



VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT LITTLE LEARNERS CHILDCARE FAMILY HANDBOOK



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WELCOME!

Hello and welcome to our family. Our program offers a relaxed and casual setting geared to the needs and interests of each family who is a part of our school. We try to take into consideration individual differences and special abilities, as well as a wide diversity of family cultural patterns.

This family handbook was written to clarify our operating policies and procedures. Please review the contents of this book carefully. You are responsible for reading and understanding its contents. If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us.

We thank you for choosing our program and look forward to providing a loving and nurturing environment to assist with your child's growing development. We look forward to the school year ahead.

Sincerely,

Your Little Learners Childcare Team

Our Mission and Statement of Purpose

Mission Statement

To promote diverse community-based recreational opportunities by providing a variety of programs, services, facilities, and natural spaces to enhance the quality of life for our residents.

Vision Statement

Addressing the lifelong leisure needs of all Vernon Hills residents.

Philosophy and Goals

We believe in creating an environment that will inspire each child to reach his/her fullest potential in the areas of social, emotional, physical and academic development. Our curriculum is developmentally appropriate according to each child's needs and is designed to meet the following goals:

1. To support and strengthen the family unit, focusing on:
 - Strengthening each family's sense of community with other families
 - Helping families work and play together
 - Supporting each family's efforts to build good values in children

2. To help children develop to their fullest potential, focusing on:
 - Self-awareness, confidence, and self-worth
 - Interpersonal relationships
 - Values development
 - Academic achievements
 - Physical skills
 - Health and nutrition

3. To provide childcare in a caring, safe, positive environment, focusing on:
 - Making sure that all children are safe
 - Broadening children's and parent's understanding of their community, country and world

About Our Facility

Hours of Operation

Our center is currently open Monday - Friday from 7:15 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.*

Emergency situations may arise where we may be required to adjust the hours of operation or close down the facility for the day. Some of these emergencies may include loss of power, temperature problems in the facilities, inclement weather or unforeseen insufficient staffing.

Enrollment Opportunities

Each family has different childcare needs. At Little Learners Childcare, we offer full week care for infants and toddlers as well as full and part week care for children ages 2 and up. If you enroll in part week care we require that you specify and follow your chosen schedule. Other children may fill attend on those days so we are unable to accommodate changes. We See our Childcare Supervisors for pricing and further information.

Enrollment Paperwork

At least one week prior to your child's first day you must submit a completed Registration Packet, Financial Form, Emergency card, current medical with up-to-date immunizations and your child's birth certificate.

Brightwheel App

Our daily communication is done through the Brightwheel app. After your child(ren) is enrolled at Little Learners Childcare will you receive an invitation from Brightwheel that will prompt you on how to create an account. You will then be able to see all the wonderful things that your child(ren) does at our school. Our teachers will share summaries their day including, photographs, meals, rest time and diapering/potty learning. The Brightwheel App also allows us to message families throughout the day as well as provide our menus, classroom calendars, lesson plans and newsletters as well as other important documentation to our families.

Licensing

The childcare programs are based on compliance with DCFS licensing Standards, Child Care Act, and by recommendation from the State Fire Marshall, Local Fire Department and the Lake County Health Department.

Center Closings

Our childcare center will be closed on the following holidays*: A center calendar of all closings are listed on the Vernon Hills Park District website at <https://www.vhparkdistrict.org/programs/childcare/>



- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve through New Year's Day
- Three Teacher Training Days (dates to be determined)

*Subject to change

Inclement Weather

On days of heavy snowfall or extreme weather conditions, for the safety of our families and teachers, we may close the Center. Please check the following for closing announcements.

- The Brightwheel App
- The Vernon Hills website <https://www.vhparkdistrict.org>

You will be notified if the Center closes early due to weather conditions and if emergency pickup is necessary. Tuition is based on the total yearly cost of the program, and the weekly fee is a breakdown of this cost. Therefore, no tuition adjustments are made when the Center is closed for legal holidays or other absences such as weather, low attendance, temperature problems in the facility, or loss of power.



Security

At Little Learners Childcare, we ensure each family a safe and secure learning environment for their child. Security measures are taken to protect all the children in our care. All entrances and exits are locked at all time. After enrollment, families will be provided with the key code to enter our school. This code shall only be shared on a need-to-know basis. In our Registration Packet you will be required to sign our Security Agreement stating:

I understand the importance of security and will not allow my child or any person under the age of 18 to access the door code. I will only inform others of the code on a need-to-know basis and will not allow any persons I do not know admittance to the facility.

