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Our



# Parent Handbook

# Philosophy

At The Learning Ladder, we are passionate about providing quality early learning for all children 0 to 6yr, no matter their abilities, social status, race, or gender.

We are committed to ensuring our families are part of their children's learning and development through our open-door policy. Communication is key to everything we do. We value our parents as their child's first teacher and work in partnership with our families to create a tailored education plan.

We feel that children learn best through their own play in an environment that is positive, respectful, unhurried, calm, and safe.

We have some structured times in our day to assist in the transition to school process for our 4-5yr olds. We believe that the learning and mastering of the child's social and emotional skills has an equal importance as academic skills. This is supported by our community and local schools.

We celebrate the cultural diversity within our centre and practice culturally responsive teachings to enable each child to feel valued, respected, and able to thrive.

Our curriculum, Te Whāriki, is at the heart of everything we do for our tamariki as we have a holistic play-based approach to planned teaching and learning in the early years.

We honour our commitment to the Te Tiriti of Waitangi and acknowledge and responsibility to ensure that the values, customs, and reo of the indigenous people of our land are evident in our daily practice.

We believe that in practising our philosophy our children will develop:

- Respect for themselves and others
- Confidence and a "give it a try" attitude
- Curiosity and imagination
- Friendly, caring, and honest behaviour

Linking to our core values of:

Nurture Respect Integrity Education Happy

## Our Vision for our Tamariki

Develop positive attitudes to learning whilst having respectful and caring attitudes to the environment.

Develop problem solving and critical thinking skills, concentration and observation skills through our educators designing learning environments that stimulate children's curiosity.

Develop core age-appropriate literacy and numeracy skills, fine and gross motor skills.

Develop independence and an understanding of the need for self-discipline.

Develop effective language, collaboration, and communication skills.

Develop concept knowledge through experience in language, mathematics, science, music, dance, drama, art, literature, and social and cultural studies.

## Hours of operation and session times

Our hours of operation are between 7.30am and 5.30pm Monday to Friday.

We have the option of a full-day session of 730 - 530pm or a short-day session of 830-330pm.

We can adjust and tailor our session times to fit within your needs as well.

We are closed weekends and public holidays.

The Christmas and New Year's holiday period we are open but run reduced hours to allow our teaching team to have a break. We send out a newsletter regarding the hours, 4-6 weeks before Christmas.

The Ministry requires the centre to be child-free by 530pm which is the end of our license each day. Please ensure you arrive before this time, so our teachers can close and finish their day on time.

## Orientation, settling & what to pack

We believe that the transition process is not just about your child getting to know us but also about you as their parents getting to know us. The transition is just as much for your child as it is for you.

Two weeks before your intended start, we will set dates and times for you and your little one to come join us for an hour at a time each day. This allows for short visits at different times for your child to see how the day rolls, and for you to see how we operate during the day and how we include your child in their settling time.

These times give you a chance to ask the teachers questions about how the day works and for the teachers to talk to you about your child. The casual chats help everyone feel a bit more comfortable with the transition process.

On the first day there are a few things to bring with you:

- A backpack
- Water bottle
- 2-3 full changes of clothes
- Waterproof bag for wet or dirty clothes
- Sunhat or winter beanie
- Nappies (if needed)
- Formula & Bottle (if needed)
- Cuddly (if needed for sleep)

Once you have headed off to work or back home, please feel free to call whenever you need too.



## Things to bring

Please bring formula/milk, and bottles for your child's enrolled hours. We encourage 5 plus a day and water or milk as a drink. The Centre has filtered water to refill your child's drink bottle. Please refrain from packing sweet treats such as lollies or chocolate bars.

Nappies, nappy rash/barrier cream. If your child runs out of nappies, the Centre will provide replacements. A note will be sent home for you to replenish what your child has used. Routine toileting times are provided before meals and naps to encourage good habits and independence in children who are ready. Please feel free to discuss any special needs with our staff.

Please pack **extra named** clothing for water/messy/sensory play. Please do not send your child to the Centre in their good clothing, we do offer the use of aprons to children for art and water play but it is not forced and is it up to the child if they wish to wear it.

## Toys and other treasures from home

We would prefer that children leave their own toys and objects at home as we cannot guarantee their condition or whereabouts at the end of the day. Some objects or toys can be unsafe to have at the centre, for example coins, marbles and beads are a choking hazard and should remain at home.

Items used for comfort/security are welcome but should be clearly named.

All personal items brought into the centre must be clearly labelled. This will help prevent loss of such items.

## Staff ratios

All staff are police vetted, interviewed, and picked because their values and qualities match ours at The Learning Ladder.

Our adult to child ratio is regulated by the Ministry of Education.

Legal ratios are as follows:

Under 2's	Over 2's
1:5	1:6, 2: 20

We run better than required ratios to allow for better teacher child interactions and more eyes on the children means a safer environment. Depending on children being away our ratios numbers can often change, meaning our ratios can be smaller than stated.

