General Welfare Requirement: Organisation

Providers must plan and organise their systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs.

Finance

4.10 Payment of Fees

Policy Statement for St Joseph's Pre-school
Statement of Intent

To ensure that the rules of payment of money owed to St Joseph's Pre-school are clear to all. The Pre-school is a charity and not for profit. All fees are used to ensure the running of the setting and it is in the best interests of every child that fees are paid promptly and fully so they can benefit from consistency of care and routine. It also enables staff to concentrate on your child and, where applicable, other governance matters, thus not being distracted chasing un-paid fees and impacting on the rewarding pre-school experience we aim to offer your child.

The Committee has set a minimum session attendance at the setting of 2 sessions a week to secure a place. Days/times will be dependent on spaces available and staff to child ratios. Please talk to the Lead Practitioner in the first instance.

Definitions

- "Funded sessions" are a child's hours covered by the Nursery Education Grant Funding (NEF) and covers 2, 3 and 4 year olds dependent on their eligibility. This link will take you to the relevant page on Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) website.
- **"**Non-funded sessions" are a child's hours not covered by NEF. This could be because the child is not currently eligible for funding or the hours are over and above the regular NEF hours the child attends and recorded on GCC's nursery portal for the term.

Nursery Education Grant Funding

- St Joseph's Pre-school are registered to receive *NEF* which children are eligible to receive from the term following their third birthday. NEF covers 38 weeks of the Pre-school year. The pre-school reserves the right to charge for any additional days not covered.

Your child's 3rd birthday	**When your child will receive NEF funding**
1 September to 31 December	Spring term (starts January)
1 January to 31 March	Summer term (starts April)
1 April to 31 August	Autumn term (starts September)

- St Joseph's Pre-school accepts 15 hour universal education funding hours for 2 year olds (where they are eligible). We require a copy of the confirmation email received by the parent/carer from Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) for our Treasurer records.
- Children of 3 or 4 years old at St Joseph's Pre-school are entitled to a maximum of 15 hours of government universal entitlement funded sessions per week for 38 weeks a year,

plus an extra 15 hours per week extended entitlement[1]. Parents can use this funding at any registered setting or with registered childminders, and can use their funding entitlement in a combination of settings or childcare arrangements.

- For the initial 15 hours universal funding entitlement parents will need to complete a form which St Joseph's Pre-school will supply at the beginning of the Autumn, Spring and Summer terms. Similarly, St Joseph's Pre-school will also issue an Extended Hours Form each term for parents to complete if they shall be using the extended entitlement. Parents are responsible for applying for the extended 15 hours free childcare entitlement through the Government's online Childcare service at www.childcarechoices.gov.uk to receive an eligibility code. This code is required to be entered on the Extended Hours form provided. Parents shall apply for an eligibility code each term before the deadline dates, which are 31st August for the Autumn term, 31st December for the Spring term and 31st March for the Summer term. St Joseph's Pre-school are responsible for verifying (or confirming) eligibility by checking that the parent's code included in the Extended Hours Declaration form is valid.
- Parents will be prompted every three months by HMRC to reconfirm that they remain eligible. If they are no longer eligible for 30 hours, they will enter a grace period and will be able to retain their place for a short period. The updated statutory guidance outlines the specific grace period cut-off dates. If a parent falls into their grace period before their child has started a 30 hours place, they should not take up their 30 hours place. Should a parent lose their eligibility St Joseph's Pre-school are not responsible for paying/reimbursing any fees accrued, it is the parent's responsibility to then pay the fees.
- St Joseph's Pre-school currently opens for no more than 39 weeks in a school year. Our term dates and inset days are the same as St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.
- On the funding form you will need to declare any NEF sessions being claimed elsewhere (e.g. at a day nursery, childminder or other pre-school). If you do not sign the form by the deadline, we will not be able to claim your child's NEF entitlement until the headcount amendment task opens later in the term. Delay in applying may cause financial difficulties to the Pre-school.
- Once your form has been submitted, there is only one opportunity within each of the 3 terms to change your child's hours and an amendment funding form will need to be completed. If you change your child's hours outside this window, you will be charged for the extra hours your child attends.
- **IMPORTANT:** All hours claimed on the funding forms, be they for 2, 3 or 4 year olds **must** match those shown in the register of attendance as registers will be inspected as part of the funding audit that GCC undertake[2]. However, if a parent/carer works an irregular shift pattern, then they will not be disadvantaged from using the funding – please talk to the Pre-school in this respect. We require written confirmation from the employer of this shift pattern for our Treasurer records.
- **Non-attendance and funding:** As per our Local Provider Agreement with GCC, GCC will not claim back funding for any irregular attendance in a funding period. However, the Pre-school **does** need to inform them of any regular patterns of non-attendance so the matter can be reviewed for the following funding period. Children can be absent due to sickness

