



Parent Handbook 2026-2027

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Welcome to Smart Quest Academy

STEAM & Bilingual

OUR SCHOOL

Smart Quest Academy is a private preschool dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing learning environment for children ages 18 months to 6 years old. We take pride in fostering a love for learning by closely working with each child as they embark on their educational journey. Our curriculum emphasizes the foundational principles of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math). Additionally, our unique Language Program enhances this experience by introducing children to Spanish as a second language, enriching their cognitive development and cultural awareness. We are committed to meeting the social and emotional needs of each child while laying a strong academic foundation that will support their future success.

We also offer Spanish After School Classes for school-age children from Kindergarten to 5th grade, as well as Summer Camps for children ages 3 to 8. You can find more information about these programs and specific details at our main front office.

Mission

At Smart Quest Academy, we provide a warm and secure environment that nurtures each child's unique social, emotional, and academic needs.

Our Mission is to deliver top-quality early education through hands-on STEAM activities and a comprehensive bilingual program. We are committed to building a strong academic foundation while embracing the joys of discovery and fostering cognitive growth through second language acquisition.

Vision

At Smart Quest Academy, our *Vision* is to make learning about STEAM and languages a delightful adventure. We strive to spark curiosity, inspire discovery, and nurture a lifelong passion for learning in every child. In our warm and safe environment, we ensure that every young learner feels cherished and excited to explore the world of new ideas.

Our Believes

Integrated Learning: We believe that integrating STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) with second language education fosters holistic development, preparing children for a dynamic and interconnected world.

Curiosity and Exploration: We believe in nurturing children's natural curiosity and encouraging exploration to promote discovery, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning.

Language Immersion: We believe that early exposure to a second language enhances cognitive abilities, cultural understanding, and communication skills, providing a strong foundation for future academic success.

Hands-On Experiences: We believe that hands-on, experiential learning in STEAM subjects engages children actively, helping them understand complex concepts and develop critical thinking skills.

Safe and Nurturing Environment: We believe in providing a safe, secure, and nurturing environment where children feel valued, supported, and motivated to take risks and explore.

Organizational Structure

The school is guided by an Advisory Board of Directors (The Board) responsible for reviewing school policies, overseeing business management, setting tuition and fees, and approving the Parent Handbook.

Curriculum

At Smart Quest Academy, we proudly offer a comprehensive, dynamic curriculum designed to foster a love of learning, critical thinking, and creativity in our students. Guided by the **Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines**, our program aligns with the Texas Education Agency's framework to ensure preschool-aged children are well-prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

Our curriculum seamlessly integrates foundational developmental domains—including Social and Emotional Development, Language and Communication, Emergent Literacy (Reading and Writing), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Fine Arts, Physical Development and Health, and Technology Applications—with **STEAM principles** (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). This approach inspires curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving through hands-on, interdisciplinary activities.

Second Language Learning

Our bilingual curriculum leverages young children's natural ability to acquire languages effortlessly. Through engaging, age-appropriate activities, we introduce Spanish as a second language in a fun, immersive, and effective way.

This holistic program not only lays the foundation for academic success but also nurtures lifelong skills in communication, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation, empowering children to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

ENROLLMENT AND TUITION GUIDELINES

Non-Discriminatory Policy

Smart Quest Academy (SQA) welcomes enrollment for all children. We do not discriminate based

on gender, color, race, ethnicity, creed, religion, nationality, origin, political beliefs, or the parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy, or disability. Admission is offered as long as the program can meet the child's individual needs.

Open Door Policy

Smart Quest Academy maintains an open-door policy. Parents and legal guardians are welcome to visit and observe any area of the school at any time during operating hours, provided the visit does not disrupt classroom activities or the learning environment.

For the safety of our school community, individuals who are not parents or legal guardians—including authorized pickup persons—must check in with the front office and follow all campus safety procedures before entering the school.

Registration

Registration for the upcoming school year takes place each February. Priority enrollment is offered to currently enrolled students, followed by their siblings. Afterward, enrollment opens to the general public.

To secure a place in the program, all families must complete the Smart Quest Academy Admission Package through the Brightwheel app and pay the non-refundable annual registration fee at the time of registration.

Admission Package:

Registration and Tuition Form

Enrollment, General Acknowledgments & Authorizations

Parent Handbook Acknowledgment

Authorization for Emergency Medical Attention & Medical History

Discipline and Guidance Policy

Parent Acknowledgment, Agreement, and Release

Health Statement

Immunization Records / Exemption Affidavit

Vision and Hearing results for children 4 years old and older

Allergy/Emergency Plan Form (If Applicable)

Court Order Form

All about Me Form

Families currently enrolled must ensure that all financial obligations are up to date before registering for the new school year.

A waiting list will be maintained for those interested in enrollment once spaces are filled. As spots become available, parents will be contacted in the order their names appear on the list, with priority given to siblings of currently enrolled students.

Families planning for a delayed start must pay the registration fee at the time of registration. Once the class is full, they may choose to either begin paying monthly tuition to hold their spot until the start date or forfeit the spot. If the spot is forfeited, all fees will be refunded.

Emergency Contact & Parent Information Updates

For the safety and well-being of each child, it is essential that Smart Quest Academy maintains current and accurate contact information for all families. This includes up-to-date parent or guardian phone numbers, email addresses, and emergency contact information.

Emergency contacts must be different from the primary and secondary parent or guardian contacts. Accurate and current information is required by Texas law.

Parents and legal guardians are responsible for promptly updating any changes to contact information, emergency contacts, or authorized persons through the Brightwheel app. It is essential that both the school office and the child's teacher have access to current contact information at all times to ensure timely communication and the safety of every child.

Classroom Division and Grouping

At Smart Quest Academy, classes are grouped by age, with offerings adjusted annually based on enrollment and demand. Children remain with their assigned class from August through May. The typical age groups, based on the child's age as of September 1, are as follows:

- Owlets: 18 months & young 2-year-olds
- Hoglets (Baby Hedgehogs) & Hoppers (Bunnies): 2 years & older 2-year-olds
- Adventurers (Raccoon Cubs) & Thinkers (Fox Pups): 3 years
- Explorers (Fawns) & Inventors (Bear Cubs): 4 years
- Owls: 5 years

Class sizes are intentionally kept well below the minimum teacher-child ratios required by state licensing standards. A detailed ratio chart is available in the office for review.

Our program is designed to provide continuity for each child, minimizing group changes, staff transitions, and classroom adjustments throughout the year. Class placement is determined by the Director, who carefully considers input from previous teachers, parents, and external professionals, as needed, to ensure the best fit for each child's development and needs.

Students in our 18-month-old class must be able to walk independently before the start of school. Exceptions may be made for children with a diagnosed disability, pending prior approval from the director. If your child is not walking by early August, please contact us to explore possible accommodations.

