

Wheatley Nursery School

Headington Quarry Nursery School

Policy for Admission To Local Authority Nursery Schools

For admissions from September 2026 onwards

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Introduction

There is a countywide admissions policy for community nursery schools. The basis of the policy was originally determined by the County Council and ensures that admissions are based on common principles. Following consultation with Headteachers of Freestanding Nursery Schools, it was agreed that a separate policy would be produced for these establishments. This is broadly the same as the admissions policy for nursery classes, except that Freestanding Nursery Schools have no defined catchment area. There are also some small elements which make the policy more relevant to a freestanding establishment. Criteria for allocating places in the case of oversubscription are therefore slightly different than those for schools with a nursery class.

Children should not remain on a Nursery School roll when they are statutory school age.

Terminology

Reception - the year children become 5

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

Looked After Child – (LAC) Children who at the time of their application are looked after by a Local Authority within the meaning of section 22 (1) of the Children Act 1989. In Oxfordshire we refer to these as 'Children we care for' but the policy follows terminology in the School Admissions Code

Previously Looked After – **(PLAC)** children who were 'looked after' but ceased to be so because they were adopted (or became subject to a child arrangement order or special guardianship order). Evidence of previously looked after status and/or the adoption will be requested. Where such evidence is not available, Oxfordshire County Council will make a pragmatic decision based on the information available so that there is a consistent approach.

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.

Siblings/Brother or Sister - For admission purposes 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.

Education and Health Care Plan – a plan made by the LA under Section 37 of the Children and Families Act 2014, specifying the special education provision, health and social care required for that child. *Therefore, this is not an oversubscription criterion*.

Published Admission Number – The number of funded 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

Working Parent Entitlement –

- 30 hours per week, term time only or 1,140 hours a year, for 2, 3 and 4 year olds from working families, according to specific eligibility criteria.
- Information on eligibility is available at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Working parent entitlement now extends to children from 9 months of age, however, schools would need to apply for a separate Ofsted registration in order to care for children under 2.

Grace period – when a child's eligibility for the working parent entitlement ceases the government allows the funded place to continue for a specified time period.

Disadvantaged 2-year-olds- NB. Sometimes referred to by the DfE as 'Early Learning for 2-year-olds' 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 'disadvantaged' 2-year-old child starts a funded place, 15-hour eligibility continues even if family circumstances change. For further information please see: Free early education for Early Learning for 2 year olds | Oxfordshire County Council

Eligibility Terms

To access a funded place in any term under the disadvantaged 2-year-old and universal funding streams, children must have reached their 2nd or 3rd birthday (as appropriate) before the start of the term as set out below. These dates are statutory and cannot be varied

Autumn Term: September 1st-December 31st
Spring Term: January 1st-March 31st
Summer Term: April 1st-August 31st

For children eligible for a working parent funded place, please see the section on 'Early Funded Starts for 'Just 2's and Just 3's'

Notes for schools

Flexibility and your funded offer. Parents cannot insist on accessing their child's entitlement at any particular provision or in a specific pattern. Schools are encouraged however to consider parental demand when deciding on hours of opening and session times.

Schools may choose to offer only 15-hour nursery places but including 30-hour working parent entitlement places is encouraged and will help to fill places more quickly. You may set a cap on 30 hour funded places. Schools should make clear to parents what options are available regarding the universal and working parent entitlements.

A funded offer must be free of charge to parents and not require take up of any paid services (such as lunch). The Early education and childcare - GOV.UK DfE statutory guidance (A2.5) states that there should be no artificial breaks in entitlement hours.

Children may become ineligible for the working parent entitlement. Where this happens, there is a **grace period** during which the child may still attend free of charge. When the grace period expires, provision should revert to a universal 15-hour place unless the parent/carer is prepared and able to pay for the extended hours and the school agrees to support this. Schools should bear in mind that only funded hours count towards meeting the PAN.

Funded 2 Year Olds
There are two entitlement streams – Disadvantaged and working parent.

Nursery Schools were set up originally with an age range of 3-5, however, there is much to be gained in terms of children's outcomes when disadvantaged funded two-year-olds attend good quality provision..

The recently extended working family entitlement for 2-year-olds is also likely to increase demand for places. If nursery schools would like to admit 2-year-olds onto the nursery school roll, there is a DfE process to follow, including consultation with relevant parties. Please see DfE guidance on school organisation for further information and contact the Principal Officer (Early years organisation) if you would like to extend your Nursery School's age range.

For 2-year-olds accessing up to 30 hours from the working parent entitlement, this funding will cease at the end of the grace period if the family circumstances have changed. Schools should make this possibility clear when offering working parent childcare places. There are circumstances where 2-year-olds are eligible under both disadvantaged and working parent criteria. Schools should claim the first 15 hours under the disadvantaged criteria in this instance as the place can then be guaranteed to continue at 15 funded hours a week should they cease to qualify under the working parent heading.

Nursery Schools which have extended their age range to 2 should only include funded 2-year-olds on their nursery roll. They must determine whether places for funded 2s are capped and publicise this to parents e.g. on the school website.

