

Choosing a pre-school



What is a pre-school?

Pre-schools are also known as playgroups or nursery schools. They offer a range of learning, play and social activities during term time, for children between two and five years old. This sessional care is for periods between two-and-a-half hours and four hours a day, mornings or afternoons.

Since September 2008, all registered childcare for children under the age of five must be working within the statutory framework and practice guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

For further information, please visit:

Web: www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs

Children develop at their own pace and are encouraged to work towards the Early Learning Goals. These are achieved through their key workers as well as through social interaction with their peers. A well-planned day that helps to develop a wide range of skills will give children the opportunity to observe, listen, communicate, explore, experiment and create.

Pre-schools provide a fun and caring environment where children can socialise with other adults and enjoy making new friends. This will equip them with skills which last a lifetime.

How will I know that my child is safe and secure?

Pre-schools are registered and inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to ensure that they are appropriately staffed and resourced and that

the premises are safe and suitable for children. The registration certificate will be displayed. Every setting must have public liability insurance. At least every three years, Ofsted will carry out an inspection and award a grade for the quality of learning, development and care provided and how they meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Ofsted reports can be obtained from the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Tel: 08456 404040

Will the staff be qualified?

All regular staff must have a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check. At least one member of staff must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification and at least half of all other staff must hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification. Each of these qualifications must be as defined by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC).

For further information, please visit:

Web: www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate must be present at all times.

Every child at the pre-school will have a key worker who has special responsibility for a small group of children. Your child's key worker will be happy to liaise with you regarding any queries or concerns you may have about your child's day.

Every pre-school must also have a named Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) who has overall responsibility for children with additional needs. They will liaise with the Special Educational Needs Development Team and any other professionals who may be involved with the family.





How many children will there be in the pre-school?

Most pre-schools offer places for between 10 and 26 children. The rules state that there should be:

- one member of staff for every four children between the ages of two and three years
- one member of staff for every eight children between the ages of three and five years

What time do pre-schools open?

Pre-schools open for sessions between two-and-a-half hours to four hours. Children usually attend for either morning or afternoon sessions. Sometimes there will be two sessions a day, for five days a week, but this may vary. Some pre-schools have expanded and are now open all day. Most pre-schools have the same term dates as local schools.

What about full-time childcare?

Some parents arrange for children to be taken to, or collected from, their pre-school by a childminder or consider another form of childcare such as a day nursery.

How much do pre-schools cost?

Pre-schools set their charges according to the service that they provide. On average, pre-schools charge between £7 and £12 per session. The Children's Information Service can provide you with further details.

Can I get help with childcare costs?

Pre-schools offer government-funded, part-time education places for all three and four year olds. Please see the fact sheet on *Early Education Funding* for further information.

If you work and pay for childcare you may be able to get tax credits to help with the costs. You usually have to work for at least 16 hours a week to qualify.

Childcare vouchers can also be used to help towards childcare costs.

Please see the fact sheets on *Tax Credits* and *Childcare Vouchers* for further information.

How do I choose a pre-school?

You know your child best and every pre-school is different, so look for one that will suit your family. It is a good idea to take your child with you on visits and observe how they respond to their surroundings. Visit when other children are present so that you can observe their behaviour. It is advisable to visit several before you make your decision.

The fact sheet on *Questions to Ask & Quality Pointers* will give you further guidance on choosing childcare.

The Children's Information Service gives free advice and guidance on all forms of childcare. They can provide you with details of pre-schools within Bournemouth.

Benefits

- There is a continuity of care for children until they start school.
- Children can enjoy learning and playing in a group environment.
- Parents can meet and get to know other parents in the area.
- Children will acquire skills that will help them when they start school.
- Pre-schools can help to familiarise children with routines.
- Children will mix with lots of other children their own age.

For further information, please contact:
The Bournemouth Children's Information Service
Tel: 01202 456222
Email: cis@bournemouth.gov.uk
Web: www.bournemouth.gov.uk/cis
www.direct.gov.uk