Falsifying your child's date of birth may result in their removal from the program

Tuition Policy

- **Annual Tuition:** Tuition is based on the annual school year and divided into equal monthly payments to ensure consistency. Programs such as **Break Camps & Summer Camps** are not included in regular tuition and require separate payments.
- **Payment Schedule:** Tuition payments are due on the **1st of each month**. A **\$5 late fee per day** will be charged for payments made **five or more days** past the due date. If tuition remains unpaid by the **10th**, the student will not be allowed to attend school until the full payment, including late fees, is received.

- **Refunds and Credits for Missed Days:** No allowances, credits, or refunds are provided for absences, including vacations, illness, or holidays. Additionally, credit or refunds will not be given for school closures caused by weather conditions, national emergencies, pandemics, or other uncontrollable circumstances.
- **Registration Fee:** The annual registration fee is **non-refundable**, regardless of circumstances, including withdrawal before the school year begins.

Summer Camp Tuition Policy

Payment & Enrollment

- To secure a child's space in Summer Camp, full tuition payment is required no later than thirty (30) days prior to the camp start date.
- Enrollment is not considered confirmed until full payment has been received.

Refunds & Transfers

- Requests to transfer to a different camp session must be submitted in writing at least fifteen (15) days prior to the camp start date and must be emailed to info@smartquestacademy.com
- Transfers are subject to availability in the requested session.
- Exceptions to transfer deadlines may be considered only in cases of emergency and at the sole discretion of the school.
- Approved refunds are subject to a \$25 administrative fee per family, per session.
- No refunds, credits, or make-up days will be provided for:
 - Absences for any reason
 - Early withdrawal from camp
 - School closures due to inclement weather, illness outbreaks, or other unforeseen circumstances.
- No refunds will be issued once a camp session has begun.

Changes & Availability

- Camp sessions, schedules, and staffing are planned based on enrollment. As a result, **changes requested within fifteen (15) days of the camp start date may not be accommodated.**
- All approved changes remain **subject to availability.**

Returned or Failed Payments

- A \$35 fee will be charged for any returned check or failed payment.
- Returned payments must be replaced within two (2) business days using an approved payment method.
- After two returned payments, the account may be restricted to cashier's check, money order, or electronic payment only.

General Policy

- Summer Camp tuition is **non-transferable to other students or programs**.
- Smart Quest Academy reserves the right to modify or cancel a camp session due to low enrollment or circumstances beyond the school's control. In such cases, families will be notified and appropriate adjustments will be made.

Payment Methods

Smart Quest Academy uses Brightwheel for all tuition and fee payments. All parents are required to enroll in Brightwheel and set up payments for tuition. Brightwheel offers a secure, user-friendly platform that ensures timely and hassle-free transactions.

For families not enrolled in automatic payments via Brightwheel, tuition may be paid by check (payable to Smart Quest Academy), and must be dropped off at the school office during regular business hours.

If choosing to pay via credit or debit card through Brightwheel, please note that a non-refundable \$25 fee will be applied to any declined transactions.

Returned Checks

A \$25 processing fee will be charged for any returned check. Checks will not be redeposited, and parents are required to collect the check and replace it with a money order within three days of notification. After two returned checks, future tuition payments must be made via money order. In cases of financial hardship, families may contact the school office to speak with the director regarding special payment arrangements. We are happy to assist when possible.

Discounts

- **Multiple Child Discount:** Families enrolling more than one child at Smart Quest Academy are eligible for a 10% discount on the monthly tuition for each additional child after the first. The child with the highest tuition is charged at the full rate, and the discount applies to siblings enrolled simultaneously.
- **ISD Employee Discount:** Families with a parent actively employed by an Independent School District (ISD) can receive a 10% discount on tuition by providing a valid ISD employee badge.
- **Military Discount:** Families with a parent serving in the military are eligible for a 10% tuition discount with proof of military service.
- **Police and Firefighter Discount:** Families with a parent employed as a police officer or firefighter can receive a 10% tuition discount by providing proof of employment in a police or fire department.

Note: Discounts are only valid if tuition payments are made on time, and only one discount may be applied to a family's account at any given time. All discounts are applied to the lowest monthly tuition rate.

Extra Days/Emergency Extended Care

Families may request extra days for special or emergency situations, subject to class availability and approval by the Director.

Parent Referrals

Students will receive a \$100 discount on their tuition for the month following the successful registration of the new family they referred, as a result of the referral during the current school year only.

Withdrawal and Enrollment Modification Policy

Withdrawal

- A **30-day written notice** submitted by email is required for withdrawal from the program.
- Families are financially obligated to pay tuition during the 30-day notice period.
- Failure to provide written notice will result in a charge equivalent to 30 days of tuition.
- To withdraw before the start of the upcoming school year without financial obligation, notice must be given by **July 1**.
- **Verbal notices** of withdrawal will not be accepted.

Enrollment Modifications

- Re-enrollment after withdrawal is subject to **space availability** and the **director's discretion**.
- A **30-day written notice** is required to reduce the number of enrolled days or hours. Changes will take effect after this notice period.
- A 30-day notice is **not required** to increase enrollment days or hours. Requests for increases should be submitted in writing, and confirmation will be provided based on space availability.

Dismissal

In some cases, it may be necessary to ask for a child to leave the program. This decision is made only after all attempts to work with the child and family have been exhausted. Dismissal may occur due to a child's behavior posing a danger to themselves, other children, staff, or school property.

Other causes for dismissal include:

- Disrespectful behavior toward teachers or staff by the child or parent.
- Repeated violation of school policies & rules.
- Non-payment of tuition.
- The school's inability to meet the child's health or educational needs.

If a child is absent for more than 30 consecutive days without prior approval from the director or written communication from the parent, they will be automatically withdrawn, and the deposit will not be refunded.

OPERATIONAL POLICIES

School Calendar

School year begins on the first **8 business day of August**. The full school calendar is available on our website for reference.

Our academic year runs from **August through May**, with **summer camps** offered in **June and July, (we are off the week of the 4th of July)**. In the rare event of a change to the approved calendar, parents will be provided with sufficient notice.

Smart Quest Academy operates **Monday through Friday**.

- **Regular preschool hours:** 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM
- **Extended care hours:** 7:30 AM – 6:00 PM

School Closings and Inclement Weather Policy

Smart Quest Academy follows the **Carroll ISD calendar** for major breaks, holidays, and weather-related closures. If Carroll ISD closes due to inclement weather, SQA will also be closed. Similarly, if Carroll ISD delays its opening, SQA will open at the same time as the district's elementary schools.

Parents are encouraged to check local TV stations or websites for updates on ISD closures during severe weather. SQA will provide up to **two (2) make-up days** for closures caused by bad weather.

Additional make-up days for excessive closures will be determined at the **Director's discretion**.

Daily Schedule

At Smart Quest Academy, our daily schedule is carefully crafted to provide a balanced focus on our **Bilingual curriculum** and **STEAM curriculum**, ensuring that children develop a second language skills while engaging in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math activities. The schedule is designed to support the **developmental, social, emotional, and personal growth** of every child.

Each lead teacher is responsible for creating and posting a detailed daily schedule for their classroom. This schedule must be displayed on the **parent information board** near the main door of the classroom and should clearly indicate where the class is at all times throughout the day.

