

## Parent Policy Handbook for Happy Kids

### Our Philosophy:

We believe quality childcare has long term, positive effects for children. Young children learn best through playful interaction with others and their environment. Children are enthusiastic learners if they are encouraged to be active and creative.

The child's environment should provide developmentally appropriate materials that enable them to think, reason, question and experiment. The environment that supports learning should also be a loving, nurturing, safe and supportive environment.

Children need an atmosphere that promotes a routine and schedule that gives them a sense of security in their day and with their caretakers/teachers. Changing the child's activities and progressive learning content helps promote the four domains of development: Physical, Social, Emotional and Cognitive.

## Our Ratio, Total Group Size, and Tuition

There are six classrooms for children at Happy Kids beginning with:

Waddler class. This class begins when the child is enrolled at HKDC upon the milestone of walking independently and drinking from a sippy cup.

Toddler class

Two year old class

Three year old class – beginning of Pre-K

Four/Five year old class

After/School program / Summer Camp Program

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Age	Ratio	Group Size	Weekly Tuition Amount
Waddler	1:4	8	\$185.00
Toddler	1:4	12	\$185.00
Two's	1:6	18	\$185.00
Three's	1:7	20	\$175.00
4's & 5's	1:11	22	\$175.00
School-age	1:11	22	\$90.00
Summer Camp	1:12	25	\$165.00

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\*Tuition is a fifty one week financial obligation to Happy Kids.

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Tuition is not prorated; tuition will remain the same regardless of any absence, vacation, or holiday, or portion of month unused. There is no tuition charge for the week of Christmas. Happy Kids is closed during this week for staff holiday mid-year break. NOTE: Please see list posted in each class and in hallway of a complete year of closings for Happy Kids.

\*On a rare occasion, HKDC may shift the ratio in a particular classroom. In this instance, notice will be given to the parents and ratio change will be a temporary act of status.

## Fee Schedule

An annual registration fee of \$50.00 is due every August. A non-refundable deposit, equal to one week's tuition is required at time of registration.

After school tuition includes teacher workdays and holiday stays when the center is open.

A non-refundable deposit, equal to one week's tuition, is required either at time of registration or the first week the child attends HKDC. When the child leaves our facility this deposit will be credited back for the last week's stay at Happy Kids contingent upon a two week notice has been given to Administration. No credits or deposits are applicable if no notice is given. NOTE: HKDC does not refund tuition, deposits or registration fees.

## Tuition:

- Due on Monday of every week – parents have grace period of Tuesday by 6:00 pm to place tuition in the payment box by doorway upon entrance to building.
- Cash or check is accepted as payment.
- Cash must be receipted by Administration in the office.
- Late payment of \$25.00 will incur for all payments found in box on Wednesday morning. One waiver of late payment is granted annually.
- If child is not at center on Monday or Tuesday and payment is placed in box on Wednesday then no late payment is incurred. Attendance rosters are checked for accuracy of late payment postings to accounts.
- Habitual late tuition payments will incur a withdrawal of the child from Happy Kids.

## Our Day

Each classroom has its own unique personality, flow, schedule and activities. However, some components which will be incorporated into the regular schedule for all classrooms are:

### Whole Group Activities

The “school day” generally begins in each classroom at approximately 9:30 with a morning “Circle Time.” Children gather as a group for sharing, songs, books, nursery rhymes, sign language and talking about the day’s events. In addition to the circle time, children stay together as a whole classroom group for meals, snacks, naptime and outdoor play both am and pm.

### Small Group Activities

During morning hours we break into small groups. A primary caregiver works with a small group of children. Activities are used for investigation, discussion, and experimentation that may not be possible within the larger group.

### The Structure of Learning

We are a Reggio Emilia inspired philosophy of school.

Read in more detail about Reggio Emilia on our website.

Eportfolios are compiled of the children’s work, developmental milestones along with pictures, anecdotal notes by the caregivers/teachers as well as many other progressive projects by the children. We model small group projects by the children with panels of observation and compilation of their questions, experiments and exploration by the children. These panels are posted in the classroom as well as the Eportfolios.

We also offer provocation tables for the children that have natural seasonal elements and materials that offer stimulation for creativity, construction and learning by the senses.

Curriculum is set by the seasons: Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer. There is also a set curriculum content for each classroom and age that works on a progressive repetition content of songs that are taught to the children, sign language, and nursery rhymes. Each class is assigned a list of content for learning and the list continues with additions and repetition of what has been taught as they move from class to class.

