



# FAMILY HANDBOOK

REVISED JULY 2008

*GRACEKIDS ACADEMY IS AN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOLS INTERNATIONAL (ACSI #214637) MEMBER  
SCHOOL AND AN ACSI ACCREDITATION CANDIDATE*

Welcome to GraceKids Academy. We feel blessed and excited that you have decided to allow us to take part in your child's journey through life and learning. This handbook was created to provide you with an easy to use reference for any questions you may have regarding our center. If at any time you have additional questions or need to speak with someone regarding the center's practices and/or policies, please remember that our door is always open. Any one of GKA's staff members will be happy to assist you in any way possible.

## **OUR MISSION**

At GraceKids Academy, we strive to provide children with the opportunity to fully develop their minds, bodies, and spirits through high-quality, Christian-based care and education.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

We believe that all things are possible through God. Because of this, we base our instruction on Christian beliefs and Biblical principles. Each child is seen as a true gift from God and is treated as such (Psalm 127:3). Because each child is unique and has been given different gifts and abilities, we work to initially discover each child's strengths. We then are able to design activities that will build on these strengths while at the same time, encourage development in areas of weakness in the child.

We want your child to feel like they are the leader in their learning and development. Therefore, we take plenty of time to observe and learn where your child is developmentally and where his/her interests lie. Once we see what your child enjoys and what they are developmentally ready to do, we can then plan appropriate activities centered around your child's unique capabilities and temperament.

It is well known that children learn best when they are in a structured and safe environment. At GraceKids Academy, we take every precaution necessary to ensure that children are indeed free from harm in every location in our center. Each group of children also has a daily schedule of activities that is followed so the child and parents know what to expect from day to day. Your child's day will be a harmonious balance of developmentally appropriate activities from each of the five major areas of development. Cognitive activities will encourage thinking and problem solving in your child. Gross motor activities will have your child using his/her large muscle groups while fine motor activities will work on smaller movements and hand-eye coordination. Social-emotional activities will teach your child about caring, sharing,

and feelings. Finally, communication activities will help to improve your child's language development.

GraceKids Academy promises to give your child the care, love, and education he or she will need to be successful in the future. Through planned and spontaneous daily interactions with staff and other children, your child will gain knowledge and build relationships that will last a lifetime.

### **WHAT WE BELIEVE**

- God is bigger and better and closer than we could ever imagine.
- The Bible is God's guide for us.
- Jesus is God showing Himself to us.
- Through the Holy Spirit, God lives in us and through us.
- Nothing in creation "just happened"—God made it all.
- Grace is the only way to have a relationship with God.
- Faith is the only way to grow in our relationship with Him.
- God has allowed evil to provide us with a choice. God can bring good out of bad events and God promises victory over evil to those who choose Him.
- Heaven and hell are real places. Death is a beginning, not an end.
- The church should serve people like Jesus served people.

### **LIFESTYLE STATEMENT**

GraceKids Academy is a religious, non-profit Christian daycare and preschool teaching the love of Jesus Christ from a non-denominational perspective. We require our employees to live their lives as role models (Romans 10:9-10, Luke 6:40). Employees will conduct themselves in a way that will not raise questions regarding their Christian testimonies. A Christian lifestyle should reflect the biblical perspective of integrity and appropriate personal and family relationships, business conduct and moral behavior. An employee is expected to demonstrate a teachable spirit, an ability to share love for others, a willingness to live contently under authority and a commitment to follow the Matthew 18 principle when an issue arises with fellow employees or supervisors.

GraceKids Academy believes that biblical marriage is limited to a covenant relationship between a man and a woman.

## **OUR STAFF**

Your child will be cared for, nurtured, and taught only by highly qualified, loving teachers who are dedicated to their profession. All teachers have been trained in child development and in the appropriate curriculum for the children that they are working with. Our teachers will strive to not only ensure that your child receives a top-notch, Christian-based education, but will also build trusting relationships and strong bonds with each and every child in their care.

