



**PRESCHOOL AT NORTH HIGHLAND CHURCH**

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# WELCOME

Dear Family,

Thank you for choosing HKA Preschool as your pre-school program. We know that good childcare is important to you and your family, and we are excited to be helping you achieve that goal. Our entire program is centered on providing your child with a safe, productive, educational, and fun program while teaching moral principles and ideals.

This handbook is written to help you know what programs we offer and the guidelines that will help us be the dynamic program that we know you desire for your children. We would also love your input as to how to make our center the best it can possibly be for your child to thrive.

For the children,

Linda J. Fischer

Director -Highland Kids Academy

## **ABOUT US**

Highland Kids Academy (HKA) exists to care for school-aged children in a positive and healthy environment helping them stay up to date on their homework, develop talents in the arts, encourage creativity, and expand horizons. HKA wants to help each child develop socially, emotionally, and academically.

### **Times of Operation and age of children served by HKA:**

Highland Kids Preschool provides services during the months of August through May from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm Monday through Friday for children ages two, three, and four.

Four year olds may also be part of our afterschool program which ends at 6:00 pm

HKA generally follows Muscogee County's school calendar. If there is an exception to this, we will announce it through emails, Procure and signs at the center.

### **Holidays**

We reserve the right to be closed for the following holidays: All federal holidays, July 4th, Thanksgiving week, and the weeks that Muscogee County School District is closed for the Christmas holiday. **It is up to the discretion of the director to open the center for full day camps during these times. This decision will be made according to the needs of our families and the availability of staff.** Parents will be notified of these camps at least three weeks in advance. These special camps must be paid for at least one week in advance.

### **Closings Due to Extreme Weather or Other Emergencies**

We will follow the Muscogee school district when they determine that weather conditions prevent us from opening on time or at all. When conditions such as snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, or loss of water occur, we will follow our emergency plans located in section 14 of this manual. **If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick up is your responsibility to arrange.**

All classrooms have emergency procedures posted in the room.

## SECTION 1: ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT

Based on the availability and openings, our preschool admits children from ages, two through five.

All admission and enrollment forms must be completed and registration fees paid prior to your child's first day of attendance. The registration fee is non-refundable. For fee information, see appendix A at the back of this booklet.

### **Enrollment Policy**

When enrolling your child at HKA there are several things you must do:

1. All appropriate forms must be filled out, signed, and on file prior to admission. All necessary forms/consents will be given to you in your admission package. \*
2. Read through & become familiar with the policies in your parent/student handbook. You will be asked to sign the final page that indicates you have read, understand, & agree to all the policies as outlined.
3. We strongly encourage you to visit the center before you enroll. We will be happy to give you a tour, introduce you to our staff and answer any questions you may have.

The student will not be allowed to stay at the center until all forms are filled out and in their file. Specific items that are extremely important are immunization records and emergency contact information.

Children are admitted without regard to race culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

## SECTION 2: GENERAL POLICIES

### **Inclusion**

**HKA Preschool** believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in child care. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

### **Non-Discrimination**

At **HKA Preschool**, equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

### **Confidentiality**

Information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by the state. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

It is our policy at HKA to keep sensitive information confidential. Teachers will not discuss personal information about your child or family. Teachers sign a confidentiality agreement. Any information about children or their

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families must be shared on a need to know basis only, thus we are sensitive about discussing children's developmental needs and information. Protect the interest of each child and family by keeping confidentiality. Also, strive to be supportive of center efforts by avoiding negative or malicious discussions about center issues.



## **Staff Qualifications**

Our teachers and caregivers participate in an orientation class and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

## **Babysitting**

We love our teachers and know that they are awesome with our students; While we gently discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (i.e. babysitting), please understand that any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside of the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by **Highland Kids Academy Preschool**.

## **Child to Staff Ratios**

Children are supervised at all times. We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:

### **Age Child to Staff HKA Room**

### **Capacity**

2 year old 12 to 1 24

3 year old 15 to 1 24

4 year olds 18-1 24

We want to do everything we can to keep you involved and informed about our program and what your child does during his day with us. To that end, we have many ways to keep you up to date with what is going on.