The Pre-K classes add 2<sup>nd</sup> Step curriculum which is a social/emotional problem solving curriculum and the Final Pre-K class (four’s & five’s) add Handwriting without Tears which is a handwriting unit that includes many components to learning how to write the alphabet.

\*\*\*See the Curriculum board located in the hallway for more detailed information.

## Indoor Learning

Each classroom contains the areas of “learning centers” appropriate for the children’s age and developmental level that is required of all high-quality childcare centers and school in North Carolina. These include literacy and language, blocks, manipulatives, art and music, science and nature, and dramatic play. Our intention is to exceed these guidelines and also make these areas as beautiful, inspiring and natural as possible. Materials are presented to encourage curiosity and exploration with the aesthetic of the learning environment as a priority.

## Outdoor Learning

Engaging with the natural world is a strong component of our program. Conservation and stewardship are emphasized while we discover and investigate all that nature has to offer. All the children, including our toddlers, spend time outdoors in all weather conditions. Rainy days mean puddles and streams. And mud!! Cold days are a chance to see our breath.

We follow the air quality guidelines in severe heat, and in temperatures below freezing we limit our outdoor adventures to a few minutes at a time. Our general rule is there is no bad weather, just bad clothes. Please ensure that your child is properly dressed for the weather each day.

## Meals / Snacks

Happy Kids provides a morning snack and an afternoon snack. Milk is served with all AM snacks and during lunch. Whole milk is served to the Waddler and Toddlers. The Two year old class, Pre-K classes, After/School and Summer Camp program is served 2% milk. Water is served at the PM snack. The snack menu is displayed in the kitchen area of our center and on the Parent Information bulletin boards in each classroom. Menus are changed in accordance to season.

The parent is responsible for providing a nutritious and dietary balanced lunch Monday thru Thursday. Lunch is provided by Happy Kids on Fridays. A rotation of pizza, corn and fruit is served during the fall winter and spring months. Hotdogs, corn and fruit is served during the summer months.

Juice boxes may be packed for the class assigned picnic day, but all juice boxes must be 100% juice. A serving of dairy such as yogurt or cheese should be packed for substitution of the milk on this particular day.

All lunches are monitored daily for the required food groups. The required food groups are a meat/protein, fruit, vegetable and a bread/grain. Since milk is provided on a daily basis, with the exception of picnic day, the dairy can be omitted. If a food group is missing from the packed lunch, then that food group will be supplemented at a charge of \$1.00 per serving. The charge will be added to the child's ledger card of tuition.

Dietary supplements are welcome for the benefit of each child. The parent may supply milk or supplemental snacks due to food allergies, cultural or religious protocol etc... Please speak with the Lead teacher in your child's class in regards to supplements and the criteria for this.

Mealtime is considered a relaxing time for the children. A teacher sits at each table with the children and eats his/her lunch as well.

All foods should be labeled with the date, contents and child's name. This is a requirement of the North Carolina Division of Child Development.

**\*\*NOTE:** If the parent does not provide the child's lunch for the day, then the center will provide a lunch for the fee of \$10.00. The charge will be applied to the child's ledger card for tuition.

**\*\*NOTE:** If your child is having breakfast "on the go" they should finish eating before entering the classroom.

**\*\*NOTE:** Meal Patterns for Children in Child Care Programs provides a recommendation of serving size per the age of the child in order to meet adequate nutrition. This form can be obtained from the Director at HKDC.

## Rest Time

Between approximately 12:30 to 2:30 pm, the school rests. This is naptime for the children. Cots are provided by Happy Kids and the children bring bedding for their assigned cot. Teachers use this time to take a personal break.

## Admission Requirements and Enrollment Procedures

Happy Kids welcomes children from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, as well as children with special needs. We recognize that all children bring their own unique gifts to our community, thus enriching the environment for us all. We reserve the right to maintain a balance between ages and gender in each classroom.

To schedule a tour of Happy Kids, please contact our School Director, Christy Dicksey by phone: (910) 619-6310 or email: [HKDC01@aol.com](mailto:HKDC01@aol.com). You can also go to our website: [HappyKidsDevelopmentCenter.com](http://HappyKidsDevelopmentCenter.com), go to the heading that says, Contact us and fill out the contact sheet, which will be emailed to our Director for a response.

We often have a wait list for enrollment so make sure that you have contacted the Director in one of the options above for a confirmation of either there is availability for your child or you have been placed on a wait list.

