

Nursery Policy
Anstey First School

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body on an annual basis

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body on 31/04/2023

It is due for review in April 2024

Signature Date

Head Teacher

Signature Date

Chair of Governors

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Statement of intent

Anstey First School aims to provide a nursery and pre-school experience for children that is affordable, high quality and geared towards a smooth transition towards primary school.

We work to create a safe, welcoming and stimulating environment for the pupils in our care. The school believes that a safe social atmosphere helps pupils to develop their social skills and confidence.

We will work with parents to claim benefit entitlement related to nursery fees such as working tax credits and free childcare entitlement.

This policy has been established to provide transparent fee information, set procedures for the payment of fees and create a framework for dealing with non-payment in a swift and fair manner.

Parents should be aware of, and given access to, this policy and the school's procedures. It will be included on the school's website and made available to view at the school on request.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Childcare Act 2006
- Childcare Act 2016
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Local Authority (Duty to Secure Early Years Provision Free of Charge) Regulations 2014 (as amended)
- The Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) Regulations 2016 (as amended)
- DfE (2018) 'Early Years Entitlements: operational guidance'
- DfE (2018) 'Early education and childcare'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Debt Recovery Policy

2. Fees

Parents are charged for care provided outside of the following provision:

- 15 hours' free provision a week for eligible two-year-olds
- Universal 15 hours' free provision a week for all three to four-year-olds
- Extended 30 hours' free provision a week for eligible three to four-year-olds
- Extended 30 hours' free provision a week for children in foster care

The charges are as follows:

- £5.60 per additional hour (increasing to £6 in September 2023)

Parents will book the required sessions for each term one term in advance. However, ad hoc sessions will be accommodated providing staffing ratios can be met.

The 30 hours' free childcare offer can only be used for childcare and cannot be used to pay for meals, other consumables, e.g. nappies or sun cream, additional hours or additional activities e.g. trips. The school may charge a fee for these additions.

Parents will not be required to pay any fee as a condition of taking up a '30 hours' place.

From July 2023, parents will be required to give a refundable deposit of £100 to ensure that the reserved place is taken up – unless their child is already a member of our Pre-school in which case the deposit will be waived.

Deposits will be credited against the first term's fees (or refunded after the first half term if all hours are government funded) to parents who take up a reserved place.

Deposits will not be repaid to parents who fail to take up a reserved place. Parents experiencing problems funding a deposit can speak to the Business Manager to discuss the possibility of waiving the deposit.

3. Eligibility for free education and childcare for two-year-olds

Parents of two-year-olds are eligible for free education and childcare if they live in England and receive one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit – if the parent and their partner have a combined income from work of less than £15,400 a year after tax
- Tax credits and they have an annual income of under £16,190 before tax
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Support through part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act
- The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment parents receive when they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

A child may also be eligible for free early education and childcare if any of the following apply:

- They are looked after by the local council
- They have a current statement of special education needs or an EHC plan
- They receive Disability Living Allowance
- They have left care under a special guardianship order, child arrangements order or adoption order

The school may ask parents to complete a form to help us ensure they receive their free early education and childcare hours.

Parents can use the free early education and childcare allowance from the term following the child's second birthday.

4. Eligibility for 15 hours' free childcare for three- and four-year-olds

All children in England can receive 570 hours free childcare per year.

These hours are usually taken as 15 hours' a week for 38 weeks of the year, but parents may choose to take fewer hours over more weeks.

15 hours' free childcare is available from the term following a child's third birthday.

The school may ask parents to complete a form to help us ensure they receive their free childcare hours.

5. Eligibility for 30 hours' free childcare extended entitlement

Parents of three- and four-year-olds must meet the eligibility criteria below to be eligible for the extended 30 hours' free childcare. These are as follows:

- The parent of the child, and the parent's partner, where applicable, is seeking the free childcare to enable them to work
- Each parent earns, or is expected to earn, a weekly minimum equivalent to 16 hours at National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage – this funding limit does not apply if a parent is self-employed and started their business less than 12 months ago

Where one or both parents are in receipt of benefits in connection with sickness or parenting, they will be treated as though they are in paid work.

Where one parent in a couple household is in receipt, or could be entitled to be in receipt of, specific benefits related to caring, incapacity for work or limited capability for work, they are treated as though they are in paid work.

Parents are not eligible if:

- The child does not live with them.
- The parent or their partner has a taxable income over £100,000.
- The parent is from outside the EEA and their UK residence card says they cannot access public funds.

Parents will check their eligibility for the scheme by using the government's [Childcare Choices](#) website or the childcare calculator. If parents are eligible, they will be directed to the digital childcare service to apply.

Eligible parents will provide the school with their unique eligibility code, National Insurance number and child's date of birth, along with their written consent, to enable the school to verify eligibility and receive future notifications from the LA on the continued validity of the code – parents are encouraged to do this as soon as possible, as they can only start their 30-hours free childcare the term after receiving a decision from HMRC.

The school will retain copies of documentation to enable the LA to undertake audits and fraud investigations; however, in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, it will be stored securely and deleted/shredded when there is no longer any good reason to keep the data.

If parents cease to meet the eligibility criteria, they will receive a grace period of four weeks, i.e. they will continue to receive the 30 hours' free childcare for this period.

A child who becomes ineligible during the first half of a funding block will be funded until the end of that following funding block or for as long as they remain under the compulsory school age, whichever is shorter.

