



Policy for Admission to Local Authority Nursery Classes

For admissions from September 2023
onwards

Introduction

There is a countywide admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled nursery schools and classes. This policy was determined by the County Council in 1997 and is administered by schools. This has ensured that admissions are based on common principles. Schools which are their **Own Admission Authority** are not legally obliged, but may choose, to adopt and follow this policy with suitable amendments. There is a separate policy for Freestanding Nursery Schools and the attached nursery school at Wheatley.

When new children join the nursery class **it is important that parents are made aware that the process of applying for place at a primary school for the reception year is separate to that of applying for a place in a nursery class or school.** Parents whose children attend the nursery class, particularly from outside the designated area of the primary school, should be reminded that their child is **not guaranteed** a place at the school when s/he reaches the normal school starting age (i.e. the September of the academic year in which the child will be five). They must apply through the normal County Council school admissions procedures.

Parents/carers are entitled to a full time reception place for the whole of the academic year in which their child becomes 5. Schools will need to consider this carefully in planning the organisation of the foundation stage, both for admissions to their nursery, and for children who may defer entry to reception.

Terminology

Reception - the year children become 5

Year – refers to the academic year (September to August)

Own Admission Authority – e.g. Voluntary Aided, Academy, Studio, Free and Foundation Trust Schools

Looked After - Children who are looked after by a local authority within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989 at the time of their application and previously looked after children. The term “previously looked after children” refers only to children who were looked after but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order).

Siblings/Brother or Sister - For admission purposes for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools a sibling is defined as a brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, step- brother or step-sister who will be resident at the same address at the time of entry.

Published Admission Number – The number of places, in part time equivalents (15hrs) agreed each year with the County Council, and published in the Council’s Pupil Place Plan.

Universal Entitlement – 15 hours per week, term time only or 570 hours a year, to which every child is entitled from the term after their 3rd birthday

Extended Entitlement – 30 hours per week, term time only or 1,140 hours a year, for 3 and 4 year olds from working families, according to specific eligibility criteria.

Grace period – when a child’s eligibility for the extended entitlement ceases, the government allows the funded place to continue for a specified time period.

Early Education for eligible children aged 2

A targeted offer of 570 hours per year for the most vulnerable 2-year-old children, from the term after their 2nd birthday, with the aim of reducing the pre-school educational gap that can start to occur from this age. Once a funded 2-year-old child starts a funded place eligibility continues even if the family’s circumstances change.

Eligibility Terms

Universal Early Education Funding entitlement starts from the term after the child’s 3rd birthday

Autumn Term: September 1st-December 31st

Spring Term: January 1st-March 31st

Summer Term: April 1st-August 31st

30 Hours Extended Childcare Entitlement

Families meeting certain eligibility criteria are legally entitled to a funded early years place of 30 hours a week or 1,140 hours a year. Information on this entitlement is available at www.childcare-support.tax.service.gov.uk/par/app/overview

Parents cannot insist on accessing their child’s extended entitlement at any particular provision. Schools must decide whether they will offer only 15 hour nursery places or whether they are able to include some 30 hour extended entitlement places. Schools should make clear to parents what options are available in regard to either the universal or extended entitlement. Children may become ineligible for the extended entitlement. Where this happens there is a **grace period** during which the child may still attend free of charge. When the grace period expires, the place should revert to a universal 15 hour place unless the parent/carer is prepared and able to pay for the extended hours. Schools collecting payments for unfunded hours should ensure that those hours are not returned on the schools census or funding portal return.

Funded 2 Year Olds

Primary Schools with nursery provision have historically had an age range of 3-11. There is much to be gained in terms of children’s outcomes if funded 2 year olds take up a place in provision that has an Ofsted rating of ‘Good’ or above. If schools would like to admit 2 year olds onto the school roll, there is a DfE process to follow, including consultation with relevant parties. Please contact the senior officer (Early years organisation) for more information on this.

Schools which have extended their age range to 2 should only include funded 2 year olds on their nursery roll, i.e. not any fee paying children. Schools must determine whether places for funded 2s are capped, and if so publicise this to parents e.g. on the school website. For further information on funded 2 year olds please see

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/free-early-education-2-year-olds-0>

Schools may find having some funded and some fee paying two year olds offers greater viability. Non-funded children (in any age group) should not be placed on the school roll or be included on the schools census or funding portal return. They also do not count towards the Published Admission Number. Parents paying for a 2 year old place should therefore be advised that they will need to apply formally for a nursery place for the term after their 3rd birthday. Purchase of a childcare place does not give any certainty of, or priority for, a school nursery place.

