



Parent Handbook

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A HOME FROM HOME



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Welcome

Welcome to Little Lemon's

Thank you for choosing Little Lemon's Childminding. Choosing childcare is a very personal decision, and I want you to feel confident about who is caring for your child, what their days will feel like and how we will work together.

My aim is to provide warm, responsive and professional home-based childcare where children feel safe, secure, valued and able to be themselves.

A Home From Home

The phrase 'A Home From Home' reflects what I want Little Lemon's to be: professional childcare that still feels warm, familiar and personal.

A little about me

I am Kayleigh-Anne Thomas, a mum of three and the childminder behind Little Lemon's. I have worked with children in early years and primary-school settings and particularly enjoy watching children develop, discovering what interests them and seeing their confidence grow.

I want parents to feel comfortable asking questions. I will be approachable, honest and attentive, and I will keep communication open from the beginning.

About Little Lemon's

A small, nurturing setting

Little Lemon's is my family home as well as my childcare setting. I want it to feel calm, welcoming and lived-in - somewhere children can relax, make themselves at home and still benefit from thoughtful professional care.

- Home-based care with familiar routines and individual attention.
- A focus on warm relationships, emotional security and learning through play.
- Regular outdoor experiences and local walking outings.
- Respect for each child's family, culture, language, interests and changing needs.

Opening hours

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 6:00pm.

The home environment

Children have access to age-appropriate play and learning resources across the main childcare areas. Crafts, baking, sensory and messy play are usually based in the kitchen or dining area, while books, construction, imaginative play and quieter activities are available throughout the day.

The environment is checked regularly and adapted for the ages, abilities and interests of the children attending.

Our Daily Routine

A flexible rhythm

Young children often feel secure when they can predict what happens next, but babies and toddlers do not run to a perfect timetable. Our days follow a familiar rhythm with room for individual sleep, feeding, toileting and comfort needs.

A typical day may include

- Arrivals, breakfast where agreed and child-led play.
- Stories, creative experiences, garden play or a local walk.
- A healthy morning snack and water.
- A parent-provided packed lunch or main meal, followed by quiet time.
- Rest or sleep as needed, afternoon play and another healthy snack.
- Calm play, tidy-up and individual handovers at collection.

Individual care

Bottles, nappies, toileting, sleep and comfort are guided by each child's age, home routine and current needs. Babies and younger children are not expected to fit one timetable.

If your child eats less, sleeps differently, seems unsettled or has an unusual day, I will tell you honestly at handover or through the agreed communication method.

Learning Through Play

How children learn

Play is at the heart of learning at Little Lemon's. Children are encouraged to follow their interests, make choices, investigate ideas and practise new skills at their own pace.

Experiences are informed by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and adapted to each child's age and stage of development.

What this may look like

- Building, sorting, puzzles and problem-solving.
- Stories, songs, conversation and imaginative play.
- Painting, mark-making, dough and sensory exploration.
- Movement, garden play and local nature walks.
- Everyday independence such as dressing, pouring, tidying and helping.

My role

I observe, join sensitively, introduce language and resources, and extend learning without taking over a child's play. Useful observations help me notice progress and plan next steps without interrupting children continually for paperwork.

If I have a developmental concern, I will speak sensitively with parents and work with them before seeking further advice or support where appropriate.

Settling In

Getting to know one another

Leaving your child with a new carer can feel difficult. Settling-in is flexible and led by your child's needs rather than a fixed timetable.

- Introductory visits or meet-ups can be arranged before care begins.
- Short independent sessions can be used where helpful, gradually increasing in length.
- We will discuss feeding, sleep, toileting, comfort, language, interests and previous experiences of separation.
- Please tell me the familiar words, songs or routines that help your child feel secure.

Comfort and reassurance

A familiar comfort item or family photograph may help during settling. Comfort items are not placed in the sleep space; sleep arrangements follow current safer-sleep requirements.

With your agreement, I can send a brief message once your child has settled after separation. If your child remains very distressed or is not coping, I will contact you rather than allowing them to struggle.

There is no deadline for a child to stop finding goodbyes difficult. We will review settling together and adjust the plan where needed.

Funding & Fees

Funded childcare

Little Lemon's accepts eligible funded childcare for children from 9 months, including eligible 2-year-olds and 3- and 4-year-olds. Depending on the family's circumstances and current government criteria, the entitlement may be 15 or up to 30 hours.

Funding is offered term-time only for 38 weeks each year and is not stretched across the year. Funded hours are free at the point of delivery and there is no consumables fee.

Private fees

Private or additional hours are charged at £7 per hour. Fees are invoiced monthly in advance and cleared payment is due by the 1st of each month, unless a different arrangement has been agreed in writing.

Deposit and late collection

A £100 refundable placement deposit is payable when a family accepts a place, as set out in the childcare contract.

Late collection is charged at £10 for the first 15 minutes, then £5 for each additional 15 minutes. Emergencies and unavoidable delays are considered reasonably when parents keep me informed.

