

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

Policy Statement

CurioCity Childcare is committed to providing high-quality early education and childcare in a way that is transparent, fair and accessible to families.

We offer Government-funded early education entitlement places in line with Department for Education guidance and Local Authority requirements.

The purpose of this policy is to explain clearly:

- how funded early education entitlement hours are delivered at CurioCity Childcare;
- what is included within a funded place;
- what is not covered by Government funding;
- what optional extras are available;
- how parents may access a funded-only place without being required to purchase optional extras;
- what reasonable alternatives are available where parents do not wish to pay for optional services;
- how we ensure families are not pressured into optional costs.

CurioCity Childcare will not charge parents for funded early education entitlement hours. Funded hours are provided free at the point of access.

Any charges made by CurioCity Childcare relate only to services, consumables, additional hours or activities that are not funded by the Government.

Parents are not required to purchase optional extras in order to access their child's funded entitlement.

Purpose of This Policy

This policy has been prepared to ensure that parents and carers understand the difference between:

- **Funded early education entitlement hours**, which are funded by the Government and provided free of charge; and

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

- **Optional additional services**, which are not covered by Government funding and may be charged separately.

The policy also ensures that CurioCity Childcare meets the Local Authority requirement that any provider offering free early education must have a clear written policy giving parents reasonable alternatives to paying for extras.

This policy should be read alongside:

- CurioCity Childcare Fee Schedule;
- Parent Contract;
- Admissions Policy;
- Food and Healthy Eating Policy;
- Outings and Visits Policy;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- Equality, Inclusion and SEND Policy;
- Local Authority Provider Agreement.

1. . Our Approach to Funded Early Education

CurioCity Childcare believes that funded early education should be meaningful, high quality and fully integrated into the life of the nursery.

Children accessing funded hours receive the same warm relationships, high-quality teaching, access to the EYFS curriculum, indoor and outdoor provision, observation, assessment and key person support as all other children.

Funded children are not treated less favourably because their place is funded.

Our curriculum is inspired by:

- the Early Years Foundation Stage;
- Reggio Emilia principles;
- child-led learning;
- outdoor learning;
- nature-based experiences;
- respectful relationships;
- curiosity, independence and creativity.

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

The funded entitlement covers early education and childcare during the funded hours. It does not cover the full cost of all services that CurioCity Childcare may offer as part of its wider nursery experience.

2. Funded Entitlements Available

CurioCity Childcare offers Government-funded early education places in line with current eligibility rules.

This may include:

- funded entitlement for eligible children from 9 months;
- funded entitlement for eligible 2-year-olds;
- universal funded entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds;
- extended funded entitlement for eligible working families.

Eligibility is determined by Government criteria and/or the Local Authority. Parents are responsible for applying for and reconfirming any eligibility codes where required.

Parents must provide CurioCity Childcare with any required eligibility code, National Insurance number, date of birth and other information needed to validate funding with the Local Authority.

Funding can only be claimed once eligibility has been confirmed.

3. Stretched Funding at CurioCity Childcare

CurioCity Childcare operates for 51 weeks of the year and is not a term-time-only nursery.

For this reason, funded hours are stretched across the year.

This means that a term-time entitlement is spread across our opening weeks to create a weekly stretched entitlement.

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

The current stretched funding model is:

- 15 funded hours over 38 weeks = approximately 11.17 hours per week over 51 weeks;
- 30 funded hours over 38 weeks = approximately 22.35 hours per week over 51 weeks.

These calculations may change if Government or Local Authority funding arrangements change.

Funded hours cannot usually be carried forward, banked, swapped for another week, used to cover absences, or exchanged for cash.

4. CurioCity's Funded-Only Offer

CurioCity Childcare offers fully funded-only places during designated funded sessions.

Our current funded-only session is:

12:30pm – 5:00pm, on days the nursery is open, subject to availability.

These hours are provided at no charge for the funded entitlement itself.

A funded-only place includes:

- care and education during the funded session;
- access to the EYFS curriculum;
- key person support;
- indoor and outdoor play;
- planned learning opportunities;
- observation and assessment;
- access to standard nursery resources required for delivery of the EYFS;
- safeguarding and welfare provision;
- reasonable adjustments where required.

A funded-only place does not include optional extras, additional paid hours, meals, specialist tuition, chargeable enrichment activities, chargeable trips or other services not covered by Government funding.

Funded-only sessions are offered subject to availability, staffing, operational requirements and the nursery's admissions process.