[1] 15 hours extended entitlement is income related
[2] As per para 13.9 Local Provider Agreement 2020-21

or holidays for a period of up to 2 weeks before any funding will be recovered. In exceptional circumstances GCC will not claim back funding for a period of 2 weeks in cases where parents/carers do not give their correct notice period when leaving the setting.

Description of Payments

Refundable deposit

From 1 January 2022 St Joseph's Pre-school has introduced the requirement of an advanced payment of £25 to secure a child's place. This will be refunded in the first term of the child's attendance. The deposit needs to be paid within a 10 working day timescale. If the monies are not received within this period then the place will not be held. In addition, in the event of a child not taking up their offered place, then the deposit will be retained.

Term fees:

- A fee is charged per hour for all children that are not eligible for funding and for all hours over any government funding (statutory 15 hours universal entitlement and/or 15 hours extended entitlement).
- Fees are reviewed each year by the Committee and would normally rise in September, but the Committee reserves the right to change fees at any time of the year with advance notice of not less than four weeks given for any increase. From 1 September 2021 the Pre-school moved to a flat fee rate of £4.50 per hour for all children.
- Staff are eligible to receive "benefit in kind" of a 5% discount on their child's termly invoice and any extra session invoices should they attend St Joseph's Pre-school.

Late collection fees:

- A late collection fee is in place – separate invoices will be issued as applicable.
- If a child is collected between 5 and 9 minutes after their session has ended (i.e. 12pm, 1pm or 3pm), on 3 or more occasions during the term, then a charge of £5 will be levied.
- Any child collected 10 minutes after their session has ended, their parent/carer will automatically be charged £5. Even if pre-school are notified, you will be charged unless you have informed pre-school at morning drop-off (i.e. 8.30am); then additional hour(s) will be charged only.
- If you are later than 10 minutes, an additional charge will be enforced at the discretion of the committee, this could either be an hourly rate or a higher rate of £10 for every subsequent 10 minutes. The reason for this is due to ratio in the pre-school, safeguarding the children and the availability of the room[3].
- If late collection occurs on a regular basis, your child's place could be withdrawn.

Extra session(s)/extra days fees:

- Separate invoices will be issued for extra sessions/extra days attended by your child. Hours will be charged at the flat fee rate of £4.50 per hour regardless of whether your child is entitled to NEF or not
- Additional days must be agreed by 1pm on the day before the requested day to ensure sufficient space and staffing is available.

[3] St Joseph's Out Of School Club uses the room before and after pre-school hours.

Retention fee
The Committee reserves the right to charge a nominal non-fundable retention fee to those parents/carers whose child is not in receipt of funding, to enable them to retain their child's place at the setting. This will be in exceptional circumstance, e.g. closure of the Pre-school adhering to a Government requirement (as in March 2020 due to COVID-19).