Starting funding

A funded place begins only after eligibility has been validated, required paperwork is complete and the funded arrangement has been confirmed. Additional hours outside the funded agreement are charged at the normal private rate.

Holidays & Closures

Planned closures

Little Lemon's plans six weeks of annual leave each year: one week at Easter, one week at May half term, two weeks in summer and two weeks over Christmas and New Year.

Bank holidays are closed and are not charged.

Charges when care is not used

- No charge when Little Lemon's is closed because I am ill or otherwise unable to provide contracted care.
- Normal fees apply when a child is absent through illness.
- Normal fees apply for parent holidays taken while Little Lemon's remains open.

Planned closure dates are shared with families as early as possible and the individual contract confirms the arrangements that apply to your place.

Arrival & Collection

Arrival

Please arrive at the agreed time and share any important information about your child's sleep, health, medication, food, mood or anything else likely to affect the day.

Children are signed in and out using the setting's attendance arrangements. Exact arrival and departure times are recorded.

Collection

Children are released only to a parent/carer or an authorised collector. Please tell me in advance if somebody different will be collecting, and make sure I have the information needed to identify them.

If you are delayed, contact me as soon as possible. Repeated late collection may incur the late-collection charge set out in the fees information and contract.

Uncollected children

If a child is not collected and I cannot reach the parent or authorised contacts, I will follow the Uncollected Child Policy and safeguarding procedures. A child will never be left without appropriate care while arrangements are made.

Health & Wellbeing

When children are unwell

Children may attend with a mild cold if they are otherwise well enough to take part comfortably. A child who is feverish, significantly unwell, unusually sleepy, distressed or unable to participate should remain at home.

Little Lemon's requires children to be free from fever for 48 hours before returning. After vomiting or diarrhoea, children must remain away for at least 48 hours after the last episode.

If your child becomes unwell while in my care, I will contact you promptly and ask for collection where needed.

Medication and health information

Please tell me about medication, allergies, diagnosed conditions, hospital attendance, infectious illness, a new rash or any significant health change. Prescribed medication is only given in line with the setting's medication procedures and written permission.

Please tell me if any vaccination is delayed or declined, or if there is a medical reason why a vaccination has not been given.

Sleep and personal care

Sleep arrangements are agreed with each family and reviewed as children grow. Current safer-sleep requirements are followed, including keeping the sleep space clear of inappropriate items.

Nappy changing and toileting are handled calmly and respectfully, with age-appropriate privacy and safe supervision.

Food & Nutrition

Food provided

Healthy morning and afternoon snacks and drinking water are provided. Breakfast may be available for early arrivals where this has been agreed in advance.

Parents provide packed lunches or main meals. Suitable food can be stored safely and warmed where appropriate.

Allergies and dietary needs

Please tell me about every allergy, intolerance, dietary requirement and cultural preference before care begins, and update me promptly if anything changes.

Little Lemon's is not a nut-free home. However, nuts and nut products are not used or served during childcare hours. Please do not include them in food brought from home.

Safer eating

Food should be prepared in a way that is safe for your child's age and development. Small round foods such as grapes and cherry tomatoes should be cut lengthways and into quarters. Whole nuts, popcorn, hard sweets and other known choking hazards should not be sent.

Children are supervised appropriately while eating and drinking. Food is not used as a punishment or reward, and children are encouraged without being forced to eat.

What to Bring & Keep

Please bring each day

- A named packed lunch or main meal.
- Formula, expressed milk or specialist milk where needed.
- Any essential medication with current written permission.
- Weather items needed that day.
- Updates about sleep, illness, medicine, injury or changes affecting your child.

Items that can stay here

- Nappies or pull-ups and wipes.
- Named nappy/barrier cream and sun cream, with permission.
- Two complete changes of clothing.
- Indoor shoes or slippers, if used.
- Waterproofs, wellington boots and seasonal hats or gloves.

Please label clothing, footwear, bottles, food containers, creams and medication. Parents should check supplies regularly and replace anything that is running low, outgrown, damaged, out of season or out of date.

Working Together

A respectful partnership

Children benefit when parents and childminder share information openly, respect agreed arrangements and respond consistently to changing needs.

Please keep me updated about

- Health, medication, allergies and dietary needs.
- Sleep, toileting, feeding and comfort routines.
- Changes at home that may affect your child's emotions or behaviour.
- Contact details, emergency contacts and authorised collectors.
- Professional support or assessments relevant to care and development.

Equalities and inclusion

Every child and family is welcomed without unfair treatment. Resources and experiences aim to reflect different families, cultures, abilities and communities. Reasonable adjustments and additional support are discussed individually.

Please speak to me early if something is unclear or worrying you. Most concerns can be resolved more easily through a calm, private conversation.

Policies

Available to families

Little Lemon's maintains written policies and procedures so that families can understand how I keep children safe, make fair decisions and provide consistent care.

Policies cover areas including safeguarding, complaints, behaviour, equality and SEND, health and safety, medication, illness, accidents and incidents, safer sleep, food hygiene, outings, missing or uncollected children, privacy and data protection, visitors, mobile phones, cameras and social media.

