

PARENT HANDBOOK



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MONDAY-FRIDAY

6:30 A.M. - 6:30 P.M.

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I. MISSION STATEMENT

Kid's Castle strives to make a meaningful and positive impact in the lives of every child in our care. We achieve this by providing the highest safety standards, quality care, and education. Our nurturing and engaging learning environment lays a strong foundation for lifelong learning, promotes self-esteem, and fosters a sense of belonging. We encourage active participation and support the development of positive social relationships, creating a true community of learners.

Our educators work collaboratively with families and, when appropriate, with community partners to ensure the success and well-being of each child.

We are devoted to valuing and embracing all children and their families. By providing families with resources and support within their communities, we aim to create systems and strategies that are respectful of and responsive to each family's unique experiences, culture, beliefs, abilities, and circumstances.

At Kid's Castle, we promote inclusive practices that build on the strengths of children, families, and their communities. We are committed to overcoming biases, building trust, and forming collaborative partnerships that benefit children, families, and the professionals who serve them.

II. OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Kid's Castle, we believe that every child is a unique individual, created with special gifts and abilities to be celebrated and nurtured. We recognize that nurturing begins in the early years, laying the foundation for a promising future where children can strive to reach their full potential.

Our staff supports each child's developmental progress through individualized benchmarks, respecting their unique journey. We believe children learn best through hands-on experiences, meaningful relationships, and playful interactions with peers and their environment.

Every child and their family deserve equitable services and support that honor their individuality and provide opportunities to thrive and achieve their full potential.

III. ABOUT OUR SCHOOL

Kid's Castle is a licensed non-profit child care center serving families since 1994. We are open Monday through Friday, from 6:30 A.M. to 6:30 P.M. To ensure smooth daily operations, all children attending must be dropped off by 10:00 A.M. Exceptions for late drop-offs will be made only with a doctor's note and prior communication with management before 10:00 A.M.

As an equal opportunity provider, Kid's Castle accepts all children regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, or sex. Our program integrates Christian values into daily routines, including prayer before meals and opportunities for teachers to incorporate Christianity into their curriculum.

We proudly collaborate with the Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD) to provide affordable childcare for families who qualify for assistance. Kid’s Castle currently holds a Star Five status, reflecting our commitment to quality care and education.

Kid’s Castle offers quality, full-time childcare for children from 6 weeks old until they are eligible to begin kindergarten. We are incredibly proud of our indoor heated swimming pool, which operates year-round. We offer swimming lessons at no extra cost for potty-trained children ages four and up. Pool hours may vary, and the pool may close temporarily for maintenance or other reasons. We provide swimsuits and towels for all participants.

Our facility uses evaporative coolers (swamp coolers) for cooling and adheres to all New Mexico state regulations regarding their operation (Section 8.16.2.47 Part C Area 1).

IV. TUITION, FEES, AND PAYMENT PROCEDURES

Kid’s Castle’s current tuition is outlined in the chart below. Tuition rates are subject to change with two weeks’ notice.

Age Group	Weekly Rate	Weekly Rate with 10% Discount	Weekly Rate with 20% Discount
Infants and Toddlers	\$236.00	\$212.40	\$188.80
Twos and Threes	\$226.00	\$203.40	\$180.80
Pre-Kindergarten	\$216.00	\$194.40	\$172.80
Part-Time (any age)	\$196.00		

DISCOUNTS

Multi-Student Discount: For self-paid families (those not on an ECECD contract), we offer a tuition discount for multiple children enrolled. For self-paid families that have two children enrolled, we offer 10% off the oldest child’s tuition. For families with three or more children enrolled, we offer 20% off the oldest child’s tuition. Students enrolled part-time are not eligible for discounts.

Military & First Responder Discount: We appreciate the dedication of our military members and local service personnel. As a token of our gratitude, we offer a 10% discount for the oldest child enrolled whose parent or guardian serves in the armed forces or as a local service professional (law enforcement, emergency medical services, or firefighters).

