

# Little Thinkers

PLAY TO LEARN, LEARN TO GROW!



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Parent Handbook

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

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## 1. **Mission Statement**

Little Thinkers learning center is dedicated to caring for and educating young children. We are committed to providing a developmentally appropriate environment for all our children. We strive to provide resources and support to the families of our children. We encourage open communication and involvement between our care providers and families.

## 2. **Our Philosophy**

**Children play to learn.** The toys and games at Little Thinkers help your child to learn. Children learn best by playing because it is fun for them, and they are able to express themselves freely.

**Children learn by example.** Appropriate behavior is learned as children observe their surroundings and watch their parents and teachers. By imitating what they see, children learn how to successfully conduct themselves in society. At Little Thinkers, we help children acquire valuable peer interaction skills by guiding them in appropriate social practices. At the same time, we place great value upon individuality, so that no child will be encouraged to act in a way that will conflict with his or her unique personality.

**Children are individuals,** and we encourage children to express themselves. The children at Little Thinkers are respected and cherished for their uniqueness, and we tailor our programs according to how each child learns

best. We guide your child towards becoming a successful, productive, and independent individual.

**Children learn through actions rather than words.** At Little Thinkers, children are engaged in a variety of valuable hands-on activities. When children have the opportunity to touch and manipulate, they remember their experience clearly. Our engaging hands-on approach continuously enriches each child's knowledge and positively contributes to his or her education.

**Children benefit from following a schedule.** Our teachers follow a schedule each day. The routine – comprised of a rotating assortment of fun and educational activities – allows your child to feel comfortable in the school environment.

**Our curriculum emphasizes good health and nutrition.** By teaching the benefits of good nutrition, Little Thinkers helps children to make informed choices about food. To ensure the ongoing health of our students, we schedule a wide variety of physical activities that are both challenging and fun.

**Our teachers are highly qualified and attentive.** Our teachers are caring and patient. Each child in the classroom is at a different stage of development. Children, like adults, have an aptitude for learning some things and difficulty with learning other things. On a case-by-case basis, our teachers understand how to be patient with those who need more time and how to challenge those who learn faster. At Little Thinkers, your

child will always be treated with compassion. Our teachers are experienced in recognizing when a child requires more attention or warmth at any particular time, for whatever reason.

**Children need encouragement and reassurance.** It is natural for children to seek approval. Our teachers inspire the students and instill them with confidence. Children also benefit tremendously from receiving constructive criticism. If a child is always told that everything, they do is perfect, they may not strive to improve. Our teachers are experts at communicating criticism to a child without discouraging them in their efforts.

**Children respond well to limits.** Society has a multitude of limits and rules. An overly permissive environment sometimes causes children to have difficulty understanding and accepting rules. By instilling a respect for boundaries, Little Thinkers helps children to abide by reasonable limits.

**Family matters! We talk to you about your child.** We believe that family is the most important aspect of a child's life. Our teachers provide examples of your child's work and will always let you know if your child needs help with something. We offer ideas for how to encourage your child's progress in school. Our teachers provide information about what your child is learning, and they will always directly address any questions that you have. We welcome and encourage your involvement.

**Children learn best when they feel safe, secure and loved.** Little Thinkers is a safe and loving place. Our teachers provide love for each and every child. We will embrace your child with open arms and open hearts, and a great big smile.

### **3. Our Goals**

Little Thinkers will provide a safe environment where children feel comfortable and loved.

Little Thinkers will promote and encourage tolerance among all staff and children.

Little Thinkers will encourage children and give them the confidence to become independent.

Little Thinkers will offer an open environment where parents feel welcome and are encouraged to take an active part in their child's experiences.

Little Thinkers will provide educational resources to families and will provide assistance whenever possible.

### **4. Admission requirements and enrollment procedures**

Little Thinkers Learning Center cares for children from 6 weeks to 12 years of age at our Moran Street Location. 6 weeks to 5 years of age at our Fisher Street location.

Little Thinkers cannot enroll your child until you have completed and signed an application form; application forms are available at the front desk. We will also need written records of your child's immunizations and a current physical examination report from a physician. There is a \$50.00 registration

fee for each child enrolled, this fee is due on or before your child's first day of attendance.

ALL CHILDREN MUST HAVE CURRENT IMMUNIZATIONS. Parents are encouraged to bring children in prior to enrollment to help familiarize them with the center and their teacher, these visits should be coordinated with the child's teacher.