Here is an example of our balanced **daily AM schedule**

Lead Teachers (Bilingual or Spanish-Speaking):

- Morning Activity: 15 minutes
- Snack: 15 minutes
- Spanish Circle Time: 30 minutes
- Art: 30 minutes

- Learning Centers: 30 minutes
 - Lunch, Rest Time & Park: 1.5 hours (Led by a Spanish teacher to maximize daily exposure to Spanish speaking skills)
- Total: Approximately 3.5 hours

Specialized Teachers (English-Speaking):

- Music and Movement (PE): 30 minutes
 - STEAM Activities: 30 minutes
 - Phonics & English: 30 minutes
- Total: Approximately 1.5 hours

Note: Our **18-month-old** and **2-year-old** classes will combine **STEAM, Phonics, and English** into a 30-minute session. This ensures a well-rounded curriculum while providing ample time for naps.

The daily PM Schedule is led by a **Spanish-speaking teacher** to provide additional opportunities for Spanish language exposure and practice.

Stay and Play Daily Schedule:

- PM Snack Time: 15 minutes
- PM Activity: 30 minutes
- Music and Movement (PE): 30 minutes
- Imagination Center: 30 minutes
- Learning Center: 30 minutes
- Park (outside) Time: 30 minutes
- Art & Science: 30 minutes
- Story Time: 30 minutes

This thoughtfully designed schedule ensures a balance of physical activity, creative expression, and hands-on learning, all while immersing students in a Spanish-speaking environment to further enhance their language development.

ARRIVAL & PICK UP PROCEDURES

Sign In & Out

At Smart Quest Academy, we use Brightwheel a childcare management software to track student arrivals and departures. Parents are responsible for signing in/out their child each morning/afternoon using a QR code located at the front entrance.

To maximize your child's experience and participation in the planned curriculum and activities, we encourage all families to arrive by **9:00 AM**. Late arrivals can disrupt the classroom routine and the learning environment for other children. Additionally, for our younger classes, children **may not be dropped off during the scheduled nap time** to maintain a calm and consistent environment for all students.

Heath Checks

Parents are required to inform their child's teacher, office staff or the school director of any special instructions or needs for the day. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Early pick-up arrangements.
- Changes to the authorized designated pick-up person.
- Health concerns or issues from the previous night that require monitoring.
- Any other general concerns or information to help staff provide the best care and support for your child.

Clear communication ensures that we can address your child's needs effectively throughout the day.

School Security and Safety

In compliance with licensing requirements, all exterior doors and gates are kept **locked at all times** to ensure the safety and security of students and staff. Teachers are equipped with keys to allow safe and swift exits in case of an emergency.

Smart Quest Academy has a comprehensive **emergency plan** in place to address various types of emergencies, and **monthly emergency drills** are conducted to ensure preparedness.

School's Right to Refuse Admission

Smart Quest Academy (SQA) reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time, with or without cause. Potential reasons for refusal of admission include, but are not limited to:

1. Ensuring compliance with Texas Child Care Regulations.
2. The child is deemed too ill to attend by the Director.
3. Domestic situations that could pose a safety risk to the child, staff, or other children if the child were present at the center.
4. Failure by parents to maintain accurate and up-to-date records.
5. Failure by parents to complete and return required documentation in a timely manner.

Tuition will not be reimbursed for days when a child is refused admission to the program.

Release of Child to Authorized Individuals

For your child's safety, only individuals listed in the **"Release"** section on the admission form are authorized to pick up your child. These individuals must present a valid driver's license at pick-up. A copy of the license will be made and stored in the child's file. If an unlisted individual needs to pick up your child, parents or guardians must provide **written authorization** to the school prior to pick-up.

Afternoon Carpool Procedures

A convenient carpool lane is available for pick-up only between **2:00 PM and 2:10 PM**. Please be prompt and remain in your vehicle at all times while using the carpool line. **Do not pass other cars** that are being loaded unless instructed to do so by a staff member.

Once carpool begins, parents and authorized guardians are required to sign their child out using the Attendance section in the Brightwheel app. A staff member will bring the QR code to the carpool

line, allowing you to complete the sign-out directly from your vehicle. Detailed carpool instructions will be provided during the first weeks of school.

Parents are also welcome to walk in to pick up their child instead of using the carpool lane.

Parking Lot Safety

At Smart Quest Academy, the safety of our students and families is our top priority. Please follow these guidelines in the parking lot:

- **Drive slowly** and avoid distractions.
- **No cell phone use** while driving, unless parked.
- **Hold your child's hand** when crossing the lot.
- **Never leave children unattended** in a vehicle.
- **Liability:** SQA is not responsible for parking lot damage.

Late Pick-Up Policy

To ensure smooth operations and respect for our staff's time, parents are expected to adhere to the designated drop-off and pick-up times.

For the **9:00 AM to 2:00 PM schedule**, a **10-minute grace period** is provided. After **2:10 PM**, a **late fee of \$1 per minute** will be assessed. For families enrolled in **Stay & Play extended care**, there is **no grace period**, and a late fee of **\$3 per minute** will apply for pick-ups after **6:00 PM**. Late fees are assessed per family, not per child.

If you anticipate being late, please notify the school office as a courtesy to our staff and for your child's well-being. However, late charges will be assessed regardless of notification.

The parent or individual picking up the child will be required to sign a form acknowledging the late fee, which will be added to their account. Repeated late pick-ups or non-payment of late fees may result in removal from the program.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Nap and Rest Time

All preschool children are provided with a designated rest or nap period after lunch in accordance with Texas Child Care Licensing requirements. Summer Camp students ages 6–8 are excluded from this rest period.

Parents are responsible for providing a **plastic nap mat**, which must be brought to school by the first day. Plastic mats will be sanitized daily at the school. **Cloth nap rollers** are permitted as long as they fit in your child's backpack or designated personal storage space in the classroom and will be sent home each day for cleaning. A small blanket labeled with your child's name is optional, provided it does not cause any distractions.

Dress Code and Personal Belongings Policy

School Uniforms are required Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, students may dress casually but must wear weather-appropriate clothing. Uniforms must include an **SQA shirt (dress)** , paired with bottoms in the following colors only: **navy blue, khaki, or denim (blue only)**. Acceptable bottoms include long pants, leggings, shorts, or skirts.

While every effort is made to keep clothes clean, school activities can get messy. **Tennis shoes or closed-toed shoes** are required for safety and comfort. **Sandals, boots, flip-flops, open-toed shoes, or Crocs** are not permitted. Children will go outside daily, weather permitting, so please dress them appropriately for the conditions.

Uniforms can be ordered both before the school year begins and at any time during the school year. uniforms are available for purchase at the front office.

We are unable to replace or take responsibility for lost items. To help prevent this, parents are encouraged to label all belongings brought to school, including clothing, mats, coats, and other personal items, with their child's name. Before leaving the school, please ensure you have collected all of your child's belongings to minimize the chance of items being misplaced.

