

Little Bears Pre-School

Little Bears is a friendly, non profit making community pre-school for 2½ to 5 year-old children. We are a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

Little Bears is managed by an elected committee of parents whose children attend the pre-school. The committee members are elected at our AGM, which is open to all parents.

Parents and children are encouraged to visit Little Bears and spend a morning there to see how the sessions are run. We have full government funding for 3 and 4 year-old children, which begins the term after they turn 3 years old. Our fees at £12.00 per (i.e. £4.00 per hour) session remain very competitive for those who do not yet qualify for funding. As a result of the fee level, we still actively fundraise on a regular basis. The extra money raised contributes to maintaining and buying equipment, and materials.

To secure a place a deposit of £20.00 is required.

Our aims

To be available (ie. affordable) to all children if their parents wish them to attend.

For children to be aware of and considerate to others around them.

To enhance the development and education of children under statutory school age in a parent-involving, community-based group, by providing a wide range of experiences and situations to stimulate the children's mental, physical and emotional development.

To provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment in which the children can have fun and enjoy themselves while learning.

To work within a framework which ensures equality of opportunity for all children and families.

To prepare the child for school by developing social and communication skills, and to encourage them to concentrate and listen. We do not formally teach the children to read and write but we do prepare them for this by practising making their mark, pencil control, pre-school skills and encouraging them to listen to and identify words, rhymes and the sounds of written words.

We offer your child

- A curriculum leading to approved learning outcomes.
- Individual care and attention. We endeavour to maintain a staff-to-child ratio which is higher than that recommended by Ofsted.
- Fun and friendship with children and other adults.
- Opportunities for you and your family to be directly involved in the activities of the group and in your own child's progress.
- Extensive facilities:
 - large hall.
 - large range of toys and equipment owned by Little Bears.
 - separate room for coats.
 - large fenced outdoor play area, including separate enclosed swings, climbing frame and slide.
 - set back with plenty of off-road parking.
 - phone line for emergencies. (No: 01494 758081)

As suggested by the Pre-school Learning Alliance, we encourage parents to take an active part in the running of Little Bears. We operate a voluntary rota for parent help. It is interesting and fun to see first hand how the sessions run, as well as seeing your child and others in action!

Little Bears is open Monday to Friday during school term times. The sessions run from 9:20am to 12:20 pm. There are additional optional lunch clubs running on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 12:20 to 13:20.

We strongly recommend that children attend the group for at least two days a week. This helps with settling and continuity.

Fees and funded places

Non funded places

Little Bear's offers places to children aged 2½ years and above. The fees are £12.00 per session (£4 per hour) and are payable in the 1st week of each half term.

Funded places

Fully funded places are available the term following a child's third birthday. Little Bears will not expect you to contribute further unless your child attends above 15 hours a week.

Notice

Whether or not the child's place is funded, a term's notice of the child leaving or reducing the number of sessions is required. If this notice is not given then a term's fees at £12.00 per session will be charged.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Within the group, all children are supported in reaching their potential at their own pace. By means of developmentally appropriate play activities and a high level of individual adult input, we offer a curriculum which leads to nationally approved learning goals and prepares children to progress with confidence over the foundation stage for children aged between 2½ and 6 years old.

Communication, Language and literacy

In both small and large groups, children are encouraged to extend their vocabulary and fluency by talking and listening, and by hearing and responding to stories, songs and rhymes. Children are helped to understand that written symbols carry meaning, to be aware of the purposes of writing and, when they are ready, to use drawn and written symbols for themselves. A well-stocked book corner gives every child the opportunity and encouragement to become familiar with books, able to handle them and aware of their uses, both for reference and as a source of stories and pictures.

Personal and social development

Within a nurturing environment, children are individually supported in developing confidence, autonomy and self-respect. They are encouraged to work and concentrate independently and also take part in the life of the group, sharing and cooperating with other children and adults. Through activities, conversation and practical example, they learn acceptable ways to express their own feelings and to have respect for the feelings of others. All children are given the opportunity, as appropriate, to take responsibility for themselves and also for the group, its members and its property.