## **5. Hours of Operation**

Both centers are open Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Little Thinkers closes promptly at 5:30 p.m. A late pick-up fee of \$5.00 per minute is charged to any family whose child is at the center past closing time. This fee must be paid to the teacher at time of pick up.

## **6. Vacations/Holidays and Days Closed**

Little Thinkers will be closed on the following days:

2 Teacher workdays each year (TBD)

New Year's Day

MLK Jr. Day

Good Friday

Easter Monday

Memorial Day

Juneteenth

July 4<sup>th</sup>

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day

Day after Thanksgiving

Christmas Week. Little Thinkers will be closed for 7 business days surrounding the holiday. (These dates vary each year based on when the holiday falls)

If a holiday falls on a weekend, it will be observed on the Friday before or the Monday after. This will be determined before the holiday and will be made known to the families in advance.

## **7. Arrival/Departure of Children**

All children aged 6 weeks through 2 years arriving before 7:00 a.m. will gather in the infant room, to have quiet playtime. After 7:00 a.m. each age group will be sent to their appropriate classroom with their teachers. All children aged 3 and up will gather in the Three-year-old classroom.

As you are dropping your child off, the teacher will greet you and your child. Please DO NOT push your child through the door and leave without the teacher greeting you.

## **8. Your child's daily schedule**

In accordance with state law, children should not be at daycare for more than 10 hours per day. If a child is at the center for more than 10 hours, the family will be charged \$15.00 per every 15 minutes over the 10 hours.

Please drop your child off no later than 10:00 a.m. unless otherwise approved by the administration.



Each family should fill out a schedule for their child/children. Please adhere to the schedule as closely as possible and inform the administration if there are any anticipated changes.

If there is any day that your child must be absent, please call the center so that we can plan for the day.

## 9. **What to bring for your child**

All Children should have a change of clothes including socks, underwear, and shoes.

Children may bring a small toy or blanket to sleep with at naptime. Other toys should not be brought into the center unless it is show and tell day.

Little Thinkers is not responsible for any lost or broken toys Babies should have at least two changes of clothes, pacifiers, diapers and wipes as needed each day.

## 10. **Meals provided**

Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack will be provided daily.

Children will have access to water any time throughout the day.

Children are not allowed to bring in outside food unless medically necessary.

We strive to offer the children a variety of healthy and interesting choices and try to keep additives and preservatives to a minimum.

Families with infants must provide pre-made bottles of formula and baby food. The bottles and baby food must be labeled and dated.

A feeding schedule must be filled out for all children 15 months and under.

New foods will not be introduced unless the child's feeding schedule is updated.

Nursing mothers are welcome and encouraged to come to the center at any time to nurse their baby.

## 11. **Nutritional guidelines**

### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form

AD3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-ComplaintForm-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by: 1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or 2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or 3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. All meals comply with the nutritional standards specified by the US Department of Agriculture and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

The Little Thinkers' cook prepares all meals in our own commercial kitchen, your child's food will never be fried: only baked, roasted, broiled, boiled, or steamed.

Breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack will be provided daily. Milk is served with breakfast and lunch and water is available throughout the day.

We will provide alternatives for children with special dietary needs or allergies, so that every child receives

the required nutritional input to promote health and energy.

We follow meal pattern requirements set forth by DCDEE. These requirements can be found at <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/> .

## 12. **Sick Policy & Procedures**

Any child showing signs including but not limited to: fever, diarrhea, vomiting, rash, deep cough, or sore throat should not be sent to the center. We are required to take all children outside every day, weather permitting. If your child is too sick to go outside, he/she is too sick to attend daycare. If your child becomes sick during the day you will be called and asked to pick him/her up. Your child will be excluded from daycare if he/she has any of the following conditions:

Fever- over 100 degrees

Vomiting with low grade fever, or repeated vomiting

Diarrhea with low grade fever, or repeated diarrhea

Suspicious rash

Head lice (no nits)

Suspected fracture or swelling of a joint

Continued complaint of severe pain

Conjunctivitis (Pink eye)

Sick children must be separated from the rest of the children; therefore, we ask that the parent/guardian come to pick up as quickly as possible when called.

If your child is sent home for an illness, he/she must be symptom free for 24 hours before being allowed to return to the center unless accompanied by a doctor's note stating that he/she is not contagious.

