

# Admissions and Fees

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**The purpose of Little Pippins Pre-School is to prepare the children of Harwell village for school. As such admissions are managed to ensure that all children within the village have an opportunity to attend prior to the first school year. We promote the use of Childcare Vouchers to pay the fees. We aim to communicate with and advise families of other sources of financial support including Early Education Funding and our own Help a Village Child Fund.**

## Admissions Policy

In order to make Little Pippins accessible to children and families from all sections of the local community, we ensure that the existence of Little Pippins is widely known in the area. We place notices advertising the setting in places where all sections of the community can see them, in more than one language if appropriate. We consult with local parents to ensure that Little Pippins continues to meet the changing needs of the local community.

We can take up to 30 children in any one Pre-school session. The staff to child ratio is 1:8 for children aged 3 and above and 1:4 for children aged between 2 and 3. Children aged between 2 yrs and 2.5 yrs will only be accepted on referral from the relevant authorities. Additional staff are employed when necessary for example during swimming sessions or when the age range of children weighs heavily towards younger children. We aim to maintain a balance of ages within sessions and endeavour to ensure continuity from year to year.

Our main intake is the start of the academic year (September), from which point we aim to reach capacity as quickly as possible for economic reasons. Once full for the academic year, space will only be available should there be a change to an existing place, e.g., a child leaves. We keep a place vacant, if this is financially viable, to accommodate an occasional emergency request for a space.

We are unable to 'reserve' places in advance i.e. we cannot guarantee that particular session(s) will be available in the future on a particular date, for example, after a child turns 3 years of age, regardless of the date they were registered. In order to maximise the take-up of Little Pippins places, and also our income, an available session/place has to be given to a child who is eligible and wishing to start immediately.

We require that children attend a minimum of 2 sessions per week. We are flexible about attendance patterns to accommodate the needs of individual children and families, providing these do not disrupt the pattern of continuity in the setting or disrupt continuity of care and stability for the children. Depending on availability, staffing ratios and other practicalities, it may be necessary to restrict lunch club places at the start of the afternoon session to children who attend all day and older children.

We operate in a way that encourages positive regard for and understanding of difference and ability - whether gender, family structure, class, background, religion, ethnicity or competence in spoken English.

We support children and/or parents with disabilities to fully partake in all activities within the pre-school.

We monitor the needs and background of children joining our setting on the Information and Permissions' Form, to ensure that no accidental or unintentional discrimination is taking place.

## **Admissions Process**

When a parent/carer contacts Little Pippins enquiring about a place for their child, they are given all the relevant information they require, including details of the Admissions and Fees policy, and informed of whether there is currently a suitable place available for their child.

The parent/carer and the child are invited to visit the setting and speak to members of staff. During this visit, the parent/carer will be provided with the Prospectus and Child Information and 'Permissions' Form. These are also available to download from our website.

Should the parent/carer wish to proceed with registration and agree to abide by all the terms and conditions including the level of fees and arrangements for payment, they are asked to complete, sign and return the Child Information and 'Permissions' Form and pay a deposit. When the form and payment is received, the child is registered.

If, on registering their child, a parent/carer is informed that there is not currently a suitable place available or that the child is not yet old enough to attend, Little Pippins' admissions procedure and criteria (see below) will be explained. We will advise the parent/carer of how long they are likely to have to wait before a suitable place becomes available. This information will only be an estimate and will not constitute a binding guarantee from Little Pippins. Parents/carers will be encouraged to indicate the preferred start date and sessions for their child on the 'Child Information and 'Permissions' form.

Once the child is registered and a suitable place is available, the Manager, or Office Manager, will contact the parent/carer concerned to offer a place and arrange a date for the child's first session at Little Pippins.

The child and parent/carer will be invited to attend a settling in visit before they start to help the child become familiar with the setting and our staff and for the child's key person to start to get to know the child. At this visit, our procedures and routines will be explained, and a copy of the handbook will be given to the parent.

The Manager or her deputy and the child's key person may also visit the child and parent at their home for a home visit before starting pre-school.

If, during the above meetings, it becomes apparent that Little Pippins would not be able to meet the child's needs or to accept the child would disrupt the balance of care and stability of other children, we may decide that we do not have a suitable place for the child. We will explain the decision to the parent and offer advice on alternative childcare provision. When the child starts, the provisions of the Settling In policy come into operation.