Door codes will be changed periodically throughout each year.

When dropping off or picking up your child at the Center, the adult must sign the child in or out through the Brightwheel App and make contact with a Little Learners Childcare staff member.

In your Registration Packet you will be required to list a minimum of two names, addresses and phone numbers of persons who are authorized to pick up your child in case of an emergency. You must notify us in writing any additional people whom you authorize to pick up your child. Anyone picking up your child must show a pictured identification before we can release your child. It is our policy that no one under the age of 18 is permitted to pick up a child. Please refrain from bringing unnecessary people into our Center to pick up your child. Visitors and siblings must stay with the parent or authorized pick up person that they have entered the center with.

In the case of divorced or single parent families, it is important to indicate who the custodial parent is. The custodial parent may be required to provide the Supervisor with a copy of legal documentation. This document will be kept confidential in your child's file. No information regarding a child or family will be released without a signed release from the parent. DCFS and the Lake County Health Department regularly review the children's files

Classroom Grouping

All classes are divided according to the child's age, social and developmental abilities. The ratios of children to staff are based on DCFS's guidelines. They are as follows:

- 4:1 for Infants -
- 5:1 for Toddlers
- 8:1 for Two year olds
- 10:1 for Three - Five year olds

When ages are combined the ratio is followed for the youngest child in the group.

Arrival and Departure

Upon arrival at our Center, all families/guardians/adults are required to:

- Sign their child in through the Brightwheel app
- Make direct and verbal contact with the teacher in the classroom where they are dropping their child off
- Notifying teachers to any changes in their child's day e.g., change of departure time, person picking them up, medical issues
- Wash their child's hands

Upon departure from our Center, all families/guardians/adults are required to:

- Sign their child out through the Brightwheel app
- Make direct and verbal contact with the teacher in the classroom where they are picking up their child
- Check their child's mailbox/cubby for any correspondence

A child will not be released to anyone that is not a parent, guardian, or listed on the authorized pick up form. You may add in writing to this list at any time. We will require picture identification from any adult who is not known to the staff.

All persons picking up a child must be 18 years of age.

Staffing

Our teachers are all caring professionals who are committed to the development and education of young children. Our staff must meet Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) requirements for their positions at the center and all are encouraged to continue their education. All staff members must participate in 15 hours of in-service training each year. In addition, staff members receive CPR, AED and First Aid training as well as specialty training offered by the Vernon Hills Park District.

All staff members at the Little Learners Childcare are Mandated Reporters. If staff members suspect possible abuse including physical, sexual and emotional or neglect, the staff must notify the Illinois Department of Children and Family Service (DCFS). All procedures by DCFS will be followed.



Curriculum

Our Curriculum

At Little Learners Childcare, we provide your children with high-quality, fun experiences that will inspire each child to grow to his or her potential. Our program offers a casual setting geared to the needs and interests of each child. All five of our classrooms utilize a play and theme-based curriculum with aspects of High Scope, Montessori and Reggio Emilia.



Children Learn by Doing

Active learning—the belief that children learn best through active experiences with people, materials, events, and ideas. We provide an environment where children can participate in a variety of learning opportunities designed to develop independence, problem solving, critical-thinking, creativity, self-expression, sharing as well as social and academic skills. Classroom interest centers and activities will vary per classroom but all will offer rich exposure to literacy, mathematics, science & nature, social studies, the arts, and English language acquisition to prepare our children for elementary school and beyond.

We plan activities around developmental milestones in social/emotional, language/communication, movement/physical, and cognitive development from the CDC for ages birth through 5 years. These guidelines, as set out by the CDC (the entire list can be found at www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html), help us to determine if our program is the best for you and your child to have a fun and safe learning experience

General Daily Schedule*

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 7:15-8:00 | Arrival /Combine with other classrooms /Free Choice Activities |
| 8:30-9:00 | Free Choice Activities, Greeting Time and Hand Washing |
| 9:00-9:30 | Breakfast |
| 9:30-10:00 | Large Group/Circle Time, etc. |
| 10:00-10:40 | Small Group/Art, Science, etc. |
| 10:40-11:20 | Work Time/Free Choice Activities |
| 11:20-11:45 | Outside Time/Large Motor |
| 11:45-12:30 | Hand Washing/Lunch |
| 12:30-1:00 | Bathroom |
| 1:00-3:00 | Naptime |
| 3:00-3:30 | Hand Washing/Bathroom/Snack |
| 3:30-3:45 | Large Group/Circle Time, etc. |
| 3:45-5:00 | Work Time/Free Choice Activities Outside Time/Large Motor Small Group/Art, Science, etc. Afternoon Enrichment Programs Combine with other classrooms Inside Activities/Departure |

**Activities and times vary per classroom*

Infant schedules are based on each baby's individual needs.



