



## FUNDING – HOW IT WORKS

‘Early Education Entitlement’ is funded education for **all** 3 and 4 year olds and **some** children under the age of three that meet certain eligibility criteria. Funding is distributed by the local authorities who set the level of funding received, which differs between county to county, and is provided for 38 weeks of the academic year.

### When does funding commence?

Children who are eligible for funded educational hours receive these from the term **after** they have reached the required age level:

For children eligible for 9 month funding:

A child born on or between....	Can access their free entitlement from
1 <sup>st</sup> July – 30 <sup>th</sup> November	Autumn Term (September onwards)
1 <sup>st</sup> December – 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Spring Term (January onwards)
1 <sup>st</sup> April – 30 <sup>th</sup> June	Summer Term (April onwards)

For children eligible for 2 year, 3 year and 4 year old funding:

A child born on or between....	Can access their free entitlement from
1 <sup>st</sup> April – 31 <sup>st</sup> August	Autumn Term (September onwards)
1 <sup>st</sup> September – 31 <sup>st</sup> December	Spring Term (January onwards)
1 <sup>st</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Summer Term (April onwards)

Please note that children starting with us at the end of July/August will not be eligible for funding until 1<sup>st</sup> September, even if they meet the eligibility criteria. This is due to cut off dates in the summer term set by Oxfordshire County Council.

### Who is eligible to receive funding?

Starting from the term after a child turns **9 months old**, **SOME** children meeting certain eligibility criteria are entitled to receive working parent entitlement equating to 30 hours of funding. If you are eligible for this level of funding and remain within the eligibility criteria, you will automatically continue to receive 30 hours of funding when your child progresses to 2 year old, 3 year old and 4 year old funding.

Starting from the term after their **second birthday**, **SOME** children meeting certain eligibility criteria are entitled to receive working parent entitlement of 30 hours of funding. If eligible, much like with 9 month old funding, if eligibility continues, children will continue to receive 30 hours of funding when they turn 3 and 4 years old.. In addition, **CERTAIN** low income or ‘disadvantaged’ families of two year olds are allowed to receive 15 hours of funding.

Starting from the term after their **third birthday**, **ALL** children are entitled to 15 hours of “universal” funding. **SOME** children are eligible for the “working parent” entitlement of a further 15 hours of funding and so they will receive a total of 30 hours. If you have not been eligible for 9 month or 2 year old funding, you will receive the 15 hours when your child turns 3 (irrespective of previous entitlement). All those families qualifying for 30 hours of funding at 9 months and 2 years will automatically receive 30 hours, providing they remain eligible.

To be eligible for the working parent entitlement at all age levels, the following criteria set by the Government, is used to determine eligibility (this eligibility criteria applies to each parent or carer in dual-parent households and the lone parent or carer in lone-parent households):

Each parent or carer must:

- earn more than the equivalent of 16 hours at the national living wage or minimum wage per week. This means that over the next three months, you expect to earn at least £2,539 before tax (the National Living Wage if you are 21 or older).

There is no requirement to work a certain number of hours per week – it is all about how much you earn. This means that, for example, if you only work 10 hours a week but earn £20 per hour, you will meet the minimum earning threshold.

#### AND

- earn less than £100,000 per year. Again, this applies to each parent and carer in a dual-parent household. This means that if one parent earned £101,000 and the other earned £20,000, a family would **not** be eligible, but if both parents earned £99,000, the family would be eligible.

For low income families who are on income support and/or universal credit and have a child aged 2 years old, 15 hours of funding is available for 'disadvantaged' children. This specific level of funding, unlike the working parent entitlement, must be applied for directly through Oxfordshire County Council at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/twoyearoldfunding](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/twoyearoldfunding). Please reach out to our Nursery Manager for additional information if you are eligible for this level of funding.

### Checking your eligibility for working parent entitlement

All parents are advised to visit the Government website: [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk) to check for eligibility for 9-23 month/ 2 year old/3-4 year old working parent entitlement, even if you do not think you qualify. If you are eligible, you will receive an 11 digit code that must be passed onto us (along with the National Insurance number of one parent). We will follow this up with all the necessary paperwork that you need to complete for tracking with Oxfordshire County Council.

