**Financial Aid Policy**

**Aims**

The purpose of this policy is to set procedures for the confidential aid agreements the Pre-School are sometimes able to provide for families on lower incomes to help reduce hardship and support all children in accessing early education whilst also protecting the Pre-School’s longevity.

It is the parent/carer’s responsibility to book discussions for any financial assistance or support they may need, including for weekly billing. Financial aid will not be applied retrospectively, apart from in dire circumstances.

**Explanation of the consumable/quality charge on all funded sessions**

The Pre-School currently applies a quality charge to funded hours to allow for the purchase of food and other necessities for the children in our care. It also supports a higher adult to child ratio than the legal requirements. We feel this is important to ensure each child receives a high level of attention and care. Sadly, the funded hours rate received from government does not meet running costs or allow us to breakeven. Even with the consumable fee, we rely heavily on fundraising and grants to break even.

The funding rate does not cover the cost of meeting hygiene needs, food for the children, trips outside of the setting or many of the other additional activities we offer.

**How financial aid works**

The Pre-School utilises more than one member to make decisions on financial aid, this ensures equality and protects the Pre-Schools interests as well as those of the families it caters for.

We require that families requesting financial aid use the full funded hours they are eligible for with us first. For non-funded families, a small discount may be discussed for families with multiple children attending or extenuating circumstances.

The setting is on occasion able to apply for charitable grants for additional non-funded sessions for families who are experiencing hardship. These grants come from an outside charitable trust and are not guaranteed and may only be for short time periods. If you believe you will be eligible and have a clear need for this support, please speak to the Manager.

Unfortunately, no government assistance exists for Pre-School children to access free meals or food. We recognise that some parents/carers may struggle to meet the quality charge. We ask that if you feel this fee will be a barrier to your child attending Pre-School, you make an appointment to speak to the Manager and Administrator as soon as possible. You must also make an appointment if your circumstances change whilst you are using the Pre-School service.

**The Appointment**

* The Pre-School Manager & Administrator will work with you to look at discretionary rates and discounts. We ask that you bring any documentation to support your application with you, and that you also consider an amount you think will be affordable to you.
* If necessary, they may also be able to support you by applying for grants or other financial aids to support you outside of the setting or to access additional sessions above the funding rate. This is not a guarantee you will achieve these grants.
* We will also discuss frequency of payments. In some circumstances, weekly payment will be accepted. This must be paid a week in advance.
* Once a rate has been agreed, this will be taken to the Committee Chair & Treasurer for approval.
* You will be asked to sign a discretionary financial aid agreement, this will list the terms of the agreements, payment and the frequency.

Any defaults on the agreement will result in the procedure documented in our fees and monies policy. Your sessions may be reduced to funded hours only and you will be expected to collect your child for lunch. You will also need to supply the list of consumables for your child and may need to accompany your child on any trips out of the setting.

If you have a change in circumstances, we welcome you to make another meeting. We also ask that you consider increasing fees if you are able, to allow us to offer aid to other families. Each agreement is subject to 6 monthly checks.

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| Date Prepared | Date Reviewed | Date Review Due |
| March 2020 |  | March 2021 |
|  | September 2020 | September 2021 |
|  | July 2021 | July 2022 |