POLICY FOR NURSERY ADMISSIONS IN OXFORDSHIRE

(Nursery Classes)

1. The County Council has devolved rather than delegated the administration of admissions to nursery classes. Therefore, in the event of a complaint the final responsibility and decision for admissions to voluntary controlled and community schools rests with the County Council.

2. **The designated area** (catchment) of each nursery class or attached nursery school should be set out clearly on a map and be available for parents to see on request. It should also be made available electronically. The catchment area for the nursery will usually be the same as for the primary school.

The designated area for nursery admissions shall be the same as the catchment area for the school.

3. Schools must agree a **published admission number** for the nursery with the County Council before the start of the academic year. Published admission numbers will be stated in part time equivalent (p.t.e.) places. One p.t.e place is 15 hours per week, term time only, or 570 hours a year if the place is delivered flexibly.

The school will offer 20 p.t.e places. This is the number of places available at the start of the school year. In the Autumn (and/or) Winter term we may make additional places available subject to suitable staffing numbers and the overall class size. If you wish your child to be considered for any places that become available, please ask for their name to be kept on the continued interest list. Any additional places will be allocated in line with the criteria in the OCC admissions policy.

There will be a maximum of 15 Nursery pupils attending any one Nursery session.

4. Schools must offer nursery places at least up to the published admission number. Where a school offers the extended entitlement within their nursery provision, a 30 hour place is deemed to represent 2 p.t.e. places.

5. Schools must not operate the nursery with empty places in any term if they have eligible children on the continued interest list.

The exception is where a set limit within the published admission number has been advertised for places for funded 2s or 30 hours, and those places have been filled. A school would not then be obliged to admit e.g. an eligible funded 2 to an unfilled universal entitlement place.

6. The minimum **universal entitlement** to funded nursery education is 15 hours per week, or 570 hours per year, from the term after the child's third birthday.

7. Where capacity against the published admission number exists, places should always be offered for at least 15 hours a week (or 570 hours a year if a stretched offer).

8. Schools are permitted to agree take up of fewer hours to meet parental request but are not obliged to. Places will be funded on actual take up of hours. Schools may set a minimum take up requirement when offering places.

The school offers 15 hour placements however a minimum of 3 sessions can be taken as part of a settling-in process. All universal 15 hour places need to be used as close as possible within the Nursery session open periods.

9. Schools may also offer the **extended entitlement**, of up to 30 hours per week (term time only) or 1,140 hours per year if stretched throughout the year. This should be decided in advance of the academic year and publicised to parents/carers on the school website. Schools are not obliged to offer the extended entitlement.

The school will offer the extended entitlement of 30 hours and this can be used to cover before school and after school provision. The universal entitlement of 15 hours cannot be used to cover before school and after school provision.

10. **Admissions are three times a year**, for as long as places are available. Funding and entitlement are based on a three-term year, with children starting in September, January and April. Parents will be notified that a place is available for their child no later than half a term in advance. Dates by when parents will be notified for allocations are as follows:

30th September for places the following January

31st January for places the following April

30th April for places in the September

11. Children are entitled to a place from the first day of term and offers of a place must always give this as an option even if the school offers 'staggered starts' to help children with the transition. Staggered starts should not be arranged over more than a week or two. The school offers places from the first day of term.

12. Parents will be notified that a place is available for their child no later than half a term in advance. Dates by when parents will be notified for allocations are as follows:

30th September for places for January

31st January for places for April

30th April for places in September

Schools may set and advertise a termly deadline for considering applications for admission in the following term.

13. Schools may choose to allow parents to split their free universal and 2 year old entitlement (where offered) with another provider but are not obliged to.

The school will offer split-funding with other providers based on the following criteria:

- At least 23.25 hours of the entitlement is used in the school, which equates to 3.5 days per week between Monday and Thursday (not Friday). This can include the use of the school's extended provision.
- This is not a permanent arrangement but will be reviewed termly depending on pupil numbers.
- There will be an Administrative charge of £30 per full term = £90 p.a.

