



# PRESCHOOL HANDBOOK



NORTHUMBERLAND  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL

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## Whose Child is this?

“Whose child is this?” I asked one day  
Seeing a little one out at play  
“Mine”, said the parent with a tender smile  
“Mine to keep a little while  
To bathe his hands and comb his hair  
To tell him what he is to wear  
To prepare him that he may always be good  
And each day do the things he should”.

“Whose child is this?” I asked again  
As the door opened and someone came in  
“Mine”, said the teacher with the same tender smile  
“Mine to keep just for a little while  
To teach him how to be gentle and kind  
To train and direct his dear little mind  
To help him live by every rule  
And get the best he can from school”

“Whose child is this?” I asked once more  
Just as the little one entered the door  
“Ours” said the parent and the teacher as they smiled  
And each took the hand of the little child  
“Ours to love and train together  
Ours this blessed task forever”

Author Unknown



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**\*The words “parent” and “guardian” is used in this document to represent the wide range of adult caregivers who raise children and is not meant to exclude or omit any caregiver groups.**



# CORE VALUES, MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS

## **Core Values**

Christ-centered Excellence  
Empowering Self-worth & Self-esteem  
Responsible & Responsive Leadership  
Community of Grace & Integrity  
Critical Thinkers & Active Participants

## **Our Mission**

Northumberland Christian School empowers the development of character and conviction with formative experience and Biblical Worldview instruction in a safe, supportive community. Students are equipped to influence and transform their world on a personal, local, and global level.

## **Our Vision**

At Northumberland Christian School, students are actively *engaged* in learning, *hopeful* of their future, and *flourishing* socially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.



## INTRODUCTION

Northumberland Christian Preschool is a branch of childcare offered by the Northumberland Christian School Society. We are an independent school community supported by area churches, alumni, and current families. The Northumberland Christian School Society is governed by a board of community members and parents elected by the voting participants of the membership. This approach allows for parental input and representation, providing the opportunity for members to have an active role and valued voice in decisions which may impact the greater school community, and the education of their child. Northumberland Christian Preschool partners with Edvance Christian Schools Association and closely follows the educational recommendations set out by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Our preschool programming is delivered and designed by competent, educated professionals within our community.

Our goal at Northumberland Christian Preschool is to:

- offer a quality program with small class sizes in a safe, stimulating environment that recognizes the unique God-given talents and needs of each individual child.
- help meet the needs of the diverse families by providing a safe and happy early learning environment
- contribute to the holistic growth and development of children
- realize the validity of play and the importance of what is being learned
- provide opportunities for play-based learning that is focused upon the child's individual needs, interests, limitations, abilities, and character, that build important foundations for each child to meet their full potential
- provide opportunities for social interaction with other children in a setting conducive to the development of wholesome relationships
  - provide age-appropriate experiences that contribute to the child's developmental needs

Our small class size reflects our strong commitment to quality programming and allows our preschool instructor to easily direct individual attention to each student. Additionally, this is a great opportunity for young children to prepare for kindergarten while focusing upon their social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive, and physical development.

God created children in His image, full of imagination, creativity and curiosity. Their little hands and inquisitive minds are eager to explore and learn about the world around them. Through play and varied activities, including music and movement, creative art, games, stories, outdoor play, Bible, and quiet time, your child will be given the opportunity to develop their God-given potential.

Our preschool is designed to be a safe, play-based learning environment that also provides comfort, in which children of all ages and abilities are challenged physically, mentally, socially, and creatively, to grow and develop, while receiving the utmost care and nurturing possible. At Northumberland Christian Preschool your child ...

- will be recognized and appreciated for their unique individuality.
- will be encouraged to grow and develop, explore and play, question and think. Their distinguishing gifts and talents will be embraced to help both others and themselves to succeed.
- will be welcomed with open arms and offered unconditional love, reflective of a home environment. This feature, coupled with a structured play environment, allows children the security, encouragement, and freedom necessary to grow as individuals.



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

At Northumberland Christian Preschool, we run our program in a manner that is somewhat reflective of Magda Gerber’s RIE (Resources for Infant Educators) approach to parenting and childcare. The basis of this approach is to care for and educate children through a lens of respect and equity. In our preschool classroom this looks like children who are loved and cared for by educators who focus upon the individual child within the greater community of learners. The environment of our classroom is one of belonging and acceptance, where children are seen and valued for WHO they are, WHERE they are, and HOW they are. Children are encouraged and guided at their own pace, accomplishing their personal goals in a time that is right and meaningful for them as an individual.

In order to maintain this approach, we have designed our preschool program to be an environment in which each child:

- feels physically safe, cognitively challenged, and emotionally nurtured
- has time to engage in child-led, uninterrupted play
- has the freedom to explore and interact with other children of varying ages and abilities
- is engaged in care activities, allowing the child to be an active participant instead of a passive recipient
- is observed at their ability level in order to best understand and meet their individual needs, while identifying goals
- is given consistency in the form of clearly defined limits and expectations

Each child's current level of development, interest, and ability are taken into consideration when planning the daily and weekly programs. This allows for each individual child to receive programming which is targeted to help them develop their unique character, meet their developmental milestones, and enhance their fine and gross motor skills. Each child will be growing and learning in an environment that is appropriate for their abilities. Children will take part in both structured and unstructured play, as well as indoor and outdoor activities. Activities and programming are focused upon, but not limited to, sensory exploration, water play, fine motor skill development, gross motor skill development, dramatic play, cooperative and independent play, and creative discovery. All activities are presented in a variety of fashions with an emphasis on the community environment of this preschool.