## **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

At GraceKids Academy, we encourage parents to utilize our open door policy, which states that parents are welcome to come into the center at anytime to visit with their child and join in his or her classroom activities. Please remember that during regular class time, the teacher's responsibility is to be working directly with his or her students. If your intentions during a visit are to discuss concerns with your child's teacher, you must schedule the visit ahead of time so that the teacher can appropriately plan and be prepared to dedicate 100% of his or her attention towards you.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

In order for your child to achieve total success in his or her journey through learning, it is essential that there is an open line of communication between children, parents, teachers and the director. Besides the notes you will receive each day from your child's teacher regarding daily activities, you can also expect the occasional parent-teacher conference, not only for when a concern arises, but also for the opportunity to praise your child on a job well done or continued success.

We expect parents to be as involved as possible with their child's education. This means that you should talk to your child each day about what they did while at the center and also read the daily notes from their teachers. If a problem does arise, we expect you to be willing to work with us and your child to correct the situation. We know that parent's lives are usually very busy, but we ask that you take the time to build a strong partnership with us so that together we can make your child's experience at GraceKids Academy a positive and rewarding one.



## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

At GraceKids Academy, we believe that there is a difference between punishment and discipline. We see punishment as simply a consequence to misbehavior, which can at times be very threatening, humiliating, and intimidating to a child. We look as discipline though as a method of changing inappropriate behaviors in a loving and respectful fashion. We work hard to ensure that children are happy and involved in activities that they enjoy in an effort to prevent misbehavior. When we notice a child beginning to get off-task, we will try to redirect the child's attention. We will then try to focus your child's attention towards another activity, something that will get them interested in learning again.

We use lots of praise and positive reinforcement, which means that children are rewarded for appropriate behavior. Children love to get both positive and negative attention. Therefore, we believe in directing our attention towards good behavior. Children will then see that behaving properly will get them the attention that they want and deserve.

At times, it will not matter how much praise we give or how much redirecting we do, a child may still misbehave. In this case, we have what we call a "Thinking Spot" in each classroom and on the playground. If a teacher is unable to get a child to behave in an appropriate manner, the child will be asked to go and sit in the thinking spot for an appropriate length of time based on their age and the severity of the incident. After a few moments of thinking about what they did, the teacher will talk with the child about what happened and how the incident made the teacher feel. The child will then have the opportunity to explain his or her actions and to apologize to the teacher and to who ever else was involved. We feel that this discussion is the essential component in order for the child to realize that his or her actions can affect other people.

If we have a child who continues to misbehave after 3 times in the thinking spot in one day, the child will be sent to the director's office. When this occurs, the child will spend time discussing his or her behavior with the director and may be directed to do other appropriate tasks based on his or her actions. You will be made aware

that this consequence has taken place in writing on your child's daily sheet. Three instances in one week may result in a possible suspension from the program. We do not do this to punish you as the parent, but because we want all children to be in a safe, productive learning environment. If a teacher has to deal with continual disruptions from a child, then he/she is unable to properly care for and educate the rest of the children in the classroom.

GraceKids Academy may, with or without notice, remove any child from the program whose actions are seen as a danger to others.

## **HOLIDAYS**

The following are recognized holidays when the center will be closed:

New Year's Eve and Day

Labor Day

Memorial Day

Thanksgiving Day and the day after

Independence Day

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

If the holiday falls on a Saturday, we will observe the holiday on Friday. If the holiday falls on Sunday, we will observe the holiday on Monday. Full tuition is due on weeks including the holidays. If your job requires you to work on these days, you will need to make alternate childcare arrangements. If at any time these holidays change, we will notify you in advance.

## **SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

In the event of a hurricane, natural disaster or matter of national security, GraceKids Academy may close. This decision will be made by the director and Grace Church. You will be notified by phone, email or another form of notification which will be posted, if such an event occurs. In instances when GraceKids must close early due to such an event, please pick up your child promptly. No credit or refunds are provided due to closings.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

The outdoor play experience is an important part of your child's day. It is our policy for all children to participate in outdoor activities on a daily basis, weather permitting. If your child is not eligible to participate in outdoor activities, please supply a doctor's note. Understand that if your child is not able to participate outdoors, they must sit in the office until their class returns as we cannot move him

or her into another classroom. GraceKids Academy will apply sunscreen on your child with your written authorization.

