



## EXPLAINING OUR FEES

### Payment & Non Payment of Fees Policy

#### **Aims**

Little Acorns is a registered charity run by a committee of volunteers and is a 'not-for-profit' entity. Little Acorns depends upon receiving payment from government funding and parent / carer fees for the regular attendance of a minimum number of children to continue to operate. It is our intention to set fees at a fair and reasonable rate in order to make it accessible to all families whilst also ensuring that the pre-school itself is financially viable.

We aim to make our charging processes clear to all parents / carers taking up a place at Little Acorns.

#### **Method**

Providing a high quality, safe and stimulating service for children has a cost implication to Little Acorns Pre-School and it relies on the income from the fees to continue running sessions. To ensure the continued high standards and sustainability of the service we must ask that parents/carers respect our policy in respect to the payment of fees.

We work closely with parents to establish what best suits their child. "Taster" sessions can be arranged in conjunction with home visits to best understand each child's background and family circumstances. The number of sessions attended can be gradually increased whilst they are settling in.

Availability of sessions will be discussed with the Manager during your visit to Little Acorns; all children are required to have at least one pre-booked regular session, for example, your child will be booked in to attend regularly on a Monday morning.

Changes to pre-booked session attendance will be accommodated where group numbers allow and 14 days notice must be given in order to ensure that Little Acorns is able to continue to meet the required staffing ratios.

The level of fees will be reviewed by the Pre-school Manager and Committee at every committee meeting. (Committee meetings normally take place once every half term). The overall policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

When reviewing session fees the Committee and Pre-school Manager will make comparisons with other local pre-schools and will also consider the settings financial position, its future strategic plans and any other broader economic or social considerations deemed relevant.

Changes to fees will be notified to parents allowing one month's notice for any changes.

Invoices will be issued with accompanying statements before the beginning of each month for pre-booked pre-school sessions and after the end of the month for any extra sessions used, so that that parents / carer can clearly see what is being charged for.

Every parent / carer signs a contract to meet the requirements of Little Acorns and this includes the agreement to pay for fees. Therefore debts should not be ignored and allowed to mount up.

### Session Fees from January 2022

<b>3 and 4 year olds</b>	<b>2 year olds</b>
£4.50 per hour	£4.50 per hour

#### Lunch £3.50 for all children

	<b>Session Times</b>
AM Pre-school (3 hours)	8.45am – 11.45am
Lunch £3.50	11.45am – 12.15pm
PM Pre-school (3 hours)	12.15pm – 3.15pm

### Late drop off and pick up fees

It is very important that children are dropped off and picked up from Little Acorns at the correct times at the beginning and end of sessions. It is very disruptive to the other children attending Little Acorns if children are being dropped off or picked up outside of these times.

#### Children should arrive or be picked up at the following times:

**Morning session** – please arrive at 8.45am

**End of Morning session** – please pick your child up at 11.45am

**Lunch session** – please arrive at 11.45am

**End of Lunch session** – please pick your child up at 12.15pm

**Afternoon session** – please arrive at 12.15pm

**End of Afternoon session** – please pick your child up at 3.15pm

A late collection charge of **£5** may be added to your account at the end of the month for each occasion that your child is collected 15 minutes outside of these times.

If you know you are going to be late please contact Little Acorns at your earliest convenience to avoid charges being added to your account. However, if your child is collected late repeatedly then charges will be applied.

This will enable us to offer all of our children the best quality service without disruptions

## **Government Funded Sessions 15 and 30 hours**

Government funding is available to children over three years of age to be used for the pre-school sessions for a maximum of 30 hours a week. Children will become eligible in the term after their third birthday. These hours can be used flexibly within our opening hours.

