

Little Friends Preschool

2024-2025

Handbook of Policies

Introduction

It is my sincere desire to provide a loving, high quality preschool experience for your child. Children and learning are my passion. I have a BA in Child Development from California State University Northridge and a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential from the University of La Verne. Learning takes place in everyday activities such as interaction with adults, other children and through play activities as well as one on one or small group teacher led activities. In preschool, children learn through doing in a specially planned and set up play experience. It is my goal to have every child ready for kindergarten. As a former elementary school teacher, I will use my skills to reach this goal.

My partner in this business is my daughter Emma. Emma was a full-time nanny for 6 years before joining my team. Emma has completed 12 early childhood education units at Ventura College, is pediatric first aid/CPR certified, fingerprinted and cleared by the department of justice just like me.

We are professional early childhood educators who will provide a clean, safe environment where your child can play and learn with guidance and loving care. To make our relationship as enjoyable as possible, the following are some mutually beneficial requirements that are necessary to assure that there are no misunderstandings between either party, that each party is aware of the requirements, and that these requirements are carried out in a businesslike manner.

Philosophy

Our goal is to provide a safe, loving, and educational environment for all children in our care. We believe that the first five years are the most important time in a child's life. We believe that children have the right to a nurturing, safe environment where they can feel comfortable and secure. We believe that children have the right to develop to their maximum abilities and that we have the responsibility to provide opportunities for this development to occur.

We recognize that each child is an individual and that each child must be allowed to develop at his or her own pace. We accept and respect differences between children including developmental and physical differences and differences in racial and ethnic heritages. Every child regardless of ability level, gender, race, religion, or ethnic origin must have the same opportunities and advantages as every other child.

We believe each child has the right to develop a positive self-image – to feel good about whom they are. We passionately hope that in treating each child with love and respect that they in turn will learn to treat others with that same love and respect.

We strive to thoughtfully plan activities that meet the developmental needs of differing children, and which follow sound early childhood developmental principles. Our goal is to have every child beyond prepared for kindergarten, both academically and social/emotionally. Our preschool/TK program is both academic and play based.

Meals/Snacks

We provide lunch, and snacks at no extra charge to you for all children. I participate in the Ventura Child Care Food Program. I am required to serve the children healthy balanced meals at certain times during the day. Do NOT let your child bring ANY food. Finish it before entering the gate please. No gum or hard candy in their mouths.

We do not serve breakfast. Morning snack is served between 9:30-10:00 am. Lunch is served at 12:00 pm.. Afternoon snack is served when children wake up from nap, usually

about 3:30pm. If your child arrives late, they may miss morning snack.

Please let us know if your child has any food sensitivities or allergies. A note from doctor is required by the food program. We are not able to accommodate food preferences unless there is a medical or religious reason.

Birthdays/Holidays

The only exception to the food rule is birthdays and holidays. You are encouraged to bring a treat or special snack on your child's birthday if there is enough for anyone. If you are bringing in invitations for your child's birthday, please make sure everyone is invited.

We also accept snack and treat donations on holidays. We love holidays and they are a big part of our program. Our program is nondenominational but we love our themes that include Santa, the Easter Bunny, Leprechauns, etc.

Supplies

Please do not bring in a bag/backpack. Your child's supplies will be kept here. Please make sure your child's cubby has a complete change of clothes (two sets of clothes for toddlers) and extra undies in a ziplock bag with their name on it. Please bring a light sweatshirt/jacket on chilly days. Big, thick jackets are hard to play in and if it is cold enough to need one, we will not be going outside. Layers are best. Please check your child's cubby daily. Also, check their clothing bag seasonally to make sure it is complete with items mentioned above in their current size. Kids grow quickly!

If your child is not yet potty trained, please bring in a pack of diapers and wipes to be kept here. We will notify you when we need more.

Injury/Illness

It is impossible to assure that no child will ever be injured at school; however, I do attempt to keep the children as safe as possible. If any accident or emergency does occur, you will cover the expense.

