

University Plaza Nursery School

Parent Handbook 2016-17

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Welcome to University Plaza Nursery School!

We hope the following information will be helpful to you and your child, not only at the start of the school year but throughout your time at UPNS. Please review and make note of any questions. This handbook is intended to be a counterpart to an ongoing dialogue between parents and staff. We look forward to working together with you!

About the School

UPNS is a parent cooperative nursery school serving New York University and the surrounding community. As part of the co-op's mission, parents play a vital role in the ongoing life of the school. As your child's first and most important teachers, parents are expected to participate fully in your child's experience here at UPNS. One important responsibility that all parents have is your school job, which not only frees the professional staff to focus on the children and curriculum, but also gives each family a first-hand experience of what makes the school tick. Some suggested activities for parents include: volunteering in the classroom, attending field trips and Board meetings, supporting fundraising events, and sharing your talents by giving workshops. We believe these all help to create a close-knit community.

Our program offers a great deal of individual attention and a wide variety of activities. We believe that children learn best when they are active participants in their own education. Therefore, rather than by direct adult instruction, we encourage hands-on experiences that offer numerous opportunities to experiment with materials, and to interact with other children. We encourage the children to become problem-solvers both on an intellectual and social level, while the teachers model appropriate behavior. We maintain a keen awareness of each child's progress, though we do not have a set standard that is expected for everyone; each child learns at his or her own pace.

UPNS admits families regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or ethnic origin. We do not discriminate in the administration of our educational programs, admissions policies, financial aid awards, or other programs.

Philosophy

We value community and trusting relationships. As part of a co-op, teachers, children and parents work together to create a learning environment that respects the uniqueness of each child. Our teachers create a nurturing atmosphere where children play and explore a variety of open-ended materials. We consider social and emotional growth to be some of the most important aspects of early learning. Our curriculum is tailored to the developmental needs of each child.

Mission Statement

Our goal is to provide a nursery school experience that builds on the natural curiosity of each child. We foster the learning process by encouraging children to explore their own interests in a warm, caring and child-centered setting. Children are supported as they learn important social skills through play and relationships within the classroom community. It is important to us that children leave UPNS with the social, emotional and academic skills to succeed in Kindergarten.

Parent Co-op

UPNS is a parent cooperative and depends on the volunteer work of parents to free up teachers and administrators to spend more time on curriculum planning. Upon acceptance of a contract, one parent from each family is required to sign up for a Parent Job. Families with siblings attending the school are required to have two jobs. Each job is important and will demand approximately 4-6 hours a month of service. In addition, each family is responsible for one major group cleaning or maintenance activity per year (e.g. repainting, year-end cleanup) and for fund-raising activities. Some jobs may demand more time all at once, rather than time spread out over the year. A “buyout” option is available for 10% of the yearly tuition. Parents who find they can’t fulfill their assigned job will be billed at 10% of the yearly tuition.

Class Parent

An extremely vital parent job is that of Class Parent. There is one from each class. The Class Parent shall serve as the representative of the class on the UPNS Board of Trustees, and as a liaison between parents, teachers and the Board; shall arrange class meetings and work with chairs of all committees relevant to the functioning of the class; shall be responsible for classroom snacks by preparing and maintaining a “Parent snack list”; shall oversee the Harvest Brunch, staff holiday and end-of-year gifts; and shall make necessary arrangements and preparations for class trips.

Forms

Prior to the start of school, please make sure that all forms are on file. The forms include *Emergency Contact Card*, *Trip/Photo Release*, *Child's History*, *First-Aid Permission*, and your *Child's Health Form*. **The Department of Health is adamant in its ruling that children may not attend school until a physician fills out the Medical Form.**

Separation and Adjustment Period

At UPNS we begin the school year with a home visit for each child, and an adjustment period which includes shorter days and smaller groups. These methods help strengthen the bonds between child and teacher.

So that your child will be happy and comfortable in school, it is important that he or she knows and trusts the teachers and feels that UPNS is a safe place. This can best be accomplished in the classroom in the presence of a parent or caregiver with whom the child feels secure. This procedure should not be hurried, and can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks (sometimes more). The younger the child, the longer the familiar adult may be needed. Our professional staff has experience in determining when children can successfully and comfortably separate and remain in school alone. They will explain the procedure when you meet with them before school begins. Usually it takes the 2's and 3's between two weeks and a month, to adjust, depending on each child's emotional makeup, beginning with half-groups and shortened days; the 4's and 5's usually need one week to adjust to school life. Since every child is different, be assured that we will take the time necessary for each child to become adjusted, comfortable and secure. **Be prepared to stay with your child for as long as it takes for them to feel secure.**

Arrival and Departure

School is in session from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. There may be occasional half days. You will be notified of half days at least one week in advance. Please be on time for both drop-off and pick-up. It is difficult for a child to enter a group when he or she arrives late and the class is already in session. Children should be ready to enter the classroom when the doors open at 9 a.m. The 9-9:30 a.m. time is your chance to have some quality time with your child in the classroom setting, and to prepare your child for separating from you. The day's activities start promptly at 9:30 a.m., usually with morning meeting when they hear about what is planned for the day. Children like to know what the routine of each day will be, and many children have a more difficult time at school if they miss this important information.