**Bulletin Boards** Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, classroom schedules, upcoming events, faculty changes, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

**Email** We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates. Our email address is **Info@Highlandkidsacademy.com** or you can email our preschool assistant director directly at **jasmine@highlandkidsacademy.com**.

## **Volunteering**

We welcome volunteers into the classroom. Parents have access to their child and all parts of the center during the hours that the child is in our care. We love visitors! Parents can help in a variety of ways such as preparing materials for an activity. If you are interested in helping, please let your teachers & director know. If you have something special you would like to share with the class, let us know so we can make arrangements. This may

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include a craft, something to do with your work or anything that you feel the children might enjoy. Let us know what you have in mind.

**Conferences.** Family & teacher conferences occur at least once a year, usually during the second half of the year. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. **Please call or visit our office to get an appointment.** Appointments will mean that you have the total attention of the teacher at that time. We would prefer that distractions in the classroom are minimal, but we encourage you to communicate any concerns you may have.

Please take time to read our notices that will be posted on our bulletin boards. This is important information that you should be familiar with.

## SECTION 4: CURRICULUM AND LEARNING

### **Learning Environment**

We provide a rich learning environment that is developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning.

Copies of daily schedules are posted inside each classroom. 10

### **Television/Movie Time**

Any media that will be shown during class hours will compliment the

curriculum. Our aim is to build relationships and socialization skills to the children that you have entrusted to us.

### **Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, photos, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it. If your family has any special cultural traditions that you would like to share with HKA, please let us know. We love to learn!

### **Celebrations**

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community. We will learn about many holidays and we will celebrate those that are relevant to our Christian values and beliefs.

## **SECTION 5: GUIDANCE**

### **General Procedure**

Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help them develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness. When a child becomes physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children.

Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent, age appropriate and understandable to the child.

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others and we may restrain a child by gently holding her or him only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

### **Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families**

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
  
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
  
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

## **SECTION 6: TUITION AND FEES**

## Payment

**Payment is always due on Fridays for the week ahead.** Payments can be made through HKA's Procure portal: **we only accept payments by credit card. (There is no additional fee in using your credit card.)**

### **Late Pick-up Fees**

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered an exceptional occurrence. **Please contact us as soon as possible if you know you will be late for pick up to avoid late fees!**

If this becomes problematic, we reserve the right to charge a \$1.00 fee for each minute after 1:10 pm (or 6:10 pm if the child is part of our after school program) until the child's name is checked out of our computer system.

**Parents/Guardian are required to pay the late fee the same day upon picking up the child.**

If we have not heard from the parent/guardian, at 1:10 pm, we will attempt to call the parent/guardian two times. After the second attempt, we will begin to call each of the names on the child's emergency contact list. If after 20 minutes (at 1:30 pm) we are unable to contact a parent/guardian or emergency contact, we reserve the right to contact the police and/or social services.

### **Late Payment Charges**

Late payments can pose serious problems for our program. Therefore, we have put procedures in place to reduce their impact.

Payment is due on the Friday for the week ahead. If payment is not received within a week of the original due date, a late fee of \$10.00 will be added for each day that the payment is late. If your account has not been paid in full within 5 business days, your child may be discharged from the program. If you need to set up a payment plan, please contact the assistant director or director.

If HKA feels it can no longer enroll your child, you will be given a one-week notice. However, if your child exhibits behaviors that endanger other children or staff, expulsion can be immediate. Examples of reasons for expulsion include but are not limited to:

- Failure of parent to pay tuition
- Failure of child to adjust to HKA after a reasonable amount of time
- Behavior that endangers other children or staff

## SECTION 7: STUDENT ABSENCES

If your child is going to be absent, please call us at 706-221-5947 (press option 2) before 9:00 am, send an email or a message through Procare.