What to Bring to School

- **Change of Clothes:** A complete change of clothes, including socks, should be kept in child back backpack at all times.
- If your child uses **diapers**, please provide disposable diapers and baby wipes throughout the year. **Do not send cloth diapers.**
- **Lunchbox:** A labeled lunchbox with your child's name that includes:
 - Lunch from home, complete with utensils.
 - A spill-proof water bottle or cup to stay hydrated throughout the day.
 - If the lunch contains perishable items, please include an ice pack as we are unable to refrigerate or heat lunches.
 - For safety reasons, glass containers are not allowed.
- **Backpack:** A labeled backpack without wheels is required for transporting items and school communications between home and school. For safety during dismissal, children should wear their backpacks to keep their hands free, except for children aged 18 months to 2 years.
- **Comfort Items** (Toddlers and Twos only): A comfort item may be brought if needed (no bottles allowed).

Items Not Allowed

To maintain a safe and focused environment, the following items are **not allowed**:

- **Toys from home:** They can be easily lost, difficult to share, and create distractions in the classroom.

- Fidget spinners of any kind: These items are distracting and unnecessary in the learning environment.
- Medicine, sanitizer, lip balm, hairbrushes, watches, or cough drops in backpacks: These items pose safety risks and must be handled by staff if needed.
- Electronics of any kind: Devices such as tablets, smartphones, or handheld games are not permitted.
- Unauthorized Food or snacks (unless pre-approved): This helps prevent food allergies, choking hazards, and disruptions during non-snack times.
- Jewelry or accessories: Items like necklaces, bracelets, or dangling earrings can pose safety hazards or become distractions.
- Sharp or small objects: Items such as scissors, nail clippers, or small trinkets can be unsafe for young children.
- Chewing gum or candy: These are choking hazards
- Large or bulky items: Items like oversized backpacks or rolling bags are not practical and can cause congestion in the classroom.
- Unlabeled items: Personal items without a label can easily be misplaced or taken home by mistake.

Water Activities

Throughout the year, children may also participate in **water activities**, including sprinkler play, water toys, and water table play, as part of their sensory and exploratory learning experiences.

Animals

Occasionally, Smart Quest Academy may bring animals into the school for educational purposes. However, personal pets are not allowed in the school.

Holiday & Birthday Parties and Special Events

At Smart Quest Academy, we love celebrating special moments with our students! Whether it's a holiday, a birthday, or another exciting event, we welcome parents to join in the fun. To ensure every celebration is well-organized and enjoyable, we kindly ask parents to **sign up at the front desk at least one week in advance**.

We strive to make every celebration **inclusive and safe** for all children. If you plan to bring snacks, please notify the school in advance and ensure they accommodate any special dietary needs.

- **Holiday Celebrations**

Celebrating holidays is an integral part of our program. We encourage families to share their traditions to help us embrace and celebrate cultural diversity within our school community.

- **Birthday Parties**

Birthdays are special, and we are delighted to celebrate with our students! Parents may bring **nutritious, store-bought treats** (e.g., baked goods or cookies without icing or frosting) or **non-**

food items to share with classmates. Celebrations should be planned to minimize classroom disruptions.

- **Goody Bags:** Goody bags are permitted but will be sent home unopened.
- **Activities:** Piñatas and similar activities are not allowed. Parents/guardians may join in singing "Happy Birthday" with prior approval from the director. Birthday candles are not permitted due to safety regulations.
- **Invitations:** Birthday party invitations may only be distributed at school if the entire class is invited.
- **Curriculum-Based Celebrations**

As part of our curriculum, activities such as cultural celebrations, carnival games, and science experiments may occasionally include treats. Parents will receive **at least one week's notice** prior to these events.

To ensure the safety and well-being of all children, parents must provide information about any **food allergies or dietary restrictions** on their child's admission form.

Lunch and Snacks

- Parents are responsible for providing a healthy lunch for their child each day. Toddlers should have finger foods for self-feeding. Suggested items include:
 - Sandwiches
 - Crackers and cheese
 - Raw vegetables and dip
 - Fresh fruits
 - Yogurt
 - Milk or juice
- SQA does not allow carbonated beverages, candy treats, candy bars, or gum as part of a child's lunch or snack.
- We do not have facilities to reheat food, so lunches should be ready to eat directly from the lunchbox.
- Teachers will encourage children to eat their main meal entrée first, followed by healthy snacks.
- At Smart Quest Academy, food is never used as a form of punishment. Children will always be allowed to participate in lunch and snack times, regardless of behavior.
- Glass containers are prohibited as they can be safety hazards for both children and staff.
- Some classes may be designated as **peanut-free** or **nut-free** to ensure the safety of children with allergies. In these cases, no peanuts, peanut butter, or peanut-related products, as well as other nut products, should be included in your child's lunch or snacks. Please check with your child's teacher or the school office for specific guidelines.
- The school provides two daily snacks, one in the morning and a second snack in the afternoon for our extended care children. These snacks meet the nutritional guidelines set by licensing requirements. If your child has dietary restrictions or allergies, please inform the teacher and the office. A list of school-provided snacks is available at the front office.

According to the **Minimum Standards under 746.3317**, children under the age of 4 should not be served foods that pose a choking hazard, such as **hard candy, marshmallows, pretzels, whole grapes, nuts, seeds, popcorn, hotdogs, and chips**. To ensure your child's safety, please avoid these items and cut food into small pieces when packing lunches or providing snacks for parties.

Potty Training

At Smart Quest Academy, we work closely with families to support toilet training and help children succeed.

- **Diapers:** Diapers are permitted only in the **18-month and 2-year-old classrooms**.
- **3-Year-Old Classroom:** To enroll in the 3-year-old classroom, children must be fully potty trained and able to use the restroom independently. This includes managing clothing, hygiene tasks, and consistently using the restroom without accidents. No exceptions.

Biting Policy

At Smart Quest Academy, we understand that biting is a common developmental behavior in young children, often resulting from frustration or difficulty expressing emotions. Parents with children in the **18-month-old and 2-year-old classrooms** should be aware that biting incidents may occur, as this is developmentally appropriate behavior for this age group. While we recognize this as a normal part of early childhood development, we are committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for all children.

Handling Biting Incidents

- **Immediate Response:** The child who was bitten will be comforted and provided with first aid if necessary. The child who bit will be calmly guided to understand that biting is not acceptable and encouraged to express their needs or feelings in appropriate ways.
- **Parent Communication:** Both parents will receive an incident report detailing the event. To maintain confidentiality, information about the other child will not be shared. Copies of the report will be placed in both children's files.
- **Family Collaboration:** Teachers and the director will work closely with the family of the child who is biting to identify triggers, develop strategies, and provide support to resolve the behavior.

Protocol and Consequences

- **Case-by-Case Approach:** Each biting situation will be handled individually. If a child bites more than three times and there is insufficient parental support to address the behavior, the director may decide to dismiss the child from the program.
- **Persistent Biting:** If biting continues despite all efforts, Smart Quest Academy reserves the right to suspend enrollment to ensure the safety of other children.

