

2026

Parent Hand Book



Smarties Early Learning Centre and
Aftercare

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1. Smarties Times Of Operation

We are open Monday to Friday from 06h30 to 18h00

Teachers arrive at school before 6:30 to ensure the area is safe and ready to receive children by 06:30. This does not mean children can come before 6h30. We ask that you strictly adhere to the operating hours. Children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian in the morning and collected from the school hall. Children may not be left in the parking area. A teacher must be made aware of a child's arrival and departure. This allows for clear lines of communication between home and school.

Holidays:

We are closed on public holidays and long weekends where a public holiday falls on a Thursday or a Tuesday. Long weekends will be communicated to you well in advance. We follow the private school terms and are open throughout the school holidays, except the December school holidays. We close around the 15th of December and open in approximately the 2nd week of January, depending on how the dates fall for the year. This means we are closed between 3 and 4 weeks during December/January (depending on the dates). We will always communicate the dates to you well in advance.

2. Late Penalties

Please note that our closing time is 18h00. A late penalty is in place to discourage parents from arriving after 18h00 to collect their children. Staff are employed to work until 18h00. Any overtime they work due to a child's late collection is for the parents' account. The staff have families and children of their own and need to use their hours after work to attend to their personal responsibilities and obligations.

The staff also needs to be well-rested to perform optimally. Our penalty system works in the following way:

- Should a parent arrive after 18h00, a fee of R25 per five minutes will apply.
- Should a parent arrive between 18h00 and 18h05, there would typically be no charge; however, if they come after 18h05, the penalty kicks in.
- In a case where there are siblings, parents are not charged per child. They are charged for time. E.g., two brothers are collected by the same mother at 18:10. The penalty fee will be R50, not R100.
- In cases where more than one parent is running late, the last parent to arrive is charged, not every parent. E.g., A parent arrives at 18h10 to collect their child; however, another child is still waiting to be collected. The second child is collected at 18h20. Only the parent of the child who goes home at 18:20 is liable to pay the penalty fee. The penalty fee is paid for time, not the number of children; therefore, only the last parent is charged.

- If more than one parent arrives late at the same time, the total penalty is split between them. E.g., Two parents arrive at 18h10, the total time penalty is R50. Each parent pays R25 to make up the total amount. The charge is for time, not the number of children.

We appeal to all parents to please do their best not to collect their children after hours. The most essential element for active, friendly, and patient caregivers is rest.

3. School Fees

Fees are payable in advance. e.g., January fees are payable by no later than the child's starting date in January, February fees are payable by no later than 1st February, etc. Alternative payment dates must be discussed and confirmed in advance, and in writing. Children with fees outstanding for more than one month will be asked to leave until the outstanding amounts are settled. Depending on your chosen payment option, payments must be made by the deadline dates to avoid losing the discount associated with upfront payments for annual or termly payment plans.

4. Things To Send For Your Child

Daily: Snack box, a clean set of clothing, diapers, and extra sets of clean clothing if the child is potty training.

Monthly: One pack of wet wipes and one box of Kleenex (tissues)

5. Disciplinary Procedures & Policies

A very important part of the preschool experience is helping children learn how to get along in the world, enjoy being with other children, and follow the direction of an adult other than their parent. A caring and positive approach will be taken regarding behaviour management and discipline. The teachers will focus on the children's positive behaviours and reinforce them as often as possible. Our goal is to help the children develop self-control and responsibility for their actions.

Our discipline procedures will consist of the following strategies:

1. Encouraging children to use their words when disagreeing with another child.
2. Facilitating children in their attempts to settle their own disputes.
3. Redirecting behaviour when this seems potentially effective.
4. Separating a child from the group (Time-Out) – one minute away for each year of age.
5. Counselling children individually about their behaviours.
6. Making parents aware of disciplinary concerns.

Disruptive Behaviour distracts from the full benefit of the preschool program and will result in consequences.