Requests for changes to attendance

- **A minimum of 6 weeks'** notice is required to delay your child's start date, change attendance days or to remove your child from St Joseph's Pre-school. Any requests for additional hours or change of hours must be submitted in writing, preferably by email to the Lead Practitioner and Treasurer. Please note that you will be liable for any fees incurred should inadequate notice be given, even if your child is eligible for NEF.
- **Attendance of a minimum of 2 sessions** a week is required to secure a place at St Joseph's Pre-school.
- Any changes to regularly attendance hours can only take place at the start of the next term.
- Please note that there are 6 terms in a year. For funding there are 3 terms in a year.
- If you are increasing the hours your child attends, you will receive a response as to when this can be accommodated within 10 working days of receipt of your request. The Pre-school reserves the right not to honor requests for increased hours if inadequate notice is given.
- However, it may not be possible to accommodate requests if the sessions are already full. If it is not possible to grant a request, the Lead Practitioner will keep a note that you are interested in that session should a space become available. Spaces arising in any session are offered in waiting list order.
- If you are looking to swap your child's hours around in any one week, then we will only accommodate this if staff ratios permit – and only if it is a 'one-off'. Note, however, that your original invoice for the Term will stand and the 'swapped hours' will be classed as an 'extra session(s)' and you will be invoiced accordingly.

Rules of Payment

- The Treasury Administrator will issue an invoice within two weeks of the start of a term, stating a due date. If it is not possible to pay the fees immediately and in full, then it is the parent/carer's responsibility to agree a payment plan with the Treasurer/Treasury Administrator (who will confer with the chair and staff).
- Invoices for extra sessions are issued on the day or when booked. Payment of these are required within 7 working days of the date on the invoice.
- Invoices for late collection are issued on the day and payment is required within 7 working days of the date on the invoice.
- St Joseph's Pre-school's preferred method of payment is by BACS (bank transfer). Bank details are given on the invoice. Parents must use their child's name as a reference and send an email to the Treasury Administrator to confirm payment.
- St Joseph's Pre-school accepts childcare vouchers. Parents must use their child's name as a reference and send an email to the Treasury Administrator to confirm payment.

- Cheques, made out to 'St Joseph's Pre-school', and cash are accepted. Please hand in person to the Lead Practitioner in an envelope addressed to the Treasurer with your child's name as a reference.
- Parents will be reminded, during the term, that their child's invoice is outstanding (if applicable).
- Concessions cannot be made for absences as the pre-school cannot fill a child's space with another child.

Non-payment of fees

- If payment has not been made by the initial invoice payment (due date) nor a payment plan agreed by both parties, a first reminder will be issued giving a final payment due date, two weeks from the initial invoice payment date. This will include a flat fee payment charge of £10. However, this charge will be waived if payment is received within 7 calendar days of the date of the reminder.
- If no payment is forthcoming by the final payment due date and there is no payment plan in place, then, subject to St Joseph's Pre-school's discretion:
    - [non-funded sessions] a formal letter will be issued to the parent/carer advising them that the child's non-funded sessions will be immediately withdrawn and offered to another family – if applicable - subject to St Joseph's Pre-school's discretion, i.e. taking into account any external factors relating to the child; or
    - [funded sessions] a formal letter will be issued to the parent/carer advising them that their child can only attend funded (NEF) sessions (i.e. those funded by the GCC and recorded on the nursery portal) at the setting until the outstanding monies are paid.
    - Failure to pay by a given date will lead St Joseph's Pre-school Committee to decide whether to pursue reimbursement of monies owed through the Gloucester and Cheltenham County and Family Court by making a court claim for the said money.
- If a payment plan has been agreed, but no payments received, then a first reminder will be issued giving a final due date. This will be two weeks either from the initial invoice payment date or from the last date a payment was received. It will also include a flat fee payment charge of £10. However, this charge will be waived if payment of the outstanding monies is received within 7 calendar days of the date of the reminder.
- If an agreed payment plan is in place, but there is repeated default on payments, then:
    - St Joseph's Pre-school has the right to take away the child's non-funded sessions immediately and offer them to another family, subject to St Joseph's Pre-school's discretion, i.e. taking into account any external factors relating to the child. A formal letter will be issued to the parent/carer advising them of this action and whether it is St Joseph's Pre-school's intention to pursue reimbursement of monies owed through the Gloucester and Cheltenham County and Family Court by making a court claim for the money.
    - A formal letter will then be issued to the parent/carer advising them that their child can only attend funded (NEF) sessions (i.e. those funded by the GCC and recorded on the nursery portal[4]) at the setting whilst any outstanding balances are to be paid.

