2.2 Funding – 15 and 30 hours

Applies to: Pre-School Manager, All Staff, Parents, Carers

St John's Pre-School is committed to providing accessible, inclusive and high-quality early education and childcare. We participate in the government's Early Years Free Entitlement scheme, offering eligible children access to their funded early education hours.

We are committed to ensuring that families can access their child's full funded entitlement without being required to pay top-up fees or compulsory additional charges.

This policy explains how funded places are allocated, how funding is administered and the arrangements for optional extras offered by the setting.

Funding Entitlements

Eligible children may access government-funded early education through the following entitlements:

- **15 hours universal entitlement:** Available to all children aged three and four from the term following their third birthday.
- **15 hours for eligible two-year-olds:** Available to children whose families meet the relevant eligibility criteria.
- **30 hours working parent entitlement:** Available to eligible children from nine months of age, subject to the relevant working parent eligibility criteria.

St John's Pre-School currently accepts children from the term following their second birthday. Parents wishing to access extended funded hours must provide a valid eligibility code where required and are responsible for reconfirming their eligibility within the required timeframes.

St John's Pre-School operates during the following hours:

- Monday to Friday: 9.00am–12.00pm.
- Extended sessions: Tuesday and Friday, 12.00pm–3.00pm.

Funded hours are allocated in accordance with the sessions offered by the setting, the child's eligibility and available places. Parents will discuss their preferred sessions with the setting before a place is confirmed. The agreed sessions and number of funded hours will be recorded on the Dorset Council parental agreement.

Where a child attends more than one childcare provider, parents must inform each setting so that funding can be allocated correctly and the child's total entitlement is not exceeded.

Funding and Charges

All government-funded hours at St John's Pre-School are provided completely free of charge.

We do not charge:

- Top-up fees to cover any difference between the funding received and the cost of providing childcare.
- Compulsory consumable or snack charges.
- Charges for learning materials, craft resources or equipment used during funded sessions.
- Compulsory charges for activities or experiences forming part of the early years curriculum.
- Additional service charges as a condition of accessing a funded place.

Children accessing 15 or 30 hours receive the same quality of care, learning opportunities, resources and experiences. Parents are not required to purchase additional services or make voluntary contributions to secure or maintain their child's funded entitlement.

Voluntary Snack Contributions

St John's Pre-School offers parents the opportunity to make a voluntary termly contribution towards the provision of snacks. This contribution is entirely optional. Parents are not required to make a payment, and no child will be disadvantaged if their family chooses not to contribute.

Parents who do not wish to contribute may discuss suitable alternative snack arrangements with the setting, including providing an appropriate snack from home.
All children will be treated equally regardless of whether their family chooses to contribute.

Parental Agreement and Declarations

Before accessing funded hours, parents or carers will be asked to complete and sign the relevant Dorset Council parental agreement.

This confirms:

- The child's eligibility for funding.
- The number of funded hours being claimed.
- The agreed days and sessions.
- Whether the child attends another childcare provider.
- The parent's agreement to the funding terms and conditions.

Parents must ensure that all information provided is accurate and notify the setting of any changes to their circumstances or childcare arrangements that may affect their child's entitlement. The setting will retain completed agreements and funding records in accordance with Dorset Council requirements.

Attendance and Absences

Parents and carers are expected to use their child's agreed funded sessions regularly. If a child is unable to attend, parents should inform the setting as soon as possible and provide a reason for the absence. Parents should notify the setting in advance of planned holidays or extended absences.

In accordance with the Dorset Council parental agreement:

- Parents should notify the setting of holiday absences, up to a maximum of two weeks per term.
- Where a child is absent for longer than two weeks in one term, the setting may be required to follow the funding agreement arrangements, including possible recovery of associated funding.

- Regular non-attendance may result in funding being reviewed or withdrawn in accordance with Dorset Council requirements.

Absences due to illness or longer-term medical circumstances will be considered individually, with parents encouraged to maintain communication with the setting.

Changes to sessions and circumstances

Parents must inform the setting of any changes to their circumstances, eligibility or childcare arrangements. Requests to change agreed sessions must be discussed with the Pre-School Manager and are subject to availability. Where a parental agreement is amended or ended during a term, the notice arrangements set out in the Dorset Council parental agreement will apply.

Responsibilities of the setting

St John's Pre-School will:

- Deliver funded hours in accordance with government and Dorset Council requirements.
- Ensure parents are not charged top-up fees or compulsory additional charges for funded childcare.
- Provide clear information about funding entitlements and available sessions.
- Administer funding claims accurately.
- Maintain appropriate attendance and funding records.
- Ensure all children receive equal access to high-quality early education.
- Explain any optional extras clearly to parents.
- Comply with the Dorset Council Local Provider Agreement and current Department for Education statutory guidance.

The Pre-School Manager is responsible for overseeing the administration of funded childcare places and ensuring that the setting complies with current funding requirements.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 28
Governments should make sure children can get an education without it costing their family money