**Parent Handbook**
**Little Ferns Child Development Center**
A Reggio-Inspired Learning Environment

**Welcome Letter**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to Little Ferns! We are delighted to have your child join our Reggio-inspired learning community. Why are we named Little Ferns? Ferns are generally associated with qualities such as resilience, beauty, and growth which makes them a perfect symbol for young children. Our approach values children as capable, curious, and creative individuals. We foster a nurturing environment where exploration, collaboration, and self-expression are at the heart of learning.

This handbook provides important information about our philosophy, policies, and daily routines. Please read it carefully and keep it as a reference throughout the year. We look forward to partnering with you to support your child’s development.

Warmly,
**Michelle Kiel**
Owner & Director, Little Ferns Child Development Center

**Our Philosophy**

Our daycare follows the Reggio Emilia philosophy, which emphasizes:

* **Child-Led Learning:** Children take an active role in their education through hands-on experiences.
* **The Role of the Environment:** Our classrooms are designed to inspire creativity and exploration.
* **Project-Based Learning:** Long-term projects emerge from children’s interests and curiosity.
* **Play-Based Learning:** Studies have shown that play based learning is more effective than direct-instruction approaches.
* **Collaboration:** Teachers, parents, and children work together as partners in learning.
* **Documentation:** We capture learning moments through photographs, journals, and displays.
* **Traditional Preschool Curriculum:** While we are Reggio *based*, focused work within a traditional curriculum is also provided. This Hybrid curriculum allows children the freedom to explore and learn based on their interests and play, but also prepares them for traditional Kindergarten.
* **Goals:** To provide high quality care to our community. Follow the NAEYC standards for curriculum and ethics. Have children reach their full potential academically and emotionally. Prepare children for Kindergarten academically, socially, and emotionally.

Our Staff

Little Ferns is committed to high quality care. Our teachers are fully qualified and experienced. California regulations require fully qualified teachers working in a Child Care Center to have the following:

* Educational Requirements: 12 Core Units in Early Childhood Education and at least six months of work experience in a licensed child care center or comparable group child care program.
* Health & Safety Requirements: CPR/First Aid Certified. Health & Safety Training. Mandated Reporter Training. TB clearance. Immunizations current.
* Infant Teachers: Infant Teachers must possess all of the above requirements, with an additional 3 core units in Infant Development.

**Admissions & Enrollment**

* Parents/Guardians must complete the Notification of Parents’ Rights form (LIC995), Personal Rights form (LIC613A), Identification & Emergency information (LIC700), Consent for Emergency Information (LIC627), Child’s Preadmission Health History-Parents Report (LIC702), and Physician’s Report-Child Care Centers (LIC701).
* Parents must complete all required enrollment contracts and classroom agreements.

**Hours of Operation**

The center is open from 6:30am to 5:30pm Monday-Friday. At no time may you drop your child off before 6:30am and pick up any later than 5:30pm.

The center will be open whenever possible on a regularly scheduled day, during normal hours. Unfortunately, severe weather conditions such as a power outage in excess of 1 hour will result in early pick up. There will be no tuition credit for any time the center is closed for any reason. You are paying for a position, as well as a service.

**Tuition**

Tuition is due one month in advance of services rendered, billed on the last Monday of each month for the following month. Childcare tuition is due regardless of whether your child attends. You are paying for a position, as well as a service. These fees are due regardless of unforeseen absences such as illness or appointments. There are no discounts for absences or vacations. Holiday’s are also paid at full rate.

Tuition Rates are Contracted per Family. Please see our rate sheet for weekly tuition rates.

Payments from customers may be made by cash, personal check, money order, cashier’s check, Venmo, or electronic payment via Brightwheel (with a 2.75% fee included). Checks may be made payable to Little Ferns Child Development Center. In the event of a returned check customers will be responsible for a non-sufficient fund fee of $40.00 and will lose their check writing privileges.

VENMO:@ littlefernspreschool

**Daily Schedule**

**See attached schedule for each Classroom**

* **Asparagus Fern Room- Infants 6 weeks-24 months old**
* **Boston Fern Room- Toddlers 18 months-36 months old**
* **Christmas Fern Room- Preschoolers 24 months-5 years old**
* **Tree Fern Room- School Age 5 -12 years old**

**Take Note:** A child who is between 18 months and 36 months of age may participate in the toddler program with written permission from the child’s authorized representative. No child in the toddler program shall be placed in the preschool program before the age of 30 months without written permission from the child’s authorized representative.