- **Children Over 3 Years of Age:** While biting is less common in older children, occasional incidents may still occur. In these cases, the teacher will follow the discipline procedures outlined in this handbook and observe the child to identify potential triggers for the behavior.
- **Uncooperative Parents:** Parents who do not actively support efforts to address the behavior may have their child's enrollment terminated.

Discipline Policy Required by the State

We are required by Texas state law to give you the following information regarding discipline: Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L, Discipline and Guidance Discipline must be:

- (1) Individualized and consistent for each child;
- (2) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
- (3) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control; and
- (4) A positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, including the following:
 - (A) Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
 - (B) Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
 - (C) Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
 - (D) Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- (1) Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- (2) Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
- (3) Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
- (4) Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
- (5) Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
- (6) Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
- (7) Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
- (8) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet; and;
- (9) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age, including requiring a child to remain in a restrictive device.

Discipline and Guidance Policy

At Smart Quest Academy, we follow a discipline approach based on Love and Logic, fostering respect, responsibility, and self-regulation in children through empathy and logical consequences. Our caregivers are trained to model respectful and appropriate behavior, respond to challenging situations with empathy and consistency, and use a calm, loving tone when addressing

misbehavior. We emphasize collaboration with families to support each child's unique needs and goals.

Our Approach:

- Encourage positive behaviors with clear expectations and routines.
- Redirect misbehavior by offering choices and alternatives.
- Teach problem-solving to help children manage conflicts constructively.
- Apply logical consequences related to behaviors to promote learning.

When a child makes a choice outside the established limits, teachers will gently remind them of acceptable options using positive language to encourage cooperation and personal responsibility. If a child continues to make inappropriate choices despite these efforts, parents will be notified in writing with details of the situation and the actions taken by the teacher to support the child in making appropriate choices.

Positive collaboration from families is crucial in addressing disruptive behavior, as consistency between the school and home is the most effective way to manage these challenges.

Smart Quest Academy reserves the right to terminate care if a child's discipline issues persist and cannot be effectively resolved despite reasonable efforts.

Suspension and Expulsion of Children Policy

Smart Quest Academy (SQA) is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children. In accordance with federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), SQA will make reasonable accommodations to our policies, practices, and procedures to support children with developmental delays, disabilities, or other needs. However, SQA is not required to fundamentally alter the nature of our services or compromise the safety and well-being of other children or staff.

Behavior and Safety Standards

Any child who poses a safety threat to themselves or others may be subject to suspension, exclusion, or disenrollment from the program if the dangerous behavior cannot be eliminated through reasonable accommodations as outlined under applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

Communication with Families

To address concerns, SQA will:

- Engage in formal and informal conferences with parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators.
- Provide written documentation of incidents or accidents, including steps taken to address the behavior.
- Communicate any decisions regarding suspension or disenrollment in writing, including the reasoning and any necessary next steps.

Return to Care

If a child is temporarily excluded, they may return to the program once support services or interventions are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals.

Breastfeeding

Smart Quest Academy supports nursing mothers by providing a private, comfortable area for breastfeeding or expressing milk. Please contact the **Director** or front office for assistance in accessing this space. Mothers have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their children while at SQA.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

Open Communication About Health

We encourage parents to be open and transparent about any physical or medical conditions their child may have. Providing this information prior to enrollment helps us assess how we can best support your child and determine if reasonable accommodations can be provided in compliance with licensing standards and the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**.

If needed, a meeting with the director may be scheduled to discuss your child's specific needs and how we can collaborate to ensure their success and safety.

Immunization and Medical Records

A **Health Statement**, included in your Admission package, must be completed and signed by your child's physician annually. This statement, along with updated immunization records, must be kept on file as required by **Texas licensing regulations**.

Immunization records must include the physician's signature (rubber stamp or electronic signature is acceptable).

If you choose to waive immunizations, a **notarized state-required waiver** must be submitted as part of your child's enrollment packet.

Vision and Hearing Screening

All children who are **four years of age or older by September 1** must undergo a **vision and hearing screening** conducted by a licensed professional.

Parents are required to provide the school with the results of the screening to ensure compliance with state health requirements. Please submit the documentation promptly to assist us in maintaining accurate health records for your child.

Illness Policy

Your child's health and well-being are of the utmost importance to us. In compliance with licensing requirements, we take precautions to safeguard the health of all children in our care. If your child

will be absent due to illness, we kindly ask that you notify the school. This allows us to monitor and track any illnesses that may occur within our community. Rest assured, this information will only be shared with employees on a **need-to-know basis** to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

When Illness Occurs at School

If your child becomes ill during the school day, we will contact you immediately. To ensure the comfort and safety of your child, they will be separated from their class and supervised in the office while receiving appropriate care until you or an authorized emergency contact arrives to take them home.

We kindly ask that parents or caregivers pick up an ill child within **one hour of notification**.

If you are unable to do so within this timeframe, it is your responsibility to arrange for an alternate pick-up by someone listed on your child's emergency contact form.

Return to School Guidelines

Children must remain at home until they are symptom-free for **24 hours without medication** or provide a physician's note stating they are free from any contagious illness and are cleared to return to school.

When to Keep Your Child at Home

Children must stay home if:

- The illness prevents them from comfortably participating in activities.
- They require more care than staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of others.
- They show symptoms of severe illness, such as:
 - Lethargy or behavior changes
 - Green nasal discharge
 - Sore throat or eye drainage
 - Abnormal breathing
 - Diarrhea, vomiting, or rash
 - Fever (100°F or higher)
 - Mouth sores with drooling

Communicable Diseases

Parents are required to notify the school office if their child is absent due to a communicable disease. Children may not return to school until they are no longer contagious. A **doctor's note** confirming that the child is no longer contagious and is cleared to return must be provided.

In compliance with legal requirements, if a child or staff member is diagnosed with a communicable disease that must be reported to the local health department, parents will be notified in writing immediately.

Definition of Diarrhea

For preschool-age children, **diarrhea** is defined as frequent, loose, or watery stools that are not related to diet or medication. It is often accompanied by other symptoms such as abdominal pain, cramping, or fever. A single incident of loose stool may not indicate diarrhea, but **two or more episodes** within a short period of time should be treated as such.

Children with diarrhea should remain at home to prevent the spread of illness. They may return to school when they have been symptom-free for at least **24 hours without medication** or with a doctor's note confirming they are no longer contagious.

Definition of Fever

For preschool-age children, a **fever** is defined as a body temperature of **100°F (37.8°C)** or higher, measured orally, or **99°F (37.2°C)** or higher, measured under the arm. A fever is often a sign of an underlying illness or infection and may be accompanied by other symptoms such as lethargy, irritability, or loss of appetite.

Children with a fever should remain at home until they have been fever-free for at least **24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication**.

Medication

Medication will only be administered with written parental permission using a completed **Medication Authorization Form**, available at the front office. Prescription medications must have a current pharmacy label with the child's name, doctor's name, date, exact dosage, name of the medication, and instructions. Over-the-counter medications require written parental consent and must follow age-appropriate dosage guidelines.

