# Early Education Free Entitlement Funding (FEF) Policy

**Opening Hours**

Oak Tree Pre-School Nursery (Oak Tree) is open Monday to Thursday 8am – 6pm. We offer parents a start time of 8am and a choice of finish time either 4:30pm or 6pm, and accept children from the age of 12 months. We are open 51 weeks per year, closing in between Christmas and New Year.

The number of sessions a child attends (from two to four sessions) is decided through discussions with parents, the availability of places and at the discretion of the Nursery Manager.

**Child Eligibility**

***Eligibility for Early Learning for 2 year olds and Universal Entitlements for 3-4 Year Olds***

3-and 4-year-olds and Early Learning 2-year-olds (who meet the eligibility criteria below) are entitled to 15 hours of free early years provision from the start of the term beginning on or following the date set out below:

- Children born in the period 1 January to 31 March: 1 April following the child's third birthday, or second birthday, as applicable.
- Children born in the period 1 April to 31 August: 1 September following the child's third birthday, or second birthday, as applicable.
- Children born in the period 1 September to 31 December: 1 January following the child's third birthday, or second birthday, as applicable.

These dates are consistent with those used for determining the start of compulsory education.

Your 2-year-old can get 15 hours funded early learning if you live in England and get any of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit, and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit

Your benefits will not be affected if you take up the Early Learning for 2 year olds offer.

2-year-olds can also get funded childcare if they:

- are looked after by a local authority
- have an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- get Disability Living Allowance
- have left care under an adoption order, special guardianship order or a child arrangements order

You should contact the Family Information Service to obtain your letter for Early Learning Funding which you will need to provide to your childcare provider.

The Department for Education's eligibility checking system provides a mechanism for local authorities to verify whether children meet the eligibility criteria based on parental receipt of benefits (including Universal Credit).

***Working Parents Entitlements***

A child is entitled to free early years provision if the child has attained the relevant age, is under compulsory school age and the child's parent(s) meets the eligibility criteria set out below:

- The parent of the child (and their partner where applicable) should be seeking the free childcare to enable them to work;
- The parent of the child (and their partner where applicable) should also be in qualifying paid work. The definition of qualifying paid work is set out in regulations 16 and 17 of the 2022 Regulations, and the minimum income requirement is in regulation 18. Each parent or the single parent in a lone parent household will need to expect to earn the equivalent of 16 hours at the national minimum wage rate over the forthcoming quarter;
- Where one or both parents are on certain forms of family leave from work (including maternity, paternity or shared parental leave) or in receipt of certain forms of statutory pay in connection with sickness or parenting, they are treated as though they meet the minimum income requirement. This only applies for specified periods for those parents on family leave that was started because of the birth or adoption of the child in free childcare.
- Where one parent (in a couple household) is in receipt or could be entitled to be in receipt of specific benefits related to caring, incapacity for work or limited capability for work that they are treated as though they are in paid work;
- Where a parent is in a 'start-up period' (i.e. they are newly self-employed), they do not need to demonstrate that they meet the income criteria for 12 months in order to qualify for the working parent entitlement.
- If either or each parent's adjusted net income exceeds £100,000, they will not be eligible for the working parent entitlement.

Further details on eligibility criteria, including family leave from work and return to work dates, can be found by using check you're eligible for free childcare if you're working.

Parents/Carers are required to provide a valid 11-digit eligibility code to access working parent funding. This code must be reconfirmed every 3 months via the UK Government website. If the code is not reconfirmed, Parents/Carers will lose their funding and will be liable for the relevant term's fees.

**Flexibility**

Entitlement to Funded Childcare does not guarantee a place at any one childcare provider or a particular pattern of provision. Childcare providers can choose how to offer Funded Childcare in their settings, as long as the following parameters are met:

- Universal Funded Childcare covers up to 570 hours per year and Working Parents Entitlement covers up to 570 (1140 in total) hours per year over a 38 week period;

- Funded Childcare cannot be longer than 10 hours in a single day;
- No Funded Childcare before 6:00am or after 8:00pm; and
- Funded Childcare is available at a maximum of two childcare sites in a single day.

**Charges for Funded Childcare**

Funding is intended to cover the delivery of childcare only. It does not cover the cost of meals (including food and preparation), consumables, outings, extra activities, and services. To cover costs not included during the Funded Childcare, childcare providers can charge a fee for these costs during the Funded Childcare which you can chose to opt out of. Childcare providers are responsible for setting their own policy on their charges.