5. What Government Funding Covers

Government funding is intended to cover early education and childcare during the funded entitlement hours.

At CurioCity Childcare, funded provision includes the core elements required to deliver high-quality EYFS learning.

This includes:

- adult supervision and care during funded hours;
- teaching and learning through the EYFS;
- access to standard play and learning resources;
- access to the nursery environment;
- key person observation and planning;
- support for children's development;
- safeguarding and welfare arrangements;
- inclusion and SEND support within the setting's usual provision.

Children accessing a funded-only place will continue to receive provision that complies with the EYFS.

6. What Government Funding Does Not Cover

Government funding does not cover every cost associated with a child's attendance at nursery.

The following are not covered by Government funding (including but not limited to):

- meals;
- snacks;
- drinks other than standard access to drinking water;
- nappies;
- wipes;
- sun cream;
- formula milk;
- additional private childcare hours;
- extended opening hours;
- specialist tuition;

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

- chargeable enrichment activities;
- optional events;
- chargeable outings and trips;
- additional services not necessary for the direct delivery of the EYFS.

CurioCity Childcare may charge for these items where parents choose to access them.

7. Optional All-Inclusive Enhanced Package

CurioCity Childcare offers an optional all-inclusive enhanced package for families who would like their child to access the wider CurioCity experience beyond funded-only provision.

This package is designed for convenience and consistency and may include, depending on the child's age, booking pattern and session times:

- additional childcare hours beyond the funded entitlement;
- meals;
- snacks;
- drinks;
- consumables;
- nappies and wipes where applicable;
- sun cream where applicable;
- enrichment activities;
- specialist tuition;
- regular outings;
- educational visits;
- trips;
- additional curriculum experiences not funded by Government entitlement.

The all-inclusive enhanced package is optional.

Parents do not have to purchase the all-inclusive enhanced package in order to access a funded-only place.

Where parents choose the all-inclusive enhanced package, charges will be explained clearly in advance and shown in the nursery's fee information.

8. No Mandatory Charges

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

CurioCity Childcare will not make the purchase of optional extras a condition of accessing a funded place.

Parents will not be required to pay for meals, consumables, outings, specialist tuition, enrichment activities or additional hours in order to access their child's funded entitlement.

Parents who choose not to purchase optional extras will still be able to access the funded-only offer, subject to availability and the nursery's admissions process.

Staff must not pressure, persuade or make families feel uncomfortable if they choose not to purchase optional extras.

9. Reasonable Alternatives to Optional Charges

Where parents do not wish to purchase optional extras, CurioCity Childcare will offer reasonable alternatives that allow the child to access funded entitlement hours free of charge.

Reasonable alternatives may include, depending on the child's age, session pattern, operational arrangements and the nature of the optional service:

- access to a funded-only session pattern;
- attendance during designated funded-only hours;
- alternative arrangements for meals or food provision;
- alternative arrangements for consumables;
- alternative EYFS provision during optional paid activities;
- non-participation in chargeable outings, trips or specialist tuition;
- an alternative activity or experience within the setting;
- agreement of a session pattern that does not require optional additional services;
- discussion with the Nursery Manager to agree a suitable funded-only arrangement.

Reasonable alternatives are designed to ensure access to funded early education. They do not mean that CurioCity Childcare is required to provide meals, consumables, trips, specialist tuition, enrichment activities or additional private hours free of charge.

Where a parent chooses not to purchase an optional extra, the child will not receive that optional extra unless another reasonable arrangement has been agreed.

10. Meals, Snacks and Food Arrangements

CurioCity Childcare places high value on high-quality, nutritious and well-presented food. Our food offer is an important part of our wider nursery provision and is included within the optional all-inclusive enhanced package.

Where a funded-only place is accessed and a child will be present during a period where food is required, alternative arrangements must be agreed in advance with the Nursery Manager.

Alternative arrangements may depend on:

- the funded session time;
- the age of the child;
- allergies and dietary needs within the setting;
- food safety requirements;
- choking risk;
- storage and hygiene requirements;
- equality and inclusion considerations;
- staffing and operational arrangements.

CurioCity Childcare reserves the right to set reasonable requirements around food brought into the setting in order to protect children with allergies, ensure food safety and maintain healthy eating standards.

Meals and snacks are an optional charge and are not a condition of accessing funded early education hours. Parents who choose not to purchase meals and snacks should discuss alternative arrangements with the nursery manager.

