



**Little Acorns**  
**Child Development Center**

**Handbook**  
**Of**  
**Operational**  
**Policies & Procedures**

A Word from Highland Oaks Church of Christ  
To the parents of Little Acorns

Dear Parents,

My name is Becky Burroughs and I serve as the Outreach Minister/Director of Caring and Sharing Food Pantry for the Highland Oaks Church.

I also function as the staff liaison to Little Acorns. As such, I am available for collaboration or consultation with Deborah Bills and Jenn Brown, your preschool directors. This gives me a front row seat to the day-to-day operations of Little Acorns. If you are new to L.A., I want to assure you that you made an excellent choice. Over the years, and through several directors, I have seen L.A. transition from being an excellent Mother's Day Out, to an exemplary licensed Child Development Center. This is largely due to the leadership of Deborah Bills and Jenn Brown, as well as the outstanding staff they have assembled.

I can say this to you with great confidence. Not only have I worked closely with these directors over the years, but three of my grandchildren attended L.A. from the time they were babies until they were ready for kindergarten. I also have a bit of knowledge about education. Prior to working in ministry, I spent 24 years in education, as a Speech/Language Pathologist, Educational Diagnostician, and as a High School Principal.

Here is what I can assure you. Your child will be loved and cared for during their time at Little Acorns. The well-being and safety of the children is a top priority, and that is something a parent should be able to expect from a preschool. What makes L.A. stand apart from other preschools is a carefully curated curriculum and great intention to making learning fun. Your child will develop a strong foundation for learning that will prepare him/her for elementary and (this is my favorite part) a love of learning. As the years roll on, you will look back on your time at L.A. as one of the best parenting decisions you have made.

At the Highland Oaks church, Little Acorns is just one of the ministries that serves the Lake Highlands community and beyond. Throughout the school year, we will provide opportunities for Little Acorns families to partner with Caring and Sharing Food Pantry to serve those in our community who are experiencing poverty because we are unstoppable when we band together to help others.

If there is any way that the Highland Oaks church can serve your family, apart from Little Acorns, or if you have any questions about the Highland Oaks church, please do not hesitate to contact me. We enjoy being your preschool. We would love to be your church family.

Blessings on this school year,  
Becky Burroughs  
Outreach Minister/Director Caring and Sharing Food Pantry  
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214-587-4567 (cell)

# Policies and Procedures

Little Acorns Child Development Center is a state licensed early childhood center. We care for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years, not yet enrolled in kindergarten. Our school session runs from September to May.

## Hours of Operation

Our regular hours of operation are Monday through Thursday from 9 am to 2:00 pm, with carpool drop-off from 8:45-9:05 AM and carpool pick-up from 1:45-2:05 PM. Staff member will safely escort each student from the car to the building in the morning and from the building to their car in the afternoon. It is very important for your child to be at school on time. The teachers have activities planned for their class beginning at 9:00 am. If you need to bring your child later than the given drop-off time, due to an appointment or other reason, please make special arrangements ahead of time with either the Director or Assistant Director, so we can ensure someone will meet your child at your altered arrival time. Due to the nature of our arrival and dismissal protocols, those who are consistently late in the morning (2 or more times per month for a 2-day student or 4 or more times per month for a 4-day student), will have a penalty fee added to the next month's tuition statement. Arriving later than the designated time on occasion is completely expected with little ones, and we are happy to be merciful. Arriving later than expected on a consistent basis, communicates to us and to your child that school is not important. Please respect the hard work of your child's teachers and arrive on time each day.