The schedule followed for our preschool day is not always reflective of the schedule followed by the older students at NCS. Teachers aim to keep schedules consistent for the benefit of the children, but also flexible to allow for optimal learning and teaching experiences. A typical preschool schedule may resemble the following:

### **8:15-8:30 Student Arrival**

### **8:30-8:45 Outside Play**

Children participate in a variety of gross motor skill development activities and sensory enriched activities while interacting positively with nature.

### **OR Structured Independent Activities**

Children are provided seated activities designed to actively engage fine motor skills or early development of language skills, while promoting mindfulness.

### **8:45-9:15 Morning Meeting** (calendar, songs, gross and fine motor enrichment, and story time)

Teacher-led group activity in which children actively participate in and review calendar concepts, storytelling, gross and fine motor enrichment, as well as sing both educational and silly songs.



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### **9:15-9:30 Centre Free Play**

Children can choose from dramatic play, creative movement, group or independent play, quiet play, table activities, and floor activities

### **9:30-10:00 Teacher-Led Crafts and Academic Enrichment**

Craft or art project which coordinates with weekly topics. Crafts and activities are used by the preschool teacher to further support academic learning and engagement within the classroom.

### **10:00-10:30 Morning Meal**

Healthy snacks provided by each family, including at least three food groups.

### **10:30-11:00 Outside Preparation and Play**

Children participate in a variety of gross motor skill development activities and sensory enriched activities while interacting positively with nature.

### **11:00-11:30 Sensory Play**

Children are provided sensory activities designed to actively engage their five senses while interacting positively with their peers and play environment.

### **11:30-12:00 Teacher-Led Crafts and Academic Enrichment**

Craft or art project which coordinates with weekly topics. Crafts and activities are used by the preschool teacher to further support academic learning and engagement within the classroom.

### **12:00-12:15 Centre Free Play**

Children can choose from dramatic play, creative movement, group or independent play, quiet play, table activities, and floor activities

### **12:15-12:45 Afternoon Meal**

Healthy lunches provided by each family, including at least three food groups – a main course and two sides

### **12:45-1:15 Outside Preparation and Play**

Children participate in a variety of gross motor skill development activities and sensory enriched activities while interacting positively with nature.

### **1:15-1:30 Quiet Reading**

In preparation for rest, children quietly engage with books on their cots in order to settle the mind and body for nap time.

### **1:30-2:45 Sleep Preparation and Quiet Rest Time**

Children are dispersed throughout the class to their individualized sleep areas. Children are expected to sleep, however after a brief rest period, those not napping may engage in quiet activities that will not disturb the others. Depending on a variety of variables, older preschool students may be invited to spend nap time in the kindergarten classroom.

### **2:45-3:15 Student Departure**

Throughout the school day, children will engage in numerous play-based and child-led activities which are designed to challenge the whole child: mind, body, and spirit. Children will also interact with both the indoor and the outdoor environment, as they embrace opportunities to explore, experiment, discover, play, learn,



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

be a friend, and most importantly, to be a child. These opportunities are presented in both a structured and unstructured manner, which allows the children opportunities to be creative and to play within the parameters that have been designated.

Children will also participate in teacher-led activities, such as calendar and story time, which are designed to specifically engage the children's minds as they gather meaning from the world around them and develop an understanding of both abstract and concrete concepts. The development of such concepts is further fostered through sensory and motor experiences in which the children are encouraged to interact with their environment through the use of their five senses. These experiences will help children to develop their minds through analytical interpretation, listening, observation, inference, and questioning. In addition to our morning meeting, children will receive opportunities to create teacher-led, ability appropriate, and thematic projects. This approach encourages children to seek further connections to the topic of the week, while exploring and developing their creative skills.

### **Open Door Commitment:**

We welcome parents and family members to visit us and their child during class time, but we do ask that you let us know in advance when possible. This allows preschool teachers the opportunity to prepare students for the arrival, and eventual departure, of visitors. It is important for preschool teachers to have the opportunity to review expectations with the students beforehand, as visits can be especially difficult for our youngest learners. Visits during the school day are welcomed, but we ask families to realize this can be challenging due to separation anxiety, creating a break from routine, and the expectation from children that they are leaving with their family members. Please discuss your visitation intentions with the preschool teacher and determine how to move forward as we would love visitors to help enhance our program.

Additionally, preschool teachers are happy to adjust programming to reflect the gifts and comfort level of visiting adults. Special learning opportunities offered through parental involvement can be arranged to maximize community connections and student learning. For instance, an additional adult in the room, who is comfortable sharing their gifts, could mean that preschool students would have the opportunity to go for a walk in the woods, have a guest reader, or participate in culturally diverse forms of learning.

Parents are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom and in other programs or committees within our school. We ask that outside arrangements be made for the care of siblings during any volunteer commitment. Due to insurance and liability restrictions, children not enrolled in the preschool program or at NCS, are unable to participate, even when accompanied by their care provider.





Our preschool program is run at the discretion of the current preschool teacher, using a variety of methods, materials and curriculum documents to support learning. Preschool learning may differ from one year to the next, dependent upon the students enrolled, the teacher, and in alignment with the most relevant research concerning the education and care of early learners. Our typical preschool year looks at the following subjects, and to engage students through hands-on, explorative learning.

### **Core Subjects:**

**Bible** - Students engage with favourite stories of the Bible at an introductory level through read-alouds, crafts, and activities geared toward captivating their attention and instilling a sense of wonder and awe. Emphasis is placed on stories of the life, lessons, and love of Jesus the rescuing king, which teach us how to live as the bigger story continues to unfold...because we have an exciting part to play too. Our bible curriculum uniquely connects each individual story to the next, clearly showing how all the stories of the Old and New Testament fit together to tell the one big story of God's great love for his children.

