

Will Smith



Parent Handbook



San Antonio Will Smith Zoo School A Nature Preschool

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San Antonio, Texas 78212

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Mission and Philosophy

The San Antonio Zoo is guided by a simple, yet powerful vision: To secure a future for wildlife. The Zoo's mission is as follows:

- Inspire people to love, engage, act, and protect animals and the places they live through sharing our passion for animal care, education and conservation.

Our Will Smith Zoo School program is designed around our mission and our goal to excite and educate young children about the natural world around them. Throughout the year, children will spend time in nature exploring and discovering the wonders of nature. Within the classroom, basic pre-school concepts will be taught in conjunction with the “wow” of plants, animals and conservation practices. We empower children to feel safe in nature, to seek and explore without harm, and to care for all things. Will Smith Zoo School students will develop a scientific temperament through hands-on experiences and learn to be good earth citizens. Parental support of nature activities and conservation are keys to the success of our program. Welcome to Will Smith Zoo School!

Hours of Operation

Monday-Friday
8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Licensing

The Will Smith Zoo School adheres to the Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). A copy of the Minimum Standards is available for review in the Will Smith Zoo School's office or by contacting the local licensing office at (210)337-3399, the Child Care Information Line at 1-800-862-5252 or at the TDFPS website: <http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/>.



Parents may also request to review the Will Smith Zoo School's most recent licensing inspection reports located in the office.

Will Smith Zoo School staff members are trained on the warning signs of abuse and neglect and how to prevent/respond to abuse and neglect. The number for the Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-252-5400.

Registration, Payment and Enrollment

Will Smith Zoo School runs from September through May, with Summer Camps available. Three tuition payment options are available. These include yearly, semester, and monthly payments. Tuition payments remain the same regardless of absences, holidays, vacations, etc.

Monthly payment is due the month prior to class. The reoccurring payment plan will charge your credit card on the 5th day of every month. For example, March payment would be due February 5th. If you desire to change your payment method for the month or would prefer to use a different card, please let us know 1 week in advance.

Should circumstances arise that require you to withdraw your child from Will Smith Zoo School, written notice is required at least 30 days in advance. Please see the tuition contract concerning withdrawals.

The Will Smith Zoo School does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, culture, gender or ability.

Preference for admission will be given as follows:

- Children presently enrolled and/or children of staff.
- Siblings of children presently enrolled.
- Siblings of former children enrolled.
- All others on the waiting list will be based on a combination of availability of days, scheduled desire and date of placement on waiting list by visiting the program.
- Once Fall registration is full, a waiting list will be maintained to fill any openings that become available.

Enrollment is secured upon notification of receipt of the registration form, tuition contract and nonrefundable Registration fee. By the first day of attendance, each child must have the following on file at Will Smith Zoo School with parent/guardian signatures:

- Form stating the Parent Handbook was received, read and understood
- Registration Form
- Medical Form with current immunizations and statement of recent examination by a physician



- Consent Form
- Release and Waiver Form
- Field Trip Form
- Discipline and Guidance Policy
- If applicable, any court orders pertaining to the life of the child, such as visitation rights

Any changes in address or telephone number should be reported promptly in writing to the Will Smith Zoo School. Telephone numbers of emergency contacts and individuals authorized to pick up the child should also be kept current.

Grouping

The Will Smith Zoo School classrooms are comprised of boys and girls whose ages range from 3-5 years old. Mixed-age classrooms meet the social and developmental needs of young children. The adult to child ratio is 1:8, with one lead teacher and one assistant teacher serving up to 16 children. Classes will be conducted from 8:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. and from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Extended care will be conducted from 8:00-9:00 a.m. and 2:00-5:30 p.m.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

The Will Smith Zoo School runs five days a week, Monday through Friday, from either 8:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. or 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The door to enter will open 15 minutes prior to class starting. Please **sign in your child** and entrust them to the teacher in the Will Smith Zoo School classroom each morning, bidding a cheerful and confident goodbye. Remember, any hesitation on your part may make your child feel they have something to fear. You are welcome to come into our classroom the first day of school, share the children's excitement about the brand new class, and help them place their lunches and belongings in the proper place.

Should a child arrive late, please bring your child to the lobby and administration will take your child to join their class. Should a child's class be exploring the zoo at the time of arrival, the parent/guardian is responsible for taking the child to meet his or her class out in the Zoo or monitoring the child until the class returns.

The doors will open for dismissal 15 minutes prior to class ending. **Please sign your child out** and remember to check for any reminders every day. We will hold parent workshops and will also send emails with information on what is happening in class and what the children are learning. Even though we would love to talk to each parent on a daily basis, in the interest of safety, please wait until the last child is picked up if you need to discuss matters with the teachers in detail.