### What is stretched funding?

As we are a 51 week setting, we stretch the standard 15 or 30 hours (funding is usually spread over only 38 weeks of the year). What that means is that we stretch your funding entitlement across all 51 weeks of the year which equates to up to 11 hours (for 15 hours funding) or up to 22 hours funding (for 30 hours a week funding). This means funding is applied more consistently over the course of the year and invoicing remains mostly constant. The 11 hours or 22 hours are applied at a rate of 5.5 hours of funding for up to four days and, where funding allows, additional breakfast and tea club sessions may also have funding applied to maximize funding entitlements. *Please note that with rounding, this means that the maximum of funded hours available will not be exhausted.*

### May I split my funding between Early Days and another setting?

As a result of the new Government guidance around funding, as of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 we no longer allow parents to split funding between settings.

### How we apply funding and what you can expect to pay

Government guidance for funding states that providers are able to make additional charges provided that these are not a condition of accessing the funded space. Allowable charges are:

- Consumables used by the child, such as nappies
- Meals and snacks consumed by the child
- Extra optional activities/other activities that are not directly or necessary for the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework (we refer to this as 'enhanced' provision as it goes above and beyond the basic EYFS requirements);
- Additional, private paid hours according to a Provider's usual terms and conditions

The simple reality is that Government funding does not cover the cost of providing the enhanced provision that we offer at Early Days. With the latest Government guidance making additional charges non-mandatory, this has put considerable strain on all nursery settings to remain financially viable. Without

additional income on top of funding, we would not be able to survive or we would have to significantly cut back on the services/staff ratios/learning opportunities provided to children in our care.

### Meals

We take great pride in our Five Star Food Hygiene rating and in providing healthy, nutritious meals at our setting. All food is freshly prepared by our in-house chef and adheres to established nutritional guidelines. Children receive two snacks daily (morning and afternoon) and a two-course hot lunch. Those attending from 7:30 am are also served breakfast, and children staying beyond 4:00 pm receive a freshly prepared tea. A great deal of thought and planning goes into our menus to ensure they meet health standards and take allergies and dietary needs into account. To support a calm and enjoyable mealtime, we also employ additional staff to help supervise over the lunch period.

When all children are served the same meals, we have found they are more likely to try new foods and eat more than they might at home. Over the years, many parents have told us their children have become less fussy and more adventurous eaters thanks to the variety of foods we offer.

We also see mealtimes as valuable learning opportunities. Children practise table manners, develop dexterity using cutlery, learn to serve themselves, and gain confidence through setting tables and clearing away. These shared experiences promote independence and important social skills.

### Consumables – Nappies/Wipes, etc

We have two levels of nappy costs: For babies and toddlers still in nappies and a transitioning charge for those that are toilet training, as we know those little accidents can still happen.

### Enhanced Provision

As already stated, funding covers the cost of basic EYFS provision. At Early Days, we offer and have always offered for 30 years a more enriched programme for the children in our care. The attached document outlines the additional activities we provide that go beyond the standard expectations of the EYFS framework and forms the basis of our Activities/Enhanced Provision charge.

As all charges over and above funded entitlement are non-mandatory, we now have to ask parents whether they would like to Opt In or Opt Out of additional charges. Parents choosing to Opt Out will need to comply with all the Opt Out alternatives as outlined in our Opt In/Opt Out Agreement which includes complying with our breakfast/snack/lunch/tea policy and understanding the liability issues that come along with food brought in from home given that our own insurance policy does not extend to cover this.

If not enough parents in our setting choose to opt in, many of the enhanced programme elements will either be substantially reduced to a basic provision level or will need to be removed from our programme altogether as we simply will not be able to afford the costs of running them.

All our fees are clearly detailed on our Fee Sheet and will be available on our website from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026. Please note that the Opt In charges detailed in our Opt In/Opt Out Agreement do not include the cost of additional hours, which are also non-mandatory when taking up a funded place.

Parents can add additional time either at the beginning or the end of a day. These hours are unfunded. For those requiring breakfast, we have Breakfast Club for drop offs between 7.30 am and 8.00 am. We also offer an early morning drop off window for families wishing to drop their child between 8.00 am and 8.45 am. For later pick ups, we offer Tea Club sessions ending at either 5.00 pm, 5.30 pm or 6.00 pm. The cost of all Tea Club sessions includes a tea that is served between 4.15 – 4.30 pm. Children on 22 hours of stretched funding that are attending **only two or three days per week** are offered a funded rate for both Breakfast Club and/or Tea Club additions, so they can maximize their funding up to 22 hours.

