



Saplings Funding and Fee Payment - Protocols

We ask all Parents/Carers to adhere to the following procedures with respect to Government funding and the payment of fees.

Funding

- 15 hours per week (570 hours per year) universal Nursery Education Funding is available to all 3 & 4-year-old children for 38 weeks each academic year, from the term following their 3rd birthday

(for example: a child who turns 3 in May will qualify for funded hours from the following term in the September).

- Parents/carers do not need to apply for the 15 universal hours.
 - These hours may be split with another provider and it is the parent/carers responsibility to confirm in writing to Saplings how they are splitting their 15 hours to ensure all setting to not exceed the entitlement.
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- 30 hours per week (1140 hours per year) Nursery Education Funding is available to working parents in England who meet the criteria set out by the Government. The 30 hours are made up of 15 hours universal funding and 15 hours extended funding.
 - Eligible parents/carers will need to apply for the extended 15 hours.
 - Visit www.childcarechoices.gov.uk to view the 30 hour funding criteria and apply through HMRC. You will be issued with an 11-digit code which must be presented to Saplings no later than the start of the term, in which it is to be used.
 - 30-hour funding can only be used the term after it has been granted by HMRC and not within the term it was applied for.
 - Parents/Carers using 30-hour funding will be asked to complete and sign a Parent Declaration Form each term and to consent to the Local Authority checking the validity of the code.
 - It is the Parent's/Carer's responsibility to ensure their 30-hour code is renewed on a regular basis, when prompted by HMRC.
 - These hours may be split with other providers and it is the Parent/Carers responsibility to confirm in writing to Saplings exactly how they are splitting the universal and extended hours. All provider's claims must mirror one another correctly. This will be checked with all local authorities.
 - Any code that has not been renewed in time will not be accepted and fees at advertise rates will be payable for any extended funded hours that your child was due to attend.
 - Saplings are unable to liaise with HMRC on behalf of the parent/carer, should any problems occur with their code.

- 15 hours Funding is also available for 2-year-olds, subject to meeting certain criteria as set out by Government. 2-year-old funding will start the term after the child's 2nd birthday.
 - These hours may be split with another provider.
 - Parents/Carers need to apply for this funding through their local Children's Centre online at; www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds
 - An Eligibility letter will be issued to Parents/Carers which must be presented to Saplings on acceptance of the place.
 - A Parent/Carer Declaration Form must be completed and signed each term. Sapling will provide Parents/Carers with this form and submit the claim for funding to Central Beds Council.

Funded places are allocated in accordance with our admissions policy. The school/preschool submit the Nursery Education Funding through the school census and local authority portal, each term therefore sessions cannot be changed once the term has started. If you would like to change your child's sessions for the following *term you must do this in writing by the end of the current term. Your request will be accommodated where possible. (There would be no restriction on the allocation of new non funded fee paying places mid term).

If a funded child leaves the setting before the census is submitted to the local authority that term, parents may be charged at the advertised rate, for any sessions taken up until the child's last day.

**Terms in the academic year are as follows: September to December, January to March & April to July.*

Fees

The setting relies on a regular income to continue operating. It is in the best interests of every child that fees are paid promptly and fully so they can benefit from consistency of care and routine. The Parent Agreement regarding fees is part of the registration process completed when the child starts at pre-school.

Fees are reviewed by The Firs Lower School Senior Leadership Team and school governors on a regular basis. Parents/Carers are advised of any increase to fees in advance of implementation.

- The school operate an online payment system "Parentpay" and fees must be settled this way. We also accept payment through Childcare Vouchers and the Government Tax Free Childcare Scheme. Please advise the Saplings if you are paying using Childcare Vouchers or the Government Scheme (along with any reference codes). We do not accept cash or cheques.
- Invoices are issued two weeks in advance of the start of half term and payable by the first day of the new term.
- New joiners - For any new joiners to the Saplings, an invoice will be issued within the first two weeks of starting and is payable within two weeks of issue. Any subsequent invoices will be issued two weeks before the start of the next half term and must be settled by the first day of the term.
- Invoices will be based on the number of confirmed sessions your child is to attend in Saplings (at the prevailing rate) for the half term ahead. These invoices do not include any wrap around care fees.

- A non-refundable one-off administration fee (currently £10.00) for non-funded children will be payable with the first invoice. This fee is to be reviewed annually and may be subject to change.
- Payment will still be required even if your child is absent from a session(s). There is no reduction in fees for time off taken during term time, or for closures which are beyond our control (e.g. severe weather). The Preschool is closed on bank holidays, and we do not charge for these.
- If a child is sent home due to being unsettled or unwell, payment is still required for the full sessions booked.
- Any queries regarding fees must be addressed via email to thesaplings@firslower.org.

Payment of Fees Procedure:

Payment of fees is required to be made by the date due on the invoice.

We understand that occasionally a Parent/Carer may experience genuine difficulty in paying fees. Any Parent/Carer who is aware at the outset that this may be the case must make immediate contact the Saplings Administrator via thesaplings@firslower.org or The Firs Lower School Business Manager via office@firslower.org. A payment plan may be suggested to the Parent/Carer at the discretion of the school Head teacher. This will be put in writing and sent by the pre-school via recorded delivery to your home address. Any agreement must be signed by the Parent/Carer and the Head teacher and returned to the Business Manager.

1. If no payment has been received by the date due a reminder email will be sent from Parentpay to remind Parents/Carers of the outstanding fees.
3. If no payments are received a week after they were due, a letter will be sent out stating that the child's place (additional to NEF hours) is at risk if fees are not paid.
4. An exclusion letter will be sent two weeks after the 2nd reminder stating your child can no longer attend preschool until the fees have been paid in full. Children will still be able to attend the funded (NEF) sessions but must be picked up promptly as more debt will accumulate
5. Failure to pay on time could result in a £5 administration fee for each letter sent being applied to the amount due.
6. Refusal or failure to pay a debt will result in your child's place being withdrawn completely (including funded hours) and may also result in a small claims court proceeding.