Proof of Child Identity

The Little Learners Childcare is mandated by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Service for the safety and protection of your child. You will be required to sign the Proof of Child Identity statement in your registration packet stating the following:

I understand that I must provide a **certified copy** of my child (ren)'s Birth Certificate within the first 30 days of enrollment of the Little Learners Childcare. The center will make a duplicate and return the original certified copy no later than the end of the next business day. If a certified copy of the birth certificate is not available, I will submit a passport, visa or other governmental documentation as proof of the child's identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate.

I understand that the Little Learners Childcare is required by law to notify the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement agency if the parent or guardian fails to submit proof of the child's identity within the 30-day time frame. The Little Learners Childcare will notify the parent or guardian in writing that the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement has been notified as required by law, advising the parent or guardian that he or she has 10 additional days to comply by submitting the required documentation.

I understand that the Little Learners Childcare will report to the Illinois State Police or local law enforcement any affidavit received which appears inaccurate or suspicious in form or content.

I understand that the Lake Little Learners Childcare will flag the record of a child enrolled who is reported by the Illinois State Police as a missing person, and shall immediately report to the Illinois State Police any request concerning flagged records or knowledge as to the whereabouts of any missing child.

Prayer

We provide care for families of various backgrounds and cultural beliefs. For that reason, we recognize and celebrate diversity at our facility. Our program is designed for children to learn, to care and respect for others regardless of religious beliefs. While we do not teach any religion, we do recite a manners poem before each meal.



Health and Nutrition

Nutrition

Throughout the day, we provide a nutritional and healthy breakfast, afternoon snack and a hot catered lunch for your child. A child may not bring any food or drink (with the exception of water) into the center unless your child has any dietary or cultural restrictions. If so, you must submit a letter from your physician. All substituted foods must align with the nutritional guidelines followed in our menu. Please also indicate them on your registration form. Monthly menus are posted in each classroom, on our website, on the Brightwheel app and are also available upon request.

Families in the infant classroom have the option of using the iron fortified formula provided by the center or bringing in their own formula or breast milk. If they choose to bring their own, they may either bring formula in its original packaging or daily premade bottles. Regardless which option, families must provide clean, sanitized, labeled bottles daily. All formula will be made per manufacturers recommendations unless otherwise advised in writing by a physician.



When your child has a birthday, we would like to help celebrate. We welcome any treats you would like to provide. We require that any food brought to the Center to share with the other children be store bought. This policy also includes treats for party days.

Due to children with allergies, we ask that families do not bring in any high allergen foods including, all nuts, fish and natural egg into the center.

Drinking Water

Disposable cups for individual use are made available to the children throughout the day. To help with the environment, we encourage children to bring a water bottle. Water bottles should be taken home at least once a week for cleaning. The facility shall also make water available to infants and toddlers at frequent intervals.

Hand Washing

We want to help teach your child valuable hygiene skills. We require that your child wash their hands before eating, after bathroom visits and at any other appropriate times. Families can help us to help eliminate the spread of disease by washing their child's hands upon entering the classroom. This is a requirement from the Department of Children and Family Services.

Diapering

Children will be changed every two hours in the designated diaper area. If a bowel movement occurs, they will be changed immediately. Disposable diapers and wipes are preferred to be used at the Center. Cloth diapers may be used in cases of medical issues. Families must provide all diapers and wipes. A daily report will be given informing families on diaper changes, participated activities, and how your child ate and slept. All classrooms with children in diapers have a changing table available and separate garbage receptacle for soiled disposable diapers and wipes. Guides are posted in these classrooms on proper diaper changing procedures. Receptacles will be emptied, washed and sanitized daily. If a child requires cloth diapers, a separate receptacle will be provided to store the soiled diapers. Families will be required to take home all soiled cloth diapers daily or the center will dispose of them.

Toilet Training

Most children are not ready to be trained by 24 months. However, if your child is showing signs of bladder control, physical readiness and instructional readiness, then the center can begin the toilet training process. There shall be a parent/staff consultation prior to considering toilet training. Children will be taken to the bathroom and placed on a potty-chair, potty seat or regular toilet. These options will be discussed with families at the consultation. The child's progress will be noted on their daily report.



