

Parent Handbook

Information, Policies, and Procedures

Welcome to Little Apples Learning Center!

Little Apples has been family owned and operated by the Szelog Family since 1993. The Hooksett center opened its doors in 1996. We are currently licensed (#04923) for 80 children ages 6 weeks to 12 years old. We have an open door policy and welcome parents at any time. If you have questions or concerns regarding our policies outlined in this handbook, please contact the Director or Linda and we will be happy to help in any way.

Thank you for choosing Little Apples as your family's early learning center!

Programs of Care

Little Apples has 5 programs to meet the individual needs of your child.

Littlest Apples – 6 weeks to 12/13 months

Wonderful Ones – 12/13 months to 23/24 months

Movers & Groovers – 24 months to 36 months

Discovery Preschool – 36 months to 48 months (*must be at least 36 months of age)

Little Scholars – 48 months to kindergarten (*must be at least 48 months of age)

Each of our programs use a whole child curriculum based on the NH Early Learning Standards. Each area of development is covered daily to ensure your child is meeting their developmental, academic, and social goals. Children are placed into the program most closely aligned with their age at enrollment.

Registration

Families interested in having their child attend the program will be given an equal opportunity for admission. A waiting list may be maintained and children will be accepted from the list on a first come first served basis. Siblings of children already enrolled in our program will be given priority for enrollment.

Upon enrollment, a non-refundable tuition deposit is required. This includes a \$100.00 registration fee **and** your child's first week of tuition. The child must have an updated physical and immunization record at the time of enrollment. The registration packet must be filled out completely and returned prior to your child's start date. Little Apples will not assume care of your child until all necessary paperwork and fees are received.

Tuition

Tuition is due on Friday by noon for the upcoming week. Kindly drop all payments in the Tuition Box to avoid late fees. If you are paying the tuition with cash, you must give it to an staff member and get a receipt prior to putting it in the tuition box. Cash payments without a receipt do not count towards your account balance.

Your child's tuition is used to hold their place at the center. If your child misses school for any reason (i.e. vacations, sick days, or snow days), their tuition must still be paid. If a problem should arise regarding tuition payment, please make immediate arrangements with Linda or the Director. There is a \$10 per day late fee for payments received after 12:01 PM on Friday. Little Apples does not allow families to carry a balance between weeks.

Little Apples accepts cash, check (made payable to "Little Apples"), credit card, or debit card. If parents choose to do automatic payments from their credit or debit card, payments must be made by Friday before noon. Please see the Director for more information regarding payment or with any questions.

Withdrawal of Enrollment

Parents may withdraw their child from the program at any time. A TWO WEEK WRITTEN NOTICE that your child will no longer be enrolled at Little Apples is required. Parents who fail to provide a written two week notice are responsible for tuition for the two weeks. Should you decide to re-enroll your child at Little Apples, registration and deposit fees will be due. If you have a balance on your account when you leave, all information will be sent to the National Credit Bureau for collection.

Little Apples is open year round. If you choose to remove your child for the summer or any part of the year without paying tuition, we cannot guarantee your spot. If you withdraw temporarily, you must re-register and repay the deposit. If there are no available openings, we will be happy to add you to our waiting list.

Returned Check Policy

For any check that is returned “unpaid” from the bank, the parent/guardian must pay with cash the next day. A fee of \$35.00 is charged for all returned checks. Any unpaid fees must be paid within 24 hours or a \$10.00 per day late fee will be added. After two checks are returned unpaid from the same account, all payments to Little Apples must be in the form of cash or cashier’s check. A check that has not been paid may be re-deposited at any time and additional fees will be added should it be returned by the bank again.

State Assistance Program for Child Care

For children enrolled in the state assistance program for tuition, the parent is responsible for paying the full price of the first week prior to starting to secure their spot at registration. Parents are responsible for any weekly tuition payments until the state links the child to our program for payment. Additionally, parents are responsible for any balance remaining after the state’s contribution (referred to as the “weekly copayment”). Parents receiving state assistance must sign the attendance clipboard weekly to maintain compliance.

Hours of Operation and Late Policy

Little Apples is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 PM year round. Parents are asked to pick up their child no later than 5:25 PM as the center is scheduled to close promptly and our staff is scheduled to 5:30 PM. Please arrive in enough time to get your children ready for departure. Parents and children in the center after 5:30 PM will be charged a \$3.00 per minute late fee. If, for some reason, your child’s pick-up person is delayed, please call the center and inform the closer. The late fee of \$3.00 per minute will be assessed and is payable **immediately** to the teacher who remained overtime with cash. Please do not add this amount to your tuition. If not paid immediately, \$10.00 per day late fee must be paid to the staff member who stayed. If your child is picked up late 3 or more times, he or she will be withdrawn from Little Apples. We value our staff’s daily schedule and personal lives and are responsible that they are able to return to them when their day at Little Apples is over.