## Our Administrative Staff

Center Director: Deborah Bills  
Assistant Director: Jennifer Brown  
Administrative Assistant: Holly Mejorado  
Extended Care Director and Parent-Teacher Liaison: Holly Tracy  
Classroom Resource Manager: Logan Dennis  
SEL (Social Emotional Learning) Coach: Megan Soto

### Teaching Staff and Staff Training

We believe our teachers and support staff are the foundation to our success. Each teacher must maintain 24 clock hours of training per year. The Director and Assistant Director schedule most of these hours before the school year begins. Topics of training include but are not limited to: Early Childhood Growth and Development, Using Music in the Classroom, Sensory Processing and Integration, Speech and Language Development, Fine and Gross Motor Teaching Strategies, Social-Emotional Growth, Behavior Intervention and Planning, Classroom Management, Self-care/Self-awareness, and Conflict-Resolution Strategies. Staff also receives training on child abuse and neglect including warning signs and prevention techniques. The Director must obtain 30 clock hours of training per year, 6 of which strictly administrative. We require all staff to be up-to-date and certified in CPR, First Aid, and Basic Child Growth and Development. All staff who interact with children 24 months and younger goes through a SIDS/Shaken Baby training every year. This includes the Director, Assistant Director, administrative staff, and all Extended Care workers, in addition to the infant and toddler teachers.

## General Policies

### Parent Involvement

We strongly encourage parent involvement in all school and classroom activities. Your involvement is much appreciated and pertinent to the success of our school. We have a Parent Committee, made up of Little Acorns parents, who will be assisting you in ways to get involved. It is vitally important to stay in close communication with your child's teacher throughout the year, as we believe the home to school connection is what fosters the greatest education for your child. At any point in the school year, please know you are welcomed to discuss any concerns or ask any questions. Please be sure to address those questions or concerns to the person for whom it pertains, rather than address the leadership. We want to build a system of trust with you as well as your child, even if the subject seems like it may cause a conflict. A lack of communication leads to assumptions and speculation, which is usually not the whole truth. Be an advocate for your child, while also offering grace to your child's teachers. The staff at Little Acorns plans to give you the benefit of the doubt—raising children is a difficult job!

## Enrollment

Children are enrolled for the school year, beginning the January prior, when we open registration. A placement is solidified with our School Year Cover Sheet and full Registration Fee per child. Registration is available first to those families currently enrolled and plan to return the following school year. The available openings are assigned on a first come-first served basis. Current student families have one week to enroll their child before we open registration to the public, until a class is full (according to our standards). If a class is full, a parent may choose to place a child on the waitlist for that class. To place a child on the waitlist, we request a completed School Year Cover Sheet and \$30. If a spot opens for a child on the waitlist, we will apply the \$30 to the registration fee, charging the remainder for enrollment. An admission form, teacher information form, current immunization records and a health statement signed by your doctor are required. Children are classified at the beginning of the school year by age on or before September 1. They will remain in that class the entire year on the days the parent chooses. If a parent wants to change the days their child comes, those decisions must be finalized by the Director, and are subject to availability in that class.

## Toilet Training

All children entering the 4-year-old class and Transitional Kindergarten must be fully toilet trained. Little Acorns staff will not be able to change diapers or pull-ups in these classrooms as it takes away from the other children. We understand that accidents happen, and we strive to be sympathetic during this time of transition. If a child is in a 3-year-old class, our expectation is that they are well-introduced and comfortable with using the bathroom. It is common for a 3-year-old to still struggle with daytime dryness, but please allow them to attempt underwear for several days at school before “throwing in the towel.” We will only use positive reinforcement for using the bathroom, and will not use shaming, embarrassment, or punishment if a potty accident happens in the school day. We have a “Little Acorns Potty Training Policy”. If you would like to have a copy of that document, we are happy to email it to you or give you a hard copy.

## Personal Belongings

Personal storage areas will be provided for each child. Each child needs to have a full change of clothes including underwear and socks. If your child is newly toilet trained, please bring more than one complete change of clothes. The clothes can remain at school or in the child’s backpack, preferably in a zip-top plastic bag. Those wearing diapers need to bring a substantial number of diapers to last for several weeks. Staff will inform you through Brightwheel when your diaper stash is running low. Wet wipes are provided at school unless your child needs a specific kind due to allergies. Children in the 2-year-old classes through Transitional Kindergarten need to have a backpack large enough to hold their lunch box and a standard-sized folder. CLEARLY LABEL EVERYTHING WITH YOUR CHILD’S NAME.

