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Policy for Admission To Local Authority Nursery Schools

For admissions from September 2023 onwards

		Date	Change Log	
Reviewed by:	OCC/SBM	05/09/2023	Reviewed Autumn 2023	✓
Authorised by:	FGB	21/09/2023	No Changes	
Signed:				

Introduction

There is a countywide admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled nursery schools and classes. This policy was determined by the County Council and is administered by schools. This ensures 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.

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.** 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 Child (LAC)- Children who are looked after by a local authority within the meaning of section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989 at the time of their application.

Previously Looked After Child (PLAC) – are children who are no longer “looked after” by a LA in England because they are subject to an adoption, special guardianship or child arrangements 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 local 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 having being adopted. The 2021 School Admissions Code regards a child as having been in state care outside England if they were in the care of or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

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.*

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.

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 family 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 regarding 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 will have a PAN including that age range. They should decide whether places for funded 2s are capped within the PAN, 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 2-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.
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.
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 2-year-olds 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.
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.

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.
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' or induction periods to help children settle in. 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 half a term in advance. 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.
14. **Flexibility** Schools may offer their nursery 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).

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 ceases to be eligible for the extended entitlement.

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 Published Admission Number as agreed by the County Council, and 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.

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 ; "Previously Looked After" (PLAC), or "Internationally Adopted Previously Looked After Children" (IAPLAC).

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 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 sibling attending the nursery or the primary school to which the nursery is attached.
- Those children who live closest to the school by the straight-line distance as calculated by Oxfordshire County Council..

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

16.5 Children living outside the designated area who have a sibling attending either the nursery 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 straight-line distance as calculated by Oxfordshire County Council.

16.6 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..

16.7 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.

In categories 16.3 to 16.6 above, priority will be given in each category to children who are eligible for Service Pupil Premium and then to children 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 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 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 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

Principal 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 distance measuring)