school. Often a day of rest is the best medicine!

We require a new medical form for each child by the first day of school each fall. Your child’s pediatrician or family physician must sign this form. This physical examination and updating of the child’s immunization record should take place no more than six months prior to the start of school each September. Please mail this form after completion or bring to the school office no later than the first day of school. This form will remain in your child’s file.

### **Allergies**

Please alert the director and other faculty if your child has any food allergies. We are required to have a written allergy action plan signed by a medical provider on file to protect your child in the event they are exposed to anything to which they are allergic. It is the parents/guardians responsibility to notify the classroom teachers of the medical plan. In the event a child must use a prescribed medication due to an allergy, we must have the medication (EpiPen, antihistamine, inhaler, etc.) provided by the family at school.

Teachers are not permitted to administer any non-emergency medication (including but not limited to sunscreen and bug spray) to children during school. If your child needs medication during the morning, one of the parents must administer the medication. If there is a medical need, the child’s parents must meet with the director and teachers involved prior to the school’s opening.

### **Accidents**

If an accident occurs at school, staff members will administer first aid, as necessary. In cases where the injury seems to need further attention, you will be called for a consultation or to pick up your child. An accident report will be filled out with details of the injury and actions that were taken.

Faculty members are certified in CPR and trained in First Aid. If your child becomes ill or is injured and requires immediate medical attention, 911 will be called. Parents will be notified immediately.

### **Abuse**

North Carolina law requires us to report to the Department of Social Services of Durham County (DSS) if we suspect that a child is being abused or neglected. Our faculty has a responsibility for the children with whom we work.

### **Special Needs**

WSYC does not discriminate against children with special needs. However, we are not equipped to meet the special needs of some children-

If it becomes necessary to have a child evaluated by a trained professional to determine if additional or outside help is needed, we ask the parents to have their child evaluated. Since the evaluation is at the parents' expense, the final decision as to who administers the evaluation is theirs. This step gives the teachers and director the information needed to determine supports for the child.

If it is determined that a child requires extra help that WSYC is not equipped to handle, it is required that the child's parents sign and agree to Westminster's policy. It states that the family will compensate the child's teacher(s) for any time spent meeting with professionals working with the child outside regular school hours. Payment will also be made to the child's teacher(s) if attending Individual Education Planning (I.E.P.) meetings or other conferences.

In some instances, it may be determined that special classroom assistance is needed for a child to attend or continue in our program. If this is the case, the parents are responsible for working with the director and teacher(s) in hiring a "shadow" to attend to the child. This makes it a "win-win" situation for everyone, but especially for the child.

### **Nutritious Snacks**

Parents furnish snacks for their child's class. Depending upon the number of children in the class, a parent will sign up to provide snacks for two or three weeks during the year.

Please send nutritious (low sugar) snacks for the children. Send at least two snack choices each day. Make them different in nature (i.e. apples and goldfish crackers, or cheese and pretzels). Remember to send enough snacks for the number of children in the classroom and the teachers. The faculty sits and enjoys snack with the children. Please do not send in drinks – we serve water at snack time and throughout the day, as needed.

Please send no nuts or peanut products of any kind. Check labels to make sure peanut oil or peanut products were not used in preparing the snack item. If sending grapes or cherry tomatoes, please cut them in half lengthwise.

Birthdays are always special! Children love to celebrate them at school with classmates. If possible, sign up for snack the week of your child's birthday. While we do not have elaborate parties at school, a special store bought snack is certainly welcome. No gifts are exchanged in class. Please be considerate when extending birthday party invitations. If possible, involve all children in the class.

### **Lost and Found**

A lost and found is located on the hat tree in the hall near the school entrance.

### **Playground**

We feel that outdoor activity is an integral part of our program. We will go outside when the weather is 32 degrees or above and is not inclement. Please remember coats and mittens with your child's name on them. Gloves are quite difficult to get on little hands!

Enrolled families may use our playground at their own risk when school is not in session. No one other than our school classes can use the playground between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm each weekday.

If you use our playground, help us maintain it by making sure the equipment is used properly, sand toys are left in sand areas, and any trash is picked up and disposed of properly. The gates must be left closed upon leaving the area.

No pets, food or drink are allowed on the playground at any time. This attracts bees and other insects.

Our gazebo and picnic tables are also available for use. Help us by clearing any debris when you leave the area.

Our insurance prohibits planned parties on our playground or in our classrooms, other than events sponsored by the school.

### **Inclement Weather Policy**

Announcements of our closings, delayed openings, and early dismissals will be communicated through the following:

- An email from the School Office
- An email from your child's teacher
- Notice on our Social Media platforms and website

Delayed opening will begin at 10:00 am.

Parents will be alerted by email from the School Office if an early dismissal is necessary. On days when inclement weather is predicted, please check your email often. Parents are welcomed to pick up their children earlier than our dismissal time.

