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## Busy Bees Pre-school Fees Policy

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Lead reviewer: Kim Brewer/Greg McGill/Lisa Tucker

Approval by: Governing Body

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### Statement of intent

Busy Bees Pre-school aims to provide a nursery experience for children that is affordable, high quality and geared towards a smooth transition to primary school.

We aim to:

We will work with parents to claim benefit entitlement related to nursery fees such as working tax credits and free childcare entitlement.

This policy has been established to provide transparent fee information, set procedures for the payment of fees and create a framework for dealing with non-payment in a swift and fair manner.

Parents should be aware of, and given access to, this policy and the school's procedures. This is included in the school's website and is available to view upon request.

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## 1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Childcare Act 2006
- Childcare Act 2016
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Local Authority (Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge) Regulations 2014 (as amended)
- The Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) Regulations 2016 (as amended)
- DfE (2018) 'Early years entitlements: operational guidance'
- DfE (2018) 'Early education and childcare'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Debt Recovery Policy

## 2. Fees

Parents/carers are charged for care provided outside of the following provision:

- 15 hours free provision a week for eligible two-year-olds
- Universal 15 hours free provision a week for all three to four-year-olds
- Extended 30 hours free provision a week for eligible working parents of children 9mths to 4yrs
- Extended 30 hours free provision a week for children in foster care

The pre-school Fees for the current year are listed upon the school website. Please refer to the charging table, on session fees and lunch club supervision.

Note that the lunch club supervision fee does not include the cost of a hot lunch, which must be ordered separately by the parent/carer through our service provider.

The 15 / 30 hours free childcare offer cannot be used to pay for meals, additional hours or additional activities e.g. trips. The school may charge a fee for these additions. Parents will not be required to pay any fee as a condition of taking up a '15 / 30 hours' place.

Parents/carers will however be required to make a deposit at registration to secure a place.

At Busy Bee's, the deposit will cover the cost of the Busy Bee's T-shirt and contribute to administration costs incurred during the registration process. This deposit is nonrefundable. In the event of a "place" not being offered or declined by a parent, the deposit remains nonrefundable.

#### **Payment information**

Payment will be required **7 days after the date clearly stated on the invoice**. The invoice will be sent once a term for all non-statutory sessions and lunches that parents have booked for their child.

Payments should be made via ParentPay, Government Childcare scheme.

Online payment directly into the school's bank account will also be permissible. To obtain the details and discuss the procedure, refer to the invoice or contact the school office.

**One month's** notice and payment will be required to withdraw your child from the pre-school.

#### **Absences**

Payment will be required when a child is on holiday or absent due to illness, as the pre-school must hold the child's place during this period as staff rotas are put in place in advance.

A late payment will be considered to be a payment received 1 calendar day after the date stated on the invoice.

If a child is absent for a long period due to illness, the pre-school will decide on a case-by-case basis as to whether fees will need to be paid for the period. The pre-school's decision is final.

Deposits will not be repaid to parents who fail to take up a reserved place.

Parents/carers experiencing problems funding a deposit can speak to the headteacher to discuss the possibility of waiving the deposit.

Fees will be increased annually at a minimum of Consumer Price Index (every April and charged from 1<sup>st</sup> Sept each academic year).

### **3. Eligibility for free education and childcare for two-year-olds**

Parents/carers of two-year-olds are eligible for free education and childcare if they live in England and receive one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit – if parent and partner have a combined income from work of less than £15,400 a year after tax
- Tax credits and they have an annual income of under £16,190 before tax
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act

- The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment parents receive when they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

A child may also be eligible for free early education and childcare if any of the following apply:

- They are looked after by the local council
- They have a current statement of special education needs or an EHC plan
- They receive Disability Living Allowance
- They have left care under a special guardianship order; child arrangements order or adoption order

The school may ask parents to complete a form to help us ensure they receive their free early education and childcare hours.

Parents/carers can use the free early education and childcare allowance from the term following the child's second birthday.

