



# Watermoor C of E Primary School

## Fireflies Pre-School Charging Policy



<b>Date policy created:</b>	26.06.2023
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**Signed by:**

	<b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Date:</b>	26.06.2023
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### **Statement of intent**

Watermoor C of E Primary School aims to provide a Pre-School experience for children that is affordable, high quality and geared towards a smooth transition to primary school.

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/Carers will be made aware of, and given access to, this policy and the school's procedures. It will be included on the school's website and made available to view at the school on request.

### **Pre-School Operation**

Watermoor C of E Pre-School is open for 38 weeks of the year, in line with Watermoor C of E Primary School's term dates.

Morning sessions run from 8:45 - 11:45am

Lunchtime sessions run from 11:45am – 12:20pm

Afternoon sessions run from 12:20 - 3:20pm

## 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'

## Fees

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

- Universal 15 hours free provision a week for all three to four-year-olds
- Extended 30 hours free provision a week for eligible three to four-year-olds
- Extended 30 hours free provision a week for children in foster care

The charges are as follows:

- £15 per additional morning or afternoon session
- £2.50 for lunch time supervision (11:45am – 12:20pm)
- A voluntary snack and consumables contribution:
  - £1 for up to 3 sessions
  - £2 for 3+sessions

We allocate sessions on a termly basis:

Autumn: September – December

Spring: January – March

Summer: April – August

Parents/Carers must book their child's required sessions in advance as follows:

For an Autumn Term start, sessions should be booked by June 30<sup>th</sup>

For a Spring Term Start, sessions should be booked by November 30<sup>th</sup>

For a Summer Term start, sessions should be booked by February 28<sup>th</sup>

Bookings should be made via the Pre-School booking form, which can be accessed here:  
<https://forms.office.com/e/B0c6VC6BN6>

The 30 hours free childcare offer cannot be used to pay for meals, other consumables, e.g. nappies or sun cream, additional hours or additional activities e.g. trips. The school may charge a fee for these additions. If Parents/Carers choose to pay for these, it will be an arrangement between the parent and the school.

Parents/Carers will not be required to pay any fee as a condition of taking up a '30 hours' place.

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

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

These hours are taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year.

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

The school will ask Parents/Carers to complete a Local Authority funding form prior to the start of each 'long term' (Autumn, Spring, Summer) to help us ensure they receive their free childcare hours. These are generated by the Local Authority prior to the start of term and will be distributed in paper format.

## **Eligibility for 30 hours free childcare extended entitlement**

Parents/Carers of three- and four-year-olds must meet the eligibility criteria below to be eligible for the extended 30 hours free childcare. These are as follows:

- The parent of the child, and the parent's partner, where applicable, is seeking the free childcare to enable them to work
- Each parent 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

Where one or both Parents/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 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.

Parents/Carers are not eligible if:

- The child does not live with them
- The parent or their partner has a taxable income over £100,000
- The parent is from outside the EEA and their UK residence card says they cannot access public funds

Parents/Carers must check their eligibility for the scheme by using the government's Childcare Choices website or the childcare calculator prior to applying for a pre-school place. If Parents/Carers are eligible, they will be directed to the digital childcare service to apply.

Eligible Parents/Carers will provide the pre-school with their unique eligibility code, National Insurance number and child's date of birth, along with their written consent, to enable the pre-school to verify

eligibility and receive future notifications from the LA on the continued validity of the code – Parents/Carers 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 pre-school will retain digital copies of documentation to enable the Trust or LA to undertake funding audits 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 Parents/Carers cease to meet the eligibility criteria, they will receive a grace period as set by the Local Authority. The Local Authority will provide the pre-school with an expiration date for this grace period

A child who becomes ineligible during the first half of a funding block will be funded until the end of that 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 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.

## **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 three, 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/Carers will apply directly to the LA by completing the LA's eligibility form. The school can provide this form on request.

Foster Parents/Carers will be required by the LA to reconfirm their eligibility every three months.

## **Payment information**

Payments will be made at the start of each half-term via BACS payment, following the issue of an invoice from Hoge, for all non-statutory sessions and lunches that Parents/Carers have booked for their child.

Half-terms are identified as follows:

- Autumn 1
- Autumn 2
- Spring 1
- Spring 2
- Summer 1
- Summer 2

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 and staffing operates in line with statutory ratios, regardless of numbers.

A Parent/Carer may request a refund of the voluntary snack/consumables charge and instead provide their child with snacks from home if desired. They should make this request to the School Business Manager in the school office by email at [admin@watermoor.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:admin@watermoor.gloucs.sch.uk)

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.

Delayed payments will be followed up by the School Business Manager in the first instance to explore any reasons for this. Based on individual circumstances, paused payments or payment plans may be utilised to support families experiencing financial difficulties, with prior agreement by the Headteacher.

Late payments on a regular basis or without prior notification will incur a £10 fine for each half-term that payments are overdue; e.g. if payment for Spring 1's fees is still outstanding at the start of Spring 2. Parents/Carers can avoid this by ensuring the timely payment of fees at the start of each half-term.

One term's notice and payment will be required to withdraw your child from the Pre-School.

## **Late collection**

Staffing ratios will be maintained at all times. If a child is collected late, this can lead to staff needing to stay beyond the end of their working hours. If a child has still not been collected by 3:30pm, a cost of £6 may be incurred unless there are exceptional circumstances which the Pre-school manager must be made aware of without delay. .

## **Difficulty with payments**

The pre-school will work with Parents/Carers to ensure all avenues for assistance with payments are explored.

The pre-school understands that Parents/Carers may face financial difficulties and, understandably, would like to ensure as little disruption to their child's care and education as possible. Parents/Carers and carers experiencing such difficulties will contact the Headteacher early as possible, to reach a suitable arrangement for both parties.

## **Debt collection**

The local governing board has a duty to ensure the school receives all the funds to which it is entitled, including Pre-School fees and will monitor debts as part of its financial oversight of the pre-school..

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

If the debt is not recovered and no plan is in place with the school for the recovery of that debt within 6 months of when the fees were due, then the school will take advice from the Trust's Central Finance Team regarding the recovery of the debt.

## **Roles and responsibilities regarding debt collection**

The headteacher and SBM will ensure that:

- Correspondence requesting money is 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/electronic communication 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 local governing board will:

- Prescribe and regularly review the arrangements for debt recovery.
- At its discretion, will take advice from the Trust's Central Finance Team with respect to the collection of overdue debts, which could include consideration of
- Record all approved action in the minutes of the relevant meeting.
- Adhere to privacy arrangements.

## **The process for pursuing debts**

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

**Informal reminder:** Within 10 days of the expected payment, the debtor will be informally reminded in person or by telephone that they owe money to the pre-school.

**First reminder letter** – If the debt is yet to be paid one week after an informal reminder, a formal letter will be sent to the debtor.

**Second reminder letter** – If the debt is yet to be paid one week after a first formal reminder, a second formal 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.

**Final reminder letter** – If no response is received following the second reminder, the pre-school will send a letter to the debtor advising them that they will be taking advice from the Trust's Central

Finance Team. This may result in the school taking legal action. This letter will be sent by recorded delivery to ensure the debtor has had every chance to respond.

Legal action – If no payment is made, then legal action will be considered by the local governing board who may take advice from the Trust's Central Finance Team.

### **Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Headteacher and SBM.

The next scheduled review date will be June 2024.