Preschool teachers help students discover:

- WHO GOD IS - the one who made everything and everyone
- WHO WE ARE - his children, whom he loves no matter what
- WHAT WE WERE MADE FOR - to love him and everyone else

**Early Math** - Through hands-on discovery and experimentation, children learn to observe, predict, solve problems, make decisions, and discover. Children are introduced to foundational math skills such as counting, problem solving, addition, subtraction, sequencing, graphing, and sorting. At the preschool level, math is approached through the use of games, songs, stories, as well as group and independent manipulation of math materials.

**Visual and Creative Art** - Preschool teachers offer art in different forms throughout the program. At times art is offered as a teacher-led experience in which children are taught foundational concepts such as colour and shape. Preschool teachers will also use this opportunity to teach art in a manner that is reflective of specific art techniques, and the proper use of particular materials.

At other times, preschool teachers place their focus on the development of individual skills and creativity through process art. This allows children the opportunity to engage freely and creatively with a variety of materials at their own discretion. At such a time, the preschool teacher takes on the role of facilitator, there to assist and support students through their creative journey.

**Early Literacy** - Early literacy is a key component to our program and has been incorporated throughout our preschool classroom, often overlapping into other subjects to reinforce concepts. Some of the tools used for early literacy include books, puppets, scavenger hunts, music, games, rhymes, and puzzles. Through this approach children develop awareness of letters and sounds, new vocabulary, storytelling skills, confidence in speaking with an audience, and a solid start in their pre-reading foundation.

### **Supplementary Subjects:**

**Science** - Preschool teachers often look to our spacious natural surroundings for real time teaching opportunities, engaging students with seasonal activities such as nature walks, scavenger hunts, gardening,



## PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM

and picnics. When possible, preschool teachers also plan more extensive units of study, which allow students to closely learn about and interact with various outdoor elements such as snowflakes, changing leaves, and the plant life cycle.

**Socials** - When possible, preschool students also have the opportunity to participate in school-wide events which support their social learning and development. This includes, but is not limited to, field trips, guest speakers, community events, as well as cultural and traditional experiences.

Preschool teachers work to integrate diversity and inclusion into the daily preschool experience to foster a culture of acceptance and love amongst all our community members. Understanding and empathising with others happens at the preschool level primarily through the use of socially and culturally diverse stories and lessons. Through daily exposure and behaviour modelling, preschool students are able to learn from the diverse experiences and scenarios and grow in an environment that encourages and supports their development and differences.

Additionally, preschool students engage in learning about social and prosocial situations every day through interactions with their peers. Through their play, preschool students learn numerous concepts including sharing, problem solving, point of view, emotions, communication, teamwork, listening, and patience. As supplemental material to their play, stories present preschool students with the opportunity to learn about the larger concepts of equality, empathy, kindness, understanding, cultural awareness, respect, and most importantly love.

**Music/Movement** - As the foundational skills of early learning, music and movement opportunities are infused into all aspects of the preschool program. Each subject that the children learn throughout the day is infused with songs, and poems for easier recall. Songs and ideas are presented to the students with movement opportunities to work on building up those fine and gross motor skills, while also giving their bodies necessary movement breaks, which in turn, reinforces the concepts being presented. Children learn best through doing; approaching their learning through music and movement allows them to do so without passively sitting and listening to information.



## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

### **Outdoor Play:**

It is the intent of this preschool that programming will allow for a minimum of two 20 minute sessions of outdoor activity during the day. This however, is also dependent upon a variety of factors, including, but not limited to: child ability, teacher support, inclement weather, seasonal disruptions, safety, emergencies, and illness. Outdoor play time will typically occur within the designated preschool play yard, where age and size appropriate equipment and toys are available. Occasionally, preschool children may join the kindergarten students for recess to allow for access to a larger peer grouping, preparation for kindergarten, or for supervision purposes. Preschool children may also be offered additional outdoor time, determined at the discretion of the preschool teacher. Children may participate in planned outdoor learning activities, and/or extended outdoor play periods due to nice weather or child engagement.

When outdoors, children are expected to always be wearing weather appropriate clothing. **Please ensure your child is always dressed for the weather and the temperature.** If you would like to leave any spare outerwear items at school in your child's cubby to ensure their availability for unexpected turns in the weather, please speak with the preschool teacher to first ensure there is adequate space.

Outdoor play is different every day. It can be cold, hot, wet, or messy. In order for your child to enjoy their outdoor experience to the fullest extent, please provide the following items, as well as multiple changes of clothing which can remain at school:

- sweater
- neck warmer
- rain/snow boots/running shoes
- socks
- sun/snow hat
- mittens (waterproof and lighter knit)
- jacket/coat
- splash/snow pants

In the months when the sun's rays are most damaging (May through September), you may wish for your child to wear sunscreen. Preschool teachers will not be applying any sunscreen to students (aerosol spray or otherwise). If this is of concern to you, please ensure that you thoroughly apply a liberal amount of sunscreen to your child's exposed skin prior to arriving at school in the morning.

### **Quiet Rest Time:**

At Northumberland Christian Preschool, a quiet rest period is planned for one to two hours every day. Children are expected to sleep during this time, in order to provide both their minds and bodies with the nourishment necessary to actively participate in and enjoy their evening at home. Children are provided with an individual cot and a rest area which promotes and reflects a typical sleep environment, while providing minimal disruption to other children. Children are welcome to bring a comforting blanket from home and one plush sleep toy or pillow, as long as there are no separation issues. Any sleep items brought from home will be used exclusively during quiet rest time and are not for use during preschool programming. Children in the midst of potty training will need to be diapered before naps to prevent their clothing and bedding from becoming soiled. Parents will need to supply diapers or pull ups for this time.