## Naps/Rest Time

According to state minimum standards, each child in our care, four years of age and younger, must be offered a rest time during the school day.

- Infants (Ducklings) class—we provide a crib with an approved mattress and clean mattress cover each day. Though infants will likely be on very different schedules at the start of the year, their naps become more streamlined with one another as they get accustomed to the new routine. All infants up to age 12 months will be placed on their backs to sleep, regardless of their ability to turn over onto their stomach. If a child can turn onto their stomach independently to sleep, they are permitted to stay in that position. We require an [Infant Safe Sleep Form](#) for every child in the infant class. On the form, there are more specific regulations for how we follow the safe sleep guidelines. If your infant has sleep exceptions put into place by their physician, we require a physician’s explicit instructions and signature to perform those functions.
- Toddlers (Bluebirds/Redbirds), Twos (Penguins) classes, and Threes (Toucans)—Little Acorns provides a nap mat for your child that they will use each school day. Please send in a blanket, lovey, or whatever your child needs to have a successful rest time. Your child will be bringing home their naptime items each day in their backpack, while the mat stays at school. The mat will be sanitized every day after nap time is over.
  - After one hour, children in these classes who are not yet asleep are given quiet activities to do while waiting for nap time to end.
  - Pacifiers, loveys, and special blankets are permitted, provided they are labeled with the child’s name.
- PreK (Flamingos) Class—This class will be offered a quiet rest time each day and will be provided a child-sized yoga mat to rest upon each day. The yoga mats will stay at school and be sanitized each day after rest time. Though some children in this age group still need a nap, most do not choose to sleep at school.

## Food

Parents will supply a snack, lunch in a lunch container/lunch box, and leakproof water cup for their child each day. We encourage healthy eating habits, and refrain from passing out treats to reward good behavior. Birthdays, holidays, and special occasions are days we look forward to at school. An occasional treat may be offered to your child on one of these days, but only with parent permission. No child will be left out, even if they suffer from a food allergy or intolerance. Special exceptions will be made if necessary, so that every child can participate. Children will not be forced or coerced into eating, nor can the teachers tell a child which food to eat first and save for last. Due to this licensing policy, please only send healthful choices for your child each day. Any substantial amount of food

the child does not finish will be put back into their lunch container and sent home, so the parent will know exactly how much food was consumed.

**VERY IMPORTANT: Please label everything with your child's name. We are not responsible for lost, stolen, or genuinely misplaced personal belongings that were not labeled properly.**

### Absences

Please notify the Director or Assistant Director, via email or Brightwheel, our messaging app, if your child is going to be absent. If your child is ill, please let us know the nature of the illness, particularly if it is contagious.

### Withdrawal of Your Child's Enrollment

To withdraw your child's enrollment at Little Acorns, we require two-week advanced written notice. This allows us time to contact a parent who may be on a waiting list. There will be no refund of fees or tuition.

### Parent-Teacher Conference

Either the parent/guardian or the teacher may request a conference. This may be done if there are behavior issues that need to be addressed or if there is a developmental or academic issue that needs to be discussed. The parent-teacher conference is a means of addressing concerns and setting future goals regarding such or keeping informed of the child's development and/or academic achievements. If your child is in the Pre-Kindergarten or Transitional Kindergarten class, the teacher will be setting up a formal conference with parent/guardian in January. For infants – Threes classes, conferences are held as needed.

### Parental Communication

Effective communication between center and parent is our number one goal. Please make sure we have current, actively used contact numbers on file, as well as current email addresses. Each school day, parents will receive digital and/or a daily information sheet, including details of the day's activities and any reminders. Please let the Director know if you are not receiving any daily information from your child's teacher, either via messaging app or an information sheet.

