



The Little Chicks - Guide for Families



Helping you get to know our philosophy and approach to educative caregiving, living and learning for infants and toddlers.

Kia Ora and welcome to the Little Chicks Whānau!

We are so excited to have you with us and hope that you and your family enjoy your time with us here in the Little Chicks room.

We are very passionate about our work and strive to provide the best for our babies and families. Our philosophy and approach are based on the model of the Resources for Infant Educators (RIE) approach, the work of Magda Gerber and Emmi Pikler.

We hope that the information provided in this guide for families will help you to understand and support our approach with your child in the centre, enrich your parenting journey and help your child's settling in transition.

We look forward to the adventure ahead,

Marisa, Xana, Steph & Leanne

THE BASIS OF THE RIE APPROACH: RESPECT

Respect is the basis of the RIE philosophy. We not only respect babies, we demonstrate our respect every time we interact with them. Respecting a child means treating even the youngest infant as a unique human being, not as an object.

OUR GOAL: AN AUTHENTIC CHILD

An authentic child is one who feels secure, autonomous, and competent. When we help a child to feel secure, feel appreciated, feel that "somebody is deeply, truly interested in me," by the way we just look, the way we just listen, we influence that child's whole personality, the way that child sees life.

TRUST IN THE INFANT'S COMPETENCE

We have basic trust in the infant to be an initiator, to be an explorer eager to learn what he is ready for. Because of this trust, we provide the infant with only enough help necessary to allow the child to enjoy mastery of her own actions.

SENSITIVE OBSERVATION

Our method, guided by respect for the infant's competence, is observation. We observe carefully to understand the infant's communications and his needs. The more we observe, the more we understand and appreciate the enormous amount and speed of learning that happens during the first two or three years of life. We become more humble, we teach less, and we provide an environment for learning instead.

CAREGIVING TIMES: INVOLVING THE CHILD

During care activities (nappy changes, feeding, bathing, dressing, etc.), we encourage even the tiniest infant to become an active participant rather than a passive recipient of the activities. Parents create opportunities for interaction, cooperation, intimacy and mutual enjoyment by being wholeheartedly with the infant during the time they spend together anyway. "Refueled" by such unhurried, pleasurable caring experiences, infants are ready to explore their environment with only minimal intervention by adults.

A SAFE, CHALLENGING, PREDICTABLE ENVIRONMENT

Our role is to create an environment in which the child can best do all the things that the child would do naturally. The more predictable an environment is, the easier it is for babies to learn. As infants become more mobile, they need safe, appropriate space in which to move. Their natural, inborn desire to move should not be handicapped by the environment.

TIME FOR UNINTERRUPTED PLAY AND FREEDOM TO EXPLORE

We give the infant plenty of time for uninterrupted play. Instead of trying to teach babies new skills, we appreciate and admire what babies are actually doing.

CONSISTENCY

We establish clearly defined limits and communicate our expectations to develop discipline.

Ways to Prepare Your Baby for Starting at an ECE Centre

Here's a list of practical and nurturing ways parents can prepare their baby to start at an Early Childhood Education (ECE) centre, with a focus on supporting independent sleep and easing the transition:

1. Gradually Introduce Independent Sleep

- **Establish a consistent nap routine:** Start putting your baby down for naps at the same times each day, this will help create a consistent sleep routine.
- **Put baby down drowsy but awake:** This helps them learn to fall asleep on their own, a skill that supports smoother naps in a group setting.
- **Use familiar sleep cues:** Practice using a sleep sack or comfort item (if age-appropriate), so those cues can be used at the centre too.
- **Reduce reliance on motion sleep:** Transition away from rocking, feeding, or holding to sleep so they can adjust more easily to the sleep environment at ECE.

2. Establish a Predictable Daily Routine

- Begin aligning your home routine with the ECE centre's schedule for meals, naps, and active times.
- Predictability helps babies feel secure and makes the transition to a new environment less stressful.

3. Encourage Familiarity with Being Cared for by Others

- Have short periods where other trusted adults (grandparents, babysitters) care for your baby to help them learn to separate from you gradually.
- This builds confidence and resilience in new social settings.

4. Visit the Centre Together (We have a settling in transition routine that we will send separately)

- Take your baby for a few short visits before their official start.
- Allow them time to explore the environment, meet teachers, and observe other children.

5. Practice Saying Goodbye

- Use a consistent and calm goodbye routine when leaving your baby with others.
- Keep it short, reassuring, and predictable – avoid sneaking away, as it can increase anxiety.

6. Communicate with the Centre

- Share details about your baby's sleep routine, comfort items, feeding preferences, and temperament with the educators.
- The more they know, the better they can support your baby's individual needs.

7. Foster Self-Soothing Skills

- Encourage gentle self-settling by giving your baby time to fuss briefly before intervening (as developmentally appropriate).
- This helps your baby learn to manage small stretches of distress, which can help during naps or transitions at ECE.

8. Build a Sleep-Friendly Environment

- Replicate some aspects of the ECE sleep space at home (e.g., white noise, or cot) so your baby is familiar with those conditions.
- Alternatively, share what works at home with the centre to help them recreate that environment.

9. Support Emotional Readiness

- Talk to your baby about what to expect, even if they don't fully understand.
- Use simple phrases like, "You'll play with friends and teachers, and then I'll come back."

10. Be Patient and Consistent

- Expect an adjustment period. Sleep patterns and behaviour might temporarily change when starting at ECE.
- Stay consistent with routines at home to provide stability and reassurance.