Problem-solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

By means of adult-supported practical experience, children become familiar with the sorting, matching, ordering, sequencing and counting activities, which form the basis for early mathematics. As they use their developing

mathematical understanding to solve practical problems, children are assisted to learn and use the vocabulary of mathematics, identifying objects by shape, position, size, volume, and number. Songs, games and picture books help the children become aware of number sequences and, when they are ready, to use simple mathematical operations such as adding.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

A safe and stimulating environment allows children to explore and experiment with a range of natural and manufactured materials. They learn to observe the features of objects and substances, recognizing differences, patterns and similarities and to share and record their findings. Children are assisted in exploring and understanding their environment, both within the group and also in the wider community. A range of safe and well maintained equipment enables children to extend their technological understanding, using simple tools and techniques as appropriate to achieve their intentions and to solve problems.

Outings

We offer a wide variety of outings throughout the year. Past visits have included Kidzone, a local farm, Wendover Woods, Worlds End Santa's grotto, Beconskot model village and Whipsnade Zoo. We are always very grateful for parents to come along to help with transport and to join in the fun.

Physical development

A range of equipment and opportunities, both indoors and out of doors, allows children to develop confidence and enjoyment in the use and development of their own bodily skills. A very high level of adult supervision enables children safely to create and meet physical challenges, developing increasing skill and control in moving, climbing and balancing. At the same time, children are supported in the development of fine motor skills required to use tools, including pens and pencils, also to handle small objects with increasing control and precision. We regret we can not allow the children to use the outside climbing facilities during pre-school sessions owing to insurance reasons, however, they are free to use them under parental supervision before and after pre-school.

Creative development

Children are encouraged to use a wide range of resources in order to express their own ideas and feelings and to construct their individual response to experience in two and three dimensions. Art equipment, including paint, glue, crayons and pencils as well as natural and discarded resources, provides for open-ended exploration of colour, shape and texture and the development of skills in painting, drawing and collage. Children join in with and respond to music and stories, and there are many opportunities for imaginative role play, both individually and as part of the group

Special educational needs

Each child is able to progress at their own pace in all areas of development and this includes children with learning difficulties. If you would like to discuss the group's ability to meet your own child's special needs, please talk to the pre-school leader. Our full special needs policy may be found in our policy document.

A typical day

The following timetable is flexible and can alter to take advantage of good weather and incidental activities.

09:20	The door is opened and children are welcomed in by a member of staff.
09:45	Registration. Includes counting and an explanation of the day's activities.
10:00 -11.20	Child initiated play. Children can choose from a wide variety of play opportunities including painting, drawing, construction, jigsaws, imaginative, crafts and games. Supervised activities include a craft, ranging from pottery to sewing and cooking to collages.
EITHER 10.30-11.20	Rolling snack. Children decide to come to the snack table during this time when they feel hungry.
11.20-11.30	Tidy away time. Children are encouraged to help with the tidying away and are also given the opportunity to sit quietly with a book.
OR	
10:50	Tidy away time
11:00	Large group snack time. If preferred, the children will share their snack together in one group with opportunity to share their news.
11:30	Outdoor play. Weather permitting a variety of balls, hoops, bats, cars, bicycles are offered. Alternatively, group games and imaginative play may be offered.
12:00	Song and story time. Children are encouraged to sing songs, play instruments and listen to a group story.
12:20	Parent/carers are ushered in to collect their child.

Adult resources

Our staff pride themselves on their attention to the needs and development of each child. They are committed to ongoing training, especially through the Pre School Learning Alliance. The staff are supported by parent help and occasional help from students.

The pre-school is run by a small team of qualified staff under the leadership of Claire Cox (BA Hons) who has a Diploma in Preschool Practice.

The pre-school 'parent helper' rota

Research shows that children learn better when their parents are involved. Our voluntary rota system enables parents to help in the group whenever they wish.