The length of quiet rest time is multi-purpose and has been determined with the intention of meeting a wide variety of purposes and needs. A 1–2-hour quiet rest period allows the teacher, children, and preschool program the opportunity to function at their best. As young children age, their sleep patterns go through a variety of changes. These changes, sometimes short lived or sometimes lengthy, can occur for a variety of reasons and differ from one child to the next. Although these changes can be frustrating, often making home sleep routines a challenge, it is important to remember that young children still require a lengthy nap during the day, especially if their night sleep is also being impacted. It is recommended that in order to reach their



## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

full potential, a toddler (1-3 years) requires 11-14 hours of sleep per day, and a preschooler (3-5 years) requires 10-13 hours of sleep per day.<sup>1</sup> Quiet rest time is a part of the preschool program intended to supplement your child's nighttime sleep, providing them with the total of 10-14 hours of sleep per day.

The length of quiet rest time is also reflective of the fact that Northumberland Christian Preschool is a multi-age facility which honours and meets the needs of children aged approximately 2 to 4 years of age. Although these children may have quite different sleep patterns, in operating a multi-age preschool, we have taken on the responsibility of respecting the needs of all clients. This means that the routine we follow is directly reflective of the needs of the youngest participants. Children who are unable to sleep for the entire sleep period, may be provided with stories to quietly look at while they remain in their designated sleep area. This allows older, or restless children to be occupied, while younger, tired children are given the opportunity to continue their sleep uninterrupted. Children who will be enrolled in kindergarten in the fall may join the kindergarten class during the last half of quiet rest time, at the discretion of the kindergarten teacher. This may not always be an option but can be considered if parents wish.

### **Field Trips:**

Throughout the school year, the preschool students are presented with the opportunity to attend local field trips which support their in-class learning. Field trips differ year to year and at the discretion of the current preschool teacher. Typically, the preschool class visits apple orchards, and pumpkin patches, farms, and the sugarbush. These trips always happen in conjunction with the kindergarten class, and occasionally the primary class as well.

Parent volunteers are a necessary part of successful field trips to ensure an optimal level of teacher support and student safety. Parent volunteer responsibilities may vary from one trip to another, but all volunteers are required to meet the specifications of the NCS field trip and volunteer safety procedures. Further information on these procedures can be found in the Northumberland Christian Preschool policy package.

Further information and specific details of field trips is communicated to parents at the time of the event. Parents are required to complete all forms and follow the safety procedures specific for their child to travel off-site. Families who do not complete all required safety steps, will not be permitted on field trips.

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<sup>1</sup> Suni, Eric. "How Much Sleep do Babies and Kids Need?" *Sleep Foundations*. Sleep Foundations: A OneCare Foundation, <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep/how-much-sleep-do-kids-need>. March 11, 2021.



## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES

### **Tea Tots:**

Tea Tots is an NCS playgroup initiative in which the preschool program and the kindergarten program come together with early learners in the community not currently enrolled at NCS, to offer community building, crafts, and play opportunities. This program is typically scheduled one morning a week through the course of the winter and again in the spring. This program spans a 2-hour time frame, offering opportunities to connect, stories, snacks, crafts, and socialization, with no expectation or obligation toward enrollment or academics. Younger siblings and/or extended family members (such as grandparents) are welcome to join this event, as it is open to the community regardless of their enrollment with NCS.

### **K-Days:**

K-Days is an NCS initiative which targets school readiness skills by providing positive and engaging school experiences and transition opportunities. Children enrolled in Northumberland Christian Preschool, along with early learners from the community not currently enrolled at NCS, have the opportunity to participate in the NCS kindergarten experience. Typically, this program is offered one day a week during the month of May, in which the senior kindergarten children at NCS get to experience what school will be like for them the next year as grade 1 students. This leaves space in the kindergarten program for preschool aged children to experience being in kindergarten.

Transitioning from preschool to kindergarten, or entering school for the first time, can come with many changes. To ease this transition, children who participate in K-days will not only receive a firsthand experience as a junior kindergarten student, but also the added benefit of interacting with students who will be a part of their peer group in the fall and familiarizing themselves with the school and staff. This program allows for preschool aged children to feel confident and successful as kindergarten students, before September rolls around. This helps to combat a lot of the 'first day jitters' that children often experience when they begin kindergarten.



## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE EXPECTATIONS

### **Arrivals:**

An adult must accompany each child to the drop off location between the times of 8:15-8:30. Programming will not be available prior to this time frame. Preschool children dropped off before this time are the responsibility of their guardian and are to wait together until adequate supervision is available.

The drop-off location changes depending upon the time of year. September, October, and April through June, preschool children are dropped off around the side of the building at their outdoor play yard, to allow for some extra gross motor development while the weather is nice. This happens rain or shine, so please ensure that preschool children are dressed for the weather when they arrive in the morning. Children who are potty trained, should also use the washroom before they arrive, as there is only one teacher in the play yard on duty. November through March, due to the need for snowsuits, preschool students are to be dropped off inside the building at their classroom.

We hope that the beginning days of school will be a positive and pleasant experience for both child and parent. Separation can be difficult for some children. If your child is having a difficult time saying goodbye, please let the preschool teacher know that you would like them to take over. Occasionally a child may need to be held by the preschool teacher until they are comfortable. Our preschool teachers are prepared to assist your child but will not remove a child from their parent without their consent or request. This can be difficult for both parent and child, as for some families this may be their child's first experience away from home.

Be patient, know it will get easier, and that your child is entering into a loving environment. Also, remember that your child will be having fun and participating in activities in no time. Preschool teachers are happy to send reassuring pictures throughout the day during the initial transition phase, at their earliest convenience. Please remember that if the preschool teacher is not responding to texts or emails right away, it is because they are tending to the needs of your preschooler and managing the daily program.

