



2020-2021
Parent Handbook

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Mission Statement

“Nurturing the Whole Child”

Philosophy

Little Friends is committed to partnering with parents and guardians to help develop curiosity, flexibility, and exploration in every child. We are strong believers in learning through play. We encourage collaboration in our community with one another as we cherish and help with development during this critical time in the life of you and your child.

Hours of Operation

Early drop off : 8:00am-9:00am

School Day : 9:00am-1:00pm

Extended Day : 1:00pm-5:00pm

Ratios

At Little Friends we maintain the following ratios at all times.

6 weeks to age 1 – 1 staff for every four children

1 year to 2 years – 1 staff for every six children

2 years to 3 years – 1 staff for every eleven children

3 years to 4 years – 1 staff for every twelve children

4 years to five years – 1 staff for every twelve children

Assessment Policy

Little Friends preschool values assessments and takes them very seriously. Through classroom observations, staff observations, indoor and outdoor inspections, as well as parent surveys, we value and take note into our program. We value parent involvement and feedback.

Every student is assessed at the beginning of the school year, a middle of the year assessment, as well as a final one at the end of the year, based on their age group. Little Friends believes that developmentally appropriate practices are best. The preschool meets the needs of every child as an individual.

Little Friends strongly supports the professional development of the staff. Every teacher is required to take the initial Department of Children and Families 40-hour requirement as well as 10 additional hours each year. Every staff member is CPR and First Aid certified. Throughout the year teachers engage in different professional development workshops either on or off campus.

Discipline Policy

Little Friends Preschool does not administer corporal punishment. Little Friends values positive reinforcement. The school understands that children respond better when they are treated with dignity and given clear expectations at all times. The preschool encourages proactive responses rather than reactive responses.

When appropriate, staff members will redirect children away from the activity that the child is involved. Separating a child from the activity (Exceptions for snack/lunch and nap) will allow time for the child to calm down and for the teacher to explain what the child did.

Encouragement of positive actions is used on a regular basis.

When a physical altercation happens (biting, hitting, pushing, etc.) an incident/accident report will be given to both sets of families. The other child's name will not be written. The school understands that it is distressing to find out your child has been hurt. Little Friends values the confidentiality of every family. The school will evaluate the circumstances and decide further action if constant occurrences continue.

No staff member is allowed to discuss or name the identity of a student or family member under

any circumstances. Please be respectful and resist asking the teachers who did what.

Biting

If you are the parent of an older infant or toddler, we know it is distressing to learn your child has been bitten or has bitten a friend. Experts in the field of child development agree that biting is within a range of expected behaviors among toddlers 13 months to 3 years of age. Common reasons cited for biting are: need for autonomy and control, exploration, teething, attention getting, frustration (frequently due to lack of language or unmet needs), anxiety, mimicking, self defense, and lack of experience interacting with children in a group.

At the first sign of biting, we evaluate the environment and activities at the time of the bite. If warranted, adjustments in the environment, routines, or the transitions in the classroom may be made. If a bite occurs, the teacher will first attend to the bitten child by comforting the child and gently cleaning the bitten area with soap and water. Staff will complete an incident report for the bitten child.

The child who has bitten will be removed from the immediate area and closely supervised for a period of time after the incident. We will complete an incident report for the child who has bitten and discuss the incident with the child's parents. It is important to remember that biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior. For children who continue to bite, more specific intervention will be initiated, including a conference with the family and the creation of a Behavior Intervention Plan. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis.

Staff cannot discuss with either parent the identity of the other child involved in the incident, nor can staff discuss the medical history of any child involved in a biting incident with the other parent.

State Licensing

Little Friends is licensed by the State of Florida through the Department of Children and Families, License #C04DU1318. Annual unannounced inspections of the centers are conducted by the Department of Children and Families to ensure the Centers are in compliance with all

state standards, policies and procedures are met. The school also has professional affiliations with the North Florida Association of Young Children, the Florida Association of Children Under Six, and the Southern Association of Children Under Six.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Little Friends is committed to a policy ensuring that persons with disabilities are not unlawfully discriminated against and that they have equal opportunity and equal access to all the rights and privileges enjoyed by those who are not disabled. Little Friends will comply with all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and will provide, upon request, reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

Please keep your child with you at all times, especially when exiting your vehicle in our parking lot. Do not leave children, regardless of their age, unattended in your car when dropping off or picking up. Lock your car, as we cannot be responsible for any personal belongings taken from your vehicle while it is on our property.

Every parent will have an access code to the main entrance of the preschool. This code is not to be shared with anyone. We hold security and safety top priorities.