Parents will be notified about any of the following incidents but does not necessarily need to take the child home.

Fever- less than 100 degrees

A bite that breaks the skin

Any head injuries

Vomiting (once)

Ringworm

In case of an emergency, the administration will call an ambulance to transport your child to a hospital. During an emergency situation, the director may authorize the physician to provide emergency care in the event that neither parent/guardian nor family physician can be contacted immediately.

### 13. **Sleep Policy**

In accordance with state law, every child not attending public school must have a rest time. Children must lie on their cot for a minimum of 1 hour. If after 1 hour the child is still awake, he/she will be given a quiet activity to do until naptime is over. Naptime lasts 2 to 2 ½ hours.

### 14. **Toileting**

Children will be encouraged to potty train starting when they enter the two-year-old room.

Little Thinkers will work with your child in any way we can. You must also be working with your child at home, because consistency is of the utmost importance when potty training.

Children will always wash their hands after toileting. If your child is still in diapers, you must provide all supplies necessary, including diapers and wipes.

If your child needs diaper cream, it must be signed in and specific instructions must be written.

If a child is old enough, proper hand washing will be encouraged after using the toilet or having his/her diaper changed. If a child is too young to wash their hands, the teacher will clean his/her hands with a diaper wipe.

## 15. **Discipline and Behavior Management Policy**

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior management of children. When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief of how children learn and develop values, this facility will practice the following discipline and behavior management policy:

We:

1. DO praise, reward, and encourage the children.

2. DO reason with and set limits for the children.
3. DO model appropriate behavior for the children.
4. DO modify the classroom environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.
5. DO listen to the children.
6. DO provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior to the children.
7. DO provide the children with natural and logical consequences of their behaviors.
8. DO treat the children as people and respect their needs, desires, and feelings.
9. DO ignore minor misbehaviors.
10. DO explain things to children on their levels.
11. DO stay consistent in our behavior management program.
12. DO use effective guidance and behavior management techniques that focus on a child's development.
13. DO use short, supervised periods of time away sparingly.

We:

1. DO NOT spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap, or otherwise physically punish the children.

2. DO NOT make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse the children.
3. DO NOT shame or punish the children when bathroom accidents occur.
4. DO NOT deny food or rest as punishment.
5. DO NOT relate discipline to eating, resting, or sleeping.
6. DO NOT leave the children alone, unattended, or without supervision.
7. DO NOT place the children in locked rooms, closets, or boxes as punishment.
8. DO NOT allow discipline of children by children.
9. DO NOT criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children's parents, families, or ethnic groups.

Our programs goals for helping children develop self-control and learn acceptable forms of social behavior are:

- Careful and meaningful planning
- Providing children with meaningful and intriguing activities
  - Limiting “down time”
  - Using guidance procedures such as “redirection” and “planned ignoring” to support children as they navigate the development of social relationships with peers and teachers



- Positive, supportive relationships between caregivers, children and the families

We help children resolve conflict and develop problem solving skills with peers by:

- Talking through disagreements
- Having the children come up with solutions together
- Having children explain what behaviors are “not nice” or unwelcomed to each other

We ensure staff follow the programs discipline and behavior management policies and practices and use behavior management strategies appropriately by:

- Being knowledgeable about developmentally appropriate practice
- Provide social and emotional support to the children
- Taking a proactive approach in daily practice to decrease and/or avoid possibly challenging behaviors
- Taking training class that promote social skills, preventing problem behaviors (through classroom arrangements, individualizing to children’s interests and abilities) and providing effective intervention strategies when needed

Local resources that can assist with services and support when persistent challenging behaviors continue to occur are:

- The Partnership for Children- Alamance County
- Any Resource and Referral agency

- The Division of Child Development

## 16. **Cleaning schedule**

Teachers are responsible for maintaining a high level of cleanliness in the center, their cleaning schedule includes all the following:

Rooms are cleaned daily.

Floors are swept and mopped with a sanitizing cleaner. Rugs are vacuumed.

Sinks, highchairs, tables, chairs, shelves and other furniture are wiped down and sanitized daily.

All bed sheets, bibs, and soft toys are washed daily.

All toys are sanitized multiple times daily.

Crib mattresses are sanitized daily

Cots are sanitized every Friday.

The cook sanitizes the kitchen at the end of each day

Any personal items (blankets, stuffed toys etc.) are to be taken home and washed every Friday.