### **To help encourage positive goodbyes:**

- Say goodbye in a kind but firm manner
- Reassure the child of your intention to return when school is finished
- Be consistent and loving

Rarely, a child experiences an extended difficult transition time. This can be based on age, familiarity, personality, comfort, etc. If your child continues to express fear and anxiety, teachers are happy to meet with parents and create a plan specifically for you and your child until they become comfortable coming to school.



## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE EXPECTATIONS

### **Departures:**

#### **Half Days:**

Students leaving after a half day of school will need to be picked up in person by a guardian. Parents are responsible for coming to the preschool classroom to call their child from class and ready them for departure. Preschool teachers are unable to stop full day programming to ready each half day child for home. Classroom transitions are designed around this time of day, to allow for ease of pick up. It is important that parents are prompt to avoid disrupting the learning environment of our full-time students.

#### **Full Days:**

Students are picked up in person, by an adult, outside at the end of the school day from their designated pick-up location, which is removed from the flow of foot traffic. This allows teachers to keep a close eye on student safety, and to speak with parents in a quieter environment. Due to the young age of preschool children, they are not permitted to walk across the parking lot to a waiting vehicle without being accompanied by an adult or older sibling. Teachers are unable to walk each child to their vehicle, as that would require leaving other preschool students unsupervised.

Our school day ends at 3:00, and preschool students are ready for pick up at that time. All students are expected to be picked up by a guardian before 3:15. Preschool children wait outside at the gate and are dressed to reflect the safety guidelines for getting into their car seat. Preschool students will not be dressed for extensive outside waits, outside play time, or in outerwear that has been soaked/soiled during the course of the day. Please ensure a prompt pick up, for the comfort of your preschooler. It can be upsetting for a child to be left past the end of the school day, when all the other students are dismissed.



# BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Children require and seek guidance and discipline as they grow and mature. It is the goal of Northumberland Christian Preschool to help children develop the confidence and self regulation necessary to move toward self regulation and to learn appropriate and acceptable school behaviour patterns. This is achieved by directing respect and understanding toward each individual child while addressing their individual needs and abilities. At Northumberland Christian Preschool we strive to create a safe environment of growth for all children.

Children are encouraged to explore, ask questions, and problem solve as they play. Our program provides a safe place for children to be themselves, and to foster an active imagination and an insatiable desire to learn. Children are provided with many play-based learning opportunities to make positive, good choices, which fit within the behaviour expectations of our preschool. Reasonable, and consistent limits and choices are established and clearly communicated to the children, in order for them to enjoy the program to its fullest extent while respecting others and being contentious of safety.

Children are encouraged to solve problems, which increases their independence, ability to cooperate, and be considerate toward others. With this approach, children can learn to advocate for themselves, developing a strong voice in the crowd. The preschool teacher is always present and focused on the children, ready to provide assistance, direction, encouragement and to model an appropriate interaction given the situation. Children who are more reserved or are not developmentally ready for this sort of self-advocacy and independence will receive more guidance, as required, to help them navigate these tricky social situations. All interactions between children are keenly observed to ensure the utmost respect and safety of all children.

### **Responsive Classroom Behaviour Management:**

When student behaviours become challenging and conflict arises, preschool teachers will refer to and implement responsive classroom behaviour management through the use of our 3-tiered approach. Further information on this approach and each of its levels is available in the Northumberland Christian Preschool policy package.

If aggressive or destructive behaviour is a recurrent problem, parents will be asked to meet with the preschool teacher to discuss new strategies to support the child. If aggressive or destructive behaviour continues after a parent meeting and new strategies have been implemented to the best of the teacher's ability, parents may be asked to withdraw the child until a plan acceptable to parents and the instructor can be put in place. This will allow time and opportunity to ensure a safe and non-threatening environment for all concerned.

### **Responsive Parental Concern Management:**

Instructors are pleased to meet with parents at a mutually agreed time but are not free for lengthy discussion of issues or concerns during class, drop off or pick up time. Families wishing to communicate information to the preschool teacher concerning their child's behaviour, progress, learning or medical needs, should, when possible, arrange a meeting prior to the start of the school year, to ensure the program and the teacher are able to provide an optimal level of support. Ongoing concerns throughout the year, that require dialogue and parental updates, shall be discussed through scheduled meetings as necessary.

Parents who have concerns about programming, staffing, or their child's experience at preschool are requested to follow appropriate protocol, which can be found in the Northumberland Christian Preschool policy package.





## STUDENT SAFETY POLICIES

Close supervision is the best accident prevention strategy. The indoor and outdoor preschool environment is kept as safe and hazard-free as possible to increase accident prevention. Northumberland Christian Preschool strives to provide equipment that is inspected regularly, is well-maintained, and is in good working condition. Any equipment that does not meet these standards will be immediately removed from child access.

All child injuries are thoroughly examined in order to assess the situation and proceed with the necessary treatment. Minor injuries will be dealt with on-site, typically through the use of ice and/or bandages. An incident report will be filled out, with a copy given to guardians during a follow-up discussion, and a copy kept on file.

In the event of a serious injury, 911 will be contacted, followed immediately by guardians. If the guardian cannot be contacted, the school will then reach out to the emergency contacts and continue calling until someone has been notified, and further arrangements/plans have been made. A cell phone and client contact information will be present during outdoor play or excursions in case of emergency or injury.

Northumberland Christian Preschool prioritizes the safety of all students and has effective safety measures in place. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safe and appropriate departure of students. Further information on the specific policies can be found in the Northumberland Christian Preschool policy package.

### **Emergency Onsite Safety Procedures:**

At Northumberland Christian Preschool all students participate in the practice of safety procedures during the course of the school year. These drills allow staff to be prepared and aware of their responsibilities in the event of an emergency situation. Through frequent practice, students also learn the personal expectations that come with an emergency situation. The safety of our staff and students is largely dependent on the preparation and confidence of each of our community members.

