

Admissions, Funding & Fees Policy

Availability

Availability of places within the Pre-School changes all the time. We advise families to submit applications as soon as possible. Our application form can be obtained from the pre-school or sent in via our website. Applications should be received well in advance of the requested start date.

Being on our waiting list does not guarantee a place, our waiting list is arranged in date order of when the application is received. We will endeavour to accommodate preferences; however, no guarantees can be given that parents will receive their first choice of sessions. We advise that children attend a minimum of two sessions per week to enable them to settle more easily.

All children are considered on an individual basis based on:

- Current staffing levels
- Current cohort of children
- The care and education of all children
- The health and safety of all children

A child's place is not reserved until it has been confirmed by the Pre-School via an e-mail, and we are in receipt of the items below:-

1. Completed registration form
2. Receipt of a completed and signed Local Authority Parent Authorisation Form (PAF)
3. A validity code or Golden Ticket, if appropriate

Once a place is confirmed, preparations will include:-

- Enrolling the child onto our system, reserving their place until they reach school age (typically end of August before their 5th birthday)
- Book dates for an induction visit and home visit
- Choose a Key Person for the child
- Consider any special adaptations that the child may need

Children are entitled to a place in school reception from the September after their 4th birthday, so it is very unlikely that we will admit a new child if they are eligible for reception. Children who turn four years old after September and are not of eligible school age may apply for a place.

Although we do not ask for a deposit we are making a considerable commitment to the child, and we expect any parent needing to cancel a place to do so promptly.

Deferred school places

Children leave our care in the July after their 4th birthday. We support children moving on to school to be 'school ready'. This means emotionally resilient, confident, and eager learners who have developed self-care skills.

Although parents do have the option to defer a school place until the term of their child's 5th birthday, we strongly advocate that the best place for school aged children is in reception. Reception is a critical foundation year where children have an eased start into school life and have a year to learn the expectations and environment of their chosen school and remain with peers of the same age.

If a parent chooses to defer their child's school placement, there should be no assumption that the child can remain at the setting. This is due to the fact that:-

- We assume that children's leaving date will be the July they become of school age, thus meaning their space may have already been allocated
- We may no longer be able to meet the child's needs due to primary care catering for children aged 2-4 years
- Additional time at Pre-School may inhibit rather than support the child's development
- We can only accommodate children on their current funded hours which may be less than school hours
- Cannot guarantee a child will be able to enter school at the reception phase and may have to go directly to Year 1, missing the foundations for learning

If a parent chooses to defer they must first approach the setting Manager.

Deferrals are considered on an individual basis based on:

- Current staffing levels
- The current cohort of children
- The care and education of all children
- The health and safety of all children

We have the right to refuse if we do not feel it is in the child's best interest.

Opening hours

We open Monday – Friday 8am to 4pm term time only (38 weeks per academic year). Term dates are advertised on our website. We try to follow the term dates of Sidegate Primary School closely; however, they may not be the same. We are closed on Bank and Public holidays.

Closures

In the rare event that the Pre-School is subject to interruption of service or temporary closure we will credit the billpayers account for the sessions we were unable to offer.

Late collection

If a parent collects a child later than the end of their booked session, this may incur additional staff costs. Therefore, we may charge a late collection fee at £5 per occasion and the relevant hourly rate charged in thirty-minute blocks. If late collection persists we may cancel the child's place by giving the parent 7 days' notice in writing.

Changing or adding sessions

When a child is registered with us this is an ongoing place until they leave for school. We understand that sometimes parents may wish to change the sessions their child attends. We will endeavour to accommodate any requests made if we are able to.

Subject to availability parents can book ad-hoc additional sessions at the ongoing fee rate. As a rule, we do not allow sessions to be swapped, unless in exceptional circumstances and agreed with the setting Manager.

Food

Healthy, balanced and nutritious snacks are provided during sessions. Information about any dietary requirements and food allergies is obtained before children start at the setting.

Lunch is part of our extended morning session; children who stay for lunch are required to bring a healthy packed lunch.

Fees and funding

We provide sessional care paid for by fees or funding, or a mixture of both. We charge based on sessions booked, not sessions attended. Refunds or credits will not be given for days where a child does not attend because of illness or holidays. Current fee rates can be found on our website.

There is a voluntary consumable charge of 50p per session to cover the costs of snacks and consumables items. We are mindful of the impact additional charges may have on parents, so if you experience difficulties meeting the costs of consumables and additional services, we ask you to have a conversation with the Pre-School Manager. The Manager is likely to have a better knowledge of individual families and their circumstances and therefore best placed to have these discussions.

In these circumstances we will do all we can to help. Alternatively, you can supply your own snacks and consumables for your child.

Payment of fees

Invoices for session fees and voluntary consumable charges for funded children are e-mailed monthly.

Payment must be received two weeks following the invoice date. Payments should be made by bank transfer; we are unable to accept cash or cheques or credit or debit card payments.

If a parent's bill is paid by a third party (e.g. other family member or employer) the parent named on the registration form remains liable for all fees due.

If fees are not paid by the due date we will contact you by phone or e-mail to chase payment. Parents are encouraged to talk honestly with the manager as soon as possible if they are likely to have difficulty paying on time.

Once a debt has accrued we reserve the right to refuse to provide further care for the child until the debt is cleared. When necessary we will pursue debt via routes such as the County Court.

Local Authority Funding

The local authority (Suffolk County Council) fund early years care through free childcare entitlements.

- **Universal 15 hours:** All 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours of funded early education and childcare per week.
- **Extended 30 hours:** Eligible working families can access an additional 15 hours, for a total of 30 hours per week.
- **15 hours for disadvantaged two-year-olds:** There is also a 15-hour entitlement for disadvantaged two-year-olds.
- **Expansion to 9 months to 3 years:** From September 2025 the Government plans to extend the 30-hour entitlement to eligible working families of children aged 9 months and above.

Eligibility

- **Working parents:** To be eligible for the extended 30-hour entitlement, parents must meet specific criteria, including working a certain number of hours and earning a certain income.
- **Disadvantaged two-year-olds:** Families on certain low-income benefits or with children with additional needs may be eligible for the 15-hour entitlement for two-year-olds.

Please see our website for more information and links.

To evidence that a child qualifies, or continues to qualify for funding parents must:

- Accurately complete and sign a local authority's PAF which we send out, by the deadline advised
- Apply in good time for their unique validity code and pass this on to the Pre-School by the deadline advised.

If we subsequently find a code to be invalid or ineligible, the parent will be liable for fees for sessions booked at our current fee rates.

It is a condition of local authority funding that children attend their place regularly and we keep attendance records for children in receipt of funding. If a child is not attending their funded sessions regularly parents will be contacted to find out reasons why.

Government funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free, high quality, flexible childcare. It is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours, or additional services; therefore parents (or the usual bill payer) can expect to pay for these.

Leaving Pre-School

Written notice of 4 weeks should be given if your child will be leaving the Pre-school before the standard school leaving age. Any outstanding bills must be settled promptly.

Policy reviewed on: 22nd April 2025

Reviewed by: Sandra Butler, Manager

Next Review Due: 22nd April 2026