

Policy on Opting Out of Optional Extras/Voluntary Charges for Funded Early Years Places

Purpose

This policy sets out the arrangements for parents and carers who wish to access their child's funded early education entitlement without paying voluntary charges. The nursery is committed to ensuring that all eligible children can access their funded hours free of charge and without discrimination.

Policy Statement

Children accessing funded early education hours are entitled to receive those hours free of charge. Parents and carers are not required to purchase additional services, consumables, meals, activities, or private hours as a condition of accessing a funded place.

The nursery offers these optional extras called voluntary charges that are not covered by government funding. Participation in these extras is entirely voluntary.

Government Funding

At Crown we offer the following funding streams;

- Universal entitlement for all 3- & 4-year-olds (15 hours per week/570 hours per year)
- Eligible Working Parent Entitlement for 9 months – 2 year-olds (30 hours per week/1140 hours per year)
- Eligible Working parent 3- & 4-year-olds (additional 15 hours per week/570 hours per year)

To support year-round childcare, we stretch the government funding entitlement over 51 weeks of the year. This means the hours are applied evenly across the year rather than term time only, this equates to 11.18 hours per week (15 hours funded) and 22.35 hours per week (30 hours funded). We ensure that the full number of free hours allocated to the child by the Local authority is shown on all invoices.

Voluntary Charges

In line with government guidance, charges for meals, snacks, nappies, trips, and activities are voluntary and are not covered by the Government funding. The funded hours cover the cost of Early Years education and care during the agreed hours only, they do not include the cost of food, non-consumables or activities, please refer to our up-to-date downloadable Fee Sheet for these costs.

Costs for food, include breakfast, lunch, tea and two snacks during the day. Also included in these budgets are not just the meals themselves, but also the safe management of allergies, tailored menu planning to meet diverse dietary needs, adherence to nutritional standards, and rigorous food safety compliance — all of which require trained staff, regular audits, and additional resources.

Non-consumables costs include nappies, wipes, suncream, cream and hand sanitizer.

Activities cover all extra-curricular activities which include external providers coming into the nursery and staff taking children out into the wider community for educational visits and trips,

these include but are not limited to; Teddy Tennis, Playphonics, Tiny Tunes, Zoolab, Polka Theatre trips and bespoke theatre workshops and Christmas and School Leavers parties. Learning Journal, our digital platform used to track, record and share the child's development with parents and carers is also included in this category.

Any voluntary charges will be communicated to parents and carers in advance, clearly itemised and detailed on invoices.

Parent Right to Opt Out

Parents and carers have the right to opt out of paying for any voluntary charges associated with funded hours and provide alternatives (e.g. packed lunch, own nappies, please refer to our attached Policy on Opt Out of Food Consumable Voluntary Charges) and these charges will never be a condition for accessing funded hours. All charges are published on our website and itemised on invoices, and we will notify parents and carers whenever such charges change.

Choosing not to purchase voluntary charges will:

- Not affect a child's funded place.
- Not affect the quality of care, education, or learning opportunities provided.
- Not result in any disadvantage, exclusion, or less favourable treatment.

Where parents have opted into paying the voluntary charges and would like to opt out at any time, they will need to give us 3 months' notice.

Alternative Arrangements

Where parents choose to opt out, the nursery will provide reasonable alternatives, which may include:

- Parents supplying their own packed lunch or snacks (subject to food safety and allergy requirements, please see our Policy on Opt Out of Food Consumable Voluntary Charges below).
- Parents supplying their own nappies, wipes, sun cream, or other consumables.
- Children participating in alternative EYFS-compliant activities where a chargeable activity is declined.

The nursery will work with families to ensure practical arrangements are agreed and documented.

Inclusion and Equal Access

All children accessing funded hours will continue to receive:

- High-quality early years education.
- Access to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum.
- Equal opportunities to learn, develop, and thrive.

No child will be excluded from funded provision because their parent chooses not to purchase optional extras.

Transparency

The nursery will:

- Clearly publish all voluntary charges on invoices.
- Provide itemised invoices showing funded hours separately from any optional charges.
- Ensure parents understand which charges are voluntary.
- Obtain written agreement (by signing our Registration Form/Terms & Conditions) for any voluntary charges a parent chooses to pay.

Attendance Requirements

Children attending under Fully funded places (15 or 30 hours per week) are not required to meet the three-day minimum and parents are not required to purchase additional hours to meet the minimum attendance requirement. Daily attendance is agreed with the manager based on availability and on the set hours below.

15 hours Government Funding (11.18 hours per week) – 8am-12pm or 2-6pm, 3 days a week.

30 hours Government Funding (22.34 hours per week) – 8am-12.30pm Monday-Friday.

Registration and Deposits

Fully Funded Places:

- No registration or administration fee is charged.
- A £500 refundable deposit is payable upon acceptance of a place.
- The deposit is returned within the first month of attendance or credited to the first invoice.
- If parents and carers cannot pay the deposit, this will not affect the child's access to a funded place.
- Deposits will not be retained if the place is not taken up.

All fees and deposits are itemised separately from funded hours to ensure transparency.