**Children will be evaluated, using DRDP measures and teacher anecdotal notes, by the director for classroom/program placement.**

**Meals:** We will be participating in a CACFP Food Program. Breakfast, Lunch, and 2 snacks will be provided daily. Children 8 months to 12 years may participate.

**Cut off time for arrival is 10am.** Please have your child at the center no later than 10am. Late arrivals disrupt our schedule and makes it difficult for children to transition properly into their day. Please let the director know if there’s a planned tardiness such as doctors or dentist appointments.

**Holiday Closure Schedule**

* New Year’s Eve & New Year’s Day
* Martin Luther King Day
* President’s Day
* Memorial Day
* Juneteenth
* Independence Day
* Labor Day
* Columbus Day
* Veterans Day
* Thanksgiving Day and the Day after
* Christmas Break December 22-Jan 2

**Communication with Families**

* **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** Scheduled twice a year.
* **Daily Reports:** Shared via Brightwheel
* **Newsletters:** Monthly updates on projects, events, and classroom highlights.
* **Open-Door Policy:** Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit at any time their children are present. We ask that you avoid visiting during nap time as much as possible.

**Parent/Guardian Expectations**

Parents are expected to bring their child into the center and see that they are under supervision before leaving them. They are also expected to sign their child in and out of the building daily, this is a state licensing requirement.

The keypad at the door is for security, a purpose which is a top priority at Little Ferns. The code is given only to Parents/Guardians, the code should not be shared with anyone including your child(ren). If an authorized person(s) come to pick up your child they will need to come to the front window and show a government issued ID to our staff that matches your child’s authorized pick-up persons list.

Children will be required to be digitally checked in/out by their authorized representative daily via iPad located at the front desk. Each Parent/Guardian will be given a unique code from Brightwheel for check in/out.

**Resting & Relaxation Policy**

* Every toddler and preschooler will have an afternoon rest period as required by state law. No child is forced to sleep, however they must remain quiet. Children may bring a comfort item and a blanket for nap time. Each child will be given their own clean cot and sheet/pillow case.
* Infants will be given rest times as needed. Each infant will have their own clean crib/cot and sheet. Infant Safe Sleep practices outlined by state licensing will be strictly enforced/followed. Parents must complete the Individual Infant Sleep Plan (LIC9227) and children under 24 months will have a nap log that is signed by staff every 15 minutes. No blankets, swaddles, sleep sacks, pillows, or pacifier leashes are allowed in the crib.

**Health & Safety Policies**

* **Illness Policy:** Children must stay home if experiencing fever, vomiting, or contagious illness for 24 hours. Please see detailed Health & Safety policy in our Enrollment Contract.
* **Immunization Requirements:** All children must be up to date on vaccinations and provide immunization documentation from their health provider.
* **Allergies & Dietary Needs:** Parents must inform staff of any allergies or special diets. Little Ferns is a nut-free facility.
* **Emergency Procedures:** We have fire drills, lockdown procedures, and staff trained in CPR, First Aid, and Preventive Health Practices.
* **Medication Policy:** Little Ferns will administer prescription medications to your child with a complete Plan of Operation Incidental Medical Services.
* **Services During a Medical/Dental Emergency:** Little Ferns will do everything in our abilities to assist during a medical or dental emergency. This would include providing first aid and/or CPR, calling an ambulance, and alerting parents immediately.

**Transportation**

* **Field Trips:** We currently do not offer field trips.
* **School Transportation:** We provide school transportation to and from the following schools: Lake Canyon Elementary, Marengo Ranch Elementary, River Oaks Elementary, and Arcohe Elementary.

**Guidance & Discipline**

We use positive discipline strategies, including:

* **Redirection:** Guiding children toward appropriate activities.
* **Conflict Resolution:** Encouraging problem-solving and communication.
* **Modeling Behavior:** Demonstrating kindness, respect, and empathy.

**Conclusion**

We believe in fostering a lifelong love of learning through creativity, exploration, and community. Thank you for trusting us with your child’s early education. We are excited for the journey ahead!

For any questions, feel free to contact us at michelle@littlefernspreschool.com

*We look forward to a wonderful partnership with your family!*