In the event of a situation which poses a threat to the health and safety of the children and staff of NCS, safety procedures have been designed in an attempt to ensure the safety and security of all individuals. Further information on these policies and procedures is available from the office upon request.

In a real emergency, guardians will be informed about the initiation of a security procedure after the situation has ceased and staff and students are deemed safe by emergency personnel. The situation which caused the initiation of a security procedure will be thoroughly documented and kept on file. Opportunities to discuss the event and the response will be available if desired by parents.

### **Outdoor Play and Equipment Safety:**

At Northumberland Christian Preschool we are devoted to maintaining a safe outdoor environment in which all equipment and toys are kept in working condition, are well-maintained, and are used safely by all children. Playground equipment and toys are inspected regularly. The outdoor environment is maintained with the safety of our youngest clients in mind. Best efforts are made to ensure the yard is kept clear of debris, both man-made and natural. Boundaries are indicated with fences, which discourage children from gaining access to areas intended for older students. A member of NCS staff is always present with the preschool students during their outdoor play and does not leave the children unattended for any length of time.



## STUDENT SAFETY POLICIES

Seasonal play equipment is also available to the students at the teacher's discretion. Use of these items will often be dependent upon the weather, the teacher's plans for the day, and the potential for additional support if needed. This includes but is not limited to a class set of crazy carpets, sleds, snow shovels, and a water table.

If children are using the climber, they must have shoes, boots or sandals with a heel strap (*flip flops are not allowed*). Sweaters/jackets with ties or strings are not recommended as they can become caught. Jewelry of any sort (especially necklaces and earrings) are not recommended as they can also become caught, resulting in injury. Students wearing such items will be encouraged to remove that clothing item (when possible) or directed to an alternate play opportunity that day.

### Risky Play:

During outdoor play our students are encouraged to find movement and freedom in their space, providing them with opportunities for growth as they delve deeper into their imagination and explore the world around them. Children everywhere are attracted to play, as this allows them to create and engage with a world, they are able to master.<sup>2</sup> This child-led mastery comes with an internal desire for growth and maturity, choices and self-governance. The outdoor environment is an optimal framework for children to express their self-driven desire to conquer fears, and practice adult roles.<sup>3</sup> Oftentimes this is best achieved in a form of play referred to as 'risky play'. Risky play can be defined as "thrilling and exciting forms of play that involve a risk of physical injury".<sup>4</sup>

There are six categories of risky play in which children experience thrill.<sup>5</sup> At Northumberland Christian Preschool we encourage children to explore all the categories of risky play during their day:

- exploring great heights - occurs when using the climber, swings, and teeter totter
- exploring rapid speeds - occurs when using swings, sledding, and tricycles
- exploring dangerous tools - occurs when using real-world tools, such as kitchen dishes and gardening tools
- exploring dangerous elements - occurs when using water, sticks, and large rocks
- exploring rough and tumble play - occurs through games of chase such as tag
- exploring fears of getting lost - this feeling occurs through walks in the woods, and exploring less familiar areas of the school property

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<sup>2</sup> Ginsberg, Kenneth R. (2007, January). *The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds*. Pediatrics: Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Beate Hansen Sandseter, Ellen. (2009). *Characteristics of Risky Play*. Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14729670802702762?journalCode=raol20#:~:text=Risky%20play%20can%20generally%20be,a%20risk%20of%20physical%20injury.&text=These%20two%20categories%20include%20several,the%20risk%20in%20risky%20play>.

<sup>5</sup> Gray Peter Ph.D.. "Risky Play: Why Children Love It and Need It." *Psychology Today*, 2014, April 7, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/freedom-learn/201404/risky-play-why-children-love-it-and-need-it>.



Regardless of which activity your child may choose during outside play, their efforts are fully supervised by the attentive and supportive staff at NCS. Staff are educated and trained, not only in the supervision of children, and first aid, but also in the value and role of risky play in the lives of our youngest learners. In the event you have questions or concerns about risky play and how that looks for your child, please feel free to discuss your concerns with the preschool teacher at any time.

Our goal for outdoor play is to offer an environment in which risk-taking behaviour and play can occur together. Safety is a top priority, in which preschool teachers inspect the play environment for, and remove, elements of danger, as there is a difference between risk and danger. The children’s endeavours are fully supported and encouraged by the staff at NCS. Our goal for outdoor play is to have educators foster a child’s curiosity, imagination, and their desire to explore. In order for children to fully embody these experiences of mastery, they must be given an outlet for risky play, through which they can “develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and the resiliency they will need to face future challenges”.<sup>6</sup>

Inclement Weather:

Outdoor play and programming can be affected by weather conditions. In the event of extreme cold or heat, children will remain indoors. These extremes take both the humidity and wind-chill (real feel) into consideration and are measured at the discretion of the teacher based upon Environment Canada updates. On these days, children will instead participate in planned indoor activities focused on gross motor development as their safety and well-being comes first.

During the winter months, when temperatures can drop quite low, children are expected to be dressed appropriately for two full periods of outdoor play each and every day. This can be expected to average 20-30 minutes each recess. When children do not arrive with seasonally appropriate clothing, efforts will be made to borrow clothing from siblings (when applicable), borrow clothing from our spare clothing bin, contact guardians for appropriate clothing to be brought. When none of the above options are viable, students will be required to spend their recess supervised by another staff member in the building. This would mean missing recess and being in the office, or another classroom.

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<sup>6</sup> Ginsberg, 2007.



# ILLNESSES AFFECTING ATTENDANCE

When your child is presenting with signs of illness or discomfort, please be considerate of other children and staff, and determine if school is the best place for your child given their condition. Home is where children are most comfortable, and this greatly reduces the spread of their illness to the other students and staff. If signs of illness occur while your child is attending preschool you will be updated on your child's condition. Dependent upon the symptom, you may be required to come pick up your child. If a guardian cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be notified to arrange alternate care.