Upon enrollment, the Director will instruct the parent to go online to the HKDC website and download the registration packet to be completed by the parent/guardian and given to Administration before attendance or the first day of school for the child.

## Safe Arrival and Departure

Upon arrival to Happy Kids, parents should park in the outer right hand circle or in the parking lot (not in the grass). All vehicles must be turned off and secured from rolling. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR VEHICLE** idling while unattended. This creates a very dangerous atmosphere for parents and children walking to and from the building.

All children must be escorted into the building by a parent or guardian. The parent or guardian must sign and indicate the arrival time on the attendance sheet in the child's class. Parents need to make sure that the caregiver/teacher has received the child into her care before they exit the class.

Parents may not leave children alone or unattended in a classroom before the caregiver/teacher is present. The parent or guardian is responsible for storing the child's items in their cubby.

A parent or guardian must accompany the child while they are in the common areas of the center. Children must never be left unattended on the grounds, parking lot or playground. All children must be escorted out of the building by a parent or guardian. Parents must notify the caregiver/teacher of their departure and the attendance sheet must be signed with the time of departure indicated.

**CHILDREN SHOULD NEVER EXIT THE BUILDING WITHOUT THE PARENT/GUARDIAN.**

Written authorization and Valid Identification is required when anyone other than the parent or designated guardian arrives to pick up the child.

Parents are advised to frequently update their child's file with current persons who can take their child home. An annual child's information sheet is required annually for updated records.

Parents should only enter and exit through the front door of the school. Entry through the play space gates is prohibited.

## Late Policy

When a parent is late to pick up a child, anxiety is felt by everyone – the parent, the teacher, and most importantly, the child. We cannot stress the importance of this enough. If an emergency arises, please notify the school as soon as possible. If your child is picked up after 6:00, even with prior notice, and regardless of circumstances, the following late fees will apply:

First late pick-up: \$20.00 for the first 15 minutes (or segment thereof as measured by a cell phone) plus one dollar for each successive minute after 6:15pm.

Second late pick-up: \$30.00 for the first 15 minutes (or segment thereof as measured by a cell phone) plus one dollar for each successive minute after 6:15pm.

Third late pick-up: \$50.00 for the first 15 minutes (or segment thereof as measured by a cell phone) plus one dollar for each successive minute after 6:15pm.

This fee goes to the teacher who is staying late with the child and must be paid upon arrival. Please know that asking for this fee is most assuredly one of our teacher's least favorite activities. We ask that parents come prepared to pay this fee when they are late. The cycle of late pick-ups is reset every year and is calculated Jan 1 through December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

\*If a child has not been picked up by 6:00, Happy Kids staff will attempt to reach both parents using all known contact numbers, then all listed emergency contact telephone numbers. In the event that no listed emergency contact is reached, at 7:00pm the Wilmington Sheriff's Office will be contacted to help us find an appropriate person with whom to leave your child.

## School Calendar

Happy Kids closings:

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

President's Day

Easter Good Friday

Memorial Day

Independence Day

Teacher Workday in August

Labor Day

Columbus Day

Thanksgiving – Thursday and Friday

Christmas Week

New Year Eve – ½ Day

New Year's Day

Happy Kids School Activities:

Valentine's Day Party – February 14th

Spring Parade – March or April

Parent Orientation Night - August

Fall Party – October

Thanksgiving Feast – Monday before Thanksgiving

December – Holiday Party

For exact dates please see the annual schedule of holidays and vacations that are posted on our classroom bulletin boards and in the hallway at HKDC.

## Inclement Weather Policy

The decision to delay opening or close the school early for the day is not a decision made lightly. We must consider road conditions and ensure that our teachers are able to arrive to work or get home safely. We understand the responsibility we have to our working parents while also balancing our staff's safety. Changes in schedule due to inclement weather will be posted on our website, and on the local TV stations newscast.

## Transitioning into New Classrooms

As a general rule, we move the children into their new classrooms during the summer months. This gives the children a transitional time to get to know their teachers and the new classroom environment. Summer is a transitional time at Happy Kids. Children are out more during this time due to family visits at home, vacations and relatives spending time with the children. Moving during this time is less intrusive than when the school year officially begins in August.

At times, a child may be ready to move mid-year. When this occurs, the next available opening will be offered. However, our community is very stable as a whole and spaces may not become readily available in the next classroom until the summer transition.

## What Children Need to Bring to School

Children should wear washable play clothes to school that are comfortable and appropriate for the season. We play hard and get messy often. We change clothes often so children need at least two clean, weather appropriate changes of clothing every day in their cubby along with socks if needed.

