



Saplings, The Firs Lower School Preschool

Admissions Policy

It is our intention to make our Preschool accessible to children and families from all sections of the local community regardless of ethnicity, gender, special education needs, disabilities, background, religion or competence in spoken English.

We care for children from 2 to 4 years of age. We are Ofsted registered to provide 40 places per session.

We operate admissions and allocate sessions to new children through our waiting list at the start of each term. Those terms are: September, January & April.

In the event of there being more applicants than there are places available, we will use the following criteria to allocate places:

Admissions Criteria

- 1) 2, 3 and 4-year-old children in receipt of Universal Nursery Education Funding
- 2) 3 and 4-year-old children in receipt of Extended Nursery Education Funding (please see section on *funding* and *sessions* regarding capped hours)
- 3) Any other fee paying children (**see below criteria for 2 year olds**)

Within each of the above groups priority will be given to the following order:

- 1) Looked after children
All 'looked after' children or children who were previously 'looked after children', including those children who appear to the Council to have been in a state of care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. (see definitions);
- 2) Children who have a sibling currently attending or offered a place in Saplings or The Firs Lower School
- 3) Children of Saplings or The Firs Lower School staff.

Two-year-old criteria:

- Two year olds will be admitted in **birth date order** (oldest to youngest) the term after their 2nd birthday.
- Sessions for fee paying children **under 2 ½ years** will be limited to **2 sessions per week**, either morning or afternoons (not full days). Following 2 ½ years of age children can extend their sessions (if required), subject to having settled well and availability.
- 2 year old funded children may be able to attend more than 2 sessions per week however this will be looked at on an individual basis.
- Children who join us **from 2 ½ years** onwards can attend a **maximum of 4 sessions per week**, subject to availability.

Sessions

- We are open from 9.10am to 3.10pm, Monday to Friday, offering morning, afternoon and all day sessions depending on the age of your child.
- A session is 3 hours long. We charge per 3 hour session.
- Children must attend a **minimum** of 2 sessions, no fewer than 6 hours per week, as it can be disadvantageous on the child's ability to form relationships and settle into the group if they were to attend any less than this.
- 3 & 4-year-old children will be able to attend a **maximum of 6 sessions per week**, a total of **18 hours**.
- We can accept a maximum of eight 2-year-olds per session.

Wrap around care

- The Firs Lower run a before and after school Kids Club. Saplings children have access to this subject to availability.

Waiting list

- Parents/Carers can contact the preschool via email or telephone in order to place their child on the waiting list.
- Parents/Carers will be given the opportunity to express a preference of which sessions they would like, however place allocation will be influenced by criteria and also availability of places for those preferred sessions and places will be allocated to ensure correct child to adult ratios.
- The process of allocating places is done on a term by term basis. This will be undertaken as quickly as possible to give families on the waiting list as much notice as possible. The prediction of future terms or academic years' availability cannot be foreseen.
- The 3/4 year old waiting list will be held in order of enquiry date (i.e. when your child's name was placed on the list).
- The 2 year old waiting list will be held in birth date order.
- A child's place on the waiting list can move up or down based on the priority of other children (refer to above criteria)
- We will not hold spaces. We do not allow families to pay to hold places as this discriminates against those who cannot pay to do this.
- We will not discuss another family's eligibility to a place with other Parents/Carers.
- Once a place has been offered, parents/carers will have 1 week to accept the place. If we do not hear after 1 week, a follow up email will be sent and a telephone call made. If we are unable to make contact, we will withdraw the offer of a place.
- Placing a child on the waiting list does not guarantee a place. Places are subject to availability.

Ratios

In line with the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and Ofsted regulations, we adhere to the following staff to child ratio:

- 2 year olds – 1 staff member to 4 children
- 3/4 year olds – 1 staff member to 8 children

Settling in process

Following the offer and acceptance of a place in the Preschool, a home visit will be offered along with two settling in sessions and a start date will be confirmed. Parents/carers are required to remain with their child during the settle sessions.

Attendance

- Families must notify the Preschool if their child will not be attending for any reason.
- Children should be in attendance for all of their funded hours claimed per week, unless there is a valid reason such as illness or holiday. A child's funded place is at risk if they fail to attend their regular sessions. Attendance will be monitored by the local authority who carry out audits on attendance registers. Funding could be withdrawn if the child does not attend regularly and parents will then be responsible for the full cost of care at the advertised rates.
- Any regular patterns of non-attendance (for example: the same day of absence each week) over a short period of time could result in a child's place being withdrawn.
- Settings can only claim the funded hours a child attends Preschool. Funding is claimed through the school census and remains with the setting through to the end of the term.

Extra sessions

- Fee paying children can request and take up regular additional sessions (in line with the maximum number for their age range) within the term, subject to availability, any additional sessions will be added to the invoice.
- One-off sessions can be requested and will be accommodated subject to availability. Payment may be requested in advance and any non-attendance or cancellation, will still incur a charge. One-off sessions should only be requested when all other childcare sources have been exhausted. There will be an additional charge per session for any ad-hoc sessions.

Nursery Education funding

- Current children who become eligible for funded hours within the academic year, will be offered their funded hours where availability allows.
- Funded hours cannot be increased or reduced once the term has started. Parents can request a change in sessions for the next funding term, subject to availability.

30-hour funding

The setting accepts Extended funding; however, this is **capped at a maximum of 18 hours per week – 6 sessions**. Any additional extended hours can be applied to wrap around care, if attended.

Internal waiting list

Where the sessions are full an internal waiting list will operate for those current children who require additional sessions. Spaces that become available will be offered in line with the following criteria:

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- 2) 3 and 4-year-old children in receipt of Extended Nursery Education Funding (please see section on *funding* and *sessions* regarding capped hours)
- 3) Any other fee paying children (**see below criteria for 2 year olds**)

Fees/Payment of fees

- Fees are published on the Saplings website.
- Fees are subject to review yearly by the school SLT and governors.
- Places are billed half termly and payment is due by the start of the half term ahead. We accept Childcare vouchers and the Government Tax Free Childcare Scheme.
- 2 year old fees will be payable until the half term after a child's 3rd birthday.
- An administration fee of £10 will be charged to fee paying children.