## SECTION 8: DROP-OFF & PICK-UP

### **General Procedure**

Our normal school year operating hours are from 9:00 am – 1:00pm. Earliest drop off time is 8:45 am. Latest pickup time is 1:10 pm before late fees are applied. Parents are expected to come into the building to sign them in and out. Please park your car and come into the main Highland Kids Academy Pre-K entrance. (No parking on the Curbside).

Please have your children at the center by 9:30 am. This is the beginning of instructional time for the teachers and students. The Pre-K doors will also be locked due to safety concerns.

- Please sign your child in and out on your devices. If you're having issues with signing in & out through Procare, the teachers and assistant director will assist you.
  - Please take care of any business before you pick up your child. This will allow them to continue to take part in the classroom activities until you are ready to leave.

### **Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up**

Your child will only be released to you or to those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. **If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick up your child,**

**you must notify us in advance.** . Your child will not be released without

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prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy. This policy is for the safety of all our children.

## **Custody Issues**

In the case of custody issues, we will need copies of the agreement or court order that outlines visitation times or disallows a parent contact with the child. We also ask that staff not be asked to take sides in these matters. We will keep accurate attendance records and factual information on file but will not provide opinion based information on either side of these issues.

## SECTION 9: CLASS ENVIRONMENT

### ***Cubbies***

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a “cubby.” Cubbies are labeled with your child’s name. Please check your child’s cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

### ***Lost & Found***

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-found Box located at the check-in desk. When something is found, we will place it in the box with a note attached with the date it was found. If it is not picked up within 10 days’ time, we will arrange to have it taken to Goodwill or a similar facility. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

## SECTION 10: DISCIPLINE POLICY

Praise, redirection, and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior management of children. When children receive positive,



nonviolent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline.

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Based on this belief of how children learn and develop values, this center will practice the following discipline and behavior management policy.

### **Discipline Procedure:**

These are the disciplinary steps that should be taken if a child does something inappropriate during his stay at HKA. Each teacher will follow these steps with a positive and affirming attitude.

1. Try to refocus the child toward another positive activity.
2. Encourage the student to stop the behavior. Remind him/her of the rule that is being violated and the consequences that goes with it.
3. If these actions do not help, the teacher will radio the front desk and ask for assistance. The director/assistant director will come and assess the situation. The teacher will be asked to write up an incident report.

## SECTION 11: NUTRITION

### ***Foods Brought from Home***

We will provide a small mid-morning snack for each child daily.

**The parent will be responsible for packing a healthy lunch for their child. Please do not pack anything with peanut butter in it, as we may have children with peanut allergies.**

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We understand that parents may want to bring snacks on special occasions. Food brought from home is permitted under the following conditions:

- Perishable food to be shared with other children must be store-bought and in its original package.
- Baked goods may be made at home if they are fully cooked, do not require refrigeration and were made with freshly purchased ingredients. **A state regulation states that we must have a list of ingredients.** Please make sure there is enough food for all children in the class.

### **Food Prepared for or at the Center**

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service.

Water will be provided along with each snack. Please make sure your child has a labeled sippy cup or water bottle.

### **Allergies**

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. Please state what the actual reaction is; ie rash, hives, etc. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually.

Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician. This plan will be placed in the child's file.

A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the classrooms. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of

exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies. We are a nut-free facility.

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## SECTION 12: HEALTH

### **Immunizations**

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

### **Daily Health Check**

We conduct a visual health check, each day that the child enters the center. We look for skin rashes, elevated temperatures, itchy scalps, lethargy and changes from usual behavior. These are quick checks to protect the well-being of all children in the program. Please understand these are not physicals and do not substitute for proper routine pediatric care.

### **Illness**

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children we cannot have a sick child at the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities. ●
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide. ●
- Fever (above 100.4)
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in underwear or toilet.

- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or 2 or more times during the previous 24 hours.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on

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antibiotics for 24 hours.

- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
  - Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
  - Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
  - Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
  - Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics. ●
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours. ●
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours. ●
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities. ●
- They have a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care, is required.

Head Lice

- Children with head lice will not be allowed to return to the center until they have been treated and no further head lice are detected during a health check at the center.