All medications must be in their **original containers**, labeled with the child's name, and free from expiration. Staff are not permitted to administer the **first dose** of any new medication to prevent potential adverse reactions. No medications can be measured in advance or put into other containers.

Medications are stored securely out of children's reach and administered by authorized staff according to the labeled instructions. A medication log is maintained to document the date, time, dosage, and staff member administering the medication.

Emergency medications, such as **EpiPens**, require a completed Allergy **Action Plan** from a health care professional detailing usage instructions.

Parents are responsible for ensuring all medications are up to date and labeled correctly, as well as retrieving unused medication at the end of the treatment period. Unclaimed medication will be discarded after 30 days.

Topical Products

Topical Products Topical products such as sunscreen, diaper cream, and insect repellent require parental authorization and must be provided in their original containers with the child's full name clearly labeled.

Diaper Cream: Will be applied **only upon request**. A **Medication Authorization Form**, signed by the parent or guardian, must be on file. If the cream is **prescription-based**, the form must also include written instructions and a signature from the prescribing physician. The cream will be stored in the child's classroom.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent: Parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen and insect repellent before arriving at school. If reapplication is needed during the school day, a **Medication Authorization Form** signed by the parent is required. The product will remain in the child's classroom for staff use as needed.

Lice

If a child is sent home due to lice or nits, they must be treated at home and may only return to school once all lice and nits have been fully removed. Upon their return, the child will be checked for lice or nits upon arrival for **three consecutive days** to ensure they remain lice-free. If any lice or nits are detected during these checks, the child will need to return home for further treatment.

Accident and Emergency Procedures

Minor Accidents

If your child experiences a minor injury at school, the teacher will administer basic first aid and document the incident. An **Incident Report** detailing how the injury occurred and the actions taken will be emailed to the parent or guardian the same day. The original report will be kept on file for school records.

Emergency Medical Procedures

For more serious injuries, immediate first aid will be administered, and parents will be notified as soon as possible. If further medical attention is required, parents may be asked to pick up their child for treatment. In case of an emergency, **911 will be called** immediately.

To ensure timely communication, it is essential that all phone numbers and emergency contact information remain current. Please notify the school of any updates to this information and ensure your cell phone is turned on while your child is attending school.

An **Incident/Illness Report (Form 7239)** will be completed for any significant injuries or illnesses and must be signed by the parent within **48 hours** of the incident.

Attendance with Medical Devices

If your child returns to school with a medical device such as a boot, cast, or helmet, the school requires a **doctor's note** detailing the necessary care instructions and any restrictions. These medical orders must be followed to ensure your child's safety.

Severe Allergy Policy

At Smart Quest Academy, your child's safety is our priority. To ensure we can meet their needs, parents must provide a completed **Allergy Emergency Plan**, signed by the child's physician and

guardians, at enrollment or as soon as an allergy is identified. This plan must be updated as needed.

Parents should also supply any prescribed emergency medications, such as an EpiPen, in the original container with a **Medication Authorization Form**.

To promote safety, the Director may restrict certain foods or items in the classroom if a child has a severe food allergy. Additionally, food sharing is prohibited.

Handwashing

At Smart Quest Academy, we prioritize handwashing as the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness. Both teachers and children are encouraged to wash their hands thoroughly and frequently. Teachers follow established guidelines for proper handwashing practices and actively teach children the importance of maintaining good hygiene.

Children are taught to wash their hands:

- After using the restroom or during a diaper change.
- Before and after meals or snacks.
- After playing at the sand, water, or discovery table.
- After coming into contact with soiled items.
- After returning from the playground.
- After handling pets or animals.
- Anytime their hands may become dirty.

Staff Vaccine Policy

While employees are encouraged to keep their immunizations up to date to protect against preventable illnesses, it is not a requirement for employment.

SQA strongly recommends that employees consult with their health care provider regarding recommended immunizations, such as influenza, Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis), and MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella), to support a healthy work environment.

Inclusive Services Policy

Smart Quest Academy (SQA) is committed to fostering an inclusive environment for all children, families, and staff. We comply with all federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards, and guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Support for Children with Special Care Needs

- Parents of children with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations during the registration process by indicating their child's needs on the admission form.
- Requests made after enrollment must be submitted in writing to the school's email, along with an updated admission form. Verbal requests are not accepted.

- SQA works with families to provide reasonable accommodations while maintaining compliance with legal and program standards.

Support for Staff with Special Care Needs

- SQA provides equal employment opportunities and reasonable accommodations for staff with disabilities, following EEOC guidelines.

Indoor and Outdoor Physical Activity

Smart Quest Academy (SQA) is committed to ensuring children engage in daily physical activity, recognizing its essential role in their health and development. Regular physical activity builds strong bones and muscles, enhances strength and endurance, reduces the risk of chronic illnesses, improves self-esteem, and helps manage stress and anxiety. Additionally, physical activity has been shown to positively influence cognitive development, motor skills, and academic performance.

Daily Physical Activity Requirements

- **Children ages two and younger:** Offered at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day during operating hours.
- **Children aged three and older:** Offered at least 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily during operating hours.

Physical activity may include running, climbing, dancing, skipping, and jumping, tailored to each child's abilities.

Structured Activity Schedule

- **PE Music and Movement Class:** A 30-minute daily session promoting gross motor development and rhythm.
- **Outdoor Recess:**
 - 30 minutes between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM.
 - 30 minutes between 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM.
 - If weather conditions (e.g., excessive heat, cold, or rain) prevent outdoor play, teachers will implement pre-planned indoor activities that involve moderate to vigorous movement in the classroom or indoor play area.

Per Texas Health and Human Services requirements, outdoor recess will be provided daily, weather permitting.

Clothing and Footwear Guidelines

Children's clothing and footwear should support active play while protecting them from sun exposure. Appropriate items include:

- **Clothing:** Weather-appropriate attire, such as lightweight, breathable fabrics. Avoid items with drawstrings or loops that could catch on equipment.
- **Footwear:** Tennis shoes or sturdy alternatives that support running and climbing.

Inappropriate Items:

- Footwear that can easily come off or lacks support for climbing.
- Clothing that restricts movement or poses safety risks, such as hoods with strings or loose-fitting items.

Weather Policy for Outside Play

Per Texas State Licensing Requirements, children must have an outdoor recess time every day, weather permitting. **Weather permitting means conditions must be safe and comfortable for children's outdoor play.** Please send a coat to school with your child on cold days so they can play outside comfortably.

During the cooler months, we follow the **Child Care Weather Watch** guidelines to assess temperature, wind chill, and safety for outdoor play.

In warmer months, we check the **Air Quality Index (AQI)** daily using Airnow.gov:

- **GREEN:** Children will play outside as scheduled.
- **ORANGE:** Outdoor time will be shortened.
- **RED:** Outdoor play will be canceled for the day.

