

11 Payment of Fees

Policy statement

The primary aim of our setting is to provide a service to local children and families and not to make a profit. However, this aim can only be fulfilled if we have enough income to cover our outgoings. Fees are therefore charged to cover staff wages and pre-school running costs.

We will never take any action against a child, including, but not limited to, exclusion or discriminatory treatment, due to parent/guardian's genuine inability to pay fees.

As a setting, we offer funded places in all of our sessions, Monday to Friday 8.30-3pm, for 38 weeks per year. For those who do not yet qualify for government funding we charge additional fees but keep these as low as possible and in line with government funding in order to remain affordable to our families.

Procedures

The responsibility for invoicing and collection of fees is held by the company directors, but actions can be delegated to the Administrator/ Bookkeeper. The responsible person will operate the following procedure:

Invoicing

- Parents/carers will be invoiced half termly in advance for all sessions into which their child is booked for the Pre-School.
- Parents/carers will be invoiced half termly in advance a 'consumable charge' with the rate depending on the number of sessions into which their child is booked for the Pre-School (see Consumables below)
- Parents/carers will be asked to pay all fees within 2 weeks from date of invoice and prior to the start of the term.
- Other fees due e.g. where a child has attended extra sessions, Lunch Clubs, the payment will be required on the same day.

Disputed invoices

- Where a parent disputes the amount of the invoice this may be settled informally by the Manager.
- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved informally the parent will be asked to submit full details in writing to the company directors and the matter will be considered at a management meeting, with enquiry commissioned if necessary.
- If after this the dispute is still not settled the dispute will be treated as a complaint and the complaints procedure followed.

Due/unpaid fees – stage one

- Parents/carers who have not settled their account within 1 week of an invoice will be sent a reminder of the amount owed and the fact that the payment is due.
- They will be invited to discuss the matter with the Pre-School manager and/or company directors in confidence.
- They will be given a further 7 days to pay fees, and informed that a fine of £15 will be levied if fees are not paid within this time.

Late/unpaid fees – stage two

- Parents/carers who do not settle their account within 2 weeks of the original invoice will incur a £15 fine.
- Parents/carers will be notified they have a further 24 hours to pay the fees with the additional £15 fine.
- Again parents/carers will be reminded of the option to discuss the matter in confidence with either the Pre-School manager/leader or company directors.
- Individualised payment plans may be agreed by the Manager, Administrator and/or company directors.
- However, full fees must be paid in all but the most exceptional cases.

Late/unpaid fees – stage three

- If parents/carers make contact with the Pre-School staff or company directors following the letter in stage two, the fine may be discounted at the discretion of the Administrator and/or company directors.
- Parents/carers who do not make contact with Pre-School staff /company directors or settle their account within 2 weeks of the original invoice and with the further 24 hours offered will then forfeit their child's allocated place at the preschool. The space will immediately be offered to children on the waiting list.

Consumables Charges

From April 2024 we replaced our previous 'donation' and 'wish' lists with a universal 'consumables' charge to enable us to budget consistently and allow us to continue to provide high quality and comprehensive childcare services to our families.

This charge is broken down into a cost per session but is used to cover all resources used by your child throughout the year. You will receive an invoice each half term, two weeks before the new term or half term commencing.

Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of funded, high quality, flexible childcare to two-, three- and four-year-old children. Our hourly rates invoiced to families also deliver the same. The funding and hourly rates are not intended to cover the costs of snacks/meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional services.

Sadly, in our case, the hourly funding rate we now receive from the government is lower than we would usually charge and does not meet our running costs. This affects the sustainability of our pre-school. Moving forward we have therefore been advised by the local authority to request all families make a 'consumables' contribution to cover things such as snacks / extra curricula activities / themed resources / cooking ingredients / online learning journey / visual aids etc. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Without your help with these costs, we would not be able to provide these additional activities and resources for your children. Where parents are unable or unwilling to pay for this contribution, please speak with our manager, as there may be options where we ask you to supply your own snacks, consumables and resources per session for your child instead.

We hope you can appreciate our position and we are happy to clarify or discuss this further with you. Please contact our manager for any queries or further information.