## **CURRICULUM**

The primary curriculum for GraceKids Academy is Christian based. We use the A Beka curriculum supplemented with Beyond Centers and Circle Time. A Beka focuses on phonics, numbers, health, safety and manners and applies everyday experiences to promote the developmental needs of each child. Beyond Centers and Circle Time focuses on learning through play, and allows children to explore the world around them. Our teachers emphasize the love of God and we teach from a Christian perspective.

## **BIBLE CURRICULUM**

Bible time is a daily part of your child's curriculum program. Bible stories are taught using a variety of methods which encourage children's active involvement. Our twos, threes and fours attend a weekly chapel service.

## **MEDIA PROGRAMS**

Media programs used by GraceKids Academy are previewed, geared to the child's age and attention span and are only used to supplement the overall curriculum. These programs are not shown daily and media time will not be a part of your child's daily routine.

## **OUR LEARNING PROGRAMS**



### **Infants**

Infants need specific one-on-one attention with an individualized schedule for each child. It is our goal at GraceKids Academy to give each infant in our program the special care that he or she needs while working with each child to accomplish the developmental goals necessary to move on to our toddler program.

We want to encourage your infant to explore the world, discover new things and develop a sense of independence as he or she learns to crawl, walk and become more self-sufficient.

### **Toddlers**

Children at this age are very curious, and while they are still very dependent on adults, they are beginning to seek out their own independence. Teachers in this room will guide toddlers in their new found search for freedom and will be there every step of the way to applaud each new discovery and encourage positive growth in each child.

Our toddler program still allows for a somewhat more individualized schedule for each child. However, at this age children do need a little more structure and need to know what to expect from day to day. Because of this, toddlers will follow a daily routine and will be more involved in planned small group activities that will still allow for one on one attention, but will also introduce toddlers to the idea of working with others.

The primary focus of our toddler program is to further develop language, motor, and self-help skills. With this in mind, teachers will spend their day listening and talking to your child and encouraging him/her to try new things.

### **Twos**

Our two year old program still allows for a somewhat more individualized schedule for each child. However, at this age we feel that children do need a little more structure. Our twos focus on play, group activities, socialization skills and preschool preparation. Potty training also becomes a big part of the two year old classroom. Even if your child is not ready for such a big step, he or she will at least become familiar with what this developmental goal means.

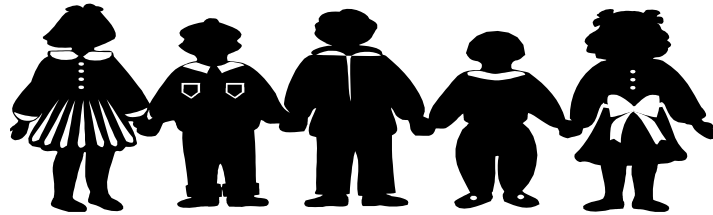
One main focus in our two year old program is language development. During this time in your child's life, communication begins to flourish. At GraceKids Academy, we want to encourage speech as much as possible. Our teachers will work daily with each child to ensure that using words is a key goal.

### **Preschool**

Teachers working with our preschoolers will strive to show their students that learning can be fun. Play is truly a child's work and it is through play that children are best able to learn new concepts and ideas. Teachers will use what children are

discovering on their own through play to design lessons that will teach children new skills and concepts necessary for a lifetime of success.

The Preschool Classroom will be divided into different learning centers: Dramatic Play, Language, Library, Science, Math, Games/Manipulatives, and Art. Along with daily lessons including language, reading, math, and Bible, children will spend their days growing, exploring, and creating in each of the different learning centers.



#### **K4 (Voluntary Pre-K)**

The primary focus of teachers working with our K4 children will be to teach the children the skills necessary to succeed in kindergarten. Children in K4 will not only be taught the academic skills necessary for both public school and private school, but will also spend a lot of time working on social skills and learning about emotions and feelings.

