



## **4K Policies and Parent/Guardian Handbook 2025-2026 SY**

*Parents and staff shall sign and date an agreement, maintained on file and updated annually, that both parties have read and understand all policies relating to the operation of the facility. DSS Regulation 0.114-503 F(4)*

Welcome to Cogito Academy's 4K program. We are proud to partner with the SC Department of Child Care Services and the South Carolina 4K First Steps program. The goal of the 4K First Steps program is to provide children and their families with the developmental and learning support necessary for school success. We look forward to working with your student and your family this school year!

Please read this handbook for valuable information about our program. **Sign and return the back page for our school records. Keep the handbook for your reference throughout the school year.**

Feel free to contact your student's teacher or the program director at any time for questions or concerns.

### **Our Day in 4K:**

Our 4K program is in operation Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM - 3:00 PM. We follow the Cogito Academy calendar with a few exceptions. The first day of school for 4K is August 11, 2025. We will have staggered entry the first week of school. You will be notified which days during the week of August 11th through August 15th that your student will attend. The last day of school is May 21, 2025. Please see the 4K calendar on our website.

### **Attendance Policy:**

Our goal is to prepare your student for kindergarten, and attendance in 4K each day is very important. All participants are expected to attend regularly and for the

full instructional day. Your student is allowed a maximum of 10 unexcused absences each year. We do understand that illnesses happen and that students need to stay home if they are ill. If your student is absent, please send a written excuse or doctor's note following each absence. Students with more than 10 unexcused absences may be withdrawn from the program. Additionally, students who are routinely late or leave early, could also be dismissed from the program. Students are considered tardy if they arrive after 7:30 AM.

### **Drop-Off and Pick-Up:**

4K students may be dropped off from 7:00 AM - 7:30 AM. Teachers and Instructional Aides are on duty to escort your student to their classroom. You may walk your student in on the first day, but after that, we ask that you drop your child off and let staff escort them. If you need to come into the building to speak with the teacher please park your car in one of the parking spaces. **Please do not block the drop-off/pick-up traffic lane.** If there are older siblings who attend Cogito Academy, they may also be dropped off with the 4K student. Dropping off after 7:30 AM is considered tardy, and you will need to come into the front office to sign your student in. Students must be picked up by 3:00 PM.

### **School Calendar:**

Please see the 4K school calendar on our website. There are several days where Cogito Academy is operating a regularly scheduled school day; however, due to professional development with staff, the 4K program is NOT operating. These days are as follows:

### **There is NO school for 4K on these dates:**

September 1, 2025

September 5, 2025

October 7-10, 2025

November 24-28, 2025

December 22, 2025 - January 2, 2026

January 9, 2026

January 14-16, 20256

January 19, 2026

February 16, 2026

March 6, 2026

April 6-10, 2026

Inclement weather make-up days, if applicable, are as follows: October 10, 2025; February 2, 2026; and April 06, 2026.

**Uniform Policy:**

Cogito Academy students will follow a uniform policy. The uniform policy can be found on our school's website.

**Daily Schedule:**

7:00 - 7:30 AM: Arrival  
7:30 - 7:45 AM: Large Group Time  
7:45 - 8:30 AM: Learning Centers  
8:30 - 9:10 AM: Outdoor Learning  
9:10 - 9:20 AM: Personal Care Routines (restroom, water, and handwashing)  
9:20 - 9:35 AM: Read-A-Loud  
9:35 - 10:05 AM: Small Group  
10:05 - 10:15 AM: Alphabet Knowledge  
10:15 - 10:30 AM Personal Care with Music & Movement  
10:30 - 11:00 AM: Lunch  
11:00 - 11:10 AM: Personal Care  
11:10 - 11:30 PM: Read-A-Loud  
11:30 - 12:20 PM: Rest Time  
12:20 - 12:50 PM: Snack Time  
12:50 - 1:00 PM: Personal Care  
1:00 - 1:30 Outdoor Learning  
1:30 - 1:40 Personal Care  
2:00 - 2:30 Learning Centers  
2:30 - 2:45 Large Group  
2:45 - 3:00 PM - Pack-Up & Dismissal

**Lunch & Snack:**

We provide each student lunch and an afternoon snack in our classrooms each day. The menu will be posted on the school's website. Students may also bring a lunchbox from home. If items in their lunchbox need to be kept cold, please pack a cold pack. Your student may also bring a reusable water bottle labeled with their name. Please do not put anything except water in the bottle. We do not

have lunch visitors because we eat in our classrooms and simply do not have the space to accommodate visitors at this time.

**Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality of information about students and their families will always be maintained. Enrollment forms and all other pertinent information will be made available to the parent/guardian, school administration, teaching staff, and licensing agency. Information regarding students will not be made available to anyone else by any means without the written consent of the parent/guardian.

**Discipline and Behavior Policy:**

First Steps 4K implements Conscious Discipline in all classrooms. Conscious Discipline is an evidence-based comprehensive program that includes the following: school climate changes, behavioral and resilience changes, social-emotional competency changes in adults and children, classroom management shift from external rewards and punishments to problem-solving, and a focus on academic success.