Complaints

Parents and carers who have concerns regarding charges or access to funded provision should raise the matter with the Nursery Manager in the first instance.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if government guidance changes.

August 2026

Policy on Opt Out of Food Consumable Voluntary Charges

Aim of this policy

To ensure that all foods brought from home and consumed in nursery provide your child with healthy and nutritious food for their growth and development while keeping all children safe from known food allergies.

At **Crown Kindergartens** we are committed to children eating healthy, nutritious and balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements, following the Department for Education nutrition guidance.

This policy supports the health, safety and well-being of all children in our care and reflects the requirements of our insurers.

Parents are asked to provide foods that comply fully with this policy. We reserve the right to remove food items that present an allergen or choking risk. Parents who regularly fail to meet the expected standards will be invited to discuss the issues to find joint solutions to ensure our policy is upheld.

We are required to support you with information to help you provide healthy meals for your child to bring to nursery. To meet our statutory welfare requirements, we avoid foods which are high in saturated fat, salt, and sugar as these are proven to negatively affect children's health, development and overall well-being. We wish for food brought from home to align with the healthy and nutritious meals we provide, so children are receiving consistent messages about healthy eating.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Nutrition and mealtimes policy.

Our facilities

- We operate a strict nut free environment.
- We ensure that fresh, plain tap water is always readily available.
- We work with parents to ensure that all foods abide by the standards listed below.
- We provide parents with guidelines for nutritious content and signpost to the NHS packed lunch guidance:
NHS Healthier lunchbox recipes - <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/> Food for Life's packed lunches guidance - <https://bit.ly/4t3Jb9d>
- We do not provide cooking or reheating services for children's foods.

Packed lunch guidelines

Home prepared food is not permitted. Please bring all foods (other than raw fruit and vegetables) pre-packaged with allergens clearly labelled.

All food for the day must be brought in a labelled lunch bag to the nursery at designated times during the day as follows to ensure freshness and manage storage space.

8:00 Breakfast and morning snack

11:30am Lunch

3:15 Tea and pm snack

We do ask that you allow sufficient time on arrival when delivering your child's food for one of our practitioners to conduct an inspection. This is to ensure that all ingredients are safe and in line with our food policy, this is to protect any children at the nursery with allergies/dietary needs. At this point you will be required to sign an agreement that your child's food adheres to our food Policy, and you take full responsibility as such. Upon our food inspection we as a setting have the right to refuse any meal/snack that we do not see as healthy balanced or does not meet our standards of quality.

If you should fail to produce foods for your child a meal will be provided by the nursery according to our daily menu and will be charged to your invoice. If you should continually do so this may result in us withdrawing the opt out consumables option from you.

It is recommended that foods should include the following on a daily basis:

- A minimum of two portions of fruit or vegetables.
- A starchy food for energy and concentration, e.g. any bread, wrap, chapatti, pasta, rice, noodles, potatoes.
- Meat, fish, eggs or another plant-based source of iron and protein, e.g. lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus.
- Dairy or dairy alternative food, e.g. cheese, plain unsweetened yoghurt or fromage frais.

To reduce risks of allergens or choking, the following items must not be included:

- Nuts – whole nuts, nut products including those which use nuts in preparation (for example, nut oil).
- Any drinks other than plain water. Fresh water is provided for all children and alternative drinks will not be served to the children.
- Flavoured dried rice, pasta and noodle products, e.g. packets and pots of instant noodles, pasta or rice.
- Popcorn, crisps, chocolate, dried fruit, chewing gum, marshmallows, raw jelly cubes, sweets (boiled, hard, gooey or sticky).

Organisation

- See the Food Standards Agency 'Early years food choking hazards' advice for preparing food for babies and children under five years olds:
<https://tinyurl.com/EYchokinghazards>
- To reduce choking risks, we expect:
 - - Hard pips or stones removed from fruit; consider removing the skin for very young children.
 - - Small round fruits (such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, cherries, berries) cut into quarters lengthways.
 - - Vegetables such as carrots, cucumber and celery cut into narrow batons.
 - - Meat/fish boned and cut into thin strips.
 - - Cheese grated or cut into short strips.
- Use easy-to-open containers/packaging where possible, to promote your child's independence.
- Ensure all food is within the use-by date.
- Ensure all lunchboxes/containers/bags are clearly marked with your child's name.

Management of food safety, allergies and dietary needs

All staff are aware of children with food allergies or intolerances, and individual dietary requirements are respected. Information from parents is shared with staff involved in preparing and serving food.

- Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of known allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary/allergy plan for their child. This will be regularly reviewed and any changes shared with all staff.
- Children's lunch boxes will be reviewed prior to giving the contents to the children to manage any risks from potential allergens or choking hazards.
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child.
- Children will always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating and, where possible, an adult will sit facing children while they eat, to minimise risks from choking and allergic reactions. In addition, a member of staff with a full and valid paediatric first aid certificate will be in the room, where possible.
- At each meal and snack time, we ensure a nominated practitioner is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child.
- Where appropriate, discussions will also take place with children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods.
- Staff show sensitivity towards children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy.
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.

August 2026