If something prevents a child from being picked up on time, please call 210-686-5606, and let the desk know that you are running late. We ask that you make every effort to be on time as children get a little nervous if they are the last ones to leave.

A fee of \$10 will be charged to a parent/guardian whose child is left in our care 10 minutes after the conclusion of dismissal time. An additional fee of \$20 will be added when they are left in our care an additional 10 minutes.

8:45-1:45 class	Dismissal 1:30-1:55	1 st late fee at 2:05	2 nd late fee at 2:15
9:00-2:00 classes	Dismissal 1:45-2:10	1 st late fee at 2:20	2 nd late fee at 2:30
Extended care	Dismissal 5:30	1 st late fee at 5:40	2 nd late fee at 6:00

Please ensure that any person picking up or dropping off the child is on your pick-up list in the paperwork and has a picture ID. We consider the safety of the children our topmost priority and so that you in advance for your patience and understanding in this regard.

Dress Code

Children will be provided a Will Smith Zoo School t-shirt and should wear it each day they attend school. We recommend closed-toe shoes for safety and convenience. Parents may purchase additional shirts.

Depending on outdoor conditions, please apply sunscreen and insect repellent prior to drop off.

Please leave an extra set of clothes, including socks and underwear, in a **labeled** Ziploc bag in the child's cubby. At Will Smith Zoo School, the children will be working with water, sand, dirt, paint, and glue which could require a change of clothes. Should an accident occur, please remember to replace the extra set of clothing.

Health and Attendance

Health and safety are of the utmost importance in our classroom. Children will wash hands regularly and use good hygiene practices during class. The classroom and toys are routinely cleaned to prevent the spread of infection.

Children with a fever or not feeling well should not attend class. Should your child become ill or develop a temperature of over 100 degrees, you will be called to pick up your child. **Children should be free of fever or vomiting for 24 hours before returning to class.**

Children with respiratory infections giving out cloudy discharge or sore throats accompanied by fever should remain at home.



Health Department requires that children infected with lice remain at home 24 hours after treatment.

Please call 210-686-5606 and leave a message if your child will not be attending class.

If your child requires medication between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., please see the assistant director to fill out a medication form. Will Smith Zoo School staff cannot administer medication without this form on file. Will Smith Zoo School staff will not administer medication for the first dose. All children must have received at least one dose by parent or guardian to insure there are no adverse effects from the medication. Our trained, on-site security will handle first aid and emergency health situations. Should an incident occur that needs medical attention, an incident report will be filled out and shared with the parent/guardian.

All children must have their up-to-date immunizations on file with the child care center. If your child is not immunized, we must have a notarized certificate on file for abstaining from immunizations.

Children are not required to have tuberculin testing.

The State of Texas requires that each child aged four years old and above, must have a vision and hearing screening on file.

Will Smith Zoo School Curriculum

The Will Smith Zoo School staff collaborates to ensure engaging activities and experiences are planned in the following areas: literacy and language, animals, math, geography and culture, sensory, art, practical life, science, dramatic play, and circle time discussion.

The Will Smith Zoo School Curriculum is comprised of themes to drive open-ended discussions, animal experiences and classroom activities. These themes are driven by the interest of the students.

The children explore nature through outdoor experiences either on our grounds or in the zoo for at least 50% of their day. Outdoor exploration will take place in all weather conditions so it is very important that your child comes to school dressed appropriately. In the case of lightning or extreme weather conditions, exploration will be held indoors.

Children will not participate in swimming or wading pool activities while under the care of Will Smith Zoo School.



Show-n-Tell

Children are encouraged to bring in items to share with the class that are nature related or pertain to a topic or theme discussed in class. Children are not to bring toys or living things to Will Smith Zoo School.

Assessments/Program Evaluation

Will Smith Zoo School instructors focus on providing the children with opportunities to gain confidence in nature consciousness and skills that will prepare them for kindergarten.

Throughout the year the children are observed in the following four areas of nature consciousness:

- Awareness
- Compassion and Care
- Discovery/Exploration
- Appreciation

The students are also assessed on the following skills:

- Math
- Literacy
- Art
- Social Skills
- Practical Life
- Stories
- Motor Skills

Periodically, Parent Workshops are held during the day to share what is being explored in the classroom and ways to incorporate those themes and ideas into their home life. Activities are also shared to help develop good discussion topics between parents and children.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are held to discuss the progress of each child.

Birthday Celebrations

The Will Smith Zoo School staff enjoy being a part of the birthdays of their students. Please talk with your child's teacher as the special day approaches so that she can plan accordingly. Birthdays celebrations will involve pictures and stories of the birthday child rather than sugary treats. Details will be dispersed by teachers to families.



Another suggestion to celebrate your child's birthday could be to make a donation to a conservation fund in their honor or donate a book to the classroom.