To receive the 30 hours government funding, parents are required to apply for a code **in the term before** they wish to use the funding. The code must be then passed on to Little Acorns to be validated. An EY2c Parent Declaration form must be completed for 30 and 15 hours funding and now requires that Little Acorns staff see the child's birth certificate. **The 30 hours government funding must be arranged during the term before it will be used.** If the 30 hours government funding is not in place prior to this, then Little Acorns will not receive any funding and parents will be charged for the sessions used. You can check if you will be eligible for the 30 hours funding by using the link below: <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk> or the Childcare Calculator at: <https://www.gov.uk/childcare-calculator>.

Little Acorns will offer as much flexibility as possible to meet family's needs where group numbers permit.

Some 2 year olds are also eligible for government funding. Please ask a member of staff for more details.

If the pre-school is not open on a particular day of the week, due to the dates of the term or bank holidays the child would not be entitled to funding for an alternative session as holidays are not included in the funded hours. Little Acorns closes for five INSET days per year, normally in line with those taken by Penponds School, and no charge is made for these sessions.

Where a child attends for more than their funded hours the parent / guardian will only be charged for the sessions which are not booked as part of the requested funded sessions.

## **Invoicing**

### **Little Acorns Pre-school**

Little Acorns will issue invoices for fees for pre-booked attendance at the setting at the beginning of each month i.e. invoice for pre-booked attendance in February will be issued at the start of February. This may be subject to change where school holidays affect the office working hours at Little Acorns i.e. September invoices will be issued as soon as possible after school summer holidays.

Fees will be charged for all non-government funded pre-booked 'regular' sessions between the dates of the start and end of the term.

### **Changes to arrangements or additional sessions**

If occasional extra sessions are required throughout the month, where session numbers allow, these will be agreed by the Pre-school Manager and the invoice for these will be issued at the beginning of the next month. For extra sessions attended in July, invoices will be issued as soon as possible in September on Little Acorns return after the summer holidays. Invoices for Sports4tots and hot lunches will also be issued at the beginning of the next month.

All fees will be charged for absences from pre-booked sessions during term-time.

### **Holidays during term-time**

Pre-school fees will be charged at the usual rate if you decide to take your child on holiday during term-time. This will enable us to keep your child's place open for you.

If a place at Little Acorns is no longer required, or the number of sessions attended are changed, 14 days notice must be given so that necessary arrangements can be made to ensure safe staffing ratios.

If 14 days notice is not given to leave or reduce the number of sessions, parents will be charged for a further 14 days from the date that the child stops attending – this does not apply when children leave at the end of the summer term to go to school.

### **Absence due to sickness**

Fees must be paid in full if a child is absent due to ill health in order to reserve the place at Little Acorns. If the absence is likely to be long term, each circumstance will be considered on an individual basis to ensure families are supported as much as Little Acorns are able.

Please refer to the Sickness Policy to check required lengths of absence following an illness.

### **Closures**

If Little Acorns has to close due to adverse weather conditions or other extreme emergency situations, i.e. under police advice, children may be offered additional sessions at Little Acorns to compensate for this once the setting has re-opened (where group numbers allow) or the fees will only be charged at 50% of the normal price. Any application of this charge will be approved by the Pre-School Governors.

### **Payment of Invoices and Statements of Accounts**

Statements of accounts will be attached to every invoice for reference to make it clear what total amount is outstanding. The invoice shows the individual items you have been charged for. You will receive individual invoices for Pre-school sessions, extra sessions, Sports4tots sessions and hot lunches. The statement shows the total of all of the invoices on your account at the time of printing.

All fees must be paid within 14 days of date of invoice, unless a prior arrangement has been made with the Manager or Chair of Governors. Alternative payment plans may be considered to meet a family's particular need if necessary in order that a child can continue to attend their sessions.

Payment can be made by cheque (made payable to Little Acorns Pre-School), BACS or a relevant employers childcare voucher scheme.

Staff cannot accept cash payments unless there are exceptional circumstances.

### **Non Payment of Fees**

If there are difficulties in making payments the parent/carer should contact the Manager / Business Manager to discuss arrangements for repayment as soon as possible.