14. **Flexibility** Schools may offer their nursery places in a number of ways. These include half or full day sessions, extended sessions covering lunchtimes, or a stretched offer (fewer hours per week but including weeks during school holidays).

Where the extended entitlement is available through hours in out of school clubs, or in partnership with other providers, the school must make clear which element is the universal entitlement and will therefore be guaranteed to continue should the child cease to be eligible for the extended entitlement.

If the child is no longer eligible for the extended entitlement the universal offer will need to be taken between the hours of 8.45am and 3.15pm and must include full sessions.

15. The school website should state the opening times of the nursery and set out its educational aims and provision. The website should also set out the County Council's policy for allocating nursery places when more applications are received than there are places available, as stated in this document (paragraph 16).

16. When more applications are received than there are places available, the following County Council criteria must be applied. These closely follow the admissions criteria for entry to County primary schools. Headteachers should apply the criteria by considering all eligible children from each priority category in turn until all the available places have been allocated. **Other criteria (such as date of birth) cannot be used.**

16.1 Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan naming the school.

16.2 Looked after children, whom the Corporate Parent agrees should attend the school, and 'previously looked after' children. Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Child (IAPLAC) - children who appear (to the admission authority) to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted.

16.3 Disabled children who need to be admitted to a school on the grounds of physical accessibility. The definition of disability is that contained within the Equality Act 2010.

16.4 Children who live in the designated catchment area. If there are more applicants than places in this category, priority will be given in the following descending order:

- Those children who, at the time of entry, have a brother or sister attending the primary school to which the nursery is attached.
- Those children who live closest to the school by the nearest designated public route as defined on the Directorate's Geographic Information System.

16.5 Children who have taken up, or are eligible for, a funded 2 year old place at the time of application.

16.6 Children living outside the designated area who have a brother or sister attending either the foundation stage or the main school at the time of entry. If there are more applicants than places in this category, priority will be given within this group to children who live closest to the school by the nearest designated public route as defined on the Directorate's Geographic Information System.

16.7 Children who attend day care or a voluntary or private sector pre-school on site at the school. If there are more applicants than places in this category, priority will be given within this group to children who live closest to the school by the nearest designated public route as defined on the Directorate's Geographic Information System.

16.8 Those children who do not meet any of the above criteria. Priority for any remaining places will be given to those who live closest to the school by the nearest designated public route as defined on the Directorate's Geographic Information System

Headteachers can seek advice and assistance from the Admissions & Transport Services Manager in applying these criteria.

17. If there are more children than places, any child who is not offered a place can only be reconsidered and admitted at a later point if the parents have put the child's name on the school's continued interest list.

18. Once a child is admitted to the nursery, the child is entitled to remain in a universal part time place in the nursery class until the term after he/she becomes five* **However this may not**

be the most appropriate place for the child if all his/her peers have taken up their reception place in a separate class within the school or another primary school.

*N.B. In the case of a summer born child, parents must either take up the school reception place by the April before the child's fifth birthday; or else need to re-apply through the next admission round for a place to start in the September, usually as a year one child. See the Primary School admissions policy for more detail on deferring entry.

19. Where a family ceases to be eligible for the extended entitlement, the place should return to the universal entitlement level when the grace period expires, unless the parent/carer is prepared and able to pay for the extended hours. Schools offering the extended entitlement should explain this possibility in writing when offering the extended entitlement place.

Parents/Carers must be allowed to keep the child in their universal entitlement place even if they cease to be eligible for the extended entitlement.

20. A universal entitlement nursery place should cease no later than the term after the child's fifth birthday, that is, when they are of statutory school age.

21. Any complaint about the operation of this admissions policy, for example in the case of a particular child who has been refused admission, should be directed to the Head of the school in the first instance, and then to the Admissions and Transport Services Manager if for a Community or Controlled school. For Aided schools or Academies the complaint should be directed to the Head of the school and then to the School Governors, as they have the ultimate decision regarding admissions to these schools.

22. There is no statutory right of appeal.

Contact details

Admissions & Transport Services Manager

Tel: 07393 001242 admissions.schools@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Senior Officer (Early Years Organisation)

Tel 07733 001503 e-mail:earlyeducation@oxfordshire.gov.uk

(for initial advice regarding the application of this policy, and for requests for home to nursery GIS distance measuring)