For families with multiple children, only one discount—the military/first responder discount or the multiple-child discount—can be applied. Discounts cannot be combined.

PAYMENT PROCEDURES

All tuition payments are due in advance. Families paying non-subsidized tuition must make payments by Monday morning each week. A \$40 late fee will be applied to your account if payment is not received by 10:00 A.M. on Tuesday.

If payment is not made by Wednesday, your child cannot attend until the balance has been paid. Failure to pay by Friday of the same week may result in disenrollment, and another family could fill your child's spot.

Kid's Castle accepts personal checks, money orders, and debit/credit cards for tuition and activity payments. Any returned checks will incur a \$40 fee, which will be the parent's responsibility and added to the family's account balance. In the event of a delinquent account, Kid's Castle reserves the right to pursue collection through legal means, including attorney fees and associated costs, which will be added to the outstanding balance.

TUITION CREDIT POLICY AND VACATION ALLOWANCE

Tuition credits are not provided for absences, holidays, or vacations. However, after one year of consecutive enrollment, families who pay tuition out-of-pocket (self-pay families who do not receive ECECD benefits) are eligible for two weeks of vacation credit per year.

ECECD SUBSIDIZED PAYMENT POLICY

We accept all ECECD contracts. For families participating in the ECECD program and paying a subsidized monthly co-payment, tuition payments are due on the 1st of each month. A \$40 late fee will be applied to accounts that have not been paid by 10:00 A.M. on the 3rd of the month.

If payment is not received in full by the 5th of the month, your child will not be permitted to attend until the balance is settled. Additionally, we must report unpaid balances to ECECD caseworkers, which may result in state-imposed sanctions or case closure.

LATE PICKUP AND ADDITIONAL SUPPLY FEES

Picking up your child after 6:30 P.M. is considered a Late Pickup and will incur a fee of \$4.00 per child per minute. Late pickup fees must be paid in cash before your child returns the next day.

Additionally, Kid's Castle does not provide diapers or pull-ups. If we need to supply these items, a \$1.00 per diaper/pull-up fee will be charged.

V. ENROLLMENT AND DISENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

A non-refundable registration fee of \$100 per child is required at enrollment or re-enrollment if the child has been absent for more than four weeks. This fee does not apply to families with state contracts. To complete enrollment, a parent or guardian must fill out and sign an enrollment

packet, and updated immunization records must be submitted. For families without state contracts, the registration fee and the first week's tuition must be paid in advance to secure a spot; both payments are non-refundable.

Should a family decide to withdraw their child, a two-week written notice is required. The Center reserves the right to withdraw a child immediately if their condition or behavior disrupts the safe and appropriate operation of the Center. Likewise, the Center may withdraw a family immediately if an adult's behavior is deemed abrasive, confrontational, or inappropriate in a child-centered environment. Excessive late pickups after 6:30 P.M. may also result in disenrollment.

VI. CURRICULUM

Our curriculum promotes high-quality, inclusive early childhood practices that nurture meaningful interactions and relationships among children, families, teachers, and professionals. Our staff fosters confidence in children by helping them recognize and build on their strengths.

Curriculum development is guided by the growth, development, and experiences of each child and their family. We continuously evaluate current practices and incorporate effective methods, research-based models, and proven strategies to ensure ongoing improvement. Curriculum planning is child-centered and asset-based, celebrating each child's unique heritage, language, and culture.

To reflect the diversity of our community, our service and support providers are well-trained and educated. We are committed to providing ongoing professional development, training, and technical assistance to ensure the successful design, implementation, and evaluation of best practices.

Teachers create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that offers diverse activities and learning centers, allowing children to explore, experiment, and make choices throughout the day. Activities are thoughtfully planned to be visually appealing, engaging, and stimulating, ensuring an exciting and enriching experience for every child.

While we allow the use of educational videos in the classroom, their use is strictly limited to 30 minutes per day to maintain a focus on active, hands-on learning.

