

Wells Next the Sea Primary & Nursery School

Nursery Charging Policy

Entitlement

Wells Primary and Nursery School supports the entitlement to 15/30 hours of free early years provision for 3 and 4 year olds in a teacher led setting. The Universal 15 free hours provision is available following a child's third birthday up until they reach compulsory school age. This provision is irrespective of family background or circumstances. Some families will be entitled to 30 hours free early years provision depending upon the family's circumstances. The 30 hours provision must be applied for and an eligibility code obtained before the start of any claim period or before the child starts attending the Nursery.

The Education Act 2002 offered the opportunity to develop childcare within the maintained sector. Maintained schools were encouraged to develop "wrap around" day care for 3 and 4 year olds attending funded Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) education. The Department for Education advises that while free entitlement at the point of delivery is statutory, provision beyond 15/30 hours is not and therefore can be charged, in line with the power to charge for extended services. See Child Care Act 2006 (Secretary of State's code of practice 2010). The Local Governing Body of Wells Next the Sea Primary & Nursery School makes charges for additional child care under section 27 of the Education Act 2002.

Purpose of our provision

The extended provision supports parents to return to work, provide education and training. For children with working parents, the provision can enable access to quality childcare and education throughout the day in a single setting. This enhances children's well-being promoting secure foundations for future learning and life.

Aims of the Policy

- Ensure that charges are fair and affordable
- To uphold the government's policy of free entitlement for 15/30 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year. This will be maintained subject to session availability
- Ensure that childcare is flexible and meets the needs of working parents
- Ensure that parents can identify on their invoice the charges made in relation to additional hours above the 15/30 free hours
- A review will be made each year in March to be implemented in the autumn term
- Any increase in charges will be made primarily to sustain the Nursery provision and parents will be informed in advance of any increase in charging

Education/child care charges

Child care provision will be available from 8.30 am to 3.00 pm, five days per week for 38 weeks of the year (190 days) This will be achieved through two 3 hour sessions with an optional paid lunch period. Parents are not obliged to purchase additional hours in order to secure a free place.

This Charging Policy covers children accessing our provision additional to Early Years Foundation Stage funded education. No charge can be made for the Early Years Foundation Stage funded education place of 15/30 hours per week but parents can purchase additional child care provision where available.

The costings are based upon resource requirements to meet Early Years Foundation Stage requirements as specified by Ofsted.

Payment information

Additional child care may be purchased at £12.50 per 3-hour session. Only full sessions can be booked; the Nursery cannot accept bookings for part sessions. Charges will be for the duration of the full sessions booked irrespective of the actual length of stay. An additional charge of £1.50 per day will be made for children attending the lunch time session. Parents will be required to provide a lunch for their own child.

Parents will be invoiced for sessions attended above the 15/30 hours free entitlement. The optional lunch time session does not attract Nursery funding and is therefore, charged in full at £1.50 per session.

Payment for optional sessions should be made to the Nursery at the start of the week in which optional sessions are booked. Payments cannot be refunded if a child does not attend an optional session due to illness or if parents choose not to bring the child to the session for any other reason. The Nursery maintains staffing levels to meet current guidelines and accepts bookings within the current capacity, therefore staffing costs will still need to be met. If a child is absent for a long period of time, the Nursery/School will decide on a case by case basis as to whether fees will still be payable for the period. The case will be referred to the Local Governing Body and their decision will be final. Charges may still be payable if the Nursery is closed due to circumstances beyond the Nursery/Schools control, for example, adverse weather or health and safety reasons. This is because the overheads of the Nursery, such as staffing, will still need to be met.

Payments can be made either in cash or by cheque. If a cheque does not clear for any reason, any costs incurred by the Nursery/School will be passed on to the family and added to the amount owing.

Voluntary contributions may be requested for additional events such as cooking activities, visits out of school or special occasions. Parents will be notified of these in advance.

The notice period for withdrawing a child from the Nursery is a half a school term.

Collection of unpaid fees

The Local Governing Body has a duty to ensure the school receives all funds to which it is entitled including Nursery fees. A full record will be kept of debts owed to the school for 7 years. This will include all letters requesting payment, all reminders and invoices. The school will not initiate legal action to recover debts, however, we may refer uncollected debts to the Wensum Trust to consider taking such action.

Roles and responsibilities regarding debt collection

The Nursery/school will ensure that:

- Letters requesting payment are accurately recorded and full records are maintained
- Evidence of the steps taken by the school in pursuance of the debt is recorded including dates and times of both letters and telephone calls
- A final reminder is sent by recorded delivery to the debtor(s)
- The privacy of the family will be respected and only made known to those who need to know
- The level of outstanding debt can be determined at any time.

The Local Governing Body will:

- Regularly review the arrangements for debt recovery
- Approve any legal action taken
- Record all approved action in the minutes of the relevant meeting
- Adhere to the privacy arrangements
- May delegate its responsibilities under this policy to the head teacher

The process for pursuing debts

- **Informal reminder** – within 3 days of late payment, the debtor will be informally reminded in person or by telephone that they owe money to the Nursery/School
- **First reminder letter** – a formal letter will be sent to the debtor if the amount is still owing one week after the informal reminder
- **Second reminder letter** – a second reminder letter will be sent to the debtor if the debt remains outstanding one week after the first reminder letter. At this stage the Nursery/School has the right to advise parents that continued late payments may result in the loss of their child's place at the Nursery. These letters allow the debtor every opportunity to make payment and ensure the Nursery/school can prove all reasonable steps have been taken to recover the amount owing should the issue proceed further.
- **Final reminder letter** – if no response is received following the second letter, the Nursery/School will send a letter to the debtor advising them that they will be referring the matter to the Wensum Trust to consider legal action. This letter will be sent by recorded delivery to ensure the debtor has had every opportunity to respond. At this point a decision will be made by the Local Governing Body as to whether the child's place will be revoked.
- **Possible legal action** – if no payment is made the Wensum Trust will decide whether to take legal action against the debtor(s)

Changes to sessions

The Nursery is not able to accommodate short term changes to sessions such as changing from a Thursday afternoon to a Friday morning for one week only. We will require a half term's notice for any changes or additions to a child's attendance. The Nursery will do its best to work with parents to accommodate longer term changes but this will be subject to session availability. If notice is given to withdraw child from the Nursery, fees will be payable up to the end of the notice period.

Application for a Nursery place

Children are accepted into the Nursery at the start of the term following their third birthday. Applications can be made at any time prior to this by telephoning or going into the school office. Brief details will be recorded including parent's contact information, and the Nursery/School will then contact parents during the term before their child would join the Nursery. At this point parents will be asked to complete the necessary paperwork, including the funding application, and to specify their session preferences.

Complaints

If parents feel that their child is not receiving the free entitlement as set out in the Early Education and Child Care Guidance, or they have any concerns about the Nursery provision, a complaint may be made to the School. Parents should follow the procedures set out in the school's Complaints Policy which is available on the school website or from the school office.

Reviewing and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed and agreed by the Local Governing Body on an annual basis.