I am not to take sick or contagious children. A child is considered contagious if they have a fever over 100, diarrhea, vomiting, eye infection, body rash or generally not feeling well. My Philosophy on illness is "If they can't play, they shouldn't stay!" Please keep your child home until they are well for 24 hours. For example: if they are sent home with a fever, they cannot come back the next morning. They need to be fever free (symptom free) without fever reducing medicine for 24 hours. If a doctor prescribes antibiotic medication for your child, they need to be on the medication for a full 24 hours before

returning to school. If you have two children in our class and one is staying home sick the other child needs to stay home too. We must do everything we can to keep illness at bay.

If an older sibling or anyone in the home has lice, please keep your child home until everything is clear. If a child who attends here has lice everyone will be sent home to decontaminate the home. No refunds for the day will be given. Luckily, we have NEVER had this happen.

These strict rules are for your own safety! We want to minimize contagion for all.

Medication: Please complete parent consent for administering medication form LIC 9221 if your child requires medication during the day at school. This includes antibiotics.

Immunizations

Please make sure your child is up to date on immunizations. Please bring in current immunization record so I can update your child's file each time you take him/her to the doctor for immunizations. Just ask for a printout while you are there.

Nap

A quiet/nap time is required by law. All full day children must nap or remain quiet from 1:00-3:30 every day. I am not able to provide full day care for children who do not nap. If you do not want your child to nap, they may attend our ½ day preschool program. We lay down around 1:00pm. The children watch a mellow, 30-minute educational program to relax them. We play relaxing nap music from 1:30-3:30pm. Please note that all childcare centers/full day preschools also have required nap time. Napping is essential to young children. If your child has a special comfort item or blanket, they may bring it from home and keep it in their cubby until nap time. We also allow pacifiers at nap if needed. Nap cots, sheets, and blankets (you may bring your own if you wish) will be provided and washed weekly. Please be respectful of nap time. If you need to pick up your child early, please pick them up before nap time (before 12:45pm). If you need to pick up your child during naptime, please let me know ahead of time. Send a text message and I can quietly sneak them out to you.

Clothing/Shoes

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes. Please make sure the clothing you choose is easy for your child to pull up and down by themselves for using the restroom. No overalls, one-piece jumpsuits or pants with difficult buttons or snaps please. Make sure to check the weather forecast and dress your child accordingly. Ventura weather

can be fickle. A short sleeve shirt and a light jacket or sweater usually works well. Children often get hot in long sleeve shirts. Fancy clothes may become dirty and stained.

Please no jewelry (including amber teething necklaces). Small earrings for children with pierced ears are ok. No little purses with small objects. We usually have at least one child under 3 in attendance. These things are unsafe.

On rainy days please bring rain boots, raincoat or rainsuit. We play outside in the rain if it's a sprinkle.

Children should wear athletic type shoes (or other shoe that covers foot well) for their safety. Flip flops, crocks, sandals, high heels, etc. are dangerous when running and climbing. Shoes with ties/laces are not allowed. Velcro is great, so that they can learn to put their shoes on by themselves. Tie shoes come untied constantly and cause problems. We do allow sandals in hot weather if they can easily run in them.

Sunscreen

Please make sure to apply sunscreen to your child on hot or sunny days. I will reapply as needed throughout the day. I ask that each child bring in one bottle of spray sunscreen every summer. We share sunscreen unless your child has an allergy. Please sign sunscreen application permission form in your packet.

Potty Training

Potty training is one of those parenting tasks that takes time, patience, and cooperation. Most children potty train between the ages of 2 and 3, with girls training an average of six months earlier than boys. When you feel your child is ready for potty training, we ask that you begin teaching at home during a weekend or vacation. We will follow through and encourage your child while in our care. Potty training will be done in a relaxed manner with the cooperation of the family. Most children who start our program in diapers are potty trained in just a few months or less. We are very supportive in potty training. When your child is potty training, please bring in **several pairs** of underwear, pants/shorts, socks, and an extra pair of shoes. Please do not bring your child in pull ups if they are not ready for potty training. Pull ups are difficult to change and actually prolong potty training. Diaper, then straight to undies is best.