The children all sleep on cots at naptime. Parents are asked to provide a standard crib sheet and a blanket large enough to cover the child's body but not so large it will not fit in the child's sleep cubby. Sleep friends such as a small stuffed animal are welcome.

Otherwise, all toys and other personal items should be left at home at all times. In addition, please keep candy, gum, money and jewelry at home. These items can be difficult to share or get lost or broken.

Each child needs a sippy cup for water. Water is available during the entire time of your child's day. Hydration is so important to a child's brain development. We wash and sanitize these cups daily and replenish them with cold water. Please make sure the sippy cup has a secure lid so no sand or debris can enter along with an attached straw or spout that cannot be removed.

We welcome hairbrushes and hair ties in a container or zip lock baggie for children who have long hair.

Lunchbox packed with a nutritious lunch.

Hats and sunglasses are optional.

## Potty Training

When your child is ready, teachers will work closely with you to develop a plan for success. Readiness at school may be different than being ready for the potty at home. We consider a child ready when they feel the urge to go, initiate the request to go to the potty on his or her own, recognizes and demonstrates discomfort when wet or soiled, and has the fine motor and self-help skills to dress and undress independently.

At school, we will not force your child to sit on the potty. Instead, we will encourage, motivate, and support the children to choose to use the potty. If sitting on the potty seems to cause the child distress, the teacher will not force the child to stay seated on the potty.

When the teacher feels the child is ready for training pants and demonstrates the motivation for potty training, she will speak with the parent and formulate a plan for the proper clothing necessary for practice and success.

## Celebrations

Children's birthdays are an exciting time and we enjoy sharing in the joy of these celebrations. If parents would like for their child to celebrate their birthday at Happy Kids with their friends then we ask for the following criteria:

All cupcakes, cakes, snack cakes are prepared in a commercially prepared kitchen that has been inspected by a county health inspector.

The celebration begins at 3:00 – during our PM snack and ends at 3:30, when the children go outside.

We praise and welcome healthy snacks such as cut up fruit like strawberries and grapes, cheese cubes and crackers. Children love finger food and these foods offer great success to toddlers for eating and are healthy. Ice cream cups with sprinkles are another favorite.

We also ask parents to remember children have food allergies and there may be some children who cannot participate in the consumption of party foods.

## Parent Participation

Happy Kids maintains an open-door policy. Parents are welcome and invited at any point in the day. We invite parents to be involved and share in your child's school experience. If you have items, books, or experiences that reflect what the children are learning, please let your child's teacher know. Parents are also welcome to assist in the classrooms in a variety of ways including, but not limited to:

- Organizing classroom materials
  
- Being a mystery reader
  
- Playing a musical instrument or sharing a special talent
  
- Making materials for the classroom

Making playdough, gak or other tactile substances.

Cutting out pictures

Collecting items from nature

Participating in small groups

Playground monitor for teacher to have planning time

Parents are encouraged to present their own ideas as well. Let us know your talents and interests so we can put them to good use.

It is our hope that everyone in the child's community is informed and involved at HKDC as a whole.

## Discipline and Behavior Management

Happy Kids Development Center uses Authoritative style of discipline. We set and maintain reasonable, fair limits and closely supervise and monitor the children's activities. The environment is warm and nurturing with realistic expectations from children of different ages. Our philosophy is that of patience, maintaining composure, setting limits respectfully, building self-esteem and willpower through allowing choices, empathy, assuming positive intent, and helping children learn from their mistakes.

Our staff is trained to use developmentally appropriate discipline strategies. These strategies focus on teaching, not on punishment. Reasons are communicated in simple clear words.

We focus on what we want the children to do, rather what not to do. Our goal is to help children choose to be successful instead of attempting to coerce or control them to behave. We focus on making connections with children so that when a conflict arises, trust and understanding is already established and children are motivated to cooperate. We do not "save" children from the consequences of their actions. Rather we help children handle disappointing choices and empathize rather than lecture. We view conflicts as opportunities to teach and utilize these moments to guide children to handle the conflict rather than punish them for not knowing how to solve the issue.

If a child begins to demonstrate a need for more support, a behavior plan may be put into place. A behavior plan is designed to address the child's challenge by evaluating the environment, instruction, and interactions in order to support the child. Teachers, parents, mentors and/or the directors' work together to develop and agree upon strategies to prevent and/or respond to a challenging behavior, plan for the implementation of strategies and review the plan for effectiveness.