VII. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Our center maintains an open-door policy, meaning parents, guardians, and individuals authorized to pick up a child are welcome to visit at any time without prior notice. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's experience at the center. Occasionally, teachers may invite parents to participate in special events such as story time, classroom parties, or other activities. While participation in these events is optional, we welcome and appreciate parent involvement as often as possible.

In addition, Kid's Castle requests that parents attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss their child's progress. For Pre-K children, conferences are held twice yearly, and for infants and toddlers, they are held three times per year.

VIII. MEALS

Kid's Castle provides a variety of healthy meals and snacks daily, including breakfast, lunch, and two snacks (please refer to the posted menu). We are not a peanut-free facility.

Our center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a state-funded program that reimburses us based on the percentage of children in attendance, regardless of whether families qualify for free, reduced, or paid meals. To comply with CACFP guidelines and ensure the health and well-being of all children, we have implemented additional food policies.

As a large center, we do not permit unhealthy foods to maintain compliance with CACFP requirements. Only one cup of juice per day is allowed, and we do not permit outside juice to be brought into the center due to strict program guidelines. Families may bring in one substitute meal component for meals served at the center or a healthy snack for their child.

For more information on approved food options, please refer to the Creditable/Non-Creditable Foods list at www.nmececd.org.

Meals are served during the following times:

Breakfast	7:00 A.M. – 8:20 A.M.
Morning Snack	10:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.
Lunch	11:30 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.
Afternoon Snack	2:30 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

IX. DAILY SCHEDULE

Each classroom is organized by age group and has an assigned teacher and assistant teacher. Occasionally, it may be necessary to have a substitute caregiver in place of your child's regular teacher. All staff members are fully trained and qualified to work with children across all age groups, ensuring consistency in care and support.

Every classroom follows a daily schedule designed to meet the developmental needs of the children in that age group. While meal times are approximate, teachers make every effort to adhere closely to the meal schedule. Nap time, for children other than infants and school-aged children, is generally from 12:00 P.M. to 2:30 P.M.

For more details about your child's classroom routine, please speak directly with their teacher to review the daily schedule.

X. DRESS CODE

Children should come to school dressed in appropriate attire for learning and play. Closed-toe shoes with heel straps are required to ensure safety, as flip-flops and shoes without heel straps can lead to accidents or falls. Pajamas are not permitted.

Please dress your child in weather-appropriate clothing to ensure their comfort throughout the day. Additionally, we ask that you provide two complete changes of clothing for your child to use in the event of spills or accidents. Kid's Castle does not always have extra clothing available, so having a clean set on hand is essential.

XI. HOLIDAYS, BIRTHDAYS, AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Parents are welcome to bring treats to celebrate their child's birthday with classmates. All treats must be store-bought, remain in their original packaging, and include a visible list of ingredients. For safety reasons, please do not bring balloons for children in the infant, toddler, or two-year-old classrooms, as they pose a choking hazard.

At Kid's Castle, we celebrate nearly all major holidays throughout the year. While we do not recognize Halloween as an official holiday, we provide a day for children to wear non-scary costumes if they choose.

Kid's Castle is closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day (or the following Monday if it falls on a weekend), Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday after Thanksgiving, and a full week for Christmas.

XII. ABSENCE, WITHDRAWAL, AND WEATHER-RELATED POLICIES

Please notify us if your child will be absent for any reason. Failure to do so may result in your child's disenrollment. If your child is absent due to illness, informing us is especially helpful so we can notify their teacher and monitor for any health concerns. If a child withdraws for a period of time, readmission will be contingent on space availability and the payment of all required fees. Families receiving ECECD assistance for child care must ensure that absences do not exceed 14 consecutive days, as this may result in case closure.

Weather rarely prevents us from opening, but in the event of severe storms or unsafe road conditions in Albuquerque, Kid's Castle may decide to close for the safety of families and staff. We will provide closure notices through Channel 4 KOB News under Lomas Child Development DBA Kid's Castle. Kid's Castle does not follow APS delays or closures. Any weather-related delays or closures will be determined at our discretion. If we implement a two-hour delay, our doors will open at 8:30 A.M.