Potty chairs, potty seats and toilets are cleaned and sanitized after each use with the appropriate bleach water solution. All classrooms shall have separate bleach water bottles in their bathroom stored out of the reach of the children.

When an accident occurs, the child's clothing will be double bagged in plastic and sent home. If the soiled clothing is not taken home upon the child's departure it will be disposed by the center. Linens or any other cloth materials owned by the center will be washed immediately.

Bathing

Your child may require a tub or sponge bath for bodily cleanliness after a diaper changing, a bathroom accident or other such circumstances. You will be notified verbally and in writing.

Radon Testing

In compliance with DCFS and the state of Illinois, our Center is tested for Radon every three years. Results of this testing is posted in the childcare office.

Pesticide Policy

A monthly inspection is done by Anderson Pest Solutions and no chemicals are used during our hours of operation. If it is necessary for chemical application this will be done a minimum of 3 hours before children enter the facility. Toys and other items mouthed or handled by the children will be removed from the area before pesticides are applied. You may request written notification if and when chemicals are used. Additional inspections may be made if needed

Personal Items

What to Bring

Because of our fun filled days of painting, singing, dancing, and both indoor and outdoor play, we suggest that your child is dressed for fun! Messy explorations can be part of our busy day so we ask that each child has a complete set of extra clothes, just in case.

Some of our classrooms participate in "Show & Tell" or "Sharing Time". These activities give your child a chance to share something special to them with their friends. Please let your child's teachers know if your child brings in an item to show so it will not get lost or broken. The Little Learners Childcare is not responsible for damaged or lost articles. Please, no guns, war toys or other toys of destruction. *These items are not allowed in our school.* Unless it is a special day, we ask that you cooperate with us by not allowing your child to bring toys or other items from home.





We ask that all families provide sunscreen and insect repellent when needed for their child during the summer months. Due to medical reasons, the Little Learners Childcare cannot provide these items

For those friends who are not yet potty trained you will need to bring diapers, wipes and diaper creams for your child.

In an effort to reduce waste and encourage independence, we request that each child bring a water bottle daily.

In addition, our infants are to bring non-bottles, formula, breast milk and other items deemed necessary. Our infant teachers will reach out to our families on other necessities.

Your child's teachers will send out a welcome letter through the Brightwheel

Jewelry

For the safety of our children and with recommendations from DCFS and our nurses, children are not allowed to wear necklaces for either medicinal or cosmetic purpose. Jewelry will be limited to stud posted earrings with locking backs.

Naptime

After a busy morning at our Center, your child will need time to rest. Our children typically have a rest time from 12:45-2:45 pm. where they rest on small cots in their classroom. After 60 minutes of rest time, Children remaining awake may read books, do puzzles, other quiet activities while others sleep.

Children will need a cot-sized blanket for naptime and may choose to bring a special blanket or sleep toy for rest time. We will provide cot sheet that will be changed and laundered at least once a week. Blankets and any sleep toys should be taken home and washed each Friday. Please let your child's teacher know if your child has a special blanket, pillow, sleepy toy etc. that needs to go home each night.

Our Infants nap on their own personal schedule. Each infant will have their own crib. We will provide crib sheets that will be changed a minimum of twice per week or more if necessary. We also have a limited amount of sleep sack families are welcome to bring their own. Per DCFS requirements the only item allow in cribs are sleep sacks.

Weather and Outdoor Play Time

Playing outside is very important to the health and physical development of young children. Therefore, it is very important that your child is always dressed appropriately for the weather. This may include: snow boots, mittens or gloves, hat and snow pants or suit. The children will be outside on a daily basis. In the winter months, children will not go outside when the temperature is 20 degrees or below with the wind-chill factor. In the summer months the children will not go outside if the temperature is over 100 degrees with heat index.

If your child is not well enough to participate in outdoor activities, a written note from the physician must be provided. Also, for safety reasons, please provide closed-toed shoes for outside play.



Medical Information

Illness

We ask for your cooperation in maintaining the level of “wellness” at our Center. Families can assist in keeping our Center healthy by making sure that their children are in good health before coming to the Center and feeling fit before returning after an illness. Children with fever, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, congestion, persistent cough or sore throat with fever (including Covid) etc. should be home until they are well. If your child has signs of illness, please keep them home. The ill child is not up to a full day of activities and he/she spreads his/her illness to other children. Please assist us in keeping our Center healthy by helping to control the spread of communicable illness. Please review the guidelines below:

Your child will be placed in isolation and sent home if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- A temperature of 101 degrees and higher
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting
- Undiagnosed rash
- Nasal discharge or discharge from the eyes or ears
- Lethargic or lack of well-being due to illness

If your child has any contagious disease, PLEASE report this to the center immediately.