Drop off and Pick-up

The center opens daily at 7:00 AM. Our opening staff arrives early to open school and prepare for the arrival of the children. **Please do not bring your child in to the building prior to 7:00 AM, even if you see lights on or a staff member is present.** A parent or adult over the age of 18 years of age must accompany children when they are being dropped off or picked up. Please enter the building with your child, put away their coat, lunch, and any other items they may need for the day in their cubby, and make contact with a teacher before you leave. For security reasons, please do not share the door code.

Anyone picking up a child who is not the parent must be 18 years of age and show a photo ID – no exceptions. A photocopy will be made and placed in the child’s file. Little Apples requires written permission from the parent if a different person is picking up. In an emergency situation, parents may notify us by calling the center. Please note we are not able to accept a note from the pick-up person.

Upon registration, you indicated what time your child/children will arrive and depart daily. Little Apples schedules staff in each classroom according to those times and we must follow State of NH regulations regarding staff to child ratio. We ask that you adhere to those times you enrolled for. Please notify the Director in writing of any schedule changes with at least a 2 week notice.

Attendance

If your child has not arrived by 9:30 AM, we will assume they are absent for the day. If you are planning on dropping off your child later than 9:30 AM due to an appointment, kindly call the center and talk to either the Director or Linda so that we may include them in the daily ratio count. If you will be dropping off later than 11:30 AM due to a doctor's appointment, please feed your child lunch prior to drop off. We do not allow drop off during nap time which is from 12:00-2:00 PM. If your child leaves for an appointment during the day, they may not return after 2:00 PM.

Any child that does not attend for two consecutive weeks without notification shall be considered withdrawn from the center. As Little Apples is both a learning center and child development center, our teachers work very hard to plan curriculum and activities designed to ignite your child's imagination and foster their growing skills.

Holidays

Little Apples closes for several holidays throughout the year. These holidays are subject to change. Parents will receive an annual copy of the holiday closing list. In addition, if the center is open on a State or Federal holiday, and we project our attendance to be less than 10%, we may decide to close early or close completely for that day. Tuition is still payable for the days we are closed due to holiday.

Cancellation/Delayed Opening/Early Dismissal

Little Apples has an obligation to our families to be open each and every weekday. There are times when unforeseen circumstances result in closure, delayed opening, or early dismissal. We try very hard to avoid such inconveniences to you and your schedules. Every snow event presents differing factors we must consider in our decision to remain open. Any time risk to our staff, your children and yourselves outweigh our obligation, we may have to adjust the center operating hours accordingly. Please watch WMUR Channel 9 after 5:30 AM for cancellation or delayed opening. This information will be available on the station's website as well. If we decide we must have an early dismissal, we will notify you by phone or let you know when you drop off that morning. All changes in operating hours will also be present on the center's Facebook page and the *Remind* app. If we open after the 7:00 opening time, please do not enter the building prior to the announced opening time.

Please note that tuition will still be due.

Custody

Under the laws of the State of New Hampshire, parents listed on their child's birth certificate have the right to pick up their child, unless a court document restricts that right. We must have a copy of the court document here in on file at Little Apples AT ALL TIMES. Examples of accepted documents are: current restraining order, sole custody decree, and/or divorce decree stating full custody. Absent such documentation, Little Apples may release the child to either parent, providing the parent documents their paternity/maternity. Such documentation may include but is not limited to Photo ID, child's birth certificate, DNA test results, or court documents.

Forms found in the parental portion of the registration materials and the Child Care Emergency Information Form must be filled out by the parents or legal guardian and kept on file at all times. If custody changes during enrollment at Little Apples, we must have a copy of legal documents before ANY parental information can be changed. If there is any existing custody issue, and court documents are filed, we must have a copy of such documents on file.

Toilet Learning

We are eager to work with parents in the toilet learning process. When you feel your child is ready, please have a conversation with your child's teacher to come up with the best plan for your child. Toilet learning is an individualized process for each child. We have a Toilet Learning Agreement for when you think your child is ready to begin!

Parent/Teacher Communication

Parent and Teacher conferences can be held at any time during the school year and will be offered to parents annually. Please let the director or Linda know if you would like to schedule a conference. Open communication is key to help establish a positive provider-parent relationship.

Each teacher or teaching team will post the classroom's curriculum in addition to any center or community activities and updates. Teachers will keep you informed of your child's daily activities or needs by daily notes placed in your child's cubby or on whiteboards maintained in each classroom. If there is something you wish to discuss one on one with the teaching staff, Director, or Linda, please let us know!

"Our door is ALWAYS open!"

Little Apples believes strongly in an open door policy and encourages families to visit the center at any time.