There will be no tuition credits given for weather-related closures. Please check local Channel 4 KOB News for updates.

XIII. COMPLAINTS

At Kid's Castle, we are dedicated to providing quality child care for your family. If we fall short of your expectations, we want to hear from you so we can promptly address and resolve the issue. Please direct any complaints or concerns to a manager. You may be asked to submit a formal complaint in writing. Please allow up to 24 hours for a response.

Parents requesting to view camera footage may do so only in the presence of a director or assistant director. Viewings are available Monday through Friday, between 11 A.M. and 2 P.M. Requests must be made at least 24 hours in advance to accommodate scheduling.

XIV. ILLNESS POLICY

Children may not attend Kid's Castle if they have diarrhea, fever, chickenpox, vomiting, lice, or any other communicable condition. If a child develops symptoms during the day that appear contagious or require medical attention, parents will be notified, and the child must be picked up promptly. This includes situations where the child has diarrhea twice in one day.

A child may return to the center under the following conditions:

- They have been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours.
- They have been free of fever, diarrhea, and/or vomiting for at least 24 hours.
- A doctor's note confirms their condition is not contagious.

Children with lice may return to the center only after treatment and must be completely nit-free. For specific illnesses monitored by the New Mexico Department of Health, a written release from a physician will be required before the child can return. A list of these monitored diseases is available in the center's office.

Kid's Castle cannot administer medications to children.

XV. SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

For the safety of every child, Kid's Castle will not allow anyone to pick up a child unless they are listed on the family's emergency pickup list. All individuals picking up children must provide a valid photo ID.

Parents may add additional authorized contacts at any time but are required to provide at least two emergency contacts (besides the parents) during enrollment to ensure we can reach someone in case of an emergency.

Each family is also required to provide a “code word” that can verify a caller’s identity over the phone or to confirm the identity of someone without a photo ID. Individuals who know the family’s code word will be permitted to pick up children, even if they are not listed on the emergency pickup list or do not have identification. Information about a child will be released only to individuals who know the code word.

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the building, all children and staff will relocate to Manzano High School. If Manzano High School is unavailable, our secondary evacuation site will be Chelwood Elementary School. In the case of a natural disaster, fire, or other event that prohibits operation of the facility, Kid’s Castle will remain closed until the building is deemed safe and operational.

In the event of an on-site active shooter, staff will implement a “CODE RED” alert. Children will be directed to shelter in classroom bathrooms, and no one will be allowed to enter the building until law enforcement officials have secured the premises and provided approval for the children’s release.

To ensure we can reach you in an emergency, please provide updated phone numbers for parents and all emergency contacts.

Kid’s Castle accommodates transportation for children with special needs or disabilities as required. To protect children with allergies, no animals are allowed on the premises except for animals brought in by Exotics of the Rainforest personnel.

All staff members at Kid’s Castle undergo fingerprinting, drug testing, and background checks to ensure the highest level of safety.

For the safety and protection of all children, parents, guardians, and visitors are strictly prohibited from having physical contact with children other than their own. This includes tickling, holding, hugging, or carrying children. Additionally, public displays of affection by adults are not permitted on the premises.

XVI. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING POLICY

While it is not the role of Kid’s Castle staff to actively monitor how parents care for their children, we have a legal responsibility to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse—whether physical, sexual, emotional, psychological—or neglect, as outlined in the Children’s Code, Article 6, 32-1-15. Failure to comply with these legal requirements is a misdemeanor offense and may result in penalties. All staff members are thoroughly trained on this policy and are required to adhere to the Code’s guidelines.

We encourage parents to inform their child’s teacher or management if their child has any unusual bruises, abrasions, or cuts. We understand that children are active and accidents can happen. But frequent or unexplained injuries may raise concerns and will be documented.