There might be some occasions with Teacher illnesses that we run at minimum legal ratios; in this case we always endeavour to find cover through a relieving agency

Under 2's	Over 2's
1:3	1:6



## Delivering our program

The Learning Ladder children are grouped according to their age. There are three age groups:

Under 2's Tui's - 3mths to 2yrs  
Over 2's           Kea's - 2-3.5years  
                          Kakapo's – 3.5-6yrs

'Kura Time' is for our children aged 4yrs and up. It is a school readiness program based around our children's developing interest in school. It has been created in conjunction with our local schools, to ensure that we are preparing our children for school in a way that sees them slide into their new learning journey with ease.

Children from different age groups do mix at times and siblings are encouraged to visit each other during the day, especially during the settling period.

## Arrival & departure

Parents must sign their child/ren in and out each day. This is of the utmost importance especially in the event of an emergency, we must be able to account for all children in our care – if they are not signed in, they potentially could be unaccounted for.

Please ensure all gates/doors are closed behind you to help keep our children safe.

Only persons you authorise on your child's Enrolment Form will be allowed to pick up your child/ren. Any other person attempting to pick up your child/ren will be refused.

Should you need to temporarily authorise another person to collect your child/ren you may do so by emailing or texting the centre to let us know who will be coming to collect. Any adults collecting children other than a parent will be required to produce photo identification before leaving the centre.

Parents with Custody Orders must provide a copy to the Centre Manager. In the case of a non-custodial parent arriving to collect a child from the Centre, staff will contact the Police and provide the copy of the order for the Police to enforce.

## Late collection of children

If you are unable to collect your child at your booked time for any reason, please phone the centre as soon as possible to let us know. This allows us to adjust staffing numbers to accommodate an extra child if needed.

Late fees are as follows:

After our closing time of 5.30pm \$10 per 5 minutes or part thereof

After booked finish time \$5 for the first 15mins or part thereof and then \$1 per minute after that.

Staff will remain at the centre for up to half an hour and shall endeavour to contact the parents or emergency contacts. If we are unable to contact anyone, at a last resort the Police or Oranga Tamariki will be contacted.

## Parent involvement and communication

Regular communication and a strong relationship with all our families is something we pride ourselves on at The Learning Ladder.

We value your role as their first teacher and believe the open and honest communication is vital in early childhood education.

We have various means of communication that we use.

- Emails
- Newsletters
- Family nights
- Story park
- Facebook (public)
- Daily quick catch ups at the start and end of the day

All teachers are available to have a more in-depth conversation, if needed. Please chat with the Centre Manager so we can arrange an appropriate time.

## Inclusive Education

If your child has a known special need when you start, a conference will be organised with the Team Leader, Centre Manager and any agencies supporting your child upon starting to ensure we are offering the best possible learning environment that will suit their needs.

If your child should show unusual or extreme behaviour over a period of time, we will consult with you regarding our observations, discuss strategies and if required, request additional support through The Ministry of Education

## Allergies

Your child's allergy and action plan will be displayed on the kitchen wall (and photo if required).

## Fee's

A non-refundable admin fee of \$60.00 is payable when enrolling your child.

This secures your child's space at The Learning Ladder and covers cost such as setting up portfolios, stationery, and name tags.

You will also be required to pay 1-weeks fee in advance.

Fees will be invoiced weekly and should be paid in advance.

Failure to make payment of your fees will result in cancellation of care. Fees must be paid for all public holidays, sick days, holidays, and any period your child/ren are booked in the centre but may be absent. Should we need to employ the services of a debt collection agency for any outstanding fees, all costs and charges will be passed on to you.

At the centre's discretion, we will allow 4 calendar weeks (of your usual booked days holiday) where fees will be discounted by 50%. Parents are required to give the centre written notice of at least two weeks prior to taking holidays.

3 weeks paid notice is required for termination of your child's place.

## Subsidies

The Learning Ladder offers 20hr ECE subsidy, which is provided by the Ministry of Education to all 3 & 6yrs. To be eligible you must complete an Attestation Form which confirms your child's attendance and that your child is not attending another early childhood centre while enrolled at The Learning Ladder.

At The Learning Ladder we are committed to providing small teacher to child ratios and quality education and care for your child. We received funding from the Ministry of Education which offsets a large portion of our teaching employment costs. This funding covers only the bare minimum of standards.

Your fee's will pay for the balance in resources, environment costs, professional development, and extra teachers.

Fee's also cover our art and consumable products too.

For more information on 20Hours ECE please visit the Ministry of Education website: [www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

Parents may be eligible for a childcare subsidy on fees from WINZ. Please see [www.workandincome.govt.nz](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz) for more information.

Until WINZ subsidies have been approved all fee's must be paid in full by the parents.



## Sun smart

During the summer months please ensure your child comes to the Centre with a named sun hat. At a small cost, The Learning Ladder will provide and apply sunscreen to your child/ren throughout the day. Our Centre policy is "no hat – no outside play".

## Children's sleep time

Children are given the opportunity to sleep anytime throughout the day if required/requested. Children will be checked for warmth/temperature, breathing and general wellbeing every 10 minutes.