### Questions, Concerns, Comments

We encourage every parent/guardian to share his or her questions, concerns, or comments with us. We want you to be confident in the care we give your child. Concerns and suggestions help improve our program.

### School Closings and Calendar

Little Acorns will follow the school calendar published on our website: [www.hocc.org/littleacorns](http://www.hocc.org/littleacorns). No school days beyond those published will be offered. In the event of inclement weather or other circumstances that may require Little Acorns to close, please check your Brightwheel messaging app concerning plans for the day by 7:30 am. Closings due to inclement weather will generally follow the decision made by the Richardson Independent School District, but ultimately will be decided by the Director and Assistant Director, alongside the leadership of Highland Oaks Church of Christ. No refund will be given if Little Acorns is closed on a scheduled school day. Days missed due to closing will not be made up later.

### Gang-Free Zone

Under the Texas Penal Code, childcare centers are required to inform parents that the center is in a gang-free zone. A gang-free zone is any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center, where gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity is a violation of the law and is therefore subject to harsher penalty under state law.

### Breastfeeding

Little Acorns will provide a comfortable, safe, and discreet place with a seat that enables any mother to breastfeed her child within the school day.

### Outside Staff Employment

To maintain Little Acorn's professionalism and confidentiality, persons employed by Little Acorns are permitted to be a caregiver or babysitter for any parent/guardian who has a child enrolled at Little Acorns, once a "Hold Harmless Babysitting Agreement" has been completed and signed by the parent/guardian, staff member, and Director, along with the dates of service.

## **Discipline and Guidance**

### Positive Guidance

Our staff focuses on the positive behaviors of the children. We also guide our staff to provide a fair and consistent environment. We feel that when consistent, age-appropriate limits are in place, children will become responsible for themselves. Children are offered an acceptable, safe alternative to negative behavior. When positive redirection attempts fail, a brief, supervised separation period is used to redirect the child's attention. Children will be treated fairly and equally.

**For a more detailed description and understanding of our behavior expectations, please see the Student Behavior Support Plan, created in collaboration with the Little Acorns SEL (Social Emotional Language) Coach.**

#### Discipline

Discipline shall always be:

1. Individualized and consistent for each child.
2. Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
3. Directed toward teaching the acceptable behavior and self-control.

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include the following:

1. Using praise and encouragement of acceptable behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior.
2. Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements.
3. The staff member assessing their own demeanor in the situation.
4. Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

1. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment.
2. Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training.
3. Pinching, shaking, or biting a child.
4. Hitting a child with a hand or instrument.
5. Putting anything in or on a child's mouth.
6. Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child.
7. Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language.
8. Placing a child in isolation, away from the constant supervision of a caregiver.
9. Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.
10. Placing a child in any restraining chair or equipment as a time-out, including a highchair, clip-on chair, exersaucer, bouncy seat, or the like.

Disrespect demonstrated towards teachers, other children or materials will not be tolerated. In such cases, a parent/guardian will be formally notified. Parents may be called to pick up a child who demonstrates disruptive, disrespectful and/or extreme behavior. Children who demonstrate such behavior may be suspended for a short period of time or indefinitely. This is not a decision that is ever easy to make nor is it one that we want to consider. However, there are times when we feel it is necessary for the physical safety and emotional well-being of the other children enrolled.

## **Fees**

### Registration Fee

Little Acorns requires a non-refundable registration fee with completed registration form for your child to reserve a place in our program.

### Tuition Fees

Tuition is due at the first of each month. If tuition is not paid by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month there is a \$10 late fee added on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month. If tuition is still not paid by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month, another late fee of \$25 will be added.

### Vacation/Illness

So that we can maintain the highest quality of education and care for all children, your child's tuition fees must be paid in full regardless of his/her attendance. This policy applies to absences for any reason including illness, family vacations, center closings such as observed holidays, severe weather closings, or other unforeseen circumstances.