The following behaviours are considered disruptive:

- Requires constant attention from the staff
- Inflicts physical or emotional harm on other children, adults, or oneself
- Disrespects people and materials provided in the program
- Consistently disobeys the rules of the classroom
- Verbally threatens other students and/or staff
- Uses verbal or physical activity that diverts attention away from the group of children.

Discipline Procedures for Disruptive Behaviour

- Disruptive Behaviour will be addressed with parents. Inappropriate behaviour that directly impacts other children, staff members, or the group will be shared with the parent, and an explanation of the behaviour and its impact on others will be provided. We will also explain how the situation was resolved.
- If a child has difficulty managing his/her behaviour regularly, parents will be asked to meet with the child's teacher and Principal.
- If the child's behaviour continues to be inappropriate, consistently disruptive, and/or dangerous, it may be necessary for the child to be sent home for a time to be determined or removed from the preschool program altogether. Children cannot become self-disciplined unless adults teach them right from wrong.

At Smarties, children will be taught the expectations for correct behaviour and encouraged to live and act accordingly. When children know something is wrong, and choose to do it anyway, consequences will follow to communicate that the behaviour is not acceptable.

"He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray." ~ Proverbs 10:17

6. Smarties Potty-Training Policy

At Smarties, we would prefer that children be potty-trained before enrolling.

If your child is not potty-trained and you decide to embark on the adventure of potty training during the school year, please notify your child's teacher. We will work with your child during his/her potty-training stage; however, it should not be expected or assumed that the school/teacher is responsible for potty training your child.

For the highest and quickest success rate in potty training, we encourage it to take place at home during a holiday or long weekend to make the transition easier. Potty training one-on-one at home is much more effective than the 1:10 ratio and the very busy, fun, and easily distractible environment at Smarties. We define successful independent toileting as the ability to lower his/her underpants (as well as other clothing), complete the act of urinating and/or defecating in the toilet, wipe himself/herself, flush, and re-dress himself/herself.

Children aged 3 are expected to be completely independent in the bathroom.

Between the ages of 2 and 3, if you feel your child is secure in his/her potty-training efforts, fabric underpants may be worn. If a child soils his/her clothes twice before naptime, your child will be returned to a diaper or Pull-Up for the remainder of the day. If a child has accidents for two consecutive school days, the child will need to return to disposable undergarments while at school until the child is secure with independent toileting.

Accidents Happen! Any child who has an accident will be removed from the classroom discreetly and escorted to the bathroom by a teacher or assistant. The teacher will assist the child in removing the soiled clothing. The child will be placed on the toilet and encouraged to complete the action to ensure the bladder and/or bowels are completely emptied, then to wipe. The soiled clothing will be returned to the child's school bag in a plastic bag. The teacher will check the child's cleanliness and assist as needed. The teacher will help the child get dressed as required. Children who have accidents will never be humiliated, punished, or belittled. We want the potty-training process to be a happy and successful phase of your child's life. This policy applies to all students in the program. Potty training and cleaning up potty accidents are time-consuming for teachers; they take teachers away from other students in the classroom and are also a sanitary issue.

7. Illness Policy

Fever

Fevers are common in young children and are often a signal that something is wrong. If your child has a fever of 37.5°C or higher, please keep him or her home.

If your child develops a fever of 37.5°C or higher while at the centre, you will be called to pick him/her up.

Our policy is that your child must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to Smarties. This means that if your child is picked up at 3:00 pm, but still has a fever at 6:00 pm or later, he/she cannot return to the centre the next day. The 24 hours begin when your child's fever has broken and remains in a normal range.

Diarrhoea and Vomiting

Diarrhoea due to illness is highly contagious. If your child has diarrhoea, please keep them at home. Suppose your child has three or more diarrhoea episodes, or any uncontained diarrhoea while at Smarties, you will be called to pick him/her up. Please understand that germs from diarrhoea can be spread through carpets, toys, swings, and direct contact. It is tough to avoid spreading these germs to other children, which is why children with diarrhoea should be kept at home.

Suppose your child vomits while at Smarties, you will be called immediately to pick him/her up. Please keep your child at home for 24 hours after the vomiting has stopped. When children return too soon, the recurrence rate and contagiousness are much higher.