This classroom will be divided into learning centers. However, these children will also spend time working on pre-reading and writing skills in a child-friendly and exciting fashion.

### **CENTER POLICIES**

#### **Personal Items**

Because GraceKids Academy provides all toys and learning materials, toys from home are not permitted. When we have special Show-and-Tell Days, your child will be permitted to bring in their own personal items as long as they are labeled with your child's name. If your child has a security item, such as a blanket or stuffed animal, we will permit this item to be brought in daily for the comfort of your child during nap time. This item must also be labeled with your child's name and we ask that you please wash these items at least once a week for health reasons. Please note that GraceKids Academy will not be held responsible for any lost items.

#### **Meals and Snacks**

It is the parent's responsibility to provide all meals and snacks for the child during their time at the center. Children will have a designated time to eat a morning

snack, lunch and an afternoon snack. We do not provide a time for dinner. Your child's lunch box or bag must be labeled with his or her name. We have a refrigerator to store lunches and do provide a microwave to heat up necessary foods. We encourage all parents to follow the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics in regards to nutrition.

### **Suggested Nutritional Guidelines**

#### *Birth to 4-6 months:*

- Breast milk or formula (16-32 oz.)
- If solids are started, iron-fortified rice cereal 2 times a day
- Vitamin c and A strained fruits or vegetables

#### *6-9 months:*

- Breast milk or formula (24- 32 oz)
- Iron fortified cereal,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup a day
- Soft mashed fruits or vegetables
- Strained meats and combination dinners or tofu

#### *9-12 months:*

- Bread group: Four servings daily of  $\frac{1}{4}$  adult serving size of teething biscuits, dry cereal like Cheerios, graham crackers, pasta, or crackers
- Fruits and Vegetables: Four servings daily of 1-2 Tbsp of bananas, cooked apple wedges, avocado slices, oranges, soft carrots, cucumbers, or papaya sticks
- Protein Food: Two servings daily of 1-2 Tbsp of chopped cooked egg yolk, scrambled eggs, tofu sticks, strips of chicken tenders, or pieces of cooked flaked fish.
- Dairy Groups: Three servings daily of grated cheese, cubes of soft cheese, yogurt or lumps of cottage cheese

#### *Older Children Daily Nutritional Recommendations:*

- 2-3 cups of milk (or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cheese or yogurt for each  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup milk)
- 2 servings of meat or protein, 2-3 oz. each
- 4-5  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup serving of fruits and vegetables
- 4 servings of grain foods (1 slice bread,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup pasta, 5 saltines,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked cereal)

### **Clothing**

Because of the various activities your child will be involved with daily at GraceKids Academy, we ask that each child wears comfortable, washable clothing and rubber soled, close-toed shoes. Please label any clothing that may be removed, such as

jackets and sweaters with your child's name. We also require that you keep a change of clothes in your child's cubby at all times, which should also be labeled with your child's name. If your child is potty training, please leave at least three changes of clothing at the center in case of accidents, including at least one pair of shoes and socks.

### **Parent's Homework**

In our toddler, twos, preschool and K4 classes, parents will receive either a bi-weekly or weekly curriculum report allowing you to see what your child is learning each week. Please know that if you reinforce this information, it will help your child in many ways. This is done to help your child see the connection between home and school and to provide you and your child an opportunity to grow and learn together.

### **Rest Times**

After a morning of playing, learning, and creating, your child will need some much deserved rest. We provide a 2 hour rest time after lunch in order for your child to build their energy back up for an exciting afternoon. We provide each child with his or her own cot or mat, each of which are sanitized at least once a week. Your child is more than welcome to bring his or her own special blanket, pillow or toy for napping. Please take these items home to launder at least once weekly. Please note that our K4 classroom does begin to slowly cut back on their napping schedule throughout the year in an effort to prepare them for kindergarten.