Indoor physical activities will be planned during inclement weather or unsafe air quality to ensure children remain active while staying safe.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents Participation and Volunteers

Smart Quest Academy values and encourages parent involvement to enhance our school community and enrich children's learning experiences.

Ways to Participate

Parents can:

- Assist in the classroom as homeroom parents, reading volunteers, or teacher aides.
- Help organize or support special events.
- Contribute outside the classroom by donating items, assisting with maintenance, or helping in the front office.
- Share talents, interests, or expertise to broaden learning opportunities.

Requirements for Volunteers

Classroom volunteers must comply with Texas childcare licensing standards, including completing and funding required background checks. Participation is contingent upon clearance.

Volunteer opportunities will be posted on the main bulletin board.

Rights of Parent or Guardian

A parent or guardian of a child at a child care facility has the right to:

- (1) enter and examine the child care facility during the facility's hours of operation without advanced notice;
- (2) review the child care facility's publicly accessible records;
- (3) receive inspection reports for the child care facility and information about how to access the facility's online compliance history;
- (4) obtain a copy of the child care facility's policies and procedures;
- (5) review, at the request of the parent or guardian, the facility's:
 - (A) staff training records; and
 - (B) any in-house staff training curriculum used by the facility;
- (6) review the child care facility's written records concerning the parent's or guardian's child;
- (7) inspect any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving the parent's or guardian's child, provided that:
 - (A) video recordings of the alleged incident are available;
 - (B) the parent or guardian of the child does not retain any part of the video recording depicting a child that is not their own; and
 - (C) the parent or guardian of any other child captured in the video recording receives written notice from the facility before allowing a parent to inspect a recording;
- (8) have the child care facility comply with a court order preventing another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the parent's or guardian's child;
- (9) be provided the contact information for the child care facility's local Child Care Regulation office;
- (10) file a complaint against the child care facility by contacting the local Child Care Regulation office; and
- (11) be free from any retaliatory action by the child care facility for exercising any of the parent's or guardian's rights.

Parent Code of Conduct

At Smart Quest Academy (SQA), we value the positive contributions of parents and guardians to our school community. To maintain a safe and respectful environment for all, we have established clear expectations for appropriate behavior on school property and during school events.

1. **Respectful Communication**

- Parents, guardians, and visitors must use respectful and appropriate language at all times while on school property, including parking lots and playgrounds. Swearing, cursing, or offensive music is prohibited.

2. **No Smoking**

- Smoking is strictly prohibited on all school premises.

3. **Child Discipline and Interaction**

- Parents and visitors may not use physical or verbal punishment on any child while on school grounds. Disciplining children other than your own is not permitted.

Concerns about another child's behavior should be brought to your child's teacher and the school Director.

4. Safety Measures

- For the safety of all, children must not enter or exit the building unsupervised, run in the hallways, or open secured doors for others, even if they are employees.
- Parents are expected to adhere to all safety procedures at all times to help maintain a secure environment.

5. Hiring Staff for Personal Services

- Employees of SQA who provide babysitting or similar services outside of school hours do so as private individuals, not as SQA employees. SQA is not liable for their actions off-site. Staff are strictly prohibited from transporting any child to or from the school without a signed Release of Liability Form from the parent or guardian.

6. Impairment by Drugs or Alcohol

- If a parent or visitor appears intoxicated when picking up a child, the school may refuse to release the child and contact an alternative person from the emergency contact list. Authorities may be notified if necessary.

7. Conflict Resolution

- Parents are encouraged to discuss concerns with the Director in a calm and respectful manner. Threatening or aggressive behavior toward staff, children, or other parents will not be tolerated and may result in termination of enrollment.

SQA reserves the right to terminate care or take legal action in response to violations of this policy. All threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Parent's Right to Immediate Access

Parents and legal guardians of children enrolled in our program are entitled to immediate access to their child at any time while the child is in our care. This right does not require prior notice or approval.

We recognize that legal guardians hold the same rights as parents in accessing their child. If custody arrangements or legal restrictions apply, parents or guardians must provide the school with official court documentation to clarify access rights.

Our priority is to ensure the safety and well-being of every child while respecting the rights of parents and guardians.

Confidentiality Policy

We are committed to protecting the confidentiality of all personal and sensitive information related to children, families, and staff.

Confidential information will only be shared with employees on a "need-to-know" basis to ensure your child receives appropriate and safe care.

Information may be shared with external parties only under the following circumstances:

- **Parental Consent:** With written authorization from the parent or guardian.

- **Legal Requirements:** As required by Texas law, such as reporting suspected abuse or complying with licensing inspections.
- **Health and Safety:** In emergencies, information may be shared with medical professionals or first responders.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Fire and Emergency Drills

The safety and well-being of our children are our highest priorities. To ensure readiness for emergencies, we have implemented a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan, which details procedures for situations such as fires, severe weather, medical emergencies, and intruders. Fire drills are conducted monthly to help children and staff become familiar with evacuation procedures, while other emergency drills, including severe weather and intruder scenarios, are practiced every three months. A copy of the Emergency Preparedness Plan is available for review in the front office.

Alternative Safe Location

In the unlikely event of an evacuation due to the building being unsafe to occupy, children and staff will be relocated to the parking lot **located at 2915 E. Southlake Blvd #200**. Parents will be promptly contacted to pick up their children from this location. Staff will remain with the children and ensure their safety until all have been reunited with their families.

Portable Emergency Safety Bag (PES) & Class Binder Policy

Each classroom at Smart Quest Academy is equipped with a **Portable Emergency Safety Bag (PES)** and a **Class Binder** to ensure your child's safety at all times. The PES Bag remains with the class during all activities, including outdoor play, and emergency drills.

The bag contains essential emergency supplies and documents, including the class roster and emergency contact information. A detailed list of PES Bag contents can be found in our **Emergency Preparedness Plan**, available for review at the front office.

In the event of an emergency, both the PES Bag and Class Binder will be taken out of the building by staff.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Emergency phone numbers are maintained in the Class Binders and prominently displayed in the front office. These include contact information for fire, police, ambulance services, child abuse reporting, and poison control.

To ensure quick and accurate communication during emergencies, our facility's address is also included.

Severe Weather Policy

At Smart Quest Academy (SQA), the safety of children, families, and staff is our top priority. In compliance with Texas child care regulations, we have established the following Severe Weather Policy to ensure preparedness and safety during weather-related emergencies.

Monitoring Weather Conditions

- SQA actively monitors weather conditions through local authorities, weather alerts, and the National Weather Service.
- Decisions regarding closures, delayed openings, or early dismissals will align with local school district announcements or as deemed necessary by the Director.

Severe Weather Procedures

1. **Shelter-in-Place:**
 - During severe weather events, such as tornado warnings, staff will follow the Emergency Preparedness Plan to move children to designated safe areas within the building.
 - Teachers carry the Portable Emergency Safety Bag at all times, which is equipped with essential supplies, including flashlights, water, first aid kits, and the Class Binder.
 - Teachers will account for all children using the class roster and maintain a calm and supportive atmosphere.
2. **Communication with Parents:**
 - Parents will be notified promptly through our communication channels (e.g., phone, text, or email) about the status of the severe weather and any necessary actions, such as early pick-up or temporary closure.
3. **Evacuation (if necessary):**
 - In the event of extreme conditions requiring evacuation, children and staff will relocate to the alternate safe location specified in the Emergency Preparedness Plan. Parents will be notified of the new location for pick-up.