At pick-up, most children become anxious if all the others have left and they haven't yet been picked up. If you are unavoidably delayed and know you will be late in the afternoon, you must call the teacher on the **classroom line, 212-677-5748**, so a teacher can explain this to your child.

Attendance/Pick-up/Lateness

Teachers take attendance each day.

At pick-up time, children will only be released to adults who are authorized. Teachers will not release a child to an adult who is not authorized by the parent, unless a parent has informed the school in advance of alternate pick-up.

If lateness becomes an ongoing issue, the director will request a meeting with the parents to see how we can resolve the problem. Late pickup can make children anxious and inconvenience teachers, so it is important to keep this to an absolute minimum.

Telephone Numbers and Cell Phones

The school has three telephone lines. The (212) 677-5748 number rings directly into the classrooms and should be used for prearranged teacher communications or time sensitive communications. When teachers take phone calls in the classroom, it takes their time and attention away from the children.

The (212) 677-3916 line is the office number used for administrative matters. **For pressing matters, it is best to call the classroom directly, do not rely on email or voicemail.** The fax number is 212-471-1700.

Do not call or text the teachers on their cell phones during the school day. Teachers are not permitted to use their cell phones when they are working with children.

Please do not use your cell phone in the UPNS classrooms. Your time spent in the classroom should be devoted to being engaged with the children. If you need to check email, text or make a phone call, we ask that you take it outside.

Health

If your child has a cold, has a fever or has spent a sleepless night, please keep him or her home. If your child is sick enough to be taking medicine, please keep him/her home. The basic question we ask is: Can the child participate with reasonable comfort and receive adequate, appropriate care without interfering with the care of the other children?

As per Department of Health regulations, if your child has experienced any of the following symptoms in the past 24 hours: fever, earache, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting, pink eye, strep throat, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing, he/she MUST be kept home for 24 hours following the disappearance of symptoms.

If UPNS teachers think your child is ill, they will use a health check form to determine if your child is too sick to remain in school. When you come to pick up your child you will receive a copy of the health check form. In some instances UPNS may require a doctor's note before your child can return to school.

Children in group care are exposed to many germs. The single most effective method of reducing illness and the spread of these germs is frequent hand washing. Teachers make an effort to protect children and themselves by showing children how to thoroughly wash their hands with soap.

Please report your child's absence by 9:00 a.m. It is especially important that you notify us of any contagious condition immediately so we can inform other families if necessary.

The Department of Health requires us to post a medical alert any time a child at UPNS has a communicable disease.

Children with Special Needs

UPNS provides a child centered learning environment to children with varying needs, abilities, and learning styles. Many parents of children with special needs choose UPNS because we individualize curriculum to meet the needs of all kinds of learners.

The teachers at UPNS are all trained in child development and have received training in recognizing and working with children who have special needs. Sometimes teachers notice that a child is having challenges or is developing in an atypical manner. In these instances, we observe and assess the child. Teachers then communicate their findings with parents at a parent/teacher conference. Teachers may suggest that a child receive an evaluation. Parents then choose if they would like their child to be evaluated. If parents agree to an evaluation, the Director will help in initiating the evaluation process.

Many children benefit from a little extra help and support, both in and out of the classroom. We frequently suggest speech evaluations for children who have a difficult time being understood, or motor skill evaluations for children who are having difficulty with writing, drawing, running, or catching a ball. Children, who receive extra support early on, frequently have an easier time transitioning to Kindergarten.

Lice

Lice are a parasite that is common to humans throughout the world. Lice are not dangerous, and are a common occurrence in NYC schools especially if children have siblings or play with other children who have siblings in elementary schools. If lice or nits, which are the lice eggs, are discovered on one child, all of the children in the school will be checked for lice.

If lice or nits are found on your child, you will be called to pick up your child from school. Your child may return to school the following day if he/she has been treated for lice. There are a variety of ways to treat lice. Most importantly, the home must be thoroughly cleaned and everything vacuumed and laundered. The teachers and director can help you with resources for safely treating lice.

If one child at the school has lice an email will go out alerting the entire community.

Please remember, lice are not dangerous to humans.

Accidents/Emergencies

All accidents at school will be reported to parents verbally and written up on an Accident Report Form. Parents are telephoned immediately for more serious injuries or when the child is not feeling well. If a parent is not reachable, the school will call the person listed on your Emergency Release Form. Please inform your emergency contacts of this possibility.