Coughs and Colds

Colds are a common occurrence. However, some symptoms warrant keeping a child home. These include, but are not limited to, a bad cold with hacking or persistent cough, green or

yellow nasal drainage, and a productive cough with green or yellow phlegm. These symptoms may be present with or without a fever.

If your child has just a cold, please notify their teacher. We encourage increased fluid intake and proper handwashing. If there are cold medicines you know will make your child more comfortable, we will administer them with your written permission.

NB: Please do not expect a teacher to keep a child with a cold indoors. If your child cannot participate in the ordinary daily routine, he/she is too sick to be at school.

Rash

A rash may be a sign of many illnesses, such as measles or chicken pox. In infants, an external rash may be a sign of an internal issue. Please do not send your child to the centre with a rash until the doctor says it is OK.

In some instances, you will be asked to keep your child home until we receive written permission from your doctor stating that your child is well enough to return to Smarties. Please understand this is for your child's well-being, as well as the well-being of the healthy children at the centre, their families, and the teachers.

Medications

If your child goes to the paediatrician and is prescribed antibiotic medication, please keep your child home until they have completed the treatment. We may only administer medications to your child with your written and signed consent.

Well-Child Assessment

If a teacher assesses that a child is not well on arrival, you will be asked to take him/her home or to a doctor. Please do not be offended if your child is deemed too ill to stay at Smarties and you are asked to take them home.

If your child has had a rough night, please assess them before bringing them to school. If you ever have any doubts about whether your child should be at school, please do not hesitate to call and ask us.

Emergency Contacts

We occasionally have problems reaching someone when a child is ill or injured. If you need to be notified because of your child's illness or injury, we must be able to reach someone. If you or your spouse is listed as an emergency contact, please make sure one of you can be reached at all times and that the numbers we have for you are correct. If there is ever a situation where you know you cannot be reached, for whatever reason, please make sure the staff has the name and phone number of another individual who can always be reached. We also request that, if you are notified of your child's illness or injury, you arrive at the centre to pick them up promptly. Please understand that a sick or injured child requires one-on-one care. This is an impossible situation: our ratio is 15:2 in the mornings and 15:1 in the afternoons. It is also extremely unfair to the ill or injured child to expect them to remain at school.

We do understand and empathize with parents when their children are ill. It can be a challenging and frustrating situation when you are torn between a sick child and your employment obligations. Our staff also experiences these situations when they or their children are ill. We ask that you appreciate how quickly a sick child can infect others, including the teacher. If the teacher becomes ill, the class and the centre suffer tremendous strain. Sick children require a lot of extra care – our teachers cannot leave a group of healthy children to care for a sick child.

These policies are designed to be fair to the ill child and their family, as well as to the healthy children and their families. Please understand that we love your children and provide the best possible care, but we are not a clinic or hospital. We hope to control the number of illnesses at Smarties to keep everyone healthy and happy.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to all of you who keep their sick little ones at home and comply with our policies. We appreciate your courtesy!

8. Smarties Injury Policies

Minor Injuries:

The child's parent or guardian will be notified of minor injuries by means of a "bump note," which will be put in the child's school bag. (This includes biting incidents or any incident that might leave a bruise).

A staff member will administer basic first aid for an injury needing only minimal attention. The teacher on duty will note the incident in the "Playground Incident Book."

Serious injury:

The child's parent will be called and notified immediately of the injury and its severity. Emergency Medical Services will be contacted if the injury requires more than minimal first-aid treatment. If the injury requires treatment at a medical facility as recommended by the EMS paramedics, the child will be transported and accompanied by a Smarties staff member if the child's parent is not yet available. We will use the closest medical facility deemed necessary.

The child's form, along with all available information, will be provided to EMS personnel. The attending medical personnel will complete an incident report; a copy will be made available to the parent, and one will be kept in our records.

9. Toys From Home policy

We find that toys brought from home often interfere with the learning environment at the centre. Children become curious about these toys and want a turn to play with them. This has the potential to create conflicts between the children. It also draws the children away from the materials the teachers have planned for the week.