In the unlikely event that an agreement cannot be reached or if no contact is made, Little Acorns will pursue the invoice amount through the following process:

**Stage 1** - for invoices older than 14 days from date of invoice, there should be a written reminder stating the non-payment of fees process. See attached sample letter 1.

**Stage 2** - after 21 days of non payment from date of invoice a final demand letter for payment within 7 days will be issued and the debt would be discussed by the Management Committee to agree what further action should be taken. All additional activities that the child attends will be stopped until the balance is cleared, this includes any parent / carer funded sessions, Sports4tots, hot lunches and extra sessions.

Children will be excluded from attending Little Acorns, as a result of non payment of fees, on agreement of the Management Committee at the recommendation of the Manager.

**SAMPLE LETTER 1.**  
**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

**To the Parent / Guardian of**

**OVERDUE INVOICES**

We are now writing to everyone whose accounts have an outstanding balance older than 14 days from the date of the invoice in an attempt to ensure that balances on accounts do not mount up. Please see the below list of your invoices that are overdue by more than 14 days.

<b><u>Invoices Overdue:</u></b> (older than 14 days)		
01/11/17	Invoice 4556	£
10/11/17	Invoice 4559	£
<b>Total overdue</b>		<b>£</b>

Please can you make a payment for £ as soon as possible.

I have also recently invoiced for ..... pre-school which should be paid within 14 days.

The management committee is informed of any accounts that have outstanding balances that are older than 14 days. The committee then discuss what action should be taken. The committee can decide not to allow children to attend paid-for sessions until the balance on their account has been paid. Government funded sessions can still be attended during this time. We follow our 'Payment and Non-payment of fees' policy and if you do not pay your outstanding invoices or contact us regarding them within 2 weeks then the next step is a final demand and if there is no response to this then the committee may decide to refer the amount to the small claims court or transfer the debt to a debt collecting agency. We do not make this decision lightly and this would be our last resort.

I would also like to remind you that we are a charity and the continued running of our pre-school depends upon invoices being paid.

We hope you will understand that we must ensure that Little Acorns remains sustainable for the future and therefore we cannot let the amount on accounts build up.

You can pay by bank transfer using the following details:

**Account Name: Little Acorns**

**Branch: NatWest, Camborne**

**Account Number: 95593640 Sort Code: 60-04-22.**

**Please use your child's name as a reference.**

Thank you for your understanding.

Yours sincerely

**Jodie Thomas**

**Business Manager**

(Non payment of fees process attached)

## **SAMPLE LETTER 2.**

**Private & Confidential**

Dear

### **LITTLE ACORNS ACCOUNTS - FINAL DEMAND**

We wrote to you on .....regarding the outstanding balance on your account with us but we have received no payment or response from you. When you enrolled your child at Little Acorns you signed a Parents Contract with Little Acorns and therefore you are responsible for paying any fees on your account.

We write now to request that you pay the outstanding balance on your account for .....totalling £..... within 7 days from the date of this letter.

The committee has decide that from ..... your child will not be able to attend paid-for sessions, this includes any parent / carer paid sessions, Sports4tots, extra sessions and hot lunches until payment is made in full. Government funded sessions can still be attended during this time.

You can now pay by bank transfer using the following details:

**Account Name: Little Acorns, Branch: NatWest, Camborne,**

**Sort Code: 60-04-22Account Number: 95593640**

**Please use your child's name as a reference.**

If you fail to pay within 7 days, the Management Committee will need to decide on what further action to take. This may include referral to the small claims court or transfer of the debt to a debt collecting agency. We do not make this decision lightly and this would be our last resort.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that Little Acorns is a charity and the continued running of our pre-school depends upon invoices being paid.

I hope that this matter can be settled amicably.

Yours sincerely

**On behalf of the Pre-school Governors**

(Non payment of fees process attached)

Signed..... Chair of Committee

Reviewed: February 2019

Reviewed: May 2021

Updated: February 2023

Review Date: February 2024