Examples:

- Strep throat, Scarlet Fever
- Pin Worm, Ring Worm
- Head Lice, Scabies
- Measles, Mumps, Chicken pox
- Pink eye (conjunctivitis)
- Impetigo
- Respiratory Syntical Virus (RSV)

Families will be notified via the Brightwheel App of all contagious diseases reported all will receive an information sheet regarding these contagious diseases.

*Before returning to the center your child should be:

1. Feeling well and fit for a complete 24 hours.
2. Free of temperature for 24 hours. This means 24 hours of a temperature of 99 degrees or below WITHOUT medication.
3. Free of vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
4. Must be on any antibiotic for at least 24 hours.
5. On a prescription eye drop for 24 hours after pink eye.
6. Home from the center a minimum of seven days from the last crop of chicken pox.



**In accordance with the Lake County Health Department these may be subject to change.*

The Little Learners Childcare can require a Physician's note for your child to return to the center if they suspect that your child is ill. Any time your child visits the physician for illness or accident, please obtain and submit a physician's note for them to return to the center with diagnosis and treatment plan.

Should your child become ill at school, families/guardians will be notified immediately so that the child can be picked up. Parent/guardian must pick up child within an hour after being notified of their health condition or make arrangements for an approved caregiver to do so. If we cannot reach a parent, the emergency contact will be called.

Medication for Your Child

Regulations for medication at the childcare center:

1. Medicine must bear a current prescription label with child's name, date, directions for administering, physician's name, prescription number, and name of drug store or pharmacy.
2. When dosage is "as needed or # of times per day" parent must return written permission of exact dosage on physician's letterhead.
3. A completed Little Learners Childcare Medication Authorization Form must be filled out weekly by the parent.
4. OVER THE COUNTER, NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION MAY only be administered at the Center when accompanied by signed physician's note. We also require families to and a complete a Little Learners Childcare Medication Authorization Form. Medication will not be administered to reduce fever.

Note: Failure to comply with the regulations above will result in medication NOT being administered. In such case, parent will be notified to come to the center to administer the medicine.

It is understood that medicine prescribed by a physician once, twice, or three times a day WILL ONLY BE GIVEN in accordance with the following criteria:

- Once a day (every 24-hour dose) will not be given at the Center.
- Twice a day (every 12-hour dose) may be given at the Center only once per day. This will depend on when the last dose was given.
- Three times a day (every 6-hour dose) may be given twice at the Center. This will depend on when the last dose was given.

Medication will be stored in a covered, labeled container. The parent is responsible for removing unused medicine from the Center at the end of the treatment.



Illinois Child Vision and Hearing Test Act

For children age 3-5, the center will annually provide hearing and vision screening services in accordance with Illinois Department of Public Health's Hearing and Vision Screening Codes (77 Ill. Adm. Code 675 and 685) and the Illinois Child Vision and Hearing Test Act.

Special Medical Conditions

For the safety of the children and the staff, any medical condition that requires blood testing must be treated in a private area not located in the classroom or in the presence of any children. Only families, guardians and trained medical staff may administer this type of test.

This does not apply to medication in emergency situations (e.g., epi pen or auvi-q for severe allergic reactions.) All Little Learners staff are trained in the administration of auto-injectors.

Allergies

The Little Learners Childcare requests the cooperation of our families to partner with us in promoting a safe environment for children with food allergies. Our Childcare will attempt to accommodate each program participant who has such an allergy and has identified the following operational practices for everyone to follow:

- Families with children who have a food allergy should identify the child's specific allergy(ies) in their registration packet and notify the staff as soon as possible concerning the details of the allergy.
- Once a severe or life-threatening allergy is identified, the families and treating physician of the allergic child must complete an Emergency Care Plan for review and comment by Childcare Manager or Supervisors. These forms must be updated annually.
- If a child(ren) with severe or life-threatening food allergies enrolls in our childcare, we will ask all families to cooperate by refraining from bringing any food that contains any ingredients identified in the Emergency Care Plan. We recognize that this may be an inconvenience for children's food choices, but the few extra minutes you spend could save a child's life.
- Staff will do their best to monitor foods that may pose a potential harm to the allergic child. However, since many items may be without their original packaging (or since trace amounts of an allergen may not even be disclosed on a list of ingredients), it is impossible for childcare staff to inspect every food item from every child to ensure compliance.
- Families should promptly notify the Childcare Supervisors of any change in their child's allergic condition(s).