Food

On a rotating basis (up to 4 times a year), each family provides a healthy morning snack of crackers, fruit and/or cheese for the children. Some families may wish to provide other foods—such as yogurt, bagels, hummus and pita—when it is their turn to provide a snack. The school provides water for children to drink. Please make sure you provide enough snack for all of the children in your child’s class. Some foods may not be appropriate to bring for snack because of food allergies that children might have. UPNS will inform you of any foods that should not be provided as snack or brought into your child’s classroom.

We ask that you provide snacks that do not contain hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup or aspartame. Children under the age of four should not be given hot dogs, whole grapes, seeds, peanuts, popcorn or chunks of any food that can be swallowed whole as they are choking hazards.

We have a policy that no candy or gum is allowed in school. Exceptions may be made in the case of gum, if there are specific children who benefit from the chewing of gum for therapeutic reasons.

Allergies

Please be aware that some children may have allergies; food of unknown sources or ingredients should never be given to a child with known allergies, and foods, in general, should not be shared among children.

If your child has a life-threatening food allergy, you must provide medical documentation concerning your child’s allergy. If any child has a medically documented, life-threatening allergy resulting from ingesting a food, that food will not be allowed in the child’s classroom. If any child has a medically documented, life-threatening allergy resulting from inhalation or contact with a food, that food will not be allowed in the entire school.

Lunch

Lunches are brought from home. Some suggestions include sandwiches, chicken, cheese, yogurt, pasta, vegetables and fruit, and water, juice or milk. We cannot refrigerate or heat up lunches. If necessary, please put an ice pack in your child's lunch box. Lunches are not allowed to be shared.

Rest

The Department of Health requires that all young children attending programs for 4 or more hours have a one hour rest time. During this time children sit or lie down on their mats and relax their bodies, look at a book or talk quietly to their friends. The room is kept relatively quiet so sleeping children are not disturbed. Parents are required to provide children with a fitted crib sheet to cover their rest mat. This is a Department of Health regulation. All rest sheets must fit easily in the space provided for storage. As per Department of Health regulations, children without sheets are not to be permitted at school during rest time. **If your child does not have a sheet to cover their rest mat, we will call you to come and pick your child up at rest time.** Pillows are not allowed by the Department of Health and will be sent home if brought to school.

Toys

We discourage bringing toys from home. It is often difficult for a child to release or share these items. A soft doll or toy may be used at rest time if it helps the child to rest.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Twice a year we schedule parent-teacher conferences. These take place in November and March. Teachers or parents may also request additional conferences as needed.

Issues that may arise concerning your child's school experience are best discussed directly with your child's teacher. If you would like to talk to the teacher, find out what time would be convenient for an early-morning, after-school or telephone conference. Please do not engage the teachers in long discussions at the start or end of the day since this is the time for teachers to greet or say good-bye to the children.

Birthdays/Parties

Children enjoy celebrating their birthdays in school and parents may like to send in a special treat. Check first with your child's teacher for the particular classroom tradition or routine.

If you are planning a home party as well, and are inviting more than three classmates, please invite the entire group. The children may discuss the party at school and if a few are left out hurt feelings develop.

If you are interested in party space, UPNS classrooms are available to rent for \$200 (includes a \$100 refundable cleaning deposit). If you rent one of the classrooms you will also be required to have a UPNS teacher monitor the party. Parents must pay the teacher monitor \$20 per hour for the entire time they are using the UPNS classroom.

Clothing

Please dress your child in play clothes, without belts, that are easy to pull down and up and comfortable shoes or sneakers. Children do get dirty and shouldn't feel restricted from an activity because of worries about clothing. Children should always be dressed warmly for outdoor activity. Even in the winter we go outdoors, though for a shorter period of time than in warm weather. We will spend time out-of-doors every day except when the temperature is below 25 degrees. Hats and gloves are mandatory in the winter. You might want to clip gloves to jacket sleeves to keep them from getting lost.

All children need to keep a complete change of clothing at school. This should include underwear, pants, shirt and socks. The clothes should be placed in a large Ziploc bag with the child's name on the outside (we are not permitted to have plastic bags in the classrooms). Items that are worn home should be replaced the following day. Also, please check the box periodically for season-appropriate clothing and to be sure that your child has not outgrown what you sent in early in the year. All clothing should be labeled, as many children have similar items.

Diapers

In the Blue Room (two's class) it is up to each family to provide diapers and wipes for their children. The Blue Room teachers will encourage and support toilet training. Both the Yellow (three's) and Green Room (four's, five's) are diaper free classrooms.

Strollers/bikes/scooters

It is against NYC fire code to leave strollers, bikes, or scooters in any public areas of the Silver Towers, including the lobby, hallways, or school entranceway.