We are aware that our children and faculty come from a wide geographical area and road conditions may vary in periods of inclement weather. Please use your best judgement concerning

whether or not to bring your student to school.

### **School Calendar**

You will receive a school calendar at the beginning of the school year. We start with a sneak peek morning the day after Labor Day in September. The first full day of school will be the Wednesday following Labor Day. Lunch Bunch (noon – 1:00pm) will begin on Wednesday if applicable.

During the school year, three and four year old classes attend Celebrations each Wednesday. This is a short, age appropriate presentation by the Church staff, including songs and stories.

Our Advisory Board will sponsor Parent-Get-Acquainted times. These events give parents an opportunity to meet and get to know each other.

### **More about our Calendar**

There are two days during the school year when students are dismissed at 11:00am. In October, we have a Halloween costume party. In December, a holiday party is given the last day of school prior to the winter break. All other days are from 9:00am – 12:00pm or 1:00pm. The only exception is an occasional day when the Church asks that we vary our schedule to help with traffic tie-ups (Lenten Luncheons, memorial services, etc).

We do not offer Lunch Bunch when we dismiss at 11:00 am and the last day of school in May.

Dates and times for all our events and activities will be published in our school calendar, which all parents receive upon school's opening.

### **Finances**

Westminster's Federal Tax ID #56-0893567

All tuition payments are due on your child's first school day of each month (September – April). September's tuition should be given prior to the first day of school.

You will receive an invoice from the school office for your monthly tuition payment.

A late fee of \$25.00 will be charged on all payments received after the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month and there is a \$35.00 fee after the 15<sup>th</sup>.

A \$20.00 fee will be charged for each check returned by the bank.

Important: Please indicate your child's name on your check. Often, we have children with the same last name or the parents and students use a different last name.

The yearly tuition fee has been divided into nine equal installments. One of these payments is to be made with registration and is applied to next year's last month's tuition. These required payments are non-refundable.

Often parents choose to have their bank send the payment the first of each month. Others pay for the entire year in September, or pay for four months in September or four months in January. (Note: You will have paid for May in advance.) A reminder: The school is financed entirely through your tuition payments.

### **Withdrawals**

We realize it is sometimes necessary to withdraw a child from our program. A thirty-day notice, in writing, should be given to the director in person. The advance May tuition, will be applied to your child's last month in our program.

### **Parent Involvement**

Parents are welcomed by the teachers to visit classrooms and participate with children in special activities or projects, read/tell stories to the class, help with parties, share a talent or hobby (playing the guitar, gardening, cooking, etc.). Parents are invited to share their holiday customs and traditions by visiting classrooms and telling/showing/sharing with the children their special celebrations. Your child's teacher will coordinate these opportunities.

If you wish to observe in a classroom, these arrangements must be made with the director and the classroom teachers.

WSYC is able to continue its tradition of high quality not only because of the dedication of its faculty, but also because of the support of our community of parents. Parents in our school community assist us as substitutes in the classrooms, participate in occasional playground workdays, help us with small painting/carpentry chores, provide professional resources and advice from landscaping to computer programming. Everyone's contribution assures that our program remains the best that it can be.

### **Fundraising**

Our monthly tuitions covers faculty salaries and utilities paid to the church. The annual supply fees paid by parents is divided into nine equal amounts and used monthly to purchase necessary supplies for the classrooms.

Fundraisers are used to cover expenses for classroom "extras." Our fundraising events may change from year to year; however, they are essential to our overall budget. Through these well-planned events, funds are raised to provide classroom enhancements, maintain, and improve our playground and purchase furnishings that our regular monthly budget cannot afford.

Advisory Board members chair these events. It takes the help of all parents to make these events a success.

### **Toys from Home**

Please keep all toys at home. This prevents them being misplaced or accidentally broken.

### **We Need Your Help**

We all do our best to take care of Westminster Presbyterian Church's beautiful grounds and Memorial Garden. Please teach your children to respect these surroundings by not climbing on trees, playing in the flower beds and plantings, or picking flowers.

### **Request for Legal Intervention**

Unless the mental or physical well-being of a student is in jeopardy, the WSYC will not become involved in legal situations such as marital separations, divorce, child custody, foster parenting, adoption, etc.

We do not keep in-depth records once children have left the program; therefore, we cannot become involved in any actions pertaining to children not presently enrolled in WSYC. Should testimony from a faculty member be required, the preferable format would be:

- The attorney must speak with the director of the school.
- A notarized statement be given
- An audio-taped interview
- A video-taped interview
- Should it become a necessity for a faculty member to appear in court, the attorney requesting the appearance will be responsible for all necessary expenses including travel, lodging, meals, salary payment for the time away from school, reimbursement for a substitute to fill the faculty member's position while away from their job and any other expenses incurred by the faculty member.

### **Children Learn What They Live**

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.



If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.

If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,  
he learns to find love in the world.

Dorothy Law Nolte