11. Consumables

Government funding does not cover consumables used by individual children.

Consumables may include items such as:

- nappies;
- wipes;
- sun cream;
- nappy cream;

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

- formula milk;
- other personal care items.

Where these are included within the optional all-inclusive enhanced package, the charge will be made clear to parents.

Parents accessing a funded-only place may be asked to provide suitable personal care items required for their child.

Where parents do not provide necessary personal care items, CurioCity Childcare will contact parents and agree how the child's needs will be met safely.

12. Outings, Trips and Enrichment Activities

Outings, trips and real-world experiences are an important part of the CurioCity approach. Children regularly benefit from visits to parks, farms, museums, galleries, community spaces and wider London attractions.

Parents who choose not to purchase the optional all-inclusive enhanced package, or who do not wish their child to participate in a chargeable activity, should understand that their child may not be able to attend that outing, trip, specialist tuition or enrichment activity.

In these circumstances, CurioCity Childcare will ensure the child continues to receive appropriate EYFS provision during their funded entitlement hours.

This may include:

- remaining at nursery with appropriate staff supervision;
- taking part in an alternative EYFS activity;
- joining another suitable room or group activity;
- being offered an alternative funded session where required by operational or staffing arrangements;
- another reasonable arrangement agreed with parents.

CurioCity Childcare will not require parents to pay for trips or enrichment activities as a condition of accessing funded hours.

13. Additional Hours

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

Parents may choose to purchase additional private childcare hours outside their child's funded entitlement.

Additional hours are charged in accordance with CurioCity Childcare's current fee schedule.

Additional hours are optional and are not a condition of accessing a funded-only place.

Where parents choose not to purchase additional hours, the child must be collected at the end of their funded session.

Late collection may incur charges in line with the nursery's Late Collection Policy and parent contract.

14. Transparency of Fees and Charges

CurioCity Childcare will provide clear information to parents before a place is accepted.

Information provided will include:

1. funded hours available;
2. funded-only session times;
3. additional private hours available;
4. optional all-inclusive enhanced package charges;
5. what is included in optional charges;
6. what is not included in funded-only provision;
7. reasonable alternatives available where optional extras are declined.

Charges will be shown clearly in the fee schedule and invoices.

15. No Pressure and Fair Treatment

Families must be able to make an informed choice about whether to purchase optional extras.

Staff must not:

- tell parents that optional charges are compulsory;

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

- suggest that a funded place will be withdrawn because optional extras are declined;
- make a child feel different because their family has chosen a funded-only place;
- pressure parents into the all-inclusive package;
- imply that funded-only families are less valued.

Children accessing funded-only places will continue to be treated with dignity, warmth and respect.

16. Equality and Inclusion

CurioCity Childcare is committed to equality, inclusion and fairness.

We recognise that families have different financial circumstances and may make different choices about optional services.

Reasonable alternatives will be considered carefully and respectfully.

Where a child has SEND, allergies, medical needs, religious dietary requirements or other individual needs, CurioCity Childcare will work with parents to ensure the child's funded provision is safe, inclusive and appropriate.

Any alternative arrangements must be consistent with:

- safeguarding requirements;
- allergy management;
- food safety;
- health and safety;
- staffing ratios;
- the child's individual needs;
- equality legislation;
- the EYFS.

17. Deposits and Administration Fees

No registration fee will be charged solely for accessing a funded-only place.

FREE EARLY EDUCATION ENTITLEMENT AND OPTIONAL CHARGES

Where a parent purchases additional private hours or a full all-inclusive place, charges, deposits or administration arrangements may apply in line with the nursery's private fee terms.

Any deposit or fee arrangement will be made clear to parents before the place is confirmed.

18. Changes to Funding or Eligibility

Parents are responsible for maintaining eligibility where reconfirmation is required.

If a parent fails to reconfirm eligibility or funding is withdrawn, parents may become responsible for the cost of the childcare place from the date funding ends.

CurioCity Childcare will notify parents where possible if eligibility validation fails, but responsibility for maintaining eligibility remains with the parent.

19. Absence, Holidays and Closures

Funded hours are allocated according to the agreed booking pattern and Local Authority rules.

Funded hours missed due to absence, sickness or holidays cannot usually be carried forward or exchanged.

Where the nursery is closed due to planned closure, bank holiday, training day or emergency closure, funding will be managed in line with Local Authority rules and the parent contract.

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