Key-carers

Our key-carer system gives each member of staff particular responsibility for just a few children. Each child in the group has one special adult to relate to which can make settling into the group much easier. In addition the key-carer is in a position to tailor the group's curriculum to the unique needs of each individual child.

Training

Our membership to the Pre-school Learning Alliance ensures that we are constantly in touch with new thinking in the field of child education and care. All the staff regularly attend courses provided by Buckinghamshire Education Authority.

The role of parents

Little Bears Pre-school recognises parents as the first and most important educators of their young children. We aim to support parents, who are welcome

- to work in the group with the children
- to assist with fundraising
- to take part in the management of the pre-school
- to represent the pre-school at branch and county activities of the Pre-school Learning Alliance
- to attend meetings of the Pre-school Learning Alliance
- to attend training courses, workshops and conferences organised by the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

Starting at pre-school

We want the children to feel safe and happy in the absence of their parents, to recognise other adults as a source of authority, help and friendship and to be able to share with their parents afterwards the new learning experiences enjoyed at Little Bears.

The first days

We invite new children to visit Little Bears Pre-school with their parents, to familiarise themselves with the setting and meet their key worker. New children start on a staggered basis to ensure staff can devote sufficient time to them. You will initially be offered 2 sessions a week, and this can be increased once your child has settled well and spaces are available.

A child who is tense or unhappy will not be able to play or learn properly, so it is important for parents and pre-school staff to work together to help the child feel confident and secure in the group. This takes longer for some children than for others and parents should not feel worried if their child takes a while to settle. We welcome parents to stay for as long as required to make the child feel comfortable with the environment.

What to bring

In order to feel free to explore and experiment with all kinds of materials, including messy ones, it is best to send children dressed in clothes which are easily washable or not too new, (Little Bears sweatshirts and T-shirts are available at a reasonable price).

It is good for children to practise the skills which will make them independent. Simple clothing which they can handle themselves will enable them to go to the toilet when they want to and to put on and take off their outdoor clothes without being too dependent on other people's help. Dungarees and long dresses are not advisable. Suitable footwear is required, taking weather conditions into consideration (ie. wellies and slippers). All items should be named.

Snack time

Little Bears is happy to provide both healthy and dentally friendly snacks in accordance with The Smile Award which we received again in 2010. Such foods will include seasonal fruits and vegetables, bread sticks, rice cakes, various breads and cheese. Occasionally the food will be prepared by staff and offered in a buffet system. Alternatively, if appropriate, the children will prepare the snack themselves using child friendly knives.

Keeping the staff informed when changes of circumstance

It is very important to appraise staff of any changes in circumstance, however minor, as they can have a huge impact on your child and explain any changes in attitude and behaviour.

We hope that your child's time at Little Bears will be a very happy and productive one. If you have any queries or if we can be of any help, please contact a member of staff or the committee at anytime

Admissions

Little Bears operates a waiting list, which is arranged in birth order, so the oldest children are offered a place first. If we are oversubscribed we also take into account siblings already attending the pre-school and the distance from home to Little Bears.

Lunch Club

Children play together in a smaller, quieter group and choose their own resources. After a short play, they sit together to eat their lunch (provided for them by home), reflect on the morning, give each other their news and have a chat. They then tidy up, play and, if time, have a story or game before Home time. Lunch Club runs on Mondays Wednesdays and Thursdays from 12:20 to 13:20 p.m. and costs £4 for one session.

Policies

A list of our policies follows. If you wish to see the full version please ask a member of staff. All our policies are designed to create a safe, secure and stimulating environment for the children and families in the preschool. Our policies are reviewed on a regular basis and comments and suggestions from parents are always welcome.

Admissions Policy

Behaviour Management Policy

Child Protection Policy

Complaints Procedures

Confidentiality Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

Equipment and Resources Policy

Food and Drink Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Lost Child Policy

Parental Involvement Policy

Settling in Pre-school Policy

Serious Injury or Fatality Policy

Special Educational Needs

Staffing and Employment Policy

Student Placement Policy