If your child is insistent on bringing a toy to school, we will respond with the following choices:

- We will ask the parent to take the toy once the child reaches the door
- We will ask the parent to wait while the child shows the toy to a friend or teacher and then have the parent take the toy.
- We will ask the child to choose between keeping the toy in the office to be returned at home time and giving it to the parent to take home.

10. Lost And Found Items Policy

At Smarties, we encourage independent dressing and undressing as these skills are vital to your child's fine motor development. This, however, means that shoes, socks, and jerseys occasionally go astray. If items are not clearly marked with a child's name, it is impossible to return the items to their rightful owner.

We encourage and remind children to place any clothing they remove in their school bags. Making children responsible for their own belongings teaches them about responsibility, a very necessary skill for all of us.

Lost and found items are placed in a container near the entrance.

11. Extra Mural Activities Policy

Various extramural activities are presented at Smarties.

Information and enrolment forms for these activities are usually available on the class WhatsApp groups. If no forms are available, you will be given the coach's phone number, and you can speak directly with them. Extra-mural activities take place at the centre, and children are not transported off the premises, except for swimming lessons.

All payments for extramural activities are payable separately, to the respective coaches, and not to Smarties. Unfortunately, we are unable to accept cash for extra murals. Please ensure you have the banking details for the activities your child enrolls in and make EFT payments to the coaches.

If the extracurricular activity requires your child to change clothing, please ensure your child can undress and redress themselves. We are happy to assist with zips, buttons, and laces, etc., but essentially, the children should be able to dress themselves.

12. Lunchbox Policy

Are you packing a lunchbox or a junk box?

Please consider what you are packing in your child's lunchbox – Is it nutritional, or just empty calories? We request that the lunch boxes packed for 9:30 teatime include wholesome foods, e.g., a sandwich, fruit, yogurt, etc.

Sweets, cakes, and biscuits have no nutritional value and offer your child only empty calories. Sweets and cakes also cause conflict between the children. A child with a "junk box" often tries to tempt and bribe others with their sweets, making friends jealous and causing fights.

It is nice to put a treat in the lunchbox – especially if you are putting it there as a surprise or reward - but please don't fill the whole box with sweets and biscuits. The treat should accompany wholesome food. Remember that empty calories do not keep a child full for long, and a hungry child cannot learn!

Please be reasonable when packing the lunchbox. It is merely a light snack that is to tide the children over between breakfast and lunch. It is not supposed to be a meal... just a snack. We are experiencing that parents are sending too much food and expecting the children to finish every morsel. The principal has instructed the teachers not to force-feed children. Force-feeding the children is a traumatic experience for both the child and the teacher, and such experiences make children associate food with trauma, which will invariably make them develop issues around food. Teachers can encourage children to eat as much as they can, but that's where it ends! If a child refuses to eat all their food, we will not punish them! And we, too, should not be punished when a child returns home with leftovers in their lunchbox.

13. Messy Children

Play is a messy business! Children throw themselves wholeheartedly into the business of exploring the world around them, with little concern for grass stains on their pants or paint in their hair. And that's precisely how it should be.

As adults, we should not get hung up on dirty clothing or dirty children at the end of a busy day of play at preschool. When parents voice concerns about dirty clothes, teachers can feel pressured to send home clean, tidy children, at the cost of limiting playful and sensory learning and discovery. So, please be prepared for dirty clothes and dirty kids. We do not want to limit their learning experiences by trying to keep them clean all day.

It might help if you:

- Dress children in old clothes or clothes you won't mind getting dirty, torn, or covered in paint.
- Send children with a change of clothing. If you want to stop at the shop after school and you feel embarrassed to have a dirty child with you, you can change them before you leave.

We wipe the children down at various intervals during the day, depending on the activities that follow, and we encourage hand and face washing before and after meals and after messy play. Depending on the time you arrive to collect your child, he/she may be dirty. This does not indicate that your child has not washed their hands or face at all during the day. It is, however, an indication that your child has explored, played, been involved, participated, and learnt.