- **NEW** Main Hallway entrance with keycode – this is the only entrance and exit
- Take temperature of parent
- Take temperature of child
- Parent’s signature at drop off and pick up required
- Staff member is responsible for escorting student to classroom and back to the parent at dismissal
- No car seats will be allowed in the building

If your child needs to be released early, please let the school know as far in advance as possible.

Parents are required to pick up children by 5:00 p.m. A child who is picked up late can get anxious, and teachers who have worked a full day need to be able to count on leaving their job promptly. Being on-time is a significant contributor to the job satisfaction of all of our teachers and the happiness of our children. We pride ourselves on being a school whose parents are on-time and strive to have no violations of this rule.

Our School closes at 5:00 p.m.

Parents arriving after 5:00 p.m. will be penalized as follows:

- 1st violation within 1 calendar month: Parents will be charged a per-child late fee of \$1 per minute after 5:00pm., and an additional \$25 for arrival after 5:15pm.
- 2nd violation within 1 calendar month: Parents will be charged a per-child late fee of \$1 per minute after 5:00pm., and an additional \$50 for arrival after 5:15pm.

- 3rd violation within 1 calendar month: Parents will be charged a per-child late fee of \$1 per minute after 5:00pm., and an additional \$100 for arrival after 5:15pm.
- 4th and all subsequent violations within 1 calendar month: 1-day suspension of child(ren) of parents at the beginning of the next calendar month; additionally, parents will be charged a per-child late fee of \$40 for arrival between 5:01 and 5:05 p.m., and an additional \$100 for arrival after 5:06 p.m..

If there are 4 or more violations within 1 calendar month, a meeting will be set up with the parents, the Director, and the Board of Directors to discuss the continuation of childcare at OUR School.

Please note that all late fees will be added to the parent's tuition bill.

If a parent has not arrived to pick up their child and cannot be reached by phone within 15 minutes of closing time, we will call the emergency contact(s) listed on their enrollment forms. The Department of Social Services and/or the Duval County Police Department will be contacted if parents cannot be contacted or do not arrive within 30 minutes of closing time.

Please notify us any time someone other than a parent/guardian is picking up your child. We will only release a child to his or her parents/guardians and the persons listed on the Emergency Contact and Release list in your child's Enrollment Registration Information packet.

If a situation arises requiring someone not on the Emergency Contact and Release list to pick up your child, prior written authorization must be provided to the school. Government-issued photo identification must be shown for any person not positively known to us before we can release your child. If there is an emergency situation and you are unable to submit prior written authority, we will use your personal information to verify your identity to authorize the release.

Under no circumstances will children be allowed to leave the school unsupervised for another location. We cannot release a child to walk to a bus stop or walk home.

Reporting Absences

If your child is going to be absent, you must call the preschool to notify the preschool as soon as possible.

Dress

Having the appropriate clothes for your child is an important part of the day. Please ensure that your child has on comfortable clothes and is wearing closed toe shoes. It is preferable that children wear an athletic shoe as we stay moving during the day.

Please bring an extra change of clothes for your child (be sure to pack extra underwear as well). The extra change of clothes will stay in your child's cubby until needed and you will be notified when a new pair is needed.

During rainy weather and cold weather when a jacket is needed please be sure to place your child's name in every article of clothing.

Privacy shorts, pants, or bloomers must be worn under skirts/dresses.

Toys and Personal Belongings

Please do not bring any valuables that you and your child treasure, such as favorite books, jewelry, or toys from home. Please help your child understand why it is not wise to bring toys or other objects to school that they may not wish to share with the group. We cannot be responsible for lost or damaged items.

Lunch

Safety is a top priority at Little Friends. We understand every child has different needs. Students are not permitted to share food during lunch or snack. Due to more children developing allergies, please make sure you are packing your child with a sufficient amount of food choices just for them. Remember lunch should have options of multiple colors. Little Friends encourages using the food chart and incorporating fruits, veggies, and proteins.

Health

Our commitment to a clean and healthy environment compels us to take precautionary steps to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Our schools are designed to be easily cleaned and maintained at high standards of sanitation. We implement and post daily cleaning and disinfecting schedules in our classrooms. Toys are sanitized and tabletops are regularly disinfected, including before and after meal and snack times.

We promote cleanliness and good hygiene with children on a regular basis. Frequent hand washing is practiced by staff and children, and is always required before eating, after toileting, and after outdoor play.