Nap Time

Every child is given time to rest during the day. The children are offered a scheduled rest time from 12-2 PM. daily. They are not required to sleep, but are given a mat to rest on. If after one half hour, they have not fallen asleep, they will be given a quiet activity to occupy them on their mat. The lights are dimmed and soft music is played to help the children relax and rest. Each child is required to have a crib sheet and blanket for rest which is provided by the parent/guardian. Please provide these items at the start of each week and collect them to clean at home on Friday. If you happen to forget your child's sleep sheet, we will have to call you to bring one in.

At times, the rest time staffing ratio may be reduced by one staff member in each class. This may occur if the total number of staff required to maintain ratios are on the premises AND the ratio of awake children is no more than half the number of children. This will only happen in the classrooms where the children are 24 months of age and older. Please see the Director or Linda if you have any questions.

Extra Clothes

Please provide at least 2 full changes of clothing that are labeled with your child's name and stored in their cubby. Infants and toddlers will require more than 2 complete changes as diaper accidents and feeding can make more changes necessary. Please send extra socks in the winter months and always extra underwear, even if your child is fully toileting independently. If your child does not have a spare set, and soil their clothing, you will be contacted and asked to bring them in. We do not keep spare clothes on hand and we cannot borrow from other children.

Summer and Winter Clothes

All classrooms have outside time planned in their daily schedule. Beginning in late fall through early spring, children must have hat, mittens, boots, warm coats and proper snow gear daily. If your child does not have these items, we will contact you to bring them to the center. We cannot have children stay inside due to staffing ratios. In the summer months, we ask that parents apply sunscreen to their child before arrival in the morning. We will re-apply as necessary during the day using a sunscreen that is at least an SPF 30. Parents do not need to provide sunscreen for use at Little Apples, but are welcome to if they choose. Please provide a water bottle that we may fill, labeled with your child's name, each day. The children are offered many opportunities to drink water throughout the day. In addition, our building is climate controlled for the children's comfort.

Toys from Home

Please refrain from bringing toys from home into the center. Each of our classrooms is fully furnished with developmentally appropriate toys and materials. Toys from home create distractions and often get lost or broken. Please leave toys from home in your car or at home to avoid conflict or loss. Please note that toys from home found in cubbies or the classrooms that are causing distractions may be placed in the office until parent pickup.

Food and Snacks

Little Apples does not provide snacks or a lunch to children in our care. Please send at least 2-4 nutritious snacks and a lunch for your child each day. We have no restrictions for food in our center (i.e. peanuts or eggs) and parents are welcome to send whatever food they wish. Our staff is not able to heat up lunches or snacks in the microwave. If you bring in a lunch requiring heat up, we will call you to provide an alternate option. Please utilize a Thermos for hot items and an ice pack to keep cold items fresh. Children must have a cup or water bottle with them each day for drinks. Staff will refill this with water once it is empty. Please do not leave cups at the center as the staff is not responsible for them. All cups and lunch boxes must be labeled with your child's name.

On Wednesdays, the center orders pizza and breadsticks from Little Caesar's. If you would like your child to eat pizza for lunch, please send in \$2.00 (\$1.00 for children under two years old).

Emergency Procedures

Safety is our first priority at Little Apples. We practice due diligence during every moment of the day and prevention as a method of cure. In any emergency, parents will be notified immediately. Please keep your emergency, home, and business numbers current and notify us of any change. **All accidents and injuries will be documented and relayed to parents.** We document accidents and injuries, noting time of incident, what child was doing when injury occurred, and type of injury on an accident form signed by supervising staff, center director, and parents. Our staff is certified in Infant and Child First Aid and CPR. Should there be a serious emergency, we will immediately call 911 and notify parents. In the event we must evacuate the center, and are unable to return to the building, all staff and children will walk to State of the Art Storage located at 1160A Hooksett Road or to Shooter's Outpost at 1158 Hooksett Road. We will contact all parents from that location.

Little Apples has created an Emergency Operations Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan to address any emergency that may happen. The Director or Linda can provide you with a copy at your request. Little Apples will utilize the *Remind* app with our families in addition to telephone communication to communicate updates during emergency situations. In the case of a situation where reunification procedures are necessary, photo identification will be required for any approved guardian picking up a child from Little Apples, as designated on the child's Emergency Contact Form.

Health Policies

Upon enrollment, your child must have a child Health Form completed and signed by a physician on file. This form must be updated yearly and after any immunizations are administered. Children CANNOT attend Little Apples without documentation on file.

Parents, we ask that you keep your child home if he/she is ill. We sanitize classroom surfaces, toys etc. and practice sanitary hand washing and diapering procedures, but with such a large number of children that we care for on a daily basis, germs will prevail. The only way to keep illness at a minimum for your child, family and our staff is to keep children at home and comfortable when they are exhibiting symptoms of illness. For any communicable disease or illness, your child will need to be treated for 24 hours or as directed by your physician before their return to Little Apples.