Children attending and using only funded hours with no additional charges will not be subject to a registration fee. If one has been paid to secure a space on our waiting list, this will be refunded to you. We are here to help so those low income/disadvantaged families and those wishing to opt out, please speak to the Nursery Manager in confidence.

## BASIC EYFS versus ENHANCED EYFS PROVISION

The Early Years Statutory Framework sets out the minimum requirements that settings must meet when delivering education for children aged birth to five. However, Early Days Nursery is committed to ensuring that each child who attends not only experiences a diverse and rich education, but also magic and joy.

We do this via our bespoke curriculum, which has been devised using a wide range of research on what is required to provide high-quality early years education. We view the resources and experiences below as a vital component in delivering this model. We believe that the love and care we want each child to feel can be communicated through the experiences we provide to them. We know that the way we present resources tells children about how they are valued. Our enhancements are not just about possibility and experimentation: they are about choice and respect.

None of the items listed here would be considered as mandatory under the EYFS Statutory Framework, highlighting the gap between what can be provided utilising only those funds provided by the government, and what parents expect from a high-quality early years setting.

### Outdoor Learning & Nature Experiences

- Woodland School at Braziers Park (den-making, nature play, etc.)
- Mud kitchens and nature play areas
- Potion Station
- Gardening activities and planting
- Daily walks and nature play
- Outdoor climbing frames & adventure play
- Trikes, scooters and bikes
- Water play areas, sandpits, and refilling of sand
- Bug hotels and mini-beast exploration kits
- Outdoor learning shelters & covered play areas
- Puddle suits and waterproofs provided by the setting
- Hi-vis jackets for walks
- Outdoor craft activities (e.g., bird feeders)
- Planting/maintaining of window boxes/planters
- Grass cutting/weeding/outdoor space maintenance

### Creative, Messy and Sensory Play

- Painting aprons and protective clothing
- High-quality arts and crafts materials (canvas, acrylics, glitter, sequins)
- Sensory play trays (water, foam, kinetic sand, edible play materials)
- Baking, food play and cooking experiences
- Loose parts play and open-ended wooden resources
- Hatching chickens and butterfly life cycle experiences
- Themed craft projects (e.g., Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas)
- Enhanced craft activities (e.g., keepsake canvases, clay handprints)
- Home learning resource kits
- Specialist Resources for ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)
- Twinkl Premium Access (Early Years Resource Bank)

### Mealtime & Nutrition Support

- On site chef to cook and prepare all meals
- Two healthy snacks per day
- Two-course cooked hot lunches
- Breakfast and tea meal provisions
- Hot Chocolate during the winter months
- Fresh food ingredients
- Special dietary catering beyond allergy requirements
- Baking activities and cooking lessons
- Drinks: formula, squash, water, oat and soya milk
- Picnics
- Specialist food items to complement in class learning themes

### Specialist Experiences/Learning

- Visiting musicians, storytellers, and performers
- Musical instruments
- Dance, movement and yoga sessions
- Cultural celebrations
- Enhanced reading book schemes
- Phonics Scheme
- Artist Studies
- Christmas Nativity/Concert
- Easter Celebration at Ipsden Village Church
- World Book Day

### Seasonal & Celebration Events

- Christmas parties, visits from Santa
- Halloween and party treats
- Easter Egg Hunt and treats
- Ipsden Marathon
- Sports Day with medals
- Teddy Bear's Picnic
- Graduation celebrations and keepsake gifts
- End of Term Learning Books (prepared by staff)
- End of Year Parties

### Support in the Community

- Baby Bank Project
- Harvest Festival at Ipsden Village Church
- Children in Need activities
- May Day at Braziers

### Specialist Staff Training (Beyond EYFS Minimums)

- Outdoor Learning and Woodland School leader training
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) training
- Speech and Language development courses
- Emotional coaching and positive behaviour training
- One-to-one/small group interventions (not SEND related)
- First aid training for staff beyond basic requirements
- Additional evening and weekend training

### Miscellaneous

- Individual sleep mats and cots
- Daily washing and laundering of bedding
- Tapestry On-Line Journal
- Extra observations/assessments beyond statutory requirements
- Curriculum Evenings
- Ad hoc parent meetings and support calls
- Medication administration (not mandatory in EYFS)
- Washing and disposing of nappies, bibs and flannels
- Settling in session