Medical Forms

The Department of Children and Family Services requires that each child have a completed Illinois Department of Public Health Certificate of Child Health Examination form dated not more than six months prior to entrance into our program. Health forms are valid for two years. A returning student's child health exam cannot be dated more than two years.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has released a set of guidelines on when to immunize young children. They are as follows:

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Vaccination</u> |
|---------------|--|
| <u>Birth:</u> | <i>Hepatitis B (#1)</i> |
| 2 Months | Hepatitis B, Rotavirus (RV) Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DPaT) Hemophilus B (HIB) Ibactivated Poliovirus (IPV) Pneumococcal (PCV) |
| 4 Months | RV, DaPT, HIB, IVP, PVC |
| 6 Months | Hepatitis B (#2), RV, DTaP, HIB, IVP, PVC, Influenza (yearly) |
| 12-15 Months | Hepatitis B (#2), <i>DPAT, HIB, PCV, IPV, Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) Varicella, Hepatitis A Series</i> |
| 4-6 Years | <i>DTaP, IPV, MMR (#2), Varicella</i> |

All immunizations must be current according to the age of your child. Lead screening and TB testing may also be required for children ages 1 through 6 years of age. You must give documentation for any and all immunizations that have been given to your child while enrolled in our program.

Medical Injuries

If your child is injured at school families will be notified through the Brightwheel App explaining the incident. Staff may also decide to call families depending on the severity of the injury. Families will be called for incidents where a child hits their head.

Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency, every effort will be made to notify the families immediately. In the event the parent/guardian cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency people listed on the registration form. 911 may be called for medical emergencies before we contact families due to the nature of the injury or illness. The parent or guardian of the child is responsible for any costs associated with the emergency. All emergency procedures and first aid will be followed regardless of religion. The staff will administer first aid to a child on a limited basis for minor accidents. In the registration package you will be asked to sign a form giving permission to staff to administer first aid regardless of religion. All staff are trained in CPR, AED and First Aid. Staff will complete an accident report for injuries.

Other Emergencies

In case of fire, severe weather or other emergencies, it is crucial that children react in a safe and orderly fashion. The Department of Children and Family Services requires us to perform monthly fire drills. During Fire Drill the entire school exits the building and gathers at the assigned meeting spot. They are performed at different times of the day allowing all children and staff the opportunity to know what to do in an actual emergency. Teachers are encouraged to use different routes in case an exit is obstructed. Tornado drills are done 3 times a year. The entire childcare will assemble in the Lakeview Fitness bathrooms. Should an emergency arise, we will notify you.

Insurance

The Vernon Hills Park District has general liability insurance that covers up to \$3,000,000.00 per child per occurrence.



Social Expectations

Adjusting

A child's first day can be filled with anxiety for families too. The Brightwheel app allows real time information to be sent to our families. But feel free to call throughout the day to see how your child is doing. Families are always welcome to call or drop in at our Center. Each child will react differently to new situations. Sometimes a child does wonderfully on the first day because everything is new and exciting, but may become anxious the second day when he or she realizes that this is going to be a new routine. Most children need two or three weeks to adjust fully to a new environment. The best support a parent can give is to be enthusiastic, encouraging and patient. If you need reassurance or suggestions for helping your child to feel comfortable, talk with your child's teachers or the Childcare Supervisors. They are there to help support you and your child.



Discipline

We use large amounts of positive reinforcement and redirection and encourage problem solving through discussion in a group setting or individually. Our goal is to encourage self-discipline within each child. After several attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, if the child still demonstrates an inability to benefit from the care offered by the Center or whose presence is detrimental to the group, the child shall be discharged from the program. In all instances when a center decides that it is in the best interest of the child to terminate care, parent and staff will meet to discuss options, including referrals to other agencies or facilities. The goal will be to meet the needs of the child.

Behavior

In the event that a child's behavior progresses to the point that he or she poses a threat to himself or others, FAMILIES WILL BE CONTACTED AND MUST REMOVE THE CHILD FROM THE CENTER FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY! If a child and/or a parent are at risk of harming themselves or others, or fail to follow the rules and regulations of the Center, the child will be withdrawn from the program. Families will be given a minimum of a one-week notice to find other arrangements.

Courtesy towards the Little Learners Childcare staff, families and children is expected at all times from the child and parent. Corporal punishment and/or verbal abuse of any kind are not permissible on Vernon Hills Park District property.