### Late Pick Up Fee

If a child is not picked up by 10 minutes after their scheduled pick-up time, the child will be escorted to the Extended Care Room, where they will be supervised by caring, trained Little Acorns staff members. If any part of that hour is needed for last-minute care, we kindly ask that you be prepared to pay the Extended Care rate of \$10/hour. We understand that life happens, so please let us know as soon as possible if you will be late due to traffic, an appointment, etc.

### Delinquent Account

If there is a balance left on your account, we will notify you. We will give you sufficient time to take care of this balance. If the balance is not paid, you will not be able to re-enroll your child in Little Acorns.

## Safety Policies

### Daily Sign in and Sign out

Parents are required by state licensing to sign their child in and out each day, using their own smart phone. Parents will scan the QR code, select their child(ren), answer the daily health check questions, then use their unique code to sign in. Last, the parent will provide their signature, using their own device, which will effectively check the child into Little Acorns that day. The signing-out procedure only requires the parent to scan the QR code to check the child out of school in the afternoon. Once the child is checked in or out, Brightwheel automatically timestamps the arrival and departure times for that child..

### Arrival

There will be three main timeslots for morning arrival: 8 AM Extended Care, 8:30 AM Extended Care, and the carpool drop-off between 8:45-9:05 AM, when the school day starts. Regardless of your arrival or dismissal time, it is imperative we have record and contact information for any approved caregiver. We will not put a child in the car of anyone who does not have prior authorization to do so. This includes grandparents, aunts/uncles, friends, and nannies.

### Dismissal

There will be five dismissal times each day: The afternoon carpool pick-up from 1:45-2:05 PM, 2:30 PM Extended Care, 3:00 PM Extended Care, 3:30 PM Extended Care, and 4 PM Extended Care. The afternoon pick-up will be located at the I entrance, just like the morning drop-off. However, all Extended Care pick-ups will be at Door H. Your child will be brought to the H doors to wait for you at their designated pickup time. Your child will only be released once an approved pickup has completed the checkout process.

**\*\*SAFETY NOTE:** Please inform all approved pickups to always maintain a slow speed in our parking lot and pay attention. For the efficiency and safety of the arrival and dismissal process, all drivers must be aware and alert, only obtaining their phone when the vehicle is in park, and the child is ready for check-in or check-out.

### Emergency Preparedness Plan

This plan is available for review in the Little Acorns office. It is designed to ensure the safety of children during an emergency by addressing staff responsibility and facility readiness with respect to emergency evacuation and relocation. The plan includes written procedures for: evacuation of children to a safe area during an emergency, how children will be accounted for, how the Little Acorns staff will communicate with parents and local authorities, and how staff will evacuate with proper documentation for each child. Little Acorns conducts whole-school fire drills each month, some of which the staff receives no warning. Quarterly, the staff reviews tornado drills and active shooter protocols. Fire extinguishers are checked each month.

## Health Policies

**Little Acorns Child Development Center is a Well-Child Facility.**

### Immunization & Other Medical Records

For the safety of all children enrolled, each child enrolled at Little Acorns must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. **All immunizations required for the child's age must be completed by the date of admission.** Little Acorns Child Development Center no longer accepts affidavits for vaccine exemption. Only vaccinated children will be admitted for enrollment at Little Acorns CDC. A current copy of your child's immunization record must always be on file for the duration of your child's enrollment with our center. A child's health statement signed by a physician must be provided upon enrollment.

### Vision & Hearing Screening

All children enrolled in Little Acorns who are 5 years of age are required to have vision and hearing screening. Documentation of such screening by a licensed health care professional or a certified screener must be provided at the time of enrollment.

### Medication

Please read the following medication policies carefully. We must follow, according to state licensing, all policies and regulations as outlined.

