



## Policy Document

Subject

Nursery Fees Policy

Approval Date:  
November 2025

Review Date:  
November 2026

Signed by:

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Role: Headteacher

### Updates since last policy versions

- Legal framework
- Fees
- Universal entitlements for three- to four-year-olds
- Working parent entitlements
- Eligibility for extended entitlement for children in foster care

# Nursery Fees Policy

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## **Statement of intent**

Ashwell School aims to provide a nursery experience for children that is affordable, high quality and geared towards a smooth transition to primary school.

We will work with parents to claim benefit entitlement related to nursery fees such as Working Tax Credits and free childcare entitlement.

This Nursery Fees 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. It will be included on the school's website and made available to view at the school on request.

## **1. Legal framework**

This policy has due regard to 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 (2025) 'Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2025 to 2026'.
- DfE (2025) 'Early education and childcare'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following nursery policies:

- Debt Recovery Policy

## **2. Fees**

Government funding will deliver 15 or 30 hours a week of free childcare. These hours are able to be accessed free of charge to parents, and there will be no mandatory charges for parents in relation to free hours.

Government funding will not cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional services.

The nursery may charge parents for the following extras in connection with free hours; however, these charges will be voluntary for parents:

- Consumables to be used by the child, e.g. nappies or sun cream
- Meals and snacks
- Extra optional activities, e.g. events, celebrations, specialist tuition, or other activities that are not directly related or necessary for the delivery of the EYFS statutory framework

The nursery may also charge parents for any additional, private paid hours according to its usual terms and conditions and with the condition that taking up private paid hours is not a condition of accessing a free place.

The nursery will deliver funded hours as follows:

- **All 3- and 4-year-olds (universal entitlement):** 570 hours per year – over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year – from the term after the third birthday until compulsory nursery age.
- **Working-parent entitlement (children aged 9 months and above):** Children aged 9 months and above will be entitled to 1,140 hours of free childcare each year if their parents meet the working-parent eligibility criteria. This is offered as 30 hours per week during term time.
- **Children in foster care:** The nursery will apply the extended working-parent rules where the foster parent is in paid work and where this aligns with the child's care plan; the minimum income test will not apply to foster parents

Any provision that goes beyond the funded entitlements for eligible parents will incur a charge, and parents will be responsible for covering the additional cost.

The nursery will not charge parents for the following in connection with entitlement hours:

- Top-up fees, i.e. any difference between the nursery's normal charge to parents and the funding it receives from the LA to deliver free places.
- The supply of or use of materials or learning resources that are necessary for the effective delivery of childcare.
- Business running costs.
- Registration fees.
- Non-refundable deposits.
- General charges or any other supplementary charges on top of the free hours.
- Any additional fees that are not specifically identified and itemised as being for chargeable extras.

The above will only apply in relation to the Government's free entitlement hours. Where a child attends provision beyond their funded entitlement, additional charges may apply. These charges, however, will never be a condition of accessing the free hours and will be clearly itemised as payable extras.

The costs of chargeable extras will be published on the school website.

### **3. Universal entitlements for three- to four-year-olds**

All children in England aged three to four can receive 570 hours of free childcare per year.

We offer these hours as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year; 8:45am to 11:45am Monday to Friday.

We offer '15 hours' free childcare from the September following a child's third birthday.

### **4. Working parent entitlements**

A child may be entitled to free early years provision if they are at least 9 months old and below the compulsory nursery age of five.

Parents' eligibility for this entitlement will depend on the following:

- Parents will need to apply for free childcare in order to work
- Parents will need to be in qualifying paid work. This means they will expect to earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours at the national minimum wage each week, averaged over the next 3 months

- If one or both parents are on family leave (such as maternity, paternity, adoption, or shared parental leave) or receiving statutory sick pay, they will be treated as meeting the income requirement for a limited time
- If one parent in a couple is receiving certain disability or caring-related benefits, they will be treated as though they are in paid work
- If a parent is newly self-employed, they will not need to meet the income requirement for the first 12 months
- If either parent has an adjusted net income above £100,000, the household will not be eligible for the entitlement

Further information on free childcare for working parents can be found via the GOV.UK website: <https://www.gov.uk/free-childcare-if-working/check-youre-eligible>

## **5. Eligibility for working parent entitlements for children in foster care**

A child in foster care will be entitled to free early years provision if they have reached the required age, are under compulsory school age, and the following conditions are met:

- The LA will need to be satisfied that the foster parent engaging in paid work (other than their role as a foster carer) is consistent with the child's care plan, ensuring the child remains at the centre of all decisions
- In single foster parent households, the foster parent will need to hold additional paid employment outside of their fostering role
- In two-foster-parent households, both foster parents will need to hold additional paid employment outside their fostering role, or one foster parent will need to be in such employment while the other is either:
  - On family leave (such as maternity, paternity, or shared parental leave), or
  - In receipt of certain forms of statutory pay.
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## **6. Payment information**

Payments should be made in advance or prior to the start of the half term for all non-statutory sessions and lunches, which parents have booked for their child for that half term.

Payments can be made by:

- Tax-Free Vouchers
- Employer ChildCare Vouchers
- Online payment direct into the school's bank account via Arbor. To obtain the details and discuss the procedure, contact the school office.

Payment is required when a child is on holiday or absent due to illness, as the nursery must hold the child's place during this period and staffing commitments are set on an annual basis.

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

Late payments will incur a £10 fine for each week payments are overdue. Parents can avoid this by ensuring the timely payment of fees each week.

A minimum of half a terms notice and payment will be required to cancel or withdraw your child from the extended nursery provision.

## **7. Late collection**

Late collection can impact staffing across the school. Staffing ratios must be maintained at all times. If a child is collected late, this can lead to staff needing to stay beyond the end of their contracted hours or impact additional roles they have across the school. This incurs a cost which will be passed on to the parents at £5.00 for the first 15 minutes and a further £1 for each subsequent 5-minute period.

These costs may be waived in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher.

## **8. Difficulty with payments**

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 will contact the headteacher as early as possible, to reach a suitable arrangement for both parties.

## **9. Debt collection**

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

## **10. Monitoring and review**

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

The next scheduled review date is November 2026.