### **Prayer & Religious Teachings**

In each classroom, children will be involved in prayers during opening circle time, prior to lunch time and snack times and during daily Bible lessons. We teach children to not only respect and communicate with each other, but also to follow God's Word and help children to build a relationship with God. Children will sing Bible Songs and read and learn Bible verses all in an effort to bring your child closer to God. We feel it is the parent's decision to teach specific denominational beliefs. We will teach your child that Jesus is the Christ the Son of our loving God and we will teach your child the basic morals of life through Christian beliefs. Our A Beka curriculum also teaches these same Christian values and beliefs and will teach your child that God can be seen not only through Bible lessons—but also by studying the world around us.

### **Children with Disabilities**

It is GraceKids Academy's policy to accept children in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), its regulations, and any other applicable local, state, or federal laws relating to the provision of services to those with disabilities. Please notify and discuss with the director of your child's specific needs prior to enrollment. In every effort to provide the best possible care for your child, we require of copy of your child's IEP if they are in special education at a public school.

#### **Non-Discrimination Statement**

GraceKids Academy does not discriminate enrollment on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin or any other characteristic protected by law.

## **HEALTH AND MEDICAL ISSUES**

#### **Allergies and Special Health Concerns**

If your child has any allergies or special health concerns, such as asthma, please inform the director upon enrollment. A list of medical concerns and allergies will be listed in each classroom to help your child's teacher take the necessary precautions regarding your child's health and safety.

#### **Hand washing**

Hand washing is the number one method of preventing the spread of illnesses. Because of this, we require all teachers and children to wash their hands before and after eating, after bathroom visits and/or diaper changes, and at other appropriate times. Please help us teach this valuable skill to your child by reinforcing this practice at home.

## **ILLNESSES**

GraceKids Academy is not licensed to provide care for children who are ill. If your child is exhibiting any of the following symptoms, please keep him or her at home until he or she is symptom-free for 24 hours:

- fever (a temperature of 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or more)
- recurrent diarrhea
- vomiting
- green or yellow discharge from nose
- severe coughing
- wheezing
- discharge from eyes or ears, redness of the eye(s)
- yellow eyes or jaundiced skin
- unexplained rash or skin lesions

- blood in urine or stool
- lice
- stiff neck
- communicable disease (chicken pox, measles, etc.)

You will be called to pick up your child if he or she exhibits any of these symptoms while in our care. We may call the Department of Children and Families if you have not picked up your child within one hour. In the event of a serious injury or illness, an ambulance may be called. We will keep a list of names, addresses and phone numbers of those authorized to pick up your child on file in the event that you cannot be reached. In addition, we ask that you provide us with the name, address, and phone number of your family physician and preferred hospital.

If your child is diagnosed with any type of illness you need to contact GraceKids Academy as soon as possible. You must bring a dated doctor's note stating that your child is no longer contagious and may return. If you plan on keeping your child out because of illness, we need you to call and notify the director.

### **Physicals and Immunizations**

Prior to enrollment, you will need to provide us with a copy of your child's current immunization and physical records. Your child's doctor will be able to provide these records on the appropriate forms required by the Department of Children and Families (immunization records are on a blue form and physical records are on a yellow form). We must have a new physical form completed each year and the immunization record must be up to date, with a valid expiration date listed.

### **Medication**

GraceKids Academy only gives medication that has been prescribed by a physician and is in the original container. We will give over the counter medication, with a parent's signed consent, only if that medication is not used to mask a fever. We do not give fever-reducing medication without a doctor's note stating that your child is not contagious. Children's medication is kept in a locked, specified medication cabinet and is only administered by the director or assistant director. You must fill out a Medication Authorization for each week your child needs medication.

## **SAFETY ISSUES**

### **Security Cameras**

We utilize digital security cameras throughout our entire facility, including playgrounds. We feel that the cameras provide an extra line of security to ensure that all children are safe at all times. The director and assistant director have access to computer monitors that will allow them to pull up any of the cameras at any time and provide them with instant visual access to any area of the center.