**Oak Tree Funded Childcare Offering**

Oak Tree is a term-time only, sessional (morning or full day sessions) childcare provider. We do not offer childcare on an hourly basis. When considering our Universal and Working Parents Entitlement Childcare offer, Oak Tree based its model on a framework that allows our parents to receive the greatest benefit.

Oak Tree offers Funded Childcare under the following model:

- Childcare is available on a sessional basis only (morning or full day sessions).
- Funded Childcare hours are applied over 38 weeks of the year, which equates to 15 hours (Universal Funded Childcare) or 30 hours (Extended Funded Childcare) a week and 570 hours (Universal Funded Childcare) and 1,140 hours (Extended Funded Childcare) a year.
- Funded Childcare hours are available up to a maximum of 7 hours a day.
- We charge an Activities, Extras and Food Supplement, as indicated on the Fee Sheet, which covers costs not paid for by the Funding. The Activities, Extras and Food Supplement is charged on the following basis:
    - Activities, Extras and Food Supplement charge covers the following but is not exhaustive:
        - Breakfast & snacks
        - Outings
        - Consumables such as nappies, wipes, and suncream.
        - Activities such as sports sessions and music sessions, which form a core part of our curriculum.
        - Special events
    - Parents/carers may be asked by the Nursery to provide consumables that are not covered by Funded Childcare for use during Funded Childcare hours (as applicable) if they have specific requirements related to allergies, eg medicine outside of Calpol & Piriton which we provide.

- If parents/carers wish to opt out or are unable to the pay the Activities, Extras and Food Supplement charge, then they will need to speak with the Nursery Manager to discuss how food and consumables will be provided by the parents/carers. There is both an operational and financial impact on Oak Tree when an Activities, Extras and Food Supplement charge is not paid.
- Additional charges may not be applicable for children/families in receipt of Early Learning for 2 year olds, EYPP and any other means tested benefit. This will be considered on a case by case basis.
- It is Oak Tree practice for all children to take part in group activities. If you do not want your child to take part in activities, please discuss with the nursery manager so we can provide an alternative activity.
- If you choose to opt out of the Activities, Extras and Food Supplement charge you must give at least one half-term's notice.
- Parents/carers are responsible for paying for any childcare services they opt in to outside of Funded Childcare as per the Parent Fee Sheet.
- Oak Tree reserves the right to make exceptions to its Funding framework on a case-by-case basis at its sole discretion.

**Parent Funding Declaration**

Funding regulations require childcare providers to enter into a separate funding agreement with parents, called the Parent Funding Declaration. Oak Tree has a standard Parent Agreement covering all its childcare services and a separate Parent Declaration Form, covering the Funded Childcare, both of which must be signed by parents. Some local authorities require parents to enter into an additional funding agreement as well. Along with the local authority funding agreement our Parent Declaration Form must be signed each term. If the Parent Declaration form is not signed Funded Childcare will not be claimed on your behalf and the full fees (without the Funded Childcare applied) will be charged to you.

**Required Documentation**

In addition, funding regulations require childcare providers to obtain documentation to evidence eligibility for the funding as per below:

- Early Learning 2 Year Old funded childcare: Child's birth certificate or passport, confirmation of eligibility (e.g. local authority confirmation letter/email or code);
- Universal Funded Childcare: Child's birth certificate or passport; and
- Extended Funded Childcare: Child's birth certificate or passport, Parent's full name, date of birth, eligibility Code issued by HMRC, and national insurance number.

**Child Absences**

Each local authority has their own policy on child absences during Funded Childcare. We must keep the local authorities informed of child absences and the local authority has the right to recover funding

payments made during periods of absences. Parents are responsible for paying Oak Tree for any reclaimed funding payments by the local authority due to a child's absence.

**Booking Pattern**

We require parents to confirm their booking pattern before the start of a new term. Due to administrative system constraints, we are unable to apply Funded Childcare to any ad-hoc sessions booked outside of the confirmed booking pattern at the beginning of the term. We are able to make permanent changes to booking patterns in accordance with the terms of the Parent Agreement.

**Local Authority Role**

Each childcare provider enters into an agreement with the local authority to provide the Funded Childcare. The local authority pays the childcare provider directly for the Funded Childcare it provides to the eligible children. The parents of the eligible children do not have access or the right to access the Funding paid by the local authority. The contract between the local authority and the childcare provider governs the Early Education Funding payments.

**Appendices**

- **Merton Family Information Service**
  https://directories.merton.gov.uk/kb5/merton/directory/service.page?id=KGvvyLrGhUQ

- **Eligibility codes and further information:**
  https://childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/

- **Further information:**
  Best Start in Life - Best Start in Life