Our main sleep time for our Over 2's is 12-2pm.

## Portfolios and social media

Children's portfolios are updated regularly via our Story park portal.

We have a public Facebook and Instagram page and 1-2 photos a week will be posted to give an insight as to what we do each day and what ECE is all about.

We will not post photos without your permission and names will not be used.

Please follow us on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/thelearningladder](http://www.facebook.com/thelearningladder)

## Policies

Please be advised that we have centre policies available for families to read located in our reception area. Our policies are reviewed annually in consultation with our staff and our families. Should you have any input, queries, or concerns please contact either the Centre Owner Dee or Centre Manager Nat.

## Child health

A Vision and Hearing technician from Manukau District Health Board will visit the centre 2-3 times a year to screen all 4yrs for their B4 School Check.

We are required by the Ministry of Health to keep an up-to-date Immunisation Register. If your child has a new immunisation, please bring in a copy for the centre so we can up-date our records.

Children are not required to be immunised to enrol in ECE but if there should be an outbreak of a notifiable illness and your child is not immunised, you will be required to keep your child at home until the illnesses is clear of the centre. There is no discount for this event.

## Illness

Children in general get sick when they first enter a group environment such as preschool or primary school. This is quite common for teachers too.

We maintain an extremely high standard of cleanliness and it won't be long until your child has built up an immunity to the bugs. If you have a concern about this, please speak with the Centre Manager.

We ask that any child who is unwell be kept at home, so illness does not spread through the Centre. The Centre Manager may at their discretion refuse to accept any child deemed unwell enough to attend the Centre.

Children showing the following symptoms should be kept at home until better.

- Severe coughs or colds, not linking to asthma or any other breathing disorder.
- Vomiting, diarrhoea (they can return 48hrs after the last episode)
- Conjunctivitis (they can return once antibiotics have been started and there is no longer gunk present in their eyes.)
- Unidentified rash or spots
- Temperature over 38°, stay home 24hrs and until no longer needed Pamol to control the temp.
- Head lice (they can return 24hrs after the first treatment and prevention)



If symptoms develop during the day a parent will be contacted to arrange for the immediate collection of their child.

A list of Contagious Illnesses is on the Parents noticeboard. Please familiarise yourself with this as your child **MUST** stay home if they have any of these.

A child may return to the centre upon clearance from the doctors with a note or they have been away for the recommend period as stated on the Contagious Illness Chart.

The general rule is: If your child requires Pamol to make them feel well enough to attend centre for the day, then they are not well enough to attend.

## Pamol

We are a NO PAMOL centre unless prescribed for a serious illness or injury and accompanied by antibiotics. Please see the Centre Manager to get a better understanding of this rule.

## Medication

Please see a teacher to fill out our Medicine register if your child has medicine that they require during the day.

All medication must be in the child's name and no older than 3mths.

All medicine must be clearly named with the amount to be given and frequency. This will be recorded on our medicine chart and the parent will be required to sign.

The Centre does not provide any oral medicine as per regulations.

For bumps, scrapes, and bruises the Centre does have Arnica, Dettol and Savlon and “magic” band aids/plasters. Please advise staff if you prefer these were not given to your child.

Any on-going medication, e.g.: asthma inhalers, eczema cream, EPI pens need to be brought into the centre in a named plastic bag with clear directions. A teacher will discuss with you the process and fill out an ‘Individual Health plan’ with you.

NO medication of any sort is to be left in children’s bags as this poses a serious health risk.

## Emergency and evacuation procedures

In case of an unforeseen emergency, every effort will be made to contact the parents to collect their child. The Centre is fitted with safety devices, which are maintained regularly. Regular fire and earthquake drills are necessary for regulation purposes. If you are present at a fire drill, you are required by law to participate.

In case of a fire/earthquake staff will stay onsite until all children have been collected.

For more information, please refer to the Emergency Management plan located on the Parents Noticeboard.

## Safety

Centre policies on health & safety procedures are continually reviewed and reinforced by staff to the children and families.

Such practices include:

- The storage of chemicals in locked cupboards
- Checking the safety of the sandpit and outdoor equipment
- Children’s awareness of personal safety, i.e.: not throwing sand, toys, or equipment, walking inside.

There is always someone trained and certified in first aid onsite. First aid certificates are renewed every two years.

## Child protection policy

Definition of Child Abuse:

Includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse as well as neglect which is the direct consequence of a deliberate act or omission by an adult, and which has the potential or effect of serious harm to the child.

The Learning Ladder is committed to protecting our children against child abuse by developing teacher expertise to recognise and respond appropriately to indications of child abuse.

The interest and protection of the child is paramount in all actions.

If any person (parent or teacher) has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse their first obligation (after ensuring the child is in no immediate danger) is to immediately advise one of the Directors of The Learning Ladder or the most senior person on duty

All matters related to individual cases are confidential to those directly involved and should under no circumstances be discussed with other parents, children, or any other person outside the Centre.

**Thank you for choosing The Learning Ladder, we look forward to sharing your child’s learning journey and having them and you as part of our whanau.**