If your child exhibits the following symptoms, please do not bring them to preschool. Instead, notify the school before 9am that your child will be absent:

- diarrhea and/or vomiting within 24 hours of class time,
- fever (37°C or higher)
- any illness or discomfort that requires medication to suppress the effects
- any communicable diseases (pink eye, strep throat, hand, foot and mouth disease, fifth disease, etc.).

It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the preschool as soon as you become concerned that your child has contracted a communicable illness.

## COMMON CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES – A QUICK GUIDE

Illness	Typical Symptoms	Contagious?	Remove from Centre
<b>Chicken Pox</b>	Fever, blister type rash, persistent itch	YES 5 days after onset	YES 5 days after spots initially appear
<b>Cold with Fever</b>	Runny nose (green discharge), sneezing, low appetite, cough, fever, tired, aches and pains	YES Before/during symptoms	YES Until symptoms return to common cold
<b>Common Cold</b>	Runny nose (clear discharge), sneezing, low appetite, cough	YES Before/during symptoms	NO
<b>Diarrhea #1</b>	Runny stools Typically, diet, or medically based Could be specific to the child	NO	NO
<b>Diarrhea #2</b>	Runny stools, sour smell, fussy/cranky, pain and/or vomiting	YES	YES Until symptoms subside for 24 hours
<b>Ear Infections</b>	Fever, clear nasal discharge, cranky, discharge from ears, ear pain/pressure	NO	YES Until on antibiotics for 24 hours
<b>Fifth Disease (Slapped Cheek)</b>	Headache, fever, stomach pain, runny nose, distinctive facial rash (red cheeks) Rash can spread to the rest of the body, and is often quite itchy	YES	YES Evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Check with administrators for compromised immune systems or staff pregnancy.
<b>Flu</b>	Fever, cranky, pain, runny nose, nausea, or vomiting	YES	YES Until symptoms subside for 24 hours



# ILLNESSES AFFECTING ATTENDANCE

<b>Hand Foot and Mouth</b>	Blister type rash typically located on the child's feet, bottom, palms, and inside the mouth May complain of sore throat, or experience decreased appetite due to sores inside mouth Fever	YES	YES At least one week from appearance of blisters, or as otherwise instructed by a physician.
<b>Herpes Simplex (common cold sore)</b>	Fever, blisters/sores around mouth	YES	Yes Evaluated on case-by-case basis. Check with staff for age grouping and mouthing habits of enrolled children
<b>Impetigo</b>	Crusty and weeping rash, mostly on face, arms, or legs	YES	YES Until on antibiotics for 24 hours
<b>Nausea/ Vomiting</b>	Pain, low appetite, fatigue, fever	YES	YES Until symptoms have subsided for 24 hours
<b>Pink Eye</b>	Thick discharge from one or both eyes, redness or itching of one or both eyes	YES	YES Until doctor says it is not contagious
<b>Rashes</b>	Red spots anywhere on child's body Children may experience pain, itching, weeping sores, swelling, or blisters	YES	YES Until rash is identified and a doctor says it is not contagious
<b>Sore Throat</b>	Fever, red and swollen throat, pain, cough, low appetite	YES	YES Until on antibiotics for 24 hours

*\*Please keep in mind that the above chart is for reference only and is in no way complete or a governing document. Illness, and therefore attendance, will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the preschool teacher. Students unable to participate in regular classroom programming, or requiring medicine to get through the day, should remain home until they are well enough to rejoin the program as usual.*

### Medications:

Administration of prescription and/or non-prescription medications during the course of the school day, is occasionally required due to the nature of some illnesses, allergies, and student needs. Northumberland Christian Preschool is happy to assist with the administration of necessary medications in adherence to the NCS medication policy. Further information on the specifics of this policy is available in the Northumberland Christian Preschool policy package.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q. *Is my child required to be potty trained before they begin preschool?***

**A.** No, it is not required that your child be potty trained to attend our preschool program. Being potty trained is an asset, as it allows the teacher more freedom when planning the day, and for greater availability to the various needs of each individual student.

Teachers are unable to potty train children *for* their parents but are willing to discuss toileting options and the parameters in which they are able to assist with this milestone. All children, regardless of their independence in the bathroom, need to be provided with multiple sets of spare clothing in the event of an accident.

**Q. *What supplies does my child need for school?***

**A.** Each school year, NCS staff put together an August Mailout, which contains all the important information and dates your family will require for the school year. In this document there is also a greeting from classroom teachers, and a student supply list. This list may change from year to year, at the discretion of the teacher and their plans for the program that year. If you are enrolling in preschool mid-year, we would be happy to send you a copy of the August Mailout so your child will be able to attend school with all necessary items.

Please label all of your child's belongings, so we can ensure that they are returned. Mable's Labels can be purchased online and are a great way to label almost anything. Purchasing Mable's Labels actually supports NCS, as a percentage of your purchase is returned to the school through our fundraising efforts.

**Q. *Are parents required to provide meals? Am I restricted by what I can send?***

**A.** Yes, parents are required to provide meals. All children are expected to have eaten breakfast prior to drop off. Breakfast provides them with the energy they require to have a pleasant day and fully participate in the planned activities.

It is the responsibility of the family to provide each child with enough healthy food to get them through the course of their school day (1 or 2 meals, dependent upon their enrollment). Preschool children are provided with a morning and afternoon nutrition break. Healthy snacks should be provided for the first nutrition break, with a larger meal item for the second break. Snacks and treats are welcome, but teachers will encourage students to first eat their healthy items. Please let us know in writing if your child has any food allergies. If allergies are present in the classroom, families may need to alter the contents of their child's lunch. This is evaluated on an annual basis dependent upon enrollment and individual allergies within the classroom. Please discuss with the Preschool teacher each year.