While our goal is always to work cooperatively with families, the safety and well-being of every child is our top priority. If a child's safety appears to be at risk, we are legally and ethically obligated to take the necessary steps to protect them

XVII. DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE POLICY

Kid's Castle's discipline and guidance policy is designed to help each child develop self-control and encourage behaviors that are positive and acceptable to their peers. If a child's behavior becomes aggressive or disruptive in the classroom, a teacher or member of management will contact the parents by phone. Often, speaking with parents can help children adjust their behavior. If the disruptive behavior continues, the family may be asked to pick up their child for the day or for a longer suspension period, depending on the severity of the situation.

One common challenge, particularly in toddler classrooms, is biting. Children may bite for various reasons, but it is not acceptable behavior. At Kid's Castle, children under the age of three will be sent home for the day after biting twice in one day. Older children, ages three and up, will be sent home after the first biting incident.

Staff members ensure that discipline is clear, consistent, and age-appropriate. Expectations are explained to the child both before and at the time of disciplinary action. Our approach to discipline emphasizes positive guidance, redirection, and the establishment of clear limits to foster the child's ability to develop self-discipline. Our practices encourage children to be fair, to respect property, and to take responsibility for themselves and others.

In some cases, staff may use brief, supervised separation to remove a child from a stressful situation as part of positive guidance. Parents, families, and guardians are strictly prohibited from disciplining or addressing children who are not their own or under their legal care. This includes verbal discipline. Any concerns or incidents must be reported to management rather than handled personally. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disenrollment.

Kid's Castle strictly prohibits the following disciplinary practices:

1. Physical punishment of any kind.
2. The use of abusive or profane language, including yelling.
3. Any form of private or public humiliation, including threats of physical punishment.
4. Unsupervised isolation of a child.
5. Withdrawal of food, rest, bathroom access, or outdoor activities.
6. Any other punishment that could harm the physical or mental well-being of a child.

XVIII. EXPULSION POLICY

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled for children who exhibit ongoing behavioral concerns or receive multiple behavioral reports. Kid's Castle will provide families with helpful resources,

such as brochures on managing behavioral challenges and contact information for occupational therapists, if needed.

If the problematic behavior continues despite interventions, disenrollment of the child may be necessary. Disenrollment may also occur if any family member exhibits aggressive behavior, including verbal or physical actions, toward staff, children, or others at the center.

XIX. CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

To protect the privacy and safety of children, families, and staff, Kid's Castle has established a strict confidentiality policy.

Information about a child will not be released or discussed with anyone unless they know the code word provided by the parents. Exceptions will only be made when a legal authority submits a written request for information. Concerns or discussions about children, parents, or staff will be limited to individuals on a need-to-know basis, such as the child's parent or guardian, the child's teacher, or members of the Kid's Castle management team, depending on the situation.

Personal information, including addresses, phone numbers, and a parent's place of employment, will not be shared without written permission from the parent or guardian.

If a child is injured by another child, the identity of the other child will not be disclosed. Additionally, medical conditions of students and staff will be kept as confidential as possible to protect their privacy.

XX. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Kid's Castle is dedicated to providing a safe and respectful environment for children, parents, and staff. If you feel that a parent, child, or staff member has engaged in inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature—such as inappropriate touching, language, or any other form of harassment—please notify the Director immediately. All reports will be taken seriously, and appropriate actions will be taken to stop the behavior. If necessary, the offender may be permanently removed from the center and may also be subject to criminal charges.

Kid's Castle reserves the right to disenroll a family or terminate a staff member if any inappropriate behavior, including sexual harassment toward parents, staff members, or children, occurs. Staff members found guilty of harassment risk immediate termination.

XXI. INSURANCE

Kid's Castle does not provide liability or accident insurance for enrolled students. Additionally, Kid's Castle is not responsible for replacing broken, lost, or stolen items.

XXII. RIGHTS RESERVED

Kid's Castle reserves the right to deny entry to any individual whose behavior or appearance may disrupt the operation of the center or compromise the safety and well-being of the children in our care. Additionally, entry may be denied if classroom or center capacity, as well as required staff-to-child ratios, have been reached.