## 4. Eligibility for 15 hours free childcare for three- and four-year-olds

All children in England can receive 570 hours of free childcare per year.

These hours are usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents may choose to take fewer hours over more weeks.

'15 hours' free childcare is available from the term following a child's third birthday.

The school may ask parents to complete a form to help us ensure they receive their free childcare hours.

## 5. Eligibility for 30 hours free childcare extended entitlement

Parents of children 9 month olds to school age must meet the eligibility criteria below to be eligible for the extended 30 hours free childcare. These are as follows:

- The parent/carer of the child, and the parent's partner, where applicable, is seeking the free childcare to enable them to work
- Each parent/carer earns, or is expected to earn, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage – this funding limit does not apply if a parent is self-employed and started their business less than 12 months ago, however you may still qualify with low earnings, please check the eligibility calculator.

Where one or both parent/carers are in receipt of benefits in connection with sickness or parenting, they will be treated as though they are in paid work.

Where one parent/carer 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, they are treated as though they are in paid work.

Parent/carers are not eligible if:

- The child does not live with them.

- The parent/carer or their partner has a taxable income over £100,000.
- The parent/carer is from outside the EEA and their UK residence card says they cannot access public funds.

Parents/carers will check their eligibility for the scheme by using the government's [Childcare Choices](#) website or the childcare calculator. If parents are eligible, they will be directed to the digital childcare service to apply.

Eligible parent/carers will provide the school with their unique eligibility code, National Insurance number and child's date of birth, along with their written consent, to enable the school to verify eligibility and receive future notifications from the LA on the continued validity of the code – parents are encouraged to do this as soon as possible, as they can only start their 30 hours free childcare the term after receiving a decision from HMRC.

The school will retain copies of documentation to enable the LA to undertake audits and fraud investigations; however, in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, it will be stored securely and deleted when there is no longer any good reason to keep the data. If parent/carer cease to meet the eligibility criteria, they will receive a grace period of **four weeks**, i.e. they will continue to receive the 30 hours free childcare for this period.

A child who becomes ineligible during the first half of a funding block will be funded until the end of that following funding block or for as long as they remain under the compulsory school age, whichever is shorter.

Consideration to extend the grace period will be taken in exceptional circumstances, e.g. if a parent/carer has been forced to leave their home and paid employment.

A child will not be able to take up their 30 hours free childcare place if their parents/carers fall into their grace period before the child has started at the school.

30 hours free childcare can be claimed at the same time as claiming Universal Credit, tax credits, childcare vouchers or Tax-free Childcare.

## 6. Eligibility for extended entitlement for children in foster care

A child in foster care will be entitled to an additional 15 hours childcare per week (30 hours free childcare per week total) provided that the child is aged 9 months, but below the compulsory school age, and the criteria below are met:

- Accessing the extended hours is consistent with the child's care plan, placing the child at the centre of the process and decision making.
- In single foster parent families, the foster parent holds additional paid employment outside of their role as a foster parent.
- In two foster parent families, both partners hold additional paid employment outside of their role as a foster parent.

To receive their free childcare allowance, foster parents will apply directly to the LA by completing the LA's eligibility form. The school can provide this form on request.

Foster parents will be required by the LA to reconfirm their eligibility every three months.

## 7. Local Government Agreement

Central Bedfordshire Council do have a local agreement in place that allows funded hours to be used to cover lunch club hours to prevent a break in childcare provision during a full day, if within their 15/30 hours funding limit.

“Where it is reasonably practicable local authorities should ensure that children are able to take up their free hours in continuous blocks and avoid artificial breaks being created throughout the day, for example over the lunch period.”

The duration of the lunch break can be included as part of the funded hours.

### Note

Lunch Club does not cover the lunch cost, this remains an additional charge to be paid to our catering provider.

## 8. Financial Hardship and Payment arrears

The school will work with parents to ensure all avenues for assistance with payments are explored.