For the protection of all children and or staff, your child will be sent home or may not attend Little Apples if they present any of the following symptoms:

1. An axillary temperature (under the arm) of 100 degrees or higher. If your child is sent home with a temp of 100 degrees, they must be kept home until they are fever free for 24 hours without a fever reducing medication.
2. One episode of diarrhea or vomiting. Child must be symptom free for 24 hours before return.
3. Rashes or skin lesions that are undiagnosed by a physician. This includes diaper rash, which is bleeding. Child must have a physician's note to return stating that the rash is not contagious.
4. Drainage of the eyes that is suspected to be conjunctivitis. A note from physician is needed for return. Children who are determined to have conjunctivitis may not return until the mucous from eyes has been clear for 24 hours and medication has been administered.
5. Drainage of green mucous from nose or eyes.
6. If the child is uncomfortable and inconsolable and is unable to follow the daily schedule and activities.
7. Uncontrollable coughing and/or wheezing.
8. Unusual or extreme fatigue and lethargy.

If your child is sent home with illness two days in a row, they may not return the third day. In addition, if your child is scheduled for a surgical procedure, we ask for their safety and comfort that they remain home a minimum of one full day following the day of the procedure. Upon return to Little Apples, please provide us with a note from the physician stating that they are healthy and able to resume center activities with no limitations.

We are not able to keep a staff person indoors during our scheduled outdoor time should a child not be feeling well. If your child is not well enough to be outside, they are not well enough to be at Little Apples. We appreciate your cooperation in advance with these policies and our efforts to keep Little Apples as healthy as possible.

Medications

Children who require medication must also have a completed and signed *Permission to Administer Medication Form* on file, for each medication, including over the counter medications. All medication must be in its original container, prescribed to the child, have the prescription label attached, and must list the doctor's name, dosage, prescription date, and name of the medication. These forms must be updated by the child's physician.

Little Apples will NOT administer ANY over the counter medication unless it is prescribed by a doctor and has a doctor's note. Little Apples will not administer any medication for children to provide relief while in our care. If the child needs medication to participate in our daily routines, it is best for them to stay in the comfort of their home.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies to all verbal and written information about potential, enrolling, and previously enrolled children and their families. All staff will be provided training on the need for confidentiality and will be expected to fulfill their obligation to respect the protection of privacy. Written records will be stored in a secure location with access limited to the Director and the child's teacher as necessary. No information will be released about a child and the parent/legal guardian during enrollment or transition to another receiving program or school without first receiving the written permission of the parent/guardian. This excludes the responsibility held by early childhood educators as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect or when information is subpoenaed by the court.

Mandated Reporting

Per State of New Hampshire RSA 169-C:29, any licensee, permittee, child care personnel, or other person involved with a program who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected is mandated to report the suspected abuse to the Division for Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) at 1-800-894-5533. Staff members of Little Apples are required by law to report any suspected abuse or neglect.

Challenging Behavior & Expulsion Policy

Unfortunately, there are at times reasons we have to expel a child from our program. We want you to know that we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child in order to prevent this policy from being enforced.

WHEN A CHILD IS HAVING A BEHAVIOR PROBLEM IN THE CLASSROOM:

- Staff will try to redirect child from negative behavior
- Staff will reassess classroom environment and activity involvement
- Staff will always use positive methods and language while disciplining children
- Staff will praise appropriate behaviors
- Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules
- Child will be given verbal warnings
- Child will be given time to regain control
- Child's disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality
- Parent/guardian will be notified verbally regarding disruptive behaviors
- The director, classroom staff, and parent/guardian will have a conference(s) to discuss how to promote positive behaviors. If appropriate, there will be a:
 - Recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation (PTAN) and/or recommendation of evaluation by local school district child study team

SCHEDULE OF SUSPENSION

If after the actions above have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting a suspension. A suspension action is meant to be a period of time so that the parent/guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with the center. The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the suspension. The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child or parent to return to the program.

SCHEDULE OF EXPULSION

An expulsion will occur when the child's behavior (1) does not respond to a suspension OR (2) if the behavior is a risk to risk to other children's welfare or safety. If the center finds that they can no longer accommodate the child, the parent will be asked to remove him/her. There may or may not be a notice dependent upon the severity of the behavior.

Collaboration with Other Professionals

Many children with disabilities or other special needs are supported by developmental and educational professionals such as therapists, teachers and others. Little Apples welcomes those professionals and works with them to assure the child's success. The service provider is encouraged to provide services to the child in the early childhood classroom environment. The child's teacher and the service provider work collaboratively to determine the best strategies to support the child in the group setting. Little Apples supports the teacher's participation in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.