## **Admissions Criteria**

To ensure that we effectively fulfil our goal to give all village pre-school age children the opportunity of a place before starting school, admissions to Little Pippins are offered according to the following criteria and order:

- A Harwell Village child on a Child Protection Plan or Child in Need Plan or a Looked After Child.
- Children already attending the pre-school and eligible for free entitlement - up to the maximum 15 universal funded hours.
- Harwell Village children eligible for 15 hours universal funding and starting primary school the following academic year.
- Harwell Village children eligible for free entitlement hours - including eligible two-year-old children.
- Distance from the child's home to the setting and age of the child. Where there are too many children in the above criteria requesting places, places will be offered to the oldest children.
- Whether the child will attend the village primary school.
- Whether any siblings attend the pre-school
- Date of registration.

If the parent/carer concerned no longer wishes to take up a place, the parent/carer of the next suitable child will be contacted.

## **Amending a place or Removing a child**

Parents/carers are asked for at least one month's prior notice in writing of their intentions for their child, i.e. changes to sessions, moving to another setting, moving up to school or deferring their school place.

If less than one month's notice of leaving Little Pippins is given, up to one month's fees will become payable in lieu of the required notice period.

If a child is absent from Little Pippins for more than 3 weeks without authorisation, they will be removed from the register and their place may be offered to a child awaiting a place.

## Fees

Little Pippins understands that the cost of registered childcare may seem expensive to a parent/carer. However, providing a high quality, safe and stimulating service for children is not cheap and to ensure the continued high standards and sustainability of Little Pippins, we ask that parents/carers respect our fees strategy.

- The level of fees will be set by the Management Committee and reviewed annually in light of the Little Pippins' financial position, its future strategic plans and any other broader economic or social considerations deemed relevant.
- Little Pippins will offer Early Education Funded places to eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children up to a maximum of 15 hours per week for 38 weeks per year. We do not offer places for the extended 15 hours free early education unless a specific educational need for a child to attend a single setting has been identified to the Manager by external agencies, and the Manager and SENDCo agree that it is in the best interest of the child to access the additional educational support they require consistently from one setting.
- Funding can be applied to pre-school morning and afternoon sessions but not to Breakfast Club or Walking Bus fees.
- Our schedule of fees for unfunded sessions is published in our prospectus and on our website.
- A deposit is payable on submission of the Information and Permissions Form. This will be refunded at the end of the child's first term unless there are fees outstanding, or if we are unable to offer the child a place at the time requested by the parent and they then wish to withdraw their child's registration form.
- Fees are due for all booked unfunded sessions; any sessions missed must still be paid for. If a child is going to be absent for health reasons for 3 weeks or more and Little Pippins is informed in advance, then the fees may be waived at the discretion of the Management Committee.
- Payment is due in advance of sessions. Invoices are raised 3 times per year at the start of terms 1, 3 and 5 for the following 2 terms. Payments can be made termly, monthly or weekly. The Treasurer or Office Manager must be informed as to which payment method is being used. Individual payment arrangements will be negotiated between the Management Committee and parents/carers.
- Parents/carers wishing to negotiate this or any other alteration to the standard fees policy should request a meeting with either the Manager or a member of the Management Committee at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Fees are due on the first day of term or on receipt of invoice. If fees are outstanding one week (7 days) after becoming due, a written reminder will be issued to parents/carers requesting payment or offering to agree a payment plan within the next 7 days.

- If fees remain outstanding 7 days after the issue of a written reminder (14 days from the due day), Little Pippins will only be able to provide up to five 3-hour sessions a week, for 38 weeks a year, funded by the Universal 15 hours Early Education Fund for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. Any other sessions will be immediately withdrawn until the outstanding debt is cleared. Once payment is received then additional sessions may be requested following negotiation with the Manager and members of the Management Committee and subject to availability.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to speak to the Manager, Office Manager or a member of the Management Committee if they have any questions about the Admissions and Fees Policy, or if, for any reason, they are likely to have difficulty in making a payment on time. Parents/carers are strongly advised to arrange a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity, to avoid jeopardising their child's place at Little Pippins.
- If appropriate, the 'Help a Village Child Fund', or other similar county funded scheme, may be considered. This is at the discretion of the Manager and Chair and is approached in an appropriately confidential manner.

The Management Committee reserves the right to take legal action, if necessary, to recover any outstanding debts.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Little Pippins Management Committee

Held on: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Signed on behalf of the Management Committee: *Laura Norton*

Role of signatory: Chair

Review date: May 2021

### **Related Policies**

Help a Village Child Fund