All children must be up-to-date on their immunizations before being admitted to our schools. Acceptable documentation for records of immunizations must be validated by a physician or other health-care professional with a signature or rubber stamp, and include your child's name and birth date, the number of doses and vaccine type, and the month, day and year the child received each vaccination. Validated proof of immunizations should be submitted as your child receives new immunizations or booster shots. If any state licensing regulations exist that exceed these requirements, the state licensing regulations will be adhered to by the school. Failure to abide by the immunization requirements may impact your child's enrollment.

We do not dispense any form of medication. If your child is on medication, a parent or guardian must administer each dose.

In addition to the physician's examination and immunization records required for enrollment, we will observe each child's health daily. We will document the following:

- • Changes in behavior or appearance.
- • Any skin rashes and itchy skin or scalp.
- • Any boils or weeping skin rashes.
- • Signs of fever, such as flushed appearance or shivering.
- • Complaints of pain or not feeling well.
- • Vomiting, diarrhea, or drainage from eyes.
- • When a child has been exposed to a harmful communicable disease.

If we observe your child developing symptoms of illness during the day, we will isolate him or her from the other children and call you to pick up your child. For the health and well-being of your child and others, your child must be kept home if he or she develops any of the following symptoms of contagious disease until the child is symptom free for twenty-four hours.

Temperature checks will be throughout the day.

- • The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities, including outdoor activities, as determined by staff.
- • The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff determine they can provide without compromising their ability to care for other children.
- • The child has any of the following conditions:
 1. Appears to be severely ill – lethargy, lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or having a quickly spreading rash.
 2. A fever
 3. Diarrhea.
 4. Blood or mucus in the stools not explained by dietary change.
 5. Vomiting.
 6. Persistent abdominal pain or intermittent abdominal pain associated with fever, dehydration, or other signs or symptoms of illness.
 7. Mouth sores with drooling.
 8. Rash with fever or behavioral changes.
 9. Head lice or nits, until after treatment has begun.
 10. Streptococcal pharyngitis (i.e. strep throat or other streptococcal infection).
 11. Scabies, until after treatment has begun.
 12. Chickenpox (varicella).
 13. Impetigo.
 14. Pertussis (i.e. whooping cough) we will follow the direction of the local health department.
 15. Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (we will follow the direction of the local health department).

16. Any COVID-19 symptoms*
17. Tuberculosis (we follow the direction of the local health department.
18. Hepatitis A virus infection (we will follow the direction of the local health department).
19. Any signs or symptoms of Head, Foot, Mouth Disease*

* If any of the faculty or children develop the COVID virus, they must quarantine for two form the time of exposure, get one negative test back upon recovery, and must bring in a signed note from a physician saying it is okay to return to school.”

It is physician-recommended that VPK students use masks that have a clear area where mouths may be seen. These masks will be provided by the school, and it is requested that the children be encouraged by their parents to use them.

If your child has a communicable disease, please inform the school immediately so we can take the necessary precautions. We will take necessary measures to protect your child’s confidentiality, and will only share the information relating to the communicable disease with those that need to know. We also will notify you if we become aware that an employee or a child in our care has contracted a communicable disease that the local health department requires us to report.

Registration and Tuition

When you enroll your child with us, you are required to complete the Enrollment Packet. These forms give us vital information about your child so we can provide the best possible care. It is imperative for your child’s health and safety that all forms are accurately completed and submitted to management for review before your child’s first day. There may be other state-specific forms that must be completed as well.

Within the Enrollment Packet, you will be asked for telephone numbers where you can be immediately reached. Please notify us as soon as any of these numbers change. For your child’s health and safety, we must be able to quickly reach you while your child is in our care. You will also be required to provide us with the names and telephone numbers of at least three other persons that you authorize to pick up your child from school. Please inform these persons that they are required to come to the office before they go to your child’s classroom, and they must bring valid, government issued identification.

While completing the Enrollment Packet, you will be asked to sign an Enrollment Agreement that explains the terms and conditions of enrollment and our fees. In addition to tuition, we require a non-refundable annual registration fee. Parents can pay tuition by the month. The payment is due on the first Friday of the month at time of drop off. Our schools accept cash, check, debit, or credit card payments. A \$50 late fee will be added on the next month’s bill.

Multiple Child Discounts

When multiple children from the same family attend the school, a \$20 discount from the usual tuition fee may be granted once a second child begins attending and for each child who attends thereafter. To take advantage of this discount, full tuition must be paid for the child with the highest tuition base. The discount is then applied to the other child enrolled from the same family. In most cases, the discount will apply to the tuition for the oldest child. You are only entitled to one form of discount, which cannot be combined with other discounts offered by the Company or other sources (such as state subsidies and/or discounts). Please see Director for details.