Biting

We are all aware that biting will occur in groups of young children for a variety of reasons. While the staff will do everything they can to prevent such incidents, the swiftness with which young children react, cannot always be stopped! When the staff and the Childcare Supervisor conclude, after EVERYTHING possible has been tried, the families will be requested to attend a parent/teacher/director conference to attempt to work on the problem from all ends. At that time, a probationary period will be set in writing, giving a two-week observation period to note any behaviors that can be changed by working both at the center and at home. In certain instances, this probationary period can be extended. During this time if excessive biting continues, the decision will have to be made if the child is able to remain enrolled in the Center. Sometimes, a short exclusion from group care solves the problem. Other times, it is advisable to have the child in a much smaller or one on one situation.

Communication

Keeping families informed is an important aspect at the Center. We feel exchange of information between families and staff provides insights for both. Knowing what your child is doing during the day helps you reinforce and encourage the same topics and activities at home. It also helps so our teachers can better provide for a child's needs if they are aware of situations at home. It is vital that you inform us of any changes happening in your family. Changes at home may include, moving, hospitalization of a sibling or alterations in parent's relationships etc. These may influence the way your child relates to others. Written observations on your child will expand your understanding of your child and what he or she is like away from you. What we provide are personal commentaries and/or assessments. Parent/Teacher conferences are available in a formal or informal format.

We understand that due to staffing, you may not see your child's teacher on a daily basis. To support communication, there is a messaging feature on our Brightwheel app, all our childcare staff has email addresses and each classroom has a phone with a direct line. Feel free to contact them at your convenience. However, please keep in mind that they are with your children and might not be able to respond immediately.

We encourage families to approach our teachers with any questions or concerns about their child. If you do not feel you are getting a satisfactory answer, please feel free to discuss it with the Childcare Supervisor or Childcare Manager



Parent Involvement

Involvement of families in our programs is essential. Your cooperation with all policies and procedures is extremely important to us. Take every opportunity to talk with the childcare staff about your child. Ask your child about their time spent in our program each day. You can also volunteer to help with your special talents we all possess. Families and teachers together can help their child develop to his or her full potential.

Families can get involved by volunteering to help on field trips, social events, presenting to children or staff and donating time to the classrooms. See your Childcare Supervisor for more information.

Cultural Celebrations

Families are encouraged to share their family's cultural celebrations in your child's classroom. There are many holidays celebrated within our country; our preschool classes discuss a few, such as, Halloween, Thanksgiving, winter holidays and Valentine's Day. We invite families to share other holidays with the class by discussing your holiday, reading a book, or even doing a craft with the class.



Absence

We do not deduct days missed from your tuition fee. When you enroll, you are reserving the time, space, staffing and provisions for your child, whether they attend or not. Regular attendance is encouraged to establish a routine for your child. If your child is not meeting our attendance requirements your child may be dismissed from our programs.

We ask that all children be in attendance by 9:30 am. All families must contact the center before 9:30 am if their child will be late or not in attendance that day. Occasionally events occur when your child's class will not be in their classroom after 9:30. (e.g. field trips, park visits, etc.) Because we follow strict ratios, if your child will be late, you may be required to transport them to their classroom location.

If your child will be home due to illness, we ask for your cooperation in notifying the center of any communicable illness. Un notified excessive absences may result in dismissal from our program. If your child is absent more than 5 days in a row without notifying the center they will automatically be dropped from the Center.

Dismissal

Dismissal from the Center occurs if a child is not ready for a group experience. The Childcare Manager and Supervisor will give the parent advance notice of dismissal and offer assistance in finding other arrangements. Other reasons for dismissal include: unpaid tuition and fees, consistent late pick up time, failure to keep your child's physical and or immunizations current and failure to comply with other center policies including the behavior policy.



Financial Responsibilities

Enrollment Fee

A non-refundable deposit may be required at the time of enrollment. The primary reason for this fee is to reserve a spot in our childcare program and the fee will be applied to your first week's tuition payment.

A two-week written notice is required when withdrawing a child from the program. If you drop from the program, you will be considered a new client and may be reassessed the non-refundable deposit.

Tuition

Tuition is based on the total yearly cost of the program. The weekly fee is based on this yearly cost. Therefore, no tuition adjustments are made when the center is closed for legal holidays or any absences, including suspensions or early dismissal. When you enroll, you are reserving the time, space, staffing and provisions for your child whether they attend or not. The exception to this is when Little Learners is closed for the 3 teacher training days and the time between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. You will not be charged for these days.