Consideration to extend the grace period will be taken in exceptional circumstances, e.g. if a parent has been forced to leave their home and paid employment.

A child will not be able to take up their 30 hours' free childcare place if their parents fall into their grace period before the child has started at the school.

30 hours' free childcare can be claimed at the same time as claiming Universal Credit, tax credits, childcare vouchers or Tax-free Childcare.

6. Eligibility for extended entitlement for children in foster care

A child in foster care will be entitled to an additional 15 hours' childcare per week (30 hours' free childcare per week total) provided that the child is aged three, but below the compulsory school age, and the criteria below are met:

- Accessing the extended hours is consistent with the child's care plan, placing the child at the centre of the process and decision making.
- In single foster parent families, the foster parent holds additional paid employment outside of their role as a foster parent.
- In two foster parent families, both partners hold additional paid employment outside of their role as a foster parent.

To receive their free childcare allowance, foster parents will apply directly to the LA by completing the LA's eligibility form. The school can provide this form on request.

Foster parents will be required by the LA to reconfirm their eligibility every three months.

7. Payment information

Payments for all non-statutory sessions that parents have booked for their child will be made within 7 days of billing (or according to the payment schedule posted on The Gateway billing and payment system currently used by the school).

Payments will be made by card using The Gateway (preferred method) or by cheque or cash at the school office. Cheques will be made payable to Anstey first School.

If a parent issues a cheque that cannot be cashed, a £10 fine may be issued. We will reconsider whether to continue with that child's unfunded hours and all future payments will be paid on card or in cash.

Online payment direct into the school's bank account will also be permissible. To obtain the details and discuss the procedure, contact the School Business Manager for details.

Payment will be required when a child is on holiday or absent due to illness, as the nursery must hold the child's place during this period and staff rotas are set on a termly basis.

If a child is absent for a long period due to illness, the school will decide on a case-by-case basis as to whether fees will need to be paid for the period. The school's decision is final.

Late payments will incur a £10 fine for each fortnight that payments are overdue. Parents can avoid this by ensuring the timely payment of fees.

One term's notice and payment will be required to withdraw your child from the nursery.

8. Late collection

Staffing ratios will be maintained at all times. If a child is collected late, this can lead to staff needing to stay beyond the end of their shift. This incurs a cost which will be passed on to the parents at £5.00 for the first 15 minutes and a further £5.00 for each subsequent fifteen-minute period.

These costs may be waived in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Headteacher.

9. Difficulty with payments

The school will work with parents to ensure all avenues for assistance with payments are explored.

The school understands that parents may face financial difficulties and, understandably, would like to ensure as little disruption to their child's care and education as possible. Parents and carers experiencing such difficulties should contact the School Business Manager as early as possible, to reach a suitable arrangement for both parties.

10. Debt collection

The governing board will have a duty to ensure the school receives all the funds to which it is entitled, including nursery fees.

The governing board will not write off any debt that exceeds £500.

A full record will be kept of debts owed to the school for seven years. This will include all emails or letters requesting money, reminders and invoices.

All debts will be handled in accordance with the Debt Recovery Policy.

11. Roles and responsibilities regarding debt collection

The headteacher and SBM will ensure that:

- Letters requesting money are accurately recorded and well-maintained.
- Evidence of the steps taken by the school in pursuance of debt is recorded.
- A final reminder is sent by recorded delivery to the debtor if previous correspondence has not been acknowledged.
- The privacy of the family involved will be respected and only made known to those who need to know.
- The level of outstanding debt can be determined at any time.
- Refer unpaid debts to the governing body.

The governing board will:

- Prescribe and regularly review the arrangements for debt recovery.
- At its discretion, refer uncollected debts to the LA for consideration for legal action.
- Record all approved action in the minutes of the relevant meeting.
- Adhere to privacy arrangements.
- At its discretion, delegate its responsibilities under this policy to a suitable individual.

12. The process for pursuing debts

The following procedure will be followed with regard to pursuing debts:

Informal reminder – Within one week of late payment, the debtor will be informally reminded in person or by telephone that they owe money to the school.

First written reminder – If the debt is yet to be paid one week after an informal reminder, a letter or email will be sent to the debtor.

Second written reminder– If the debt is yet to be paid one week after a first written reminder, a second letter or email will be sent to the debtor. This procedure allows the debtor every opportunity to settle their debt and ensure the school can prove all reasonable steps have been taken to recover the debt should the issue proceed further.

Third written reminder - If no response is received following the second reminder, the school will write to the debtor advising them that they will be referring the matter to the Governing Body who are likely to refer to the LA for debt collection.

Final written reminder– If no response is received following the third reminder, the school will write to the debtor advising them that they will be referring the matter to the LA to consider legal action. If no response has been received by the debtor, this letter will be sent by recorded delivery to ensure the debtor has had every chance to respond.

Possible legal action – If no payment is made, and the governing body decides to escalate the matter to the LA, the LA will decide whether to take legal action against the debtor.

13. The waiving of debts

The waiving of debts will be at the discretion of the Headteacher and the governing board.

A debt may be waived when it is believed the debtor is experiencing serious financial hardship or if all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted and it is believed it would not be cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.

The Headteacher will be authorised to waive debts off up to £100.

Debts between £100 and £500 will only be waived with the approval of the governing board. Debts of £500 or more will never be waived.

14. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Headteacher and SBM in conjunction with the governing board.