1. For child safety, all medication must remain in the front office with management personnel. No medication is allowed in the classrooms.
2. All medications (prescription and over the counter) must be in their original container and clearly labeled with your child's name.
3. Medications must not be expired. Any expired medication will not be administered. Any unclaimed expired medication will be disposed of.
4. Prescription medication will be administered as directed with written authorization and instructions that correspond with the physician's directions on the label. We cannot administer prescription medication to anybody other than the child for which it was prescribed. This includes sharing a prescription medication with a sibling(s).
5. Over-the-counter medication will be administered as directed with written authorization and instructions that correspond to the manufacturer's directions on the label.
6. Over-the-counter fever reducers and pain-relieving medications shall not be administered for the purposes of 'disguising' a fever and/or an attempt to keep a child comfortable while in care. If a child requires medication to remain comfortable, they are considered too ill to attend and shall not be admitted into care for the day.
7. Over-the-counter medication and prescription medication shall be administered only for the period for which the medication indicates.
8. We will not deviate from either the physician's or manufacturer's directions. We will not administer medication for which parent/guardian has altered the directions and/or dosage, unless directions are accompanied by a supporting physician's note indicating such alteration.
9. Any medication given within the school day will be documented and the parent will be notified through the Brightwheel App on the child's daily log.
10. If a child requires medicine on an "as needed" basis, such as inhalers, EpiPen, allergy medication. Anti-itch cream, or other topical analgesic, the medicine will be kept in the Little Acorns office and administered only with explicit instructions from the parent/guardian and/or physician. If a child requires an EpiPen for a life-threatening allergy or a rescue inhaler, those may be kept either in the office or in the child's classroom, depending on the severity and need for medicine proximity.
11. Any child requiring an Epi Pen available, must have a completed allergy form filled out by their physician. The teachers, administrators, and support staff will all be trained thoroughly on the action plan.

### Illness

We will not admit a child for care if one or more of the following exists.

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities including outdoor play.
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than the caregivers can provide without compromising the health, safety, supervision (and general consideration) of the other children.
3. The child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that you can include the child in the school's activities:
  - a. A temperature of 100 degrees or greater.
  - b. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, 3 subsequent loose stools, one or more vomiting episodes in a 24-hour period, rash with or without fever, mouth sores, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill; or
4. A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

If your child becomes ill while at school, we will contact you. Your child will be kept apart from other children until you arrive. The parent/guardian or other designated person must pick up a sick child that needs to go home within one (1) hour of notification.

If your child is sent home with a fever, diarrhea or vomiting he/she must be free from symptoms **without medication** for 24 hours or possess a physician's release statement before returning to school. So that we can track and better control the spread of infection, please notify Little Acorns if your child becomes ill.

### Medical Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, we will call 911 and attempt to contact the parent/guardian in the order written on your child's enrollment form. If we are unable to contact anyone listed on the enrollment form, we will act on behalf of the parent.

If an injury or accident occurs at school that prompts a visit to the child's doctor, the parent must let the Director or Assistant Director know, as we are required by licensing standards to report any such injury.

### Diaper Cream/Insect Repellant/Sunscreen

Staff will apply diaper cream, insect repellent, or sunscreen at the request of the parent. Parent must supply said diaper cream, insect repellent, or sunscreen. Please consider leaving these labeled items at school if you suspect they may be often used.

## Texas DFPS Standard for Child Care Centers

The Minimum Standards and Rules for Licensed Child Care Centers and Little Acorns' licensing report is available for review anytime during hours of operation.

Texas Law requires that any person who believes a child is being abused, neglected, or exploited to report the circumstances to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) Abuse Hotline. A person making a report is immune from civil or criminal liability, and the name of the person making the report is kept confidential. Any person who suspects abuse and does not report it can be held liable for a Class-A misdemeanor. Reports of suspected child abuse may be directed to the licensing office at 214-951-7902, the child abuse hotline at 800-252-400, or the PRS website at [Texas Childcare Licensing](#).

Any questions or concerns should be directed to the Director. You may call 214-342-6000 during normal business hours or email our office at [littleacorns@hocc.org](mailto:littleacorns@hocc.org).