If a more intensive plan is appropriate to the circumstances, the director may invite a behavioral specialist from New Hanover County Child Care Services (or other appropriate agency) into the classroom to observe the child's behavior.

If a child's behavior is dangerous to themselves or others on an on-going basis and there is no response to the interventions put into place, the family may be asked to find a more suitable program to support their child. However, this is only done after all other interventions and strategies have been put in place, sufficient time is allowed to determine the response to interventions, and the highest level of support the school can provide is offered and the behavior continues despite the support.

## Health Policy

### Sick:

If a child becomes sick, has a fever of 101 degrees or greater, wheezing, vomiting, diarrhea three times during their day at the center, sore throat, rash or any contagious illness, then the parent will be contacted to pick the child up. Phone calls to parents are documented at the time the call was placed. The parent is required to pick the child up within one hour from the time the call was placed. One dollar per minute will be charged after this time. After the child has been sent home due to illness he/she will not be allowed to return to the center for the next full day (twenty-four hours). For clarification; this means that regardless of the time the child is sent home on Monday, he/she will not be allowed to return to Happy Kids until Wednesday.

### Medication:

We will gladly administer medications to the children with their parent's written consent.

We limit administering medication to once a day. This is a recommendation from the New Hanover County Health Department.

A physician or the child's parent must authorize, in writing, all medications given at HKDC. Medications, prescriptions, ointments or lotions must be in its original container and labeled with the child's name. All medications must be age appropriate and meet the guidelines for administration on the container.

All medications must be given to the Director for proper storage in the office medicine lock box.

Medications are not allowed in the classrooms. Do not place any medications in your child's lunch box, bags or cubby etc...

If medications are left at the center for two days or past the expiration date of the container, the director will discard the medication.

\*NOTE: Parents are asked to apply sunscreen in the morning before arriving to school during the summer months of water play.

### First Aid

In case of an accident, staff members will use standard first aid procedures. Employees are CPR and first aid certified. If we feel medical attention is required, we will call the proper emergency personnel and then call your designated contacts. If an accident or injury occurs during the day that does not require a doctor's attention, our teachers complete an "Incident Form." This form outlines specifically what occurred and our response.

# Waterplay Information

Water-play begins and ends with the Director's posting each year in accordance to hot weather temperatures.

For parents new to water-play at the center, we have sprinklers and water tables on the playground. We go outside after breakfast and stay out until lunch everyday. We do not go out in the afternoons due to extreme hot weather. The sun rises on the front of our building in the mornings - making a shaded playground. It is comfortable due to the building's help in blocking the sun. By lunch the temperature gets extreme and it is time for us to go in. Little bodies dehydrate very fast and we avoid unpleasant environments for the children and their creative play.

**\*\*\*NOTE\*\*\***It is extremely important that you apply Sunscreen before school. This gives the sunscreen plenty of time to absorb into your child's body for maximum protection. It also gives the parent total control over the choice of sunscreen applied due to allergies and allergic reactions.

## Summer Supply List for Water-play

Children should be dressed in **shorts and t-shirts** upon arrival to the center and ready for water-play. We find that pull on shorts and t-shirts offer the best protection against the sun and are comfortable when wet. **An additional set of labeled clothing** should be available in the child's cubby box for changing (Labeled). We suggest easy pull on and off items. We value the summertime water-play time as a great opportunity to teach self-help skills in taking off and putting on clothing. We always offer aid and assistance, but encourage the children to dress themselves as much as they can.

A **freshly laundered towel** brought in every Monday morning. (NO LARGE BEACH TOWELS PLEASE)

A **pair of Crocs or Sandals** for water play and an additional pair of shoes for inside play. These shoes will be kept at school for the week. Please do not send canvas or fitted water shoes. They are too hard for the children to manipulate and we are teaching self-help skills. This sets the child up for failure and frustration. The water shoes are also prone to smell by the end of the week.

Wet clothes will be sent home daily. Towels and shoes will go home every Friday.

We can't **stress the importance of labeling EVERYTHING**. Children will dress in small groups and clothes tend to get mixed up.

**Policy: Children must dress for water-play even if they choose not to get wet.** It is certain that 99.9% of the time, children say in the mornings to their parents; "I don't want to play in the water," because the morning temp is not conducive to the mid morning temps going up and they of course get hot and change their mind.

We, the staff at HKDC, thank you in advance for all of your help in assuring the children have a comfortable and happy day everyday by following these requests