**Q. *How do I inform the teacher of any special pick-up arrangements?***

**A.** Please inform the teacher or the office through a phone call, note, or verbal communication of where or with whom your child should go after school. Please inform the person picking up your child that picture I.D. may be required before they can pick up your child. Until that person becomes a familiar face, this allows us to keep all children safe. If car seats need to be exchanged between drivers, please clearly label your car seat and speak to the office about an appropriate location for your car seat to be left during the school day.

Please notify the office of early pick up days with as accurate a time as can be reasonably provided. If early pick up occurs after 1:30, please knock quietly on the classroom door, to avoid waking the other children.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q. *What is the procedure if I would like my child to stay indoors at recess?***

**A.** Our school policy is that all children go out for recess unless the weather is very inclement, and outdoor play is considered unsafe at that time. In the event of extreme cold, teachers may consider a reduced outdoor playtime.

If you feel that your child is too ill to go outside, then it also holds true that they are likely too ill to be at school. On days where your child's health makes you feel they are unable to participate in regular programming, please keep them home, until they are able to return to their usual programming. However, if there are unusual circumstances that necessitate your child staying indoors at recess, please discuss that with the preschool teacher to see where accommodations may be possible.

**Q. *Does the class celebrate birthdays at school?***

**A.** Yes, birthdays are celebrated in preschool (unless otherwise instructed by the parent). Teachers are not responsible for throwing a birthday party, but instead may provide decorations, or special birthday plans and activities. These decisions are left to the discretion of the classroom teacher. Preschool teachers work hard to make each birthday special for each child. This may look different from how birthdays are celebrated in other classrooms or with other teachers, but rest assured your child will have a special day. Birthdays are also recognized by the wider school community during chapel, and with a special birthday prize from the office treasure chest.

Treats for sharing may only be given out if the guardian consults with the classroom teacher in advance of the special day to ensure that allergies are acknowledged, and all students are included. If your child is having a birthday party with only a few children from the class, please invite them privately so as to not cause any jealousy among students. You are welcome to hand out invitations at the school only if all the students are invited.

**Q. *Can my child bring toys to school?***

**A.** To avoid lost, damaged or broken items (and the corresponding emotions), families are asked to please leave all toys and books at home. The exception to this being one plush sleep toy. If guardians feel a toy incentive is necessary to get their child moving in the morning or for entertainment during the car ride, that is fine, but toys are to remain in the front hall or go back in the car when guardians leave. In the event of a heightened attachment to the item from home, in which the child can not separate from the item adequately and continue with the expectations of the school day, it will be necessary for the item to remain at home.

**Q. *Will the school wash my child's bedding?***

**A.** No. Any nap time bedding that is sent to school will be washed by parents. It is recommended that bedding be washed weekly, however that may depend on the frequency with which your child attends. Please discuss this with the preschool teacher to set up a washing rotation that works for your family. Parents are responsible for returning or replacing items sent home for washing.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q. Why does my child's clothing come home wet and muddy?**

**A.** At Northumberland Christian School we are fortunate to have a large, natural play yard, allowing students supervised access to nature. Children have access outdoors to areas that are man-made, but they also have access to large open and forested spaces. Regardless of which activity your child may choose for their outside play each day, their endeavours are fully supported and encouraged by the staff at NCS. Our goal for outdoor play is to have educators foster a child's curiosity, imagination, and their desire to explore. The outdoor environment, in all its various states, even puddles, and mud pits, holds the potential for rich child-led learning experiences. Interacting with natural elements and loose parts from nature, provides children with an inherently open-ended form of play.<sup>7</sup> Through the use of natural materials (sticks, rocks, water, mud, dirt, pinecones, grass, etc.), young children are able to support their constantly changing ideas and avenues of exploration.<sup>8</sup>

“Learning through play—particularly in the case of messy play—is a process of discovery and exploration, without a focus on a specific end product. [This] open-ended nature of muddy play, as a loose part resource, serves any purpose a child chooses.”<sup>9</sup>

As educators at NCS, we view messy outdoor play, as a positive interaction with the environment from which children gain many benefits to “their learning and development, including internalizing routines, developing confidence, and engaging in critical thinking.”<sup>10</sup>

It is in these inquisitive moments that children are truly *engaged* in their play and their learning. It is in these enlightening endeavours that children are truly *flourishing* in their learning environment and connecting with the world around them. It is in these connections that students and teachers alike are *hopeful* for the future, and the amazing and ingenuitive abilities of these children.

If this approach causes distress for your family, please consider purchasing a mud suit for your child. These are plastic suits which go on over your child's outerwear allowing full coverage and can be purchased online. Preschool teachers are happy to help students don these outfits, and they may be left at school for daily use. An alternate approach to mud suits, would be to ensure you send your child to school in 'old' clothes that you do not mind being soiled. Do not feel as though you need to wash the mud from their outerwear each night. Especially during the seasons where those outdoor items will end up covered in mud again the next day.

### **Q. What if I have more questions that have not been addressed in this handbook?**

**A.** Please feel free to speak with administrators or the preschool teacher if you have any questions or concerns with any of the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in this handbook. We are always happy to answer any questions and accommodate your needs to the best of our abilities.

905-372-8766 [office@northumberlandchristian.ca](mailto:office@northumberlandchristian.ca)

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<sup>7</sup>Fruin, Hannah. “Muddy Play. Reflections on Young Children's Outdoor Learning in an Urban Setting (Voices).” *naeyc*, NAEYC, <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2020/outdoor-learning-urban-setting>. March 11, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.