Fee-paid sessions
Nursery Schools may find having some fee-paying places or sessions offers greater viability especially in quieter terms, and many already operate this as a Daycare provision. Non-funded children (in any age group) should not be placed on the Nursery

school roll or be included on the schools' census. Please record these children as 'guests' on your MIS. Fee paid sessions do not count towards the Published Admission Number

Allocating Places and Oversubscription
Nursery Schools may find it helpful to set a cut-off date each term for applications to start nursery the following term. This helps with administration particularly when places are likely to be oversubscribed.

If oversubscribed, please allocate places strictly in line with the criteria listed at point 16 of the policy. You may need to request home to school distance measuring, in which case please allow sufficient time for this to be done. Detail on how to request measuring from County Hall staff is on the Intranet at Nursery to Home Distance Measuring.

Schools can also use the arrangements detailed under the measuring process note to check whether individual children qualify under point 16.*3* – eligibility for a funded disadvantaged 2 place - at the time of application. Eligible families may be able to provide you with a **'TYE reference number'**. **If you** wish to check for eligibility please mention this when you send your data across.

Early funded starts for 'Just 2's' and 'Just 3's' (working parent entitlement)
Depending on whether your school has a formal age range of 2+ or 3+, you may be able to start children on or after their 2nd or 3rd birthday. Schools should request permission to claim for this specific age group for the first time by contacting earlyeducation@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Schools should bear in mind that admitting children at 'Just 2' or 'Just 3' can only be funded where the family has a valid working parent entitlement code. Places during the term in which the child turns 2 or 3 would in that term only be funded at the higher rate for the younger cohort (i.e. 9-23 month or 2-year-old, respectively).

'Just 2' or 'Just 3' children may be placed on the school roll if your age range supports that. Schools should ensure that early starts do not bypass the nursery admissions policy e.g. by giving the final available place as an early start to a child in a working parent family, where they would not have been entitled to that place (using this policy's oversubscription criteria) when using the normal term starts.

Please do not admit or place children on roll before their 2nd birthday (school age range 2+) or 3rd birthday (school age range 3+) as this has legal implications.

POLICY FOR NURSERY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS IN OXFORDSHIRE

(Freestanding Nursery Schools)

1. The County Council has devolved rather than delegated the administration of admissions to Nursery Schools. Therefore, in the event of a complaint the final responsibility and decision for admissions to Nursery Schools rests with the County Council.

2. Nursery Schools must agree a **published admission number** with the County Council before the start of the academic year. Published admission numbers will be stated in part time equivalent (pte) places. One pte place is 15 hours per week, term time only, or 570 hours a year if the place is stretched.

3. Nursery Schools must offer funded places at least up to the published admission number. Where a nursery school offers the working parent entitlement within their provision, a 30-hour place is deemed to represent 2 pte places.

4. Nursery Schools must not operate 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.

5. 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.

6. 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).

7. Nursery 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.

8. Nursery Schools may set a minimum take up requirement when offering places.

9. Nursery Schools may also offer the **working parent 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. Nursery Schools are not obliged to offer the extended entitlement.

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 places starting in September, January or April.

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 Nursery School offers ‘staggered starts’ or induction periods to help children settle. Staggered starts should not be arranged over more than a week or two.

12. Parents will be notified that a place is available for their child no later than a half term in advance. Nursery Schools may set and advertise a termly deadline for considering applications for admission in the following term.

13. **Flexibility** Nursery Schools may offer their places in several 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). Funded places must always be available free of charge, without obligation to buy extra hours or services.

14. Where the working parent entitlement is available through hours in daycare provision or in partnership with other providers, the Nursery School must make clear which element is the universal entitlement and will therefore be guaranteed to continue if a child ceases to be eligible for the working parent provision.

15. The Nursery School shall provide information on their school website stating the opening times of the nursery provision and its educational aims and provision. The website should also set out the Published Admission Number as agreed by the County Council, and the County Council's policy for nursery admissions.

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. Children with an Education Health and Care Plan naming the school will always be admitted. 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.**

    Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan in which the school is named in Section 1 must always be admitted.

    16.1 Children who are looked after (LAC) by a Local Authority and “Previously Looked After” (PLAC) , or

"Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Child" (IAPLAC) at the time of their application.

16.2 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.

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

16.4 Those children who, at the time of entry, have a sibling attending the nursery school.

16.5 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 straight-line distance as calculated by Oxfordshire County Council.

16.6 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 straight-line distance as calculated by Oxfordshire County Council.

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 admitted to the Nursery School, a 3- or 4-year-old child is entitled to remain in a **universal part time** place until the term after he/she becomes five, that is when they are statutory school age.

    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 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 working parent entitlement, the free place should return to the universal entitlement level (for children aged 3+) when the grace period expires, unless the parent/carer agrees to pay for the extended hours. Schools offering the extended entitlement should explain this possibility in writing when offering the working parent entitlement place. **Parents/Carers must be allowed to keep their 3 or 4-year old child in their universal**

entitlement place even if they cease to be eligible for the working parent entitlement.

20. Schools may allow the parent/carer to continue to access the extended hours on a fee-paying basis but are not obliged to. Fee paid hours do not count towards a school's PAN.

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 Nursery School in the first instance and then to the Admissions & Transport Services Manager.

22. There is no statutory right of appeal.

Contact details

Admissions & Transport Services Manager
admissions.schools@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Principal Officer (Early Years Organisation)
Tel 07733 001503 e-mail: school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk
(for initial advice regarding the application of this policy or requests for home to nursery distance measuring)