Where to find them

Current policies are available through the Little Lemon's website and can also be requested directly. A printed policy folder is available for parents to read.

Please ask for a paper or digital copy of any policy you would like to read in full. Material changes that affect families will be communicated.

Safeguarding

Keeping children safe

Safeguarding is the most important part of my role. I have a professional duty to recognise, respond to and record concerns about a child's welfare and to follow current safeguarding procedures.

Where a child may be at risk, information may need to be shared with the appropriate safeguarding professionals without seeking parental permission first.

Safe practice

- Children are supervised according to their age, development and the activity.
- Personal information is handled confidentially and shared only where there is a legitimate need.
- Photographs, mobile phones and online communication are managed carefully and in line with permissions and policy.
- I keep factual records and seek professional advice where required.

I do not investigate safeguarding allegations myself. Concerns and allegations are referred through the appropriate procedures. The full Safeguarding and Complaints Policies are available to families.

Positive Behaviour

Our approach

Children are still learning how to manage big feelings, share space and understand what is expected of them. I respond calmly and consistently, taking account of a child's age, development, feelings and circumstances.

- Clear, age-appropriate expectations and reminders.
- Positive attention, encouragement and specific praise.
- Redirection, choices and support to regulate strong feelings.
- Immediate, proportionate consequences that are connected to what happened.

I do not use smacking, shaking, humiliation, frightening threats, food restriction or inappropriate isolation.

Working with families

Persistent or concerning behaviour is discussed sensitively with parents. We may agree shared language, routines or strategies and, where needed, work with relevant professionals while maintaining the dignity and inclusion of every child.

Outdoor Play & Outings

Everyday outdoor experiences

Outdoor play supports physical development, confidence, wellbeing and curiosity. Children have regular opportunities to use the garden and explore the local community.

Local outings

Regular outings are on foot and may include local parks, libraries, toddler groups, shops, woodland walks and community events.

- Routes, weather, children's ages and individual needs are considered before outings.
- Emergency contacts, a charged phone, first-aid supplies and essential care items are taken.
- Younger children may use a pushchair, buggy board, trailer or walking reins according to age and risk.
- Plans are changed or cancelled if weather, illness or local conditions make an outing unsuitable.

Please provide weather-appropriate clothing, suitable footwear and any requested sun protection.

Communication

Daily handovers

Short conversations at arrival and collection help us share essential information while keeping transitions calm and safe. Updates may cover meals, sleep, nappies or toileting, wellbeing, play and notable achievements.

Messages and photographs

Daily information may be shared verbally or through BabyDays according to the arrangements agreed for your child. Photographs are shared only where the relevant permission has been given.

During childcare hours my priority is supervising and caring for the children, so non-urgent replies may not be immediate.

Important conversations

Developmental concerns, changes to care or sensitive matters are best discussed privately at an agreed time rather than during a busy doorway handover. Important changes and agreements should be confirmed in writing so that everyone has the same information.

Frequently Asked Questions

What should my child bring?

A named packed lunch or main meal, suitable spare clothes and any daily items listed in the What to Bring & Keep section.

Do you provide food?

Healthy snacks and water are included. Breakfast may be available where agreed. Parents provide packed lunches or main meals.

Are you nut-free?

No. The home is not nut-free, but nuts and nut products are not used or served during childcare hours. Please do not send them in food from home.

Do you drive children on outings?

No. Regular outings are local and undertaken on foot.

What happens if my child is absent?

Normal fees apply for child sickness, other child absences and parent holidays when Little Lemon's is open.

Can I change my funded pattern?

Changes depend on availability, eligibility, notice requirements and the signed agreement. Please discuss requests as early as possible.

Contact Information

Your childminder

Kayleigh-Anne Thomas
Little Lemon's Childminding
A Home From Home

Contact details

Telephone: 07786 806582
Email: hello@littlelemonschildminding.co.uk
Website: www.littlelemonschildminding.co.uk
Address: 33 Manscroft Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP1 3HX

Opening hours

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 6:00pm.

Contacting me

For routine updates, please use the agreed contact method or BabyDays.
During childcare hours, supervision and care come first, so non-urgent replies may not be immediate.

For an urgent matter affecting the current childcare day, please telephone directly.

Thank You

Thank you for choosing Little Lemon's

Thank you for taking the time to read about Little Lemon's and for trusting me with the information that helps me understand your child and family.

It is a privilege to care for your child and to be part of their early experiences. I look forward to getting to know your family and sharing the small moments, growing confidence and joyful discoveries ahead.

Please keep this handbook

Use it alongside your childcare contract, registration information, permissions and the full policies available from the setting.

If you ever have a question, please ask. Open communication helps us provide the happiest and most consistent care for your child.

Kayleigh-Anne Thomas
Little Lemon's Childminding

Notes

A little space for your notes.



Notes

A little space for your notes.



Notes & Reminders

A little space for anything you'd like to remember.

