



3 and 4 Year Old Funding

As your child turns three, parents enter into the new world of funding! We are sure you have a lot of questions, so we have prepared the following information to give you a better understanding of what funding is, how it works and what you need to do to claim your funding entitlement. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

3 and 4 year old funding is a Government funded scheme which is distributed by local authorities. **ALL** 3 and 4 year olds are eligible for up to 15 hours of government funding for 38 weeks of the academic year. Children become eligible the term **after** they have turned 3 (cut off dates are 31st August, 31st December and 31st March for the Autumn, Spring and Summer Terms respectively). For example, a child that turns 3 on 4th March (during the Spring term) becomes eligible for the Summer term; however a child turning 3 on the 4th April (a date which may still fall during the Spring term) would not be eligible until the Autumn term due to the cut off date. Please note these cut off dates have been set by the Government to determine eligibility and are not determined by Early Days.

In addition to the 15 hours that every 3 and 4 year old is entitled to, some families may be able to claim an additional 15 hours of funding, bringing their funding entitlement up to 30 hours. Parents must check their eligibility to see whether they qualify to receive 30 hours and register to get a special code **which must be renewed every three months**. We encourage all families to check their eligibility for receiving 30 hours of funding; information on how to do that is attached.

Parents are also able to split their funding hours across settings; if you attend another nursery or preschool, your funded hours can be divided between each setting in whichever way you choose, as long as you stay within your entitlement of either 15 hours or 30 hours.

The DfE's guidance on funding states that "Government funding is intended to deliver free, high quality flexible childcare. It is not intended to pay for the costs of drinks, snacks, other consumables, extra hours or additional services". **At Early Days, funded children are asked to pay an additional services/consumables fee of £2.70 per funded hour, as well as our normal charges for breakfast, hot lunches and cold teas (if applicable)**. Any additional hours that your child attends over and above your free funded hours are billed at our non-funded hourly rate of £6.85 per hour for 3 and 4 year olds.

The additional services/consumables fee includes additional provisions/services that we provide as a private setting as well as the cost of consumables. As outlined in our Terms and Conditions, this fee covers and is not limited to Woodland School, supplemental learning (e.g. Mini Professors), digital learning, book lending scheme, Tapestry Journal, in-class cookery, gardening, music and movement, niche staff training, improved staff to child ratio above the industry standard, end of term/year parties and events (e.g. sports day), in-house chef, snacks, drinks, art and craft supplies plus consumables (e.g. hand towels, soaps, disposable gloves, aprons, baby wipes), etc. This list is not exhaustive.

We do make provision for families that would like to opt out of paying the additional services/consumables fee by offering afternoon sessions between 12 noon and 6 pm. These fully funded sessions cannot be combined with morning session hours. All other families have access to funded hours but are asked to pay the additional services/consumables charge.

Please note that government funding only applies for 38 weeks of the academic year whilst the academic year is typically 40 weeks (academic year refers to those weeks of the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms). This means that in both the Autumn and Summer terms, families only receive 14 weeks and 12 weeks of funding respectively when the term time

typically runs for 15 weeks and 13 weeks. Like you, we do not really understand the logic of this(!) and share your frustration that not all 40 weeks are covered, especially as academic weeks are also set by the government through Oxfordshire County Council. Unfortunately, what that means is for these terms, there will be one week of attendance that will have to be fully paid for by parents at our non-funded hourly rate. Holiday Club weeks are not covered by any government funding.

We will provide you with paperwork you need to complete so that we can claim your funding hours. If you are using less hours a week than your full 15 or 30 hour entitlement, then please talk to us about how you can stretch (bank) these unused hours. For example, if you have a 30 hour code and are only using 22 hours per week, you have 8 unused hours per week which you are entitled to. We can 'bank' those unused 8 hours so that we can use these hours in other weeks that are not normally covered by funding. Banked/unused hours can be used to cover Holiday Clubs, for example as well as those non-funded weeks mentioned above that fall in regular term time. When those hours are used in non-funded weeks, you will only be billed the additional services/consumables fee as opposed to our non-funded hourly rate for 3 and 4 year olds. We appreciate that this must sound very confusing but be assured that we will reach out to you about banking hours, if you are eligible, and work with you so that we can maximize your funding and help you to reduce your childcare costs.

Once the paperwork is complete, we enter information onto the government portal and are directly paid for your funding. It is very important that we get your forms back on time so that they can be processed and entered by all the government deadline dates. Your invoice will clearly detail your free hours, the additional services/consumables fee for the term, the cost of meals and any additional hours outside your funding entitlement. I

To get the ball rolling, the first thing you should do is to check the government website and determine your eligibility to receive 30 hours funding (see the process attached). You then need to let us have your eligibility code along with your National Insurance number so that we can set you up on the government portal. We are not able to apply for this eligibility code on your behalf. If you are eligible, please note that **YOU MUST** reapply for a new eligibility code **every 3 months**. Once you are set up, the government portal will send you emails to remind you to do this before your code expires. Please, please be sure to reapply when you get that reminder as every term, there are parents that forget to reapply and then they become ineligible and revert to just 15 hours. There is nothing we can do to fix this for you – the government are very strict with their rules and deadlines. So please react immediately to any emails you may receive about reconfirming your eligibility.

Frequently Asked Questions:

I am eligible for 30 hours funding but we attend Early Days for a total of 36 hours per week. How do you calculate my funding across the four days I attend?

You will receive your 30 hours of free funding entitlement and would be invoiced for 30 hours of our additional services/consumables fee at £2.70/funded hour for each funded week. The additional 6 hours not covered by funding will be billed at our 3 and 4 year old non-funded rate (currently £6.85 per hour). You will also be charged for any meals.

My child attends for 27 hours a week and I am eligible for 30 hours of funding, does that mean I can bank 3 hours of funding and how does that work?

Yes, that would mean you are eligible to bank 3 hours of funding. We will contact you directly with more information about banking unused hours and explain how these can be used. For a 12 week term, that would mean you would be able to bank a total of 36 hours which we can use on one of the non-funded weeks, during holiday club, for example. We track and monitor all banked hours as we have to be able to show when and where any child uses banked hours as all banked hours must be used up by 31st August of each year.