Emergency Preparedness

- Fire drills, severe weather and active threat drills are practiced four times a year.
- For closures due to weather, Will Smith Zoo School will follow the Alamo Heights Independent School District communications. If inclement weather causes Will Smith Zoo School to close early, staff will contact parents to inform them.

Snack and Lunch

Water is available at all times. The Will Smith Zoo School will provide snacks to be served mid-morning in the classroom. If a child has a food allergy, parents are to indicate this in their enrollment paperwork and provide a food allergy plan that is signed by the child's physician. This information will also be a part of their file.

Sample Snacks: apples, bananas, fresh fruit and vegetables, small carrots, whole grain crackers, breads, pretzels, cubed cheese, string cheese.

Parents are to send a nutritious lunch every day for their child. Lunch should be brought from home in a reusable lunch bag. Make sure to include an ice pack if your child's lunch needs to be refrigerated. We do not have refrigerator space for lunches or a microwave available for warming food.

Will Smith Zoo School is a nut-free school. Foods containing nuts or processed in facilities that also process food containing nuts are prohibited.

As part of our Nature Preschool program, we will be emphasizing the need for less waste and reusable items. Please pack your child's lunch in containers that can be washed and reused. In addition, consider your child when selecting items for their lunch. Make sure they are able to open their containers and they like the food you are sending. We have recycle bins in our classroom, and since we will be learning the concept of the 3 R's (reduce, reuse and recycle), it could be a fun project to put together a minimum waste lunch.

Classroom Guidance

- Children will be introduced to the classroom expectations and procedures during the first month of classes.
- Positive reinforcement is used within the classroom.
- Consequences for discipline issues may be to ask the child to sit for a short time to think about their actions or to take some time to regain control of themselves.
- A parent will be called to remove a child from the setting if the child is in danger of hurting himself or another child in the class.



- Parents are encouraged to team with the teachers relating to common discipline challenges.

Communication

Communications will be sent via email relating to curriculum and classroom activities. Parents will also receive updates to the policies or procedure changes via email.

All concerns should be addressed with the teacher after dismissal or during a scheduled conference. If you would like to set up a conference with your child's teacher, please send a note with your child or call 210-686-5606.

Periodic program evaluations and focus groups will be held to encourage parents to provide feedback and insight relating to the program.

Front desk personnel are available for check in/check out and payments.

Will Smith Zoo School Director, Amanda McMickle, and Assistant Director, Jennifer Stuart, supervise the Will Smith Zoo School program.

Animals

Animals are an intricate part of the San Antonio Will Smith Zoo School Classroom. As a part of the Zoo, we will take every opportunity to expose and teach the children about animals.

While most of our animals are in enclosures and not a touch opportunity for the children, we do have education presentation animals that can be used in the classroom. Some of these animals may be available for a controlled touch by the children under certain circumstances. All animals in the San Antonio Zoo collection have been properly vaccinated and are under the care of staff veterinarian.

Lost and Found

Labeling all belongings is a great practice to prevent loss. Check with the teachers and front desk as soon as you notice an item is missing. Unclaimed lost and found items will be sent to the Zoo's lost and found one week after being found. The Zoo periodically sends unclaimed items to local charities.

Visitors

The San Antonio Will Smith Zoo School has an open door policy. Parents may visit the preschool at any time during the day to observe their child, the Will Smith Zoo School's operation, and program activities. Please check in at the front desk upon arrival. If a parent would like to participate the Will Smith Zoo School's operation or an activity, they may contact the director to set that up.



The Director and Assistant Director of the preschool are on grounds. You may schedule an appointment to meet with them at any time to ask questions, voice concerns, or just to check in.

Under Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to increased penalty.

As with all areas of the San Antonio Zoo, there is a comfortable place for parents to breastfeed their children. All parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk to their own child in care.

Child Abuse and Neglect

It is important for even suspected abuse or neglect to be reported (toll-free Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400) so that specialists can intervene before more harm is done.

Extended Care

Extended is offered from 8:00-9:00 am and 2:00-5:30 pm for an extra fee. Children staying for extended care will have a rest time. The rest time will be for 1 hour 15 minutes and children will be able to nap or engage in quiet activities. Children are to bring a blanket similar to the size of a beach towel. Please do not send pillows, large blankets, or toys/stuffed animals. The children will also be given a second snack for the day. Children staying in extended care will be playing outdoors and have planned activities provided for them.

Transportation

Students will be transported by bus to and from Will Smith Zoo School to the San Antonio Zoo every day for a field trip. Transportation will be regulated by Texas Department of Family Protective Services (TXDFPS) Minimum Standards. The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles is referenced for vehicle safety standards. Safety precautions will be taken loading and unloading children from bus and utilize child passenger safety seat system to restrain children when transporting. Transportation Minimum Standards may be viewed at TDFPS website: <http://www.dfpd.state.tx.us/>. Subchapter X Transportation §746.5601