The marks on children's clothes, the pockets filled with sand, the paint in the hair - these are the indicators of architects, artists, and scientists in training. If we worry too much

about dirty children and clothing, we can place a real damper on the spirit of learning and self-discovery.

14. Encouraging Independence

“Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed.” ~ Maria Montessori

Independence is of extreme importance to children, and they make every effort to acquire it. To grow and develop, children must be able to function independently. This will set a pattern for good work habits, a sense of responsibility, and help children learn, think, and discover for themselves.

If you have ever heard of the “butterfly parable,” you will already have a good idea of why it is not helpful to a child to do everything for them. The parable tells of a man who watched a butterfly struggling to free itself from a cocoon. Feeling sorry for the butterfly, he decided to cut open the other cocoons to free the butterflies so that they would not struggle as the first one had. The butterflies were beautiful, and the man was pleased that these lovely creatures were free. After watching them for some time, he noticed that they were not flying... they were merely sitting on the branches. The only butterfly that flew was the one that had struggled to free itself from the cocoon.

Your children will not “learn to fly” if you are doing everything for them. Allow them to dress themselves, put on their own shoes, go to the toilet, bathe themselves, carry their own bags, feed themselves, etc. Yes, they may not do it exactly as you want, but they will never learn valuable skills if they are not given the opportunity. Instead of doing everything for them, guide them and teach them to do things for themselves. It’s ok for children to struggle – valuable lessons and skills are learnt through struggle. Be there to support and guide your children, but resist doing everything for them.

Please bear in mind that children who are not independent make teaching a class very difficult. It is disruptive and takes time away from the whole group when a teacher must constantly step away to do things for a child who should be doing for themselves.

15. Barefoot Play

There are lots of good reasons to encourage your child to go barefoot. Not just occasionally, but as often as possible. It’s suitable for all of us, but little ones — whose bodies are growing rapidly — can especially benefit from going without shoes.

Wearing shoes changes the way we walk. And it isn’t for the better. When we’re barefoot, we naturally walk more gently, with a shorter stride, putting less pressure on our heels. Our knees bend to cushion the shock of each step. Our toes grip the floor and help propel us forward. Shoes change all that. The cushioning on our soles encourages us to slam our heels into the ground, which is harder on our knees. The stiffness of our soles prevents our feet from rolling flexibly forward, so shoes are given an upward-curved toe — called a toe spring — to allow them to rock forward onto the next step. This toe spring lifts our toes off the

ground, so they can't help propel the foot forward as they're meant to. Our feet get trained to use the wrong muscles to move us forward. All of these things together mean an unnatural gait that is harder on all of our joints.

If you consistently put shoes on your children right from infancy, they learn this unnatural gait from the start. They never get the chance to strengthen their toes and the tendons in their feet that are supposed to do the bulk of the work. These muscles atrophy, so that when kids finally do take off their shoes and try to run around, it hurts. Give your kids a chance to learn the correct way to walk by letting them go barefoot as much as possible.

The number one reason most people put shoes on their kids is for their safety. To protect their feet from hard, sharp surfaces. But our experience and observations at school are that in most situations, wearing shoes is more dangerous than going barefoot. Children are much more likely to trip and fall when they're wearing shoes. Depending on the soles of the shoes they are wearing, they are more likely to slip from the climbing apparatus. Children's sensory development is hampered when they wear shoes all the time and are not allowed to feel the earth under their feet.

16. Clothing

We request that you dress your children in practical clothing for pre-school. Fancy, expensive clothing is going to get ruined. Children need to wear clothing that they can put on and take off themselves. Belts make going to the toilet very difficult, as does clothing that is too tight. Tight clothing also restricts the child's movement, making them clumsy and prone to accidents.

If your child is unable to tie their own shoelaces, please ensure that they wear shoes that they can fasten themselves. Slip-ons or Velcro straps are easier for younger children – remember, we are encouraging them to be independent, so we need to start simple and choose clothing and shoes they can put on and fasten themselves.