Strollers, bikes, and scooters can be stored outdoors in front of the building. Strollers left in front of 110 Bleeker Street must be folded with wheels locked, to prevent them from blowing away and causing injury to pedestrians. This area is protected from the weather and there is a bar that strollers, bikes, or scooters can be locked to. Any stroller, bike, or scooter that is left in one of the indoor public areas will be moved to the front of the building. Strollers, bikes, and scooters may not be left in front of 110 Bleeker overnight.

Communication

Information is sent to families via email. In addition, each family has a mailbox in his or her child's classroom. Please check it daily for notes, messages and bills. Also, check the classroom bulletin board for reminders or signups for trips. The bulletin board located in the lobby has community-related information.

Special Activities

The children participate in movement or yoga at least once a week. Please have your child wear socks and shoes that are easily removed and put on for these days. Children should not wear tights, but leggings without feet are fine. We also provide a weekly half-hour music program for each group in addition to the daily classroom music time. Other special activities may be provided.

Field Trips

UPNS provides field trips throughout the school year. Children might travel by school bus, city bus, or subway for field trips. In these instances parents must fill out a permission slip before a child can attend the field trip. Many field trips are walking trips that take place in the immediate neighborhood. One of the forms parent's sign in the beginning of the school year is permission for your child to participate in walking trips. In many instances you will not sign another permission slip for individual walking trips, although some walking trips may require an additional permission slip.

We depend on parents to help chaperone many UPNS field trips. A signup sheet will be posted in the classroom prior to the field trip. If you sign up to join us on a field trip, please be prepared to be with your child's class from the time the children leave the classroom until the time they return to school. If you find that you will not be able to attend a field trip you signed up for, it is your responsibility to let the UPNS teachers know as soon as possible or find a replacement to chaperone the trip. If there are not enough adults to accompany children, the field trip will be cancelled.

Extended Day/After School

An Extended Day/After School program is offered for Green and Yellow room children, and Blue room children who are at least 3 years old, Monday through Thursday, from 3:00-5:00 p.m. The additional fee for this program is \$25 per day with advance registration; discounts are also available when registering for 2 or more days. When space permits, we offer an Emergency Drop Off rate of \$30/day. In some instances Blue Room children may be admitted to attend the After School program if they have sibling in the program. This is at the discretion of the Assistant Director. Do not rely on email requests for drop off reservations. Please confirm with the Assistant Director in the morning that there is space for your child.

Philosophy of Discipline

At University Plaza Nursery School, we believe that there are only a few instances when discipline is needed. These are when a child is: hurting others or destroying the work of others, disrupting the learning environment, endangering himself/herself by dangerous behavior or participating in unacceptable behavior as determined by classroom rules.

In all of the above instances, we speak to the child and explain why his/her behavior is unacceptable. This is done in a positive manner that is neither embarrassing nor degrading. If a child persists in the behavior, we ask him/her to work in another area of the room or yard. In addition, if a child is unable to control him/herself, we tell him/her to sit down and calm down away from the activity. This separation is done in the classroom with a teacher nearby, and as soon as the child feels settled he/she may return to play. Our goal is to help the child gain self-control and take responsibility for his/her actions. If negative behavior persists, the teacher will meet with the parents to try and better understand what is happening and collaborate on a solution or strategy.

Grievance Procedures

Any parent that has a grievance should first discuss their concerns with the classroom teacher. Should the parent feel that their concerns are not being addressed adequately; an appointment should be made with the Director. If the parent still feels unsatisfied, they should contact their Class Parent, or a Board representative. If the parent still feels that the issue should be taken to the Board, the grievance should be promptly submitted in writing to the Class Parent or Board president.

Emergency School Closing

The following, but not limited to, will constitute an emergency school closing: No water, no electricity, no heat, severe weather.

Should we find it necessary to close the school; an email will be sent out to notify all families. In the case of severe weather, we will follow the NYC public school closings. Please listen to local radio and television announcements.

Evacuation Plan

In the event of an emergency that causes us to evacuate the building (fire, bomb threat), we will transport the children to either:

- Kimmel Center lobby at 60 Washington Square South (Jonathan Ross in Kimmel Operations # 212 998 4900 - NYU Public Safety #212 992 2222.) or,
- The Academy of St. Joseph, located at 111 Washington Place (telephone #212-243-5420).

Once we have safely arrived the emergency parent telephone chain will go into effect. We will remain at that location until we have made contact with all parents or emergency contacts and ALL children have been picked up.

We are a community that celebrates differences!

We feel lucky to be part of a large community that is rich in cultural, ethnic, and family diversity. We believe that children become better citizens and community members when they are part of a non-judgmental environment of acceptance and respect. In this way we strive to support and defend families as they make their own lifestyle choices and celebrate their own cultural identities. Please feel free to talk to your child's teachers about ways that you feel will best support and affirm your family's cultural roots and lifestyle choices within the classroom.

We are happy to have your family as part of the UPNS community!