Facility Closure

- If severe weather conditions make it unsafe to open or remain open, parents will be informed as early as possible.

Practice Drills

- Severe weather drills, including tornado drills, are conducted every three months to familiarize children and staff with safety procedures.

As outlined in our tuition policy, Smart Quest Academy (SQA) does not provide credits or refunds for closures resulting from weather conditions, national emergencies, pandemics, or other circumstances beyond our control.

For further details, please refer to the Emergency Preparedness Plan available in the front office.

In an emergency, our primary focus is the safety of the children and staff, which may prevent us from answering phone calls. Please check your email and text messages for updates. If there is a power outage and you do not receive any communication, rest assured that we are prioritizing the safety and well-being of the children.

COMMUNICATION

At Smart Quest Academy (SQA), we prioritize open and effective communication to support children's success and keep families well-informed. We use various electronic tools to provide timely updates, essential resources, and important information about your child's education and school events.

Communication Channels

Our primary methods of communication include:

- **School Email:** For official updates and inquiries.
- **School Phone:** Used for direct communication (text messaging is not included).
- **Child Care Management App (Brightwheel):** To share important notifications and updates.
- **Social Media:** Facebook and Instagram

Regular Updates

To keep parents informed and engaged, we share the following updates electronically:

- **Monthly Newsletter:** Offers insights on child development, at-home activities, and upcoming events.
- **Monthly Calendar:** Highlights key dates and activities.
- **Weekly Email Reminders:** Provides current and upcoming event details.

Additionally, the **School Year Calendar** is always accessible on our website for your convenience.

Emergency Communication

In the event of an emergency—such as weather-related closures or urgent updates—parents will be promptly notified via **email**, the **Child Care Management App (Brightwheel)**, and **social media**.

Parent Feedback and Inquiries

We encourage parents to reach out with questions, concerns, or feedback. Our office staff is available during business hours via email or phone.

Privacy and Security

All communication will adhere to privacy and confidentiality standards to ensure the protection of your family's information.

To reduce our environmental impact, we minimize paper correspondence and rely on electronic communications. We encourage parents to regularly check these platforms to stay connected and fully informed about their child's experience at SQA.

Child Care App (Brightweel)

At Smart Quest Academy (SQA), we use a **Child Care App (Brightweel)** to keep parents connected and informed about their child's daily experiences at our school. This app streamlines communication and provides valuable insights into your child's activities.

By enrolling your child at SQA, you agree to their participation in the Child Care App program (Brightweel). This includes receiving updates, photos, and notifications (via email or text) through the app.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

At Smart Quest Academy, we value open communication and collaboration with parents to support each child's growth and success.

- **Scheduled Conferences:** Parent-teacher conferences will be held during the Fall semester, providing an opportunity to discuss your child's progress.
- **Progress Reports:** Written progress reports will be sent home three times a year—in October, January, and May.
- **Additional Conferences:** Parents or teachers may request additional conferences at any time throughout the school year to address specific questions or concerns. Advance notice will be provided for all scheduled conference dates.

For any questions or concerns regarding the school, curriculum, or staff, the Director is available year-round to meet with parents.

Camara and Photograph Policy

Smart Quest Academy uses closed-circuit cameras in all classrooms and the lobby for safety and monitoring purposes only. These cameras record video and audio and are not accessible via the internet. Protecting children's privacy is a top priority, and access to camera recordings is limited to authorized administrative personnel only.

At Smart Quest Academy, the safety and privacy of every child are taken seriously.

- **Staff Photography:** Photos of children are taken only using school-owned devices and are used exclusively for educational documentation, classroom activities, and parent communication.
- **Parent Photography:** Parents may photograph or record only their own child during school events unless prior, explicit permission has been granted by other families.
- **Group Photography:** Group photos or videos may be taken during certain parent events, such as Pre-K graduation, Christmas programs, and carnivals, photographs may be taken. If

you do not wish for your child to be photographed, you may choose to remove them from these events.

By enrolling at Smart Quest Academy, families acknowledge and agree to this policy. Any concerns must be submitted in writing to the Director.

LICENSING AND LEGAL REGULATIONS

Licensing Information

As a licensed child care center in Texas, Smart Quest Academy (SQA) complies with all regulations and standards established by Texas Health and Human Services (HHS). Parents are welcome to review the Minimum Standards, available at the front desk, or request the most recent inspection report from the Director. This information is readily accessible at any time.

For additional information or assistance, you can contact Texas Health and Human Services at **1-800-735-2989** or visit their website at <https://hhs.texas.gov>. You may also reach the local licensing office for the Fort Worth area at:

1501 Circle Dr., Suite 310

Fort Worth, Texas 76119

Phone: (817) 321-8604

Employees and parents are expected to promptly report any licensing violations by anyone within the organization to the school director. HHSC values your privacy. For information about how personal information is protected, please review the HHSC Privacy and Security Policy available online: [Policies, Practices and Privacy | Texas Health and Human Services](#)

Prevention and Response to Child Abuse and Neglect

At Smart Quest Academy (SQA), all employees are required to complete at least one hour of annual training on preventing, recognizing, and reporting child abuse and neglect, as mandated by Texas Health and Human Services.

Parents and staff can learn about warning signs and prevention techniques at:

- [Recognizing and Reporting Abuse and Neglect](#)
- [Warning Signs and Resources](#)

If you suspect abuse or neglect, contact:

- **Texas Abuse Hotline:** 1-800-252-5400
- **ChildHelp Hotline:** 1-800-4-A-CHILD
- **Online Reporting:** www.txabusehotline.org

SQA collaborates with community organizations under the guidance of the Department of Family and Protective Services. Employees are protected from liability for good-faith reports, even if the claims are later found to be unfounded.

SQA is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of every child in our care.

Gang-Free Zone

In compliance with Texas law, Smart Quest Academy (SQA) is designated as a gang-free zone. This means that engaging in organized criminal activity, including gang-related activities, within 1,000 feet of our facility is a violation of state law and subject to enhanced penalties.

This designation is intended to protect children by maintaining a safe environment and deterring criminal behavior in and around the child care center.

Firearms and Weapons

Firearms, ammunition, and weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited on school property, or at events sponsored by the school. This policy applies to everyone, regardless of licensing, except law enforcement officers on official duty.

Violations may result in immediate action, including contacting law enforcement or termination of care.

School Policies

If any school policies are updated, you will be notified via email. Should you have questions or concerns about any policy or procedure, please feel free to speak with the Director during your visit or schedule a private meeting to discuss your concerns.

School Contact Information

Smart Quest Academy

Email: info@smartquestacademy.com

www.smartquestacademy.com

PH: 817-416-2766