Holding spots

If a spot becomes available and you are not ready to take it, you may hold it for a child up to 4 weeks at ½ rate. Most spots become available when a currently enrolled child begins

kindergarten in late August. The spot needs to be secured or it will be given to another family. To secure or save a future spot you can pay the first week's fees. This fee is nonrefundable if you decide to not take the spot.

Tuition

*See tuition sheet for prices.

Early care 8am-9:00am \$5 per day x number of days added to tuition. Occasional/drop in early care is \$8 per day.

Annual supply fee of \$50 is due in August for the new school year.

Fees are due on Monday of each week. A late fee of \$15 will be assessed for payment received Wednesday or after. Payments must be made through the Playground School Management Program. An increase of no more than 7% per year may occur. We do not offer a sibling discount.

Vacation, Absences and Sick Days

Tuition is like rent for your child's spot. You are charged even if your child is not here. This includes legal holidays that we are closed and up to two weeks' paid vacation per year. You will be notified well in advance with an annual calendar of closure dates. Your vacations are paid in full. Payment is due **before** your vacation to hold your spot. We may also take up to 5 sick/personal days per year. Sick/personal days are also paid in full.

Teachers:

During the summer you will be required to pay 50% of your weekly fee to hold the spot, otherwise the spot will be filled, and your child will not be able to return in the fall. You may switch your child to a part time spot (2 or 3 days) and pay the current part time rate instead if you wish. . You will be able to go back to your regular days/hours in the fall. Other school breaks such as fall, winter, and spring break are paid in full.

Days/hours

We are closed most legal holidays: You will be given a calendar of closure dates due to holidays and vacation. The calendar is based on the school year and given out in July or August

Pick up time is between 3:45-4:30 pm for full day, and between 12:15-12:30pm for ½ day. Please let us know if you need to pick up your child before that time as it interferes with

lunch (1/2 day) and with nap/snack (full day).

If you are late to pick up, you will be charged an overtime fee of \$3 per minute. You have an **occasional** 5-minute grace period. You may plan for your child to occasionally stay late (after 4:30 pm) ahead of time (12hr advanced notice) and only pay the additional \$20 for up to one hour if we are available to do so, \$25 for each additional hour. Same goes for early drop off before 8:00. Early drop off fee is \$10 per 15 min. because I am not an early morning person!

If you need more overtime care or on weekends, Emma is available at \$20 per hour if you book her ahead of time. She is also available nights and weekends at your home as well.

Please text us by 9:00 am if your child will be absent. Please make sure your child is here by 9:30am so they don't miss circle time and small groups. Children may not come to school past 10:30am for any reason including doctors' appointments. Please schedule appointments early in the morning or in the late afternoon.

House Rules

There are certain rules that all children will be taught and expected to follow. This is for the safety and wellbeing of everyone. We realize that we must expect a certain amount of wear and tear where children are concerned, but we do not want to have our school "demolished".

There will be no running permitted inside. No hitting, pushing, biting, grabbing, kicking, spitting, scratching, or pinching other children/pets/adults. No standing or climbing on chairs or tables. There will be no name calling or use of obscene, derogatory, or disrespectful language. The words "stupid" and "shut-up" are like f-words to preschoolers and will not be allowed.

Children may not walk around with food, cups, or pacifiers (pacifiers are allowed at nap). We sit down together to eat. Milk is only served with lunch and juice occasionally with afternoon snack. Water is always available. They will be taught to take a sip from their water bottle and to put it back where it goes. We do not use sippy cups. We learn to use a regular "dixie" type cup.