### **Signing Children In and Out**

The computer system that GraceKids Academy has installed allows parents or other authorized individuals to sign children in and out on the computer in our reception area. Upon enrollment, you will receive a personal access code that will allow you access to the classroom area of the center. Once you have signed your child in, you will enter your code into the special keypad, which will unlock the door leading from the reception area to your child's classroom. You will need to walk your child to his/her classroom and drop him/her off with the teacher. Your child will only be released to parents or guardians with legal custody or persons over 18 who you have listed on the Emergency Contact and Child Release Authorization Form and who have been issued a personal access code. When you come to pick up your child, you will follow the same procedure as signing your child in. If you just come by for a visit we request you only use our special "enter door" code. Please request this code from the director. Also, when you pick your child up from his/her classroom please be sure you pick up your child's daily information sheet.

At times, the center's front door may be locked. This is an additional security measure taken if no one is near the front desk. In these instances, please ring the doorbell and someone will be with you as soon as possible.

If you come to pick up your child after the center closes, you will be charged a late fee. If you are over an hour late and we have not heard from you and cannot reach your emergency contact, the director is required to call the Department of Children and Families. It can be very scary for a child to be left in the center long after the other children have left, wondering why his or her parents have not shown up. Please help us avoid this type of situation by calling if you know you will be late or making other arrangements for your child to be picked up.

### **Custody Arrangements**

In order for the center to be in compliance with court orders regarding the custody of your child, we require that you provide us with a certified copy of custody orders. This information is kept confidential and is required only for the safety of your child. If at any time a new custody order is issued or a restraining order has been issued against any parent or other member of the family, we require

that you provide us with this information to keep in your child's file. It is GraceKids Academy's policy to remain neutral in all custody matters and our facility may not be used as a visitation site.

### **What Happens if There is an Accident**

As mentioned before, your child's safety is our number one concern. With this in mind, we take every precaution to prevent accidents including such things as frequent inspections of the facility, equipment, and playgrounds, and weekly lessons regarding safety concerns. However, even with taking precautions, there may be times when unavoidable accidents will occur. Any time your child is injured, no matter how minor, the teacher will write up an incident report detailing all the specifics of the accident and treatment given. You will be given a copy and we will keep a copy in your child's file. In the event of an injury requiring immediate medical attention, we will call you or your emergency contact.

### **Fire and Safety Drills**

To prepare for emergency evacuations, fire and safety drills are practiced at least once a month in the center. We teach your child the appropriate way to react to such instances and ensure that all children and staff know what to do and where to go in the event of a fire or other disaster. In the event of a true emergency evacuation, we will notify you as soon as we have ensured the safety of all children.

## **ENROLLMENT POLICIES**

### **If You Must Withdraw Your Child**

We require a notice of at least one week if you must withdraw your child. If for some reason you and/or your child do not adjust well to the center, we may ask you to withdraw your child and will also give you a one week's notice. In certain, extreme cases, we may require you to immediately withdraw your child.

### **Threatening or Abusive Behavior**

We are concerned not only for your child's safety and well-being, but also for the safety and well-being of all other children in our care. Therefore, if you or your child demonstrates behavior that is threatening or abusive to another child or staff member, we may choose to dismiss your child immediately.

## **FEE AND PAYMENT POLICIES**

### **Registration**

A registration fee will be charged upon enrollment. On January 1 of each year a materials fee will be due. The fee is based on your child's classroom. Please see the current tuition rate sheet for the amount. All fees are non-refundable.

### **Tuition**

Weekly tuition will be due at the beginning of each week and may be paid by cash, check or money order (please make checks payable to GraceKids Academy). NSF returned check charge is \$15 per NSF check. If there are 2 NSF checks in one year (Jan.-Dec.), it is the school's choice to request payment by Cash Only from there forward. You may pre-pay at any time. If tuition for the week has not been paid by the end of the business day on Thursday, your account will be charged a \$10.00 late fee p/child p/day.

### **Absences**

If your child is absent one to three days of the calendar week (Monday through Friday), we will charge the regular weekly tuition. If your child misses a full week, or is absent for four days during the calendar week (Monday through Friday) because of illness or vacation, we will only charge a 50% reservation rate. Please note that you are permitted five reservation weeks per calendar year (January through December).