[4] No extra sessions will be available to the child other than those funded through the local authority (GCC)

The letter will also advice whether it is the Committee's intention to pursue reimbursement of monies owed through the Gloucester and Cheltenham County and Family Court by making a court claim for the money.

- Once all outstanding monies have been paid then reinstating any non-funded hours or increasing NEF hours can be discussed – dependent on space and staff availability.

Refunds

- Refunds will **not** be made for absence through illness, holidays or other, including weather conditions apart from exceptional circumstances (at St Joseph's Pre-school's discretion), as the running costs of the Pre-school remain the same.
- Refunds will **not** be made where a child leaves or reduces their weekly sessions after the initial invoice has been issued.
- Refunds will **not** be made for school trips/outings as St Joseph's Pre-school is still required to pay staff, rental of facilities and associated costs.
- Refunds will be issued for paid fees (not funded placements) when St Joseph's Pre-school closes a planned session, with prior notice by letter given 48 hours before the session.
- Refunds will be arranged by the Treasurer and/or Treasury Administrator, by deducting from the next month's invoice, or by BACS or cheque, this will be discussed between the parent and the Treasurer/Treasury Administrator.
- If the Pre-school has to close due to Government requirements (e.g. as in March 2020 re COVID-19 pandemic) then the Emergency/temporary closure policy[5] will be followed. If refunds are applicable (non-funded places only), then parents will be informed accordingly.

Further guidance

- Gloucestershire Local Provider Agreement "Early Years Funded Entitlements for 2, 3 & 4 year-olds"

Associated policies and procedures

- 4.3 Parent Pack (latest update)
- 4.10.3 Debt recovery (being written)

Version Number	Author	Purpose of change	Date
1.0	E Kemp	Update re. 15 hour extended entitlement	Nov 2017
2.0	K Coupe	Review & update re preferred payment method	19/9/2018
3.0	K Coupe, N Powers & A Wand	Update re. ad hoc swapping of hours, funding amendment form and written clarification of 2 year old funding, NEF forms must match attendance	1 May 2019 Cttee mtg
4.0	K Coupe	Amendment wording about the "benefit in kind" available to committee members and staff	10/07/2019 AGM

[5] Policy 39 Emergency/temporary closure

Version Number	Author	Purpose of change	Date
5.0	K Coupe	Inclusion of paragraph with regards to non-attendance and funding, “late fees” updated and addition of a retention fee	06/08/2020 Cttee Mtg
6.0	K Coupe, A Shipton, A Hitchings	More clarity given to the process to be followed with regards to non-payment of fees.	28/01/2021 Cttee – via email
7.0	K Coupe S Turner A Shipton	Updated to reflect change from 2-tier hourly rates to flat fee from 1 September 2021. Also more clarification about applying for 30 hours extended entitlement and non-payment of fees.	01/04/2021 Cttee – via email
8.0	K Coupe	Removal of reference to 2-tier hourly rates prior to 1 Sept 2021	08/07/2021 Chair
9.0	K Coupe	Within “Description of Payments” the inclusion of a paragraph regarding the “Refundable Deposit” introduced from 1 January 2022	25/11/2021 Cttee Mbr (T Clapp)
10.0	K Coupe & L Farrer	Deletion of wording stating that Committee members are eligible for a “benefit in kind” (5% discount) on child invoices as applicable – as per DBS advice Inclusion of “further guidance” section. Inclusion of “associated policies and procedures section as per EY safeguarding audit (section 175/157). Plus rewriting of bullet re funding amendment period	12/05/2022 Cttee Mbr (M Montgomery)