## 17. **Child Abuse Policy**

North Carolina Law mandates that all childcare workers report any instance of suspected child abuse or neglect. The health and wellbeing of every child is most important to Little Thinkers. Any teacher or parent suspecting abuse or neglect should report this immediately to the director. The director will call Child Protective Services and make a report. If the parent or

teacher prefers, they may call child protective services directly: Alamance Child Protective Services (336) 229 2908

## 18. **Opportunities for family involvement**

We encourage parent and family involvement in your child's education. Of course, parents and families are welcome to visit the center anytime, but these are the scheduled events throughout the year when we invite families to join us for lunch and play:

Easter Egg Hunt                      Thursday before Easter

Field Day                              Beginning of summer

Fall Festival                        End of October

Christmas Party    Middle of December

Parent/Teacher conferences will be held at least once yearly. At these meetings teachers will share their observations with the parents and offer suggestions for improvement in any areas.

There will also be a quarterly newsletter letting the parents know what is happening in the center in the coming months and any holiday closings we will be having. Also, our website and App are excellent places to find information. We are always adding new information. The parents will also be able to communicate with teachers via email and through the ProCare App if so desired.

The director has an open-door policy, if you have complaints and/or suggestions please feel free to speak to the Director at any time.

The center operates under the auspices of the NC Division of Child Development, their web site - <http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us> contains valuable information for parents and contact information should you wish to make a formal complaint against the center.

## 19. **Emergency Evacuation Plan**

Little Thinkers uses two pieces of emergency warning equipment:

1. The buildings are equipped with a fire alarm that will sound in the event of a fire.

2. The office is equipped with an Emergency Alert Radio which will sound an alarm and provide instructions from emergency services if any of the following events occur:

- a. Flash Flood Warning
- b. Hurricane warning
- c. Tornado warning
- d. Tropical Storm Warning
- e. Winter Storm warning

The fire alarm is tested once each month when a drill is performed, and the EAR is tested each week when NOAA sends out a test signal to ensure correct

functioning of the alarm. Tornado/hurricane drills are conducted 4 times a year.

In the event of Fire: In the event of a fire the fire alarm will sound. This sound will notify teachers and children to evacuate the building. Each classroom at Little Thinkers has direct access to the outside, teachers are trained to know the evacuation procedure for their classroom and in addition evacuation plans are posted in each room indicating which route to follow to get out of the building. Current emergency contact information for children is maintained in each classroom the lead teacher will bring this information outside with them.

Everyone will congregate in the parking lot in front of the school. The lead-teachers will take attendance for their own class and report any missing children immediately to the director.

The director will check each room and ensure the building is empty. The director will call the emergency services (911). The director and lead teachers will be responsible for calling families if necessary.

Other emergency situations such as tornado or hurricane:

In the event of a tornado, hurricane or other warning being received on the Emergency Alarm Radio the director will listen to the directions and recommendations of the emergency services. If the emergency services advise that persons should be moved to a place of safety within the building the

director will instruct lead teachers to take themselves and children to the designated areas as marked on evacuation plans.

Lead teachers will bring with them the children's contact information. Lead-teachers will take attendance for their own class and report any missing children immediately to the director.

If time permits the lead teachers and the director will call families. The director will call 911 and inform the authorities of the actions taken.

If the emergency services issue an evacuation order, then the director will sound the fire alarm and the fire evacuation procedures will be followed. Once all children and staff are assembled in front of the school, the children will be transported in the school's bus and, if necessary, in teachers' private vehicles to the Home Depot Parking lot. When staff and children have arrived safely, lead teachers will again take attendance for their own class and report any missing children immediately to the director. Families will be called to pick children up.<sup>22</sup>

## 20. **Tuition/Fees/ Vacation time**

Tuition is due every Monday for the current week. Payment can be made by check, cash, money order or credit/debit card.

Tuition not received by Wednesday will incur a \$10 late payment fee.

Private paying families will receive a 10% discount if tuition is paid monthly and received by the 5th of the month.

Parents receiving DSS subsidy support must pay their parent fee by the 1st day of the month.

Private paying families will not be charged for 1 week at Christmas and may use 1 week of vacation for a time of their choosing.

If your child attends even one day of any week you will be charged for the full week.

**We look forward to getting to know you and your children. The Little Thinkers staff is committed to providing a safe and loving environment for your family.**