Children **will not** be permitted to bring toys from home. Young children are not developmentally capable of sharing their personal items. They may also become lost or broken and generally cause lots of problems. On occasion we may have a sharing day based on the theme or letter of the week/day where the children may bring an item from

home. This will be posted in monthly newsletter. The only exception to this rule is a special soft toy for naptime. Nap time toys must be noise-free, soft, and small enough to fit in cubby.

Above all, children will be expected to be kind and loving to all. We are all little friends, and everyone needs to feel included and loved. Please support us in the enforcement of these rules to create a better environment for all.

Damages

Respectful treatment of other people and all property, toys, and furniture is expected. We expect the usual amount of damage children may cause. Willful destruction of property will be charged to the parent at the cost to replace the item.

Pets

We do have cats. They usually stay clear of preschool area, but they may come by and visit. In spring we hatch chicks, but they only stay for a week or two.

Two Week Trial period

The first two weeks are a probationary period for the provider, parent, and child. Our agreement/contract may be terminated at any time during this period. After that, 2 weeks' notice, or two weeks fees **must** be given if your child is to leave. Starting preschool may be difficult for some children. We will do everything we can to make sure your child feels comfortable and happy at school. Some children come right in and join the group like they have been here forever, others take more time. Leaving your parent can be stressful. Prolonged goodbyes do not help. Some children may cry. The crying usually stops within 5 -10 minutes with love and understanding from the teachers. Our policy is to call their parent if the crying does not stop within 30 min. This rarely happens. If a child is not able to regulate with our help after about an hour you will be called to pick them up. Crying is extremely hard on everyone. It affects all the other children in a negative way. Some children may need to join the group slowly. They may need to be picked up early the first few days. They will quickly learn that their parent comes back and start to feel comfortable at school. We will try for a full two weeks.

Preschool

All children (including toddlers) will be encouraged to participate in the circle time portion of preschool. Toddlers are not developmentally ready for some preschool

activities such as written academic activities and some crafts. Preschool age is 3-5 years old. Some two-year old's may be ready to join the preschool activities before they are preschool age. Toddlers do benefit from being in the preschool environment and are encouraged to participate in many activities. Our mixed age group is greatly beneficial to children,

Tentative Preschool Schedule:

8:00-9am: Early care arrival, inside play, tabletop activities and free play

9:00-9:30am: preschool arrival, outside play (weather permitting)

9:30am-9:45am: Circle time/whole group academics

9:45am: Morning snack

9:50am-10:45am: Small group academic rotations, teacher led activities inside and outside.

10:45-11:30am Art, sensory play, dramatic play, etc. inside and outside

11:30-12pm free play, lunch prepared.

12:00 Lunch

12:20-12:30pm Half day pick up window, outside play.

1:00-3:30pm Nap

3:30-3:45pm Afternoon snack

3:45-4:30pm full day pick up window, outside play.

Discipline

We maintain a positive discipline policy, which focuses on prevention, redirection, love, consistency, and firmness. We stress two main patterns of behavior: respect for other people and respect for property. The children are explained the rules frequently, so they are all familiar with the guidelines.

Please keep in mind that there WILL be disagreements between children. Refereeing is a big part of our job! Young children have a hard time expressing their feelings. Sometimes they hit, throw toys, bite, etc. We will try to prevent problems, redirect when appropriate, discuss inappropriate behavior, encourage making amends when offense

involves another person, and sometimes withdraw privileges. Sometimes, the use of time outs will be used as a brief cooling off period for one minute per year of age of the child. When children are fighting or throwing toys, we will put the toy in a short time out, and then bring it back into circulation a little later. We believe that communication, consistency, and understanding the needs of children are the keys to keeping a positive behavioral climate in our classroom. Many issues are solved by redirection and communication.

Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES will there be any spanking, physical abuse, verbal abuse, or name calling.