You will be billed weekly on the Sunday of each week. All tuition payments shall be automatically charged to a credit or debit card. Upon enrollment you will fill out an Auto Withdraw Form consenting payment.

The Vernon Hills Park District uses ActiveNet as their registration and billing software. It is a web-based program so families may view their receipts and change their form of payment online. We ask if you change your credit or debit information to please let the childcare office know.

From January through December, a total of two-weeks of vacation time will be allowed with written notice to the Center's Supervisor or Manager prior to these dates. Vacation days must be consecutive and are equal to one week of your child's current enrolled days. For example, if your child(ren) attends full time it must be 5 days in a row within 2 weeks. If your child(ren) is part time and attends Mondays, Tuesday and Wednesdays it must be MTW or TWM or WMT. You will be charged half of your tuition rate to hold your child's spot. If you choose to plan a lengthy absence or vacation, you may pay full tuition to hold the spot or disenroll your child and re-enroll them when an opening is available. By submitting vacation notification, you are agreeing not to bring your child to Little Learners during this designated time frame. Please contact the Childcare Supervisor or Manager for more information.

Like every other home and business, the Vernon Hills Park District operates on a budget. We count on receiving payments on time so we can make purchases needed for our Center and pay salaries. At the end of each month your tuition must be paid in full for your child(ren) to continue in the program. All services must be paid before they are received.

Sibling discounts are available, contact the Childcare Manager for more information.

Late Pick-up Fees

Children become upset when families are late picking them up. Additionally, the Little Learners Childcare faces staffing and licensing issues when families are late. Therefore, if you pick up your child(ren) after our scheduled closing time, you will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per child for every minute you are late. The late fee will be automatically charged to your Park District account.

DCFS only allows our Center to operate within certain hours. If you are later than one hour after the Center closes and the Little Learners Childcare staff is unable to contact anyone on your Emergency Contact list, we are required to contact the local police department, and you must pick up your child from them.

Additional Opportunities

Field Trips

Our Center may take seasonal offsite field trips for our preschoolers to promote exploration of the world around us. These trips may be an additional cost to families to cover admission and transportation. Families will be notified in writing as well as required to fill out permission slips in order for their child to attend. All safety precautions are taken. See the Childcare Manager or Supervisor for more information. We also provide onsite field trip/presentations which allow the entire center to participate. Families will also be responsible for covering the additional cost of these performances or opt to find alternative care.

Transportation

Families will be required to give permission for the Little Learners Childcare Staff to take their child on walking trips/buggy rides in the area. Permission will also be granted to allow Childcare Staff to accompany child using rented school buses for field trips and local transportation. We do not provide any transportation to or from a family's residence.

Special Events

Our Center hosts several special events where your entire family is able to meet other families in a social setting. To add to our curriculum, the teachers add special events, visitors and activities for the Center and their classrooms to enhance each child's learning

Park District Events

The Vernon Hills Park District offers various family events throughout the year. This is a wonderful opportunity meet other families in our community. Feel free to check them out on our website at <https://www.vhparkdistrict.org>



Code of Conduct

The teachers are required to follow a professional Code of Conduct. Families must also adhere to the following health and safety procedures while on Vernon Hills Park District property.

Families should not abuse children or staff including:

- Physical abuse—strike, spank, shake, slap
- Verbal abuse—humiliate, degrades, threaten
- Sexual abuse—inappropriate touch or verbal exchange
- Mental abuse—shaming, cruelty

Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for immediate dismissal. Families will respond to staff with respect and consideration and treat everyone equal regardless of sex, race, religion or culture.

The police will be called for anyone attempting to pick up a child while possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Smoking or using tobacco in the presence of the children enrolled is not permitted.

Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life and any kind of harassment in the presence of the children is prohibited. Families will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, courtesy, tact and maturity while on Vernon Hills Park District property.

Families may not ask employees to transport children in their vehicles.

Families may not leave children unsupervised on Vernon Hills Park District property.

Families not following this conduct will be disenrolled from the program.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE HANDBOOK

Please be advised that you are responsible for all the information in this handbook and will be required to sign a form stating that you have read and understand these guidelines that have been set forth. Failure to do so may result in terminating your child's enrollment.



The Vernon Hills Park District reserves the right to change existing policies or introduce new

policies pertaining to Center operations at any time with notice to families.



Administrative Offices
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847-996-6800
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Superstars Classroom
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Lil Gardeners Classroom
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