

Policies and Procedures Manual

Section 3.1

Booking Policies

We aim to provide flexible childcare for parents but we need to be given sufficient notice of bookings in order to roster our staff appropriately.

We cannot accept children on a 'drop-in basis' as we are frequently full, and to accept extra children would take us over our licensed limited. Parents **MUST** make a prior booking, even if it is by telephone on the day. We are always happy to accept bookings if we can accommodate them.

Irregular Bookings and Changes to Existing Bookings

Parents who do not have a regular and ongoing booking should give us their requirements well in advance to avoid disappointment. We are able to confirm your booking several months in advance. However, parents should note that once a booking is made, it will be charged for, unless we are given one month's notice of its cancellation. This is because we may have refused other bookings based on your child's attendance, so that a cancellation at the last moment means that we lose out in two ways - firstly from the late loss of your booking and secondly because we refused a booking that we could have accepted after all. This policy means that we do not allow free swaps - if space is available, parents can book additional sessions, but they will pay for the original booking as well, unless the swap is over a month away.

Start and Finish Times

Please note that when making a booking, the start time we are given is the **earliest** time we will accept the child, and that the end time is the **latest** time the child should be collected. Whilst we advertise opening times, we do this on demand. Consequently, if the last child is booked in to 6pm, the staff are expecting to go home at that time. Late pickups without prior notification mean that people's evenings are disrupted and we need to pay the staff extra. This means that parents picking their children up late without notifying us can expect to be billed for the extra time (in half hour blocks) and may also incur a £10 late pickup fee per child. Parents should contact us as soon as they know they are running late so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Accepting Bookings

Parents should note that the only people authorised to accept bookings or changes are the centre managers and administrative staff. Parents should therefore go to the office to make their bookings. Ideally, bookings (especially for irregular attendees) should be made in writing, and we provide forms for this. We know this is not always possible, so staff can take messages and requests from parents, but parents must understand that the care staff are **not authorised to confirm bookings**, and the administrative staff will contact the parents later to confirm the arrangement. **Parents should not regard the booking as definite until this happens.** All bookings and changes, however taken, are written into the bookings log, which will be regarded as the master document in the case of disputes unless the booking or change request has been made in writing by the parent.

Through-Year / Term Only Places and the Holiday Allowance

Children aged up to 3 must maintain through-year bookings to ensure that their place remains available. Term-time places are not available, and core hours must be paid for throughout the year even if the child does not attend due to sickness or holidays. A two-week holiday allowance may be used by parents of children in this age group, providing the child attends regularly, has been in our care for more than 3 months, and we are given at least 4 weeks' notice. The allowance is available pro-rata in that children who attend for less than full-time (which means at least 9.00am to 4.30pm on five days a week) will have their allowance reduced accordingly.

Children attracting council funding for nursery education may elect to have a term-only place or full-time place. Term-only places do not qualify for any discounts or holiday allowance. Full time children may use the holiday allowance as above.

Parents should note that, in order for us to hold a nursery place open once they have used the 2 week holiday allowance, they must pay for core hours even if the child does not attend. An averaged weekly fee will apply to irregular attendees.

Kids' Club

Kids' Club bookings may be made on a regular or ad-hoc basis. However, we cannot accept children on a 'drop-in basis' because we are frequently full, so parents **must** make a prior booking. If parents want extra sessions at very short notice, we can accept bookings by telephone on the day if space is available.

During the school term, children who need to be taken to school must arrive by 8.30am or we cannot accept them for the school run.

Holiday Club programmes are frequently over-subscribed, so an early booking is essential to avoid disappointment. Parents should also note that many of our holiday activities take place away from our premises, and **children must be dropped off at the start of the session in order to take part**. We are not able to transport late arrivals to the activity location.

Emergency Childcare Cover

As all our rooms are fully staffed, we are able to see at a glance from the First Steps system how many vacancies we have available by the hour. This enables us to offer Emergency Childcare Cover to **new** customers who have experienced a last-minute breakdown in their childcare arrangements. Bookings made be made by telephone the night before or on the day, and a Fast Track Registration Form is available so that parents can give us sufficient information for the day in question. Payment must be made in advance by debit or credit card. If parents need additional days cover, they will need to complete our full registration procedure.