If a discipline problem arises that does not respond to the above-mentioned techniques, we will hold a conference with the parents. Together, we will try to find a solution. Extreme or repeat offences will be noted on a duplicate form. One sheet will be sent home and the other will be kept in your child's file. You may be called to remove your child if his/her behavior prevents us from being able to properly care for the other children. If the problem continues, other arrangements for the care of the child will have to be made, for the safety and wellbeing of all.

Biting

Unfortunately, biting can be a normal part of toddler development. Toddlers bite due to lack of ability to communicate. They feel frustrated and do not know how to appropriately deal with their feelings. Under age 2 it is still "normal". Over age 2 it is a bigger problem. This policy serves to protect the child or children who are bitten.

If we have a child who bites, we will do everything in our ability to stop it. We will shadow the child to find out what is frustrating them and try to redirect them. If the biting causes marks, bruising or cuts the skin it must be dealt with. No one wants their child to be bitten. The first bite is a warning. The second bite within a months' time will be a full day suspension. A third bite may require termination.

Parents will either be notified immediately or at the end of the day depending on severity. A duplicate note will be used to track the behavior. A copy will be sent home. For privacy purposes I am not allowed to release the name of the child who bit to the other party.

Arrival and Departure

Children are to arrive clean and fed. Please make sure children are in clean clothes, not pajamas unless it's a special pajama day, hair and teeth brushed, face and hands clean, nails trimmed and ready for the day. It's safer for long hair to be in a ponytail or braid.

It is normal for some children to have difficulty separating from parents, or cry when dropping off. Please make your drop off brief, the longer you prolong the departure, the harder it gets. Prolonged drop off makes it harder on the child. A smile, cheerful good-bye kiss, and a reassuring word that you will be back is all that is needed. In my experience, children are nearly always quick to get involved in play or activities as soon as parents are gone.

On the rare occurrence that a child is not able to acclimate and continues to cry for more than 30 minutes, you will be called to pick up your child. We will try again the next day.

Please be brief at pick-up times! Visiting with parents at pick up distracts us from the other children who are still here. We love to chat with parents, but we just can't when children are present. It is distracting and not safe. We need to be focused on the children. Feel free to text me in the evening if you want to chat about something! Also, children begin to act differently when parents are here. This is a time of testing, when two different authority figures are present (the parent and the teacher). All children will test to see if the rules still apply. During arrival and departure, we expect parents to back up our rules. Please be in control of your child during pick up times. When bringing in siblings to pick up your child please do not allow them to stay and play. **To avoid issues please keep pick up time brief.**

Our normal procedure is to release the child only to his/her parents, or someone else the parents designate on the Emergency Contact Form. If someone other than the parent is to pick up the child, please notify us ahead of time. A verbal notice is fine on that day, if this person is on the list of people who are authorized to pick up your child. If the person is NOT on that list, we **MUST** have written permission to release your child (text message is acceptable). Please inform emergency contacts, or people designated to pick up your child, that if we do not know them then we will need to ask for identification. This is not meant to offend them. This is simply a measure taken for the child's protection.

Drop off and pick up are not good times to discuss serious problems. Little ears and minds hear and understand everything. We can set up a time where the issues can be discussed in private.

Transportation/Field trips

Children will be transported on occasion for field trips and outings. Children will be secured in age-appropriate car seats provided by me. Please complete the permission for transportation form in your enrolment packet. Some field trips will cost \$2-\$8 per child. If you do not want your child to participate in field trips, they will need to stay home that day. Alternative care will not be provided. You will be notified about field trips requiring a fee ahead of time in the Playground app and/or in the newsletter.

Some field trips will be for the oldest 6 kids only. We must always stay within our 1:6 ratio. I will only be able to take 6 if I go by myself. I am sorry if you feel like your young child is being left out. We must stay in ratio (1:6) always.. They will be able to go the next year.

