

Funded Place Admissions Policy

Introduction

Our Funded Place Admissions Policy ensures that Saplings operates as close to full capacity as possible, in line with the requirements for our Ofsted registration. We are committed to providing childcare services to families in the local community.

Saplings is a full day care nursery that has been serving working parents since 1998 in the Bishops Stortford area that includes Elsenham and Takeley. Situated on the Herts & Essex border, close to Stansted Airport, we also serve the local villages of Bampers Green, Mole Hill Green and the expanding Dunmow area.

Admissions are open throughout the year, and are subject to availability.

This policy can be found on our website and in the Tapestry App → Documents → Funding

We operate an **application window system**, where we match your request once received to our availability, we do not hold requests on a waiting list.

The Application Process

1. Complete the Enquiry Form on our website [HERE](#)
2. We will call you to confirm our availability for the attendance pattern you are seeking; we may be able to offer an alternative in the event we cannot meet your exact requirements.
3. You will receive an email confirming in writing the place under offer. The email will outline the following:
 - non-refundable £30 enrolment fee
 - when the refundable place deposit (subject to T's & C's) will be due payment
 - the relevant notice periods pre and post start date
 - an estimated date for a face to face tour of the setting
 - clarification of our settling in process, including the purpose of the home visit by the room leader 6-8 weeks before your child's start date.

We will attach the following documents for your convenience:

- Your specific pricelist, if extended hours are relevant (all pricelists are published online)
 - Funded Terms and Agreement (published version online)
 - Admissions Policy (published online)
 - Nursery Calendar (published version online)
 - Parent Handbook (published version online)
4. You will need to accept the offer within 24 hours. Beyond 24 hours, the offered place may have been taken by another enquiry
 5. Once you confirm acceptance of the offer Linda Davies will make contact to offer you an opportunity to discuss your options with her via a private zoom meeting. If you do not need to discuss your options, you will receive Part 1 of our **Funding Agreement** and Part 2 will be sent via Signable after the return of Part 1.
 6. An invoice for the non-returnable £30 enrolment fee will be sent, payment will be due within 5 days.

For children taking up government-funded only places at 2 years or universal 3-4 year olds (term time only) the enrolment fee and the later refundable place deposit fee is waived.

Place Allocation

All children enter the **application window system**, until we have matched your request to our availability. If we need to, the following priorities are applied:

1. **Full-time and greater number of full-day places** take precedence over part-time or less days places, including all privately paying families, not eligible for government funding as a working parent.
2. **Siblings of current children** have priority over new applicants.
3. **Children of staff members** are considered on the same basis as other applicants, with a cap on the number of employee-discounted spaces available.
4. **Fully funded only places** are available and allocated fairly following our place criteria outlined below
5. If more applications are received than available places, allocation is also based on the date / time of completed application.

Criteria for fully funded places

When space is limited, **fully funded places over 38 weeks** are allocated with the following priority order:

1. Looked After Children (LAC)
2. Vulnerable children
3. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
4. Siblings of children in the above categories
5. Children of staff members
6. All other children

Funded Childcare & Education Offers available

The government funding is intended to provide 15 or 30 hours of **free, high-quality childcare** per week. It was never intended to cover costs for meals, consumables, additional hours, or extra services.

Extended Pattern (All Year Round)

- We offer funding to working parents as a **stretched model over 52 weeks**.
- Applications for places under our stretched model may be booked as early as pregnancy so as to secure the place required.

Term Time Pattern (38 weeks only)

- **Fully funded term time places** over 38 weeks are limited.
- Enquiries for term time only places are accepted the term before a child becomes eligible, they cannot be booked any further in advance
- **Fully funded term time places** over 38 weeks at Saplings are offered to government funded 2 year olds and universal 3-4 year olds – we do not offer term time only to children 9 -35 months.
- Where **term time only places** are offered, we plan these around available spaces and therefore we will allocate your days according to our availability. Whilst you may express a preference, this is not a guarantee you will receive the days you choose.

Both Patterns

- Additional services such as meals, enrichment activities, consumables and extended hours are **fully inclusive** no additional charges will be applied..

Grace Periods

If your eligibility changes, **Grace Periods** allow you to continue funding

Date Entered Grace Period	Funding Ends
January 1 – February 10	Ends March 31
February 11 – March 31	Ends August 31
April 1 – May 26	Ends August 31
May 27 – August 31	Ends December 31
September 1 – October 21	Ends December 31
October 22 – December 31	Ends March 31

Complaints Procedure for Government-Funded Entitlement

If you believe your funded place at Saplings has not been provided correctly:

1. Please contact Linda Davies for a resolution using the dedicated parent email address you are familiar with
2. If further action is required, contact Essex County Council Early Years team for assistance.
3. **Ofsted does not handle funding complaints** it is solely interested in welfare, safeguarding, and the educational, early learning provision of the children.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually.


 A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'L Davies'.

Linda Davies

Next Review Date: March 2027

Further information can be found on our website [HERE](#)