Praise 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 healthy concepts of self, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on these beliefs, Cogito Academy will adhere to the following:

**WE DO:**

- Communicate with students using positive statements
- Communicate with students on their level of understanding
- Communicate with children in a calm manner
- Explain unacceptable behavior to students
- Give attention to students for positive behavior
- Praise and encourage children
- Reason with and set limits for students
- Apply rules consistently
- Model appropriate behavior
- Set up the classroom environment to prevent problems
- Provide alternatives and redirect children to acceptable activities and behaviors

- Give students the opportunity to make choices and solve problems
- Help students talk out their problems and think of solutions ● Listen and respect student's needs and feelings
- Provide appropriate words and tools to help solve conflicts

## **WE DO NOT:**

- Inflict corporal punishment in any manner. Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force to the body as a disciplinary measure. Physical force includes, but is not limited to, spanking, hitting, shaking, biting, pushing or slapping
- Use any strategy that hurts, shames, or belittles students
- Use any strategy that threatens or intimidates a student
- Use food as a form of reward or as a punishment
- Use or withhold physical activity as a punishment
- Shame or punish a student if a bathroom accident occurs
- Embarrass any child in front of others
- Place students in a locked and/or dark room
- Leave any student alone, unattended, or without supervision
- Allow discipline of a student by another student
- Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle a student's parents, families, or ethnic groups

Conferences will be scheduled with parents/guardians if a particular disciplinary issue occurs. If a student's behavior consistently endangers the safety of other students and/or staff, then the School Director has the right, after meeting with the parents and documenting the behaviors and interventions, to terminate the child care services for that particular student.

Academic conferences will be scheduled 3 times per year. During this time, teachers will provide information to parents/guardians about the students academic progress.

## **Release of Students:**

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are required to complete a form disclosing who is allowed to pick up the student from school in the event the parent/guardian is not able to do so. Only these adults, with a verified I.D., are allowed to pick up the student

from our campus.

### **Administration of Medicine:**

- Inform the teacher of any allergies, emotional concerns, physical disabilities, etc. at the beginning of the school year.
- If prescription medication is needed, it must be kept in the school nurse's office, and a doctor must complete the needed form before any medication is given.
  - Medication must be labeled with the student's name and prescription. Parents should bring the medication to the school nurse for check-in. Do not send the medication with the student in a backpack, lunch bag, etc.
- Cogito Academy staff are prohibited from providing or administering over-the-counter medications to students.
- Parents should ensure that all emergency contact information is up to date and accurate.
- Parents should notify the school promptly if medical information or emergency contact information changes during the year.
- If parents cannot be contacted by using the information provided, and a life-threatening situation occurs, the school will take whatever action is necessary for the health, safety, and well-being of the child.

\*Any student with head lice, scabies, ringworm, pink eye, or any contagious condition will not be allowed to attend school until proper treatment has been administered and the parent provides the school with proof that treatment has been given. Cogito Academy has a no-nit policy. This means that all nits must be removed from a student's hair before the student can return to school.

### **Student Supervision:**

Students will not be left alone without proper supervision. 4K teachers and Instructional Aides will mark each student present when they enter the building each day. Teachers will carry a class list of students if the students leave the classroom.

### **Field Trips:**

Field trips may be planned throughout the school year. Parents will be informed about the trips in advance and will be provided with a permission slip to sign to

allow their student to attend the field trip along with any details about the trip. The student/teacher ratio will be followed at all times during the field trip. Lunch and snacks will be provided. Parents may attend the field trip with their child; however, parents should have a background check completed 30 days prior to the trip. Parents are responsible for the cost of the background check as well as any fees to attend the trip.

### **Emergency Medical Plan:**

Parents should ensure that all emergency information is up-to-date and accurate. If parents cannot be contacted by using the information provided, and a life-threatening situation occurs, the school will take whatever action is necessary for the health, safety, and well-being of the child. If a student is to be transported to the hospital, an ambulance would be called to the school to transport the student to the nearest hospital. The school nurse will accompany the student and will remain with the student until the parent arrives.

### **Illness:**

We understand that students will have illnesses during the school year. Please keep your student home if they are ill. If your child has a fever, is vomiting (or has had either within the past 24 hours), has diarrhea, or pink eye, they should not attend school. Students should be symptom-free for at least 24 hours before they return to school. If they wake up with a fever, please do not give them medication and send them to school. They will most likely be contagious. If you have questions, please contact your student's teacher or the school nurse. If your student needs to see the nurse, they will be escorted to the nurse. If your child is ill and needs to go home, we will contact you.

### **Safety Drills:**

Cogito Academy will participate in fire, tornado, and other federal, state, and local mandated safety drills throughout the school year. This will ensure our students know how to remain safe in the event of an emergency.

### **Birthdays:**

Birthdays are special, and we appreciate the opportunity to celebrate with your student. You are welcome to send a special store-bought snack such as cookies or cupcakes. These treats must have a label showing the ingredients due to student allergies. Teachers will serve these treats during afternoon snack time.

**Other Information:**

Students should be potty trained. We do not have changing facilities in our 4K classrooms. Pull-ups or diapers should not be worn to school.

Please keep a complete change of clothes in a zip lock bag inside your student's backpack. Be sure to include a shirt, pants or shorts, underwear, and socks. This does not have to be a uniform. If your student has a toileting accident and does not have a change of clothes, they will need to be picked up from school. A child may not stay at school in soiled clothing. Be sure to wash and change the clothing periodically as the weather changes.

Please do not allow your child to bring toys to school unless your teacher lets you know that it is "Show and Tell" or another special occasion.

Please send a note when your student is absent from school.

Please check your student's take-home folder every day! This folder will often contain pertinent information. Please make sure to return the take home folder every day.

If your student is not wearing an approved school uniform, parents will be asked to pick the student up from school or bring the appropriate clothing.

Blankets and beach towels may be used during nap time. They will be sent home on Fridays to be washed. Please send them back to school with your student the next school day. We do not provide extra blankets.

Afternoon pick-up is at 3:00 PM. If you do not pick up your student on time, you are subject to incur after-school care charges.

**Please keep this handbook for your reference. Detach the last page of the handbook, complete the information, and sign to acknowledge you have received and read it. The signature page will remain with your student's file.**



My signature indicates that I have received a copy of the Cogito Academy Child Care, 4K, policies. The policies have been reviewed with me, and I have read and understood the policies.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_