Late Fees

Late payment fees will be assessed if all tuition and other charges are not on/before the due date. Late pick-up charges will also be assessed to parents who leave their children beyond regular closing time. If you are unable to pick up your child before the school's scheduled closing time, please call us as soon as you know you will be late.

Returned Check Fees

If you write a check that is returned to us for any reason, you will be charged a returned check fee. The fee and the amount of the original check must be paid via money order, cashier's check, or credit/debit card (if available). If you write two checks to the school that are returned for any reason within a six-month period, you will be required to make payments via money order, cashier's check, or credit/debit card (if available) for the next six-month period.

Withdrawing Your Child

If you do decide to withdraw your child from our care, you are required to give us a two-week notice. If notification is not provided, you will still be responsible for all tuition and fees for the two weeks, whether or not your child is in attendance. Registration fee is non-refundable. You will be reimbursed for the remaining weeks not used if proper notification is adhered. After you have withdrawn your child, he or she will only be eligible for readmission based upon space availability and if all other enrollment criteria are met. If an outstanding balance existed when your child was withdrawn, you must bring your account current before we can consider you for re-enrollment. If your child is eligible to re-enroll, you must pay a new non-refundable registration fee at the current rate. Reservation fees may not be used during a final two-week withdrawal period.

Disenrollment

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to discontinue a child's enrollment. This decision is based on the best interest of the child concerned, other children in the class, and the wellbeing of everyone at the school. Every effort will be made to correct a situation before a final decision is made (i.e. moving a child to another class, redirecting behaviors, providing choices, separating children who are not getting along or other interventions).

Disenrollment may be a result of the following:

- • Abuse of other children, staff, or property by child or parent/guardian.
- • Continued violation of policies by child or parent/guardian.
- • Disruptive or dangerous behavior by child or parent/guardian.
- • The school's inability to meet the child's need or the parent's/guardian's expectations.

This is a partial list and we reserve the right to end the enrollment of a child at any time for any reason deemed appropriate. Whenever possible, prior notification will be provided to the parent.

Incident/Unusual Occurrences

After any injury or medical emergency occurs, you will be asked to sign and will receive a copy of an Incident Report describing how the incident happened and the action taken by a qualified staff person. You are solely responsible for initiating any additional insurance claim, if you choose to do so, by requesting all appropriate forms, and tracking the status of your own claim. Students who sustain any injury to the head (scrape, scratch, bump, etc.) will have their parent contacted that day by phone and with a note home from the child's classroom teacher or Facility Director.

As caring and concerned childcare providers, we take our responsibilities seriously. Abuse and neglect, whether physical or emotional, can happen in all types of families, from all walks of life, and in varying degrees. When abuse occurs, both children and parent/guardians are the victims and need support, understanding, and help. Our staff has been trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. Furthermore, the law requires us to report all suspected cases of abuse or neglect. Parents may ask the Director for a confidential referral for outside intervention and suggested resources for prevention and assistance in dealing with this sensitive manner.

Emergency Preparedness

In an emergency where we have to exit our facility the Director or staff in charge will designate a safe area for parents to pick up their children. The primary location is Dunkin Donuts (3929 Hendricks Ave). All staff will follow the instructions of emergency personnel. In a typical release the following steps will be followed.

Parent Reunification: In case of the need to evacuate or when parents/guardians are unable to get to children, the following procedures will be followed to reunite children with parents/guardians (or other contacts designated by parent/guardian) as soon as it is safe.

Notification : Attempts will be made to contact parents to advise them of the incident/disaster. Parents will be advised to report to the assigned area and give the name of their child/children so reunification can occur. This may be onsite or at a medical facility if necessary.

Release : Parents/Guardians will follow the sign in and out procedures that are used on a daily basis indicating the date, time, and initials of person picking up the child. All children will be escorted to their parent/guardian to ensure an easy and safe transition. The exception is; if the child is in the first aid area, the parent will be escorted to that area for reunification. Children will only be released to contacts listed on the child's enrollment form, with proper identification.

Meeting Children's Needs: During this process the needs of each child including those with special needs will be accommodated. Our staff will account for all children after exiting the building, accessing each child for injuries. We will ensure a safe environment and supervision until parent reunification occurs. Staff will follow the instruction of emergency responders.

Non-Discrimination Policy

It is our policy to provide an environment that is free from unlawful discrimination of any type, including discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. This policy governs all aspects of our schools' operations.

Please sign and return the form below. Please keep the packet for your convenience.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

Parents/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____