The school understands that parents may face financial difficulties and, understandably, would like to ensure as little disruption to their child’s care and education as possible. Parents and carers experiencing such difficulties should contact the headteacher as early as possible, to reach a suitable arrangement for both parties if agreed.

**The school reserves the right in any circumstance of a late payment to charge a £10 fine for each week payments are overdue.**

## 9. Debt collection

The Business Manager will have a duty to ensure the school receives all the funds to which it is entitled, including pre-school fees and will not write off any debt.

A full record will be kept of debts owed to the school for **seven** years. This will include all letters / emails requesting money, reminders and invoices.

The school will not initiate legal action to recover debts; however, it will refer uncollected debts to Central Bedfordshire District Council to consider such action.

All debts will be handled in accordance with the Debt Recovery Policy.

## 10. Roles and responsibilities regarding debt collection

The Headteacher and Pre- school manager will ensure that:

- Letters and emails requesting money are accurately recorded and well-maintained.
- Evidence of the steps taken by the school in pursuance of debt is recorded including dates and times of both letters and phone calls.
- A final reminder is sent by recorded delivery to the debtor.

- The privacy of the family involved will be respected and only made known to those who need to know.
- The level of outstanding debt can be determined at any time.

The Business Manager and Head Teacher will:

- Regularly review the arrangements for debt recovery.
- At its discretion, refer uncollected debts to the LA for consideration for legal action.
- Record all approved action in the minutes of the relevant meeting.
- Adhere to privacy arrangements.
- At its discretion, delegate its responsibilities under this policy to a suitable individual.

## 12. The process for pursuing debts

To keep your child/ren's place at the setting secure, it is important to make payment on time. However, should you have difficulty being able to make the payment on time, please do speak with the Headteacher to discuss the matter.

The following procedure will be followed with regard to pursuing debts:

**Informal reminder** – Will be sent to all outstanding Debtors, [1 week](#) after Invoices are sent, the debtor will be informally reminded by the school messaging service that they owe money to the school.

**First reminder email / letter** – If the debt is yet to be paid [3 days after an informal reminder](#), They will also be contacted in person or by telephone by the school and with a formal email / letter will be sent to the debtor from the School Business Manager

**Second reminder email / letter** – If the debt is still yet to be paid [1 week after a first formal reminder](#), a second formal email / letter will be sent to the debtor. These letters allow the debtor every opportunity to settle their debt and ensure the school can prove all reasonable steps have been taken to recover the debt should the issue proceed further. This will include an opportunity to come in and discuss with the Headteacher, sent by The School Business Manager.

**Final reminder letter** – After [one week if no response is received following the second reminder](#), the school will ask that the child no longer attends lunchtime sessions or any parent paid sessions. We will send a letter to the debtor advising them that they will be referring the matter to the Governing Board for potential referral to Central Bedfordshire Council to consider legal action. This letter will be sent by recorded delivery to ensure the debtor has had every chance to respond. This will be sent from the Headteacher.

**Possible legal action** – If no payment is made the Business Manager and Headteacher may escalate the matter to Central Bedfordshire Council who will decide whether to take legal action against the debtor. A letter will be sent from the Governing Body in advance of any decision made.

Along with referring the matter to CBC, the Business Manager and Headteacher may, at their discretion, impose further sanctions including:

-exclusion from lunchtime sessions

-exclusion from other sessions

There is an appeals process with members of the governing board if you are not happy with this decision.

## **13. The waiving of debts**

The waiving of debts will be at the discretion of the Headteacher and the Governing board.

A debt may be waived when it is believed the debtor is experiencing serious financial hardship or if all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted and it is believed it would not be cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.

The headteacher will be authorised to waive debts off up to £100. Debts between £100 and £500 will only be waived with the approval of the Governing board. Debts of £500 or more will never be waived.

## **14. Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Headteacher and the School Business Manager in conjunction with the governing board.

The next scheduled review date will be April 2026.