You are welcome to join us on field trips if you wish. We will need parent volunteers to help drive and chaperone. Please note that if you do come you will be responsible for your child while you are there. Children act differently when their parents are around, and it makes it harder for us to care for them.

Open door

We have an open-door policy. You may show up at any time! Please be respectful of nap time. If you do show up to visit you will be required to take your child with you at that time. It is hard for a child to readjust when parent comes and goes. It is easier if you text us when you are planning on picking up at a non-regular time, but you are always welcome here.

Parent Involvement

There will be times and ways you can get involved in your child's preschool experience. You are welcomed and encouraged to participate in any or all of these. The best way to stay involved is by reading the monthly newsletter. Some examples of ways to be involved include:

- Lending objects for units of study
- Coming and talking about your job, when asked
- Helping your child at home with the concepts we are studying here (see monthly newsletter)
- Helping to provide treats or other items for our parties

- Bring a treat for everyone to celebrate your child birthday
- Dressing your child on themed days such as St Patrick's Day (wear green) or pajama day, etc.
- Donate toys or play equipment your child has outgrown
- Donate extra sunscreen, tissue, toilet paper, or snacks.
- Purchase items from our amazon wish list (linked on website)

Family Communication

We will be using the Playground School Management App for communication. You may also text me directly if needed. You will be given a monthly newsletter. Please read and post the newsletter in your home for reference. It's important to know what is going on in your child's day to day activities.

Custody/Separated families

If parents are separated and there is a shared custody agreement, please bring in a copy of the court order. Without a court order, both parties will be given access to the child, as legally required.

Mandated Reporter

Teachers and childcare providers are mandated reporters. We are required to do a mandated reporter training every year. By law, we are required to report any observed or suspected child abuse or neglect. If we fail to report, we would be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail and/or up to \$1,000 fine.

Earthquake kit

Each year we will update our earthquake kit. Each child has a gallon size Ziploc bag with food, a note from home and a family picture. See earthquake kit information handout.

TV, iPads, Social Media, Photography

We do watch some televisions on occasion. I do believe in limiting a child's screen time so it will not be overused. We sometimes watch child appropriate/educational programs during early care in the morning before everyone is here (when only one teacher is here) or more on rainy days. The full day kids may watch a short 20-30 min show to settle them down before naptime on their cots at 1:00pm.

iPads with educational games will only be used on rainy days or with OSMO as a tech center in rotations.

You will be asked to sign a photograph/video release form. I post pictures daily at naptime on Playground and occasionally on our social media pages.

Pandemic/Emergency Closure

If we must close in an emergency for a temporary amount of time for any unforeseen reason such as a pandemic or disaster, ½ of tuition is due to hold your child's spot. The first week of emergency closure is paid in full, subsequent days at ½ rate. If you choose to not pay the ½ rate holding fee, two weeks' notice of termination with 2 weeks full tuition will be due. When we reopen, your child will not be able to return to preschool.

Bereavement/Death in the Family

If we have a death in our immediate family, we may take up to 3 days closed without tuition refund. If we need more than 3 days and have used up all our sick/personal days, you will be refunded or not charged for the extra days.

Utility Outage

During a utility outage we may need to close early. If its unplanned we may not be prepared for a non-cooked lunch. We have an electric oven and electric stove. If the weather is hot, we would not be able to keep the children for nap. Our nap room gets hot without the use of fans/AC. We are prepared for outages to the best of our abilities, but an early closure could happen.

Termination

We reserve the right to terminate care for a child for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- Failure to pay
- Routinely late picking up your child
- Lack of parental cooperation or support
- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time
- Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property (including biting)

- Our inability to meet the child's needs
- Lack of compliance with handbook regulations

We appreciate as much advance notice as possible when terminating and will give the same courtesy in return. Parents are required to give two weeks' notice if they decide to leave preschool. The two weeks will be paid in full, regardless of attendance. The provider reserves the right to give notice of immediate termination where there are extreme circumstances that affect the well-being of the provider or other children in attendance.