## Medications

- All medications should be handed to an administrative staff member with specific instructions for administering. **Only prescription medicines will be given out during HKA hours. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own.** Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed. An adverse reaction to medication will be documented on the authorization form and the parents contacted immediately

- **Prescription medications** require an authorized form signed by the parent/guardian and a written order from the child's physician. (The label on the medication meets this requirement.) The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your

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prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication.

**Medication Storage and First Aid Kit:** All medications and first aid supplies are kept on site and stored in an area that can be locked at all times. An additional locked box is provided for medications that may need to be refrigerated. The following first aid supplies are available at all times: fever thermometer, band-aids, sterile gauze pads, tape, and gloves.

**EPI-PEN:** If your child has an allergy that may require the use of an Epi-pen, HKA will require the child's own Epi-pen kept on site which will be provided by the parent or guardian. If your child would require the use of the Epi-pen while in attendance the following steps will be taken:

1. The Epi-pen will be injected by a staff member.
2. 911 will be called after the Epi-pen is injected.
3. The parent or guardian will then be contacted and given further information.

Teaching staff are trained in CPR and first aid. Any treatment given will be logged on an incident sheet, placed in the child's file and the parent will be notified when and how the injury occurred.

## **Injuries**

Safety is a major concern in child care and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. In the event that your child sustains a minor injury, (e.g., scraped knee) first aid will be administered and an incident report will be written outlining the incident and course of action taken and given to the parent when the child is picked up. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical

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attention, you will be contacted immediately. HKA is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital (Piedmont Northside in Columbus) immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

### **Communicable Diseases**

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will notify families by email or sending a note home that day to make sure our families know about the exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus Influenzae (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Covid - 19

- Any cluster/outbreak of illness

## SECTION 13: SAFETY

### **Clothing/bedding**

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child may be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, water play, and

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other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits. Schedules may be adapted due to extremely hot or cold days. (Example of this may be shorter outside time during extreme weather.)

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

### **Communal Water-Play**

Communal, unsupervised water play is prohibited. Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precautions such as the daily emptying and refilling of water containers are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable infectious disease.

### **Respectful Behavior**

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

### **Cell phone Usage**

The time you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with one another about your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, as

well as to be attentive to your child, other children and adults who may wish to communicate with you, we ask that you do not use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center.

### **Smoking**

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

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### **Prohibited Substances**

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

### **Dangerous Weapons**

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used (or intended to be used), is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

### **Child Custody**

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to



custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. **We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.**

### **Suspected Child Abuse**

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to

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believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

### **SECTION 14: EMERGENCIES**

All emergency plans such as tornadoes, earthquakes, loss of power, loss of water, etc. are reviewed regularly with staff and posted in each classroom.

### **Lost or Missing Child**

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group at the center or on a field trip, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within 10 minutes, the parent/guardian and the police will be notified. Our state agency Bright from the Start will be notified within

24 hours.

### **Fire Safety**

Our center is equipped with a sprinkler system, fire alarms, fire extinguishers, and egress windows.

Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a monthly basis and is posted in each of the classrooms.

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### **Emergency Transportation**

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called and the child will be taken to Piedmont Northside hospital in Columbus, Ga. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives. The address to Piedmont Northside is **100 Frist Court, Columbus, GA 31909. The phone number is (706)494- 2100.**

## **Appendix A**

## **Fall 2023-24 Fee Schedule for Highland Kids Academy Preschool Program**

**Annual Registration fee:** \$50.00 per child

**Weekly Tuition:** \$70.00

There may be additional activity fees for special activities throughout the year.

# Parent/Student Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

The handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are completed.

Thank you for your cooperation, and we look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received the **Highland Kids Academy Preschool Parent/Student Handbook**, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the **Highland Kids Academy** staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask center management any questions I may have regarding any policy, procedure or information contained in the **Highland Kids Academy Preschool Parent/Student Handbook**.

Recipient Signature Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Center Staff Signature Date: \_\_\_\_\_