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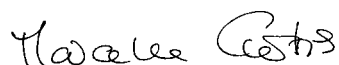
Dear Colleague

**Early Years Education for 3 or 4 year olds**

Attached please find five copies of the leaflet 'thought about free early education for your 3 or 4 year old?'

I would be grateful if you would draw this leaflet to the attention of your parents, staff and management committee. Further copies for distribution to parents may be requested by telephoning the Childcare Information Service on 01603 622292.

Yours sincerely



Marcelle Curtis  
Head of Early Years and Childcare Strategy



# thought about free early years education for your 3 or 4 year old?

basic guidance for parents on  
where to start, what to look out for  
and how children will benefit

## what is early education ?

Early Education is an opportunity for children to meet with other children and adults and begin to explore the world outside of their family. Children are given the opportunity to play and learn through a wide range of different activities, in a safe and secure environment.

## who is eligible for early education ?

All 4 year olds are eligible for a free early education place of five 2½ hour sessions, for a minimum of 33 weeks each year. Many 3 year olds are also eligible.

By September 2004, all 3 year olds will be eligible for a funded early education place from the beginning of the term following their third birthday.

Children with a free early education place will be following the Foundation Stage of the National Curriculum, working towards the 'early learning goals' for 3-5 year olds.



## where is early education available ?

Early education is provided in many different places, such as playgroups, private day nurseries, independent schools and County Council maintained nursery classes and nursery schools. Whatever place you choose, your child will develop their skills and understanding through play activities.

### **Playgroups or pre-school groups**

Playgroups or pre-school groups are run by private or voluntary organisations and may provide up to five 2½ hour sessions of early education each week, for a minimum of 33 weeks each year.

### **Day-care centres or day nurseries**

Day-care centres or day nurseries (sometimes called nursery schools) are run by private or non-profit-making groups and provide childcare throughout the day, usually from 8am until 6pm. Early education may form part of this childcare, in which case the group will be following the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Children eligible for early education funding may get reduced fees (by the amount of the Nursery Education Grant) for five 2½ hour sessions a week for at least 33 weeks each year.

### **Independent schools**

Independent schools may provide early education at a pre-prep or prep school and will be following the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Eligible children may be funded (by the amount of the Nursery Education Grant) for five 2½ hour sessions a week for at least 33 weeks each year.

### **Maintained nursery classes**

Some schools have nursery classes on the same site, which are maintained by Norfolk County Council as Local Education Authority. These nursery classes often provide early education for a wider area than the school catchment area and a place

in a nursery class will not guarantee the child a place in the main school. This means that parents have to apply separately if they want a place for their child at that school. Each nursery class follows the Foundation Stage Curriculum and provides five 2½ hour sessions of early education each week, during term-time. Norfolk County Council funds places at nursery classes.

## **Maintained nursery schools**

There are three nursery schools in Norfolk, which are maintained by Norfolk County Council as Local Education Authority. Each nursery school follows the Foundation Stage Curriculum and will provide five 2½ hour sessions of early education each week, during term-time. Norfolk County Council funds places at nursery schools. One nursery school is also an Early Years Centre and another will become a Neighbourhood Nursery (see below).

## **Early Years Centres, Children's Centres, Neighbourhood Nurseries**

New centres providing a combination of early education, childcare and family services are being developed in Norfolk. These may be maintained by Norfolk County Council as Local Education Authority, or run by private, non-profit-making or voluntary groups. These centres will provide childcare for 0-5 year olds throughout the day, usually from 8am until 6pm, together with other child and family services. Early education will form part of this childcare for eligible children and the centre will be following the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Children eligible for early education funding may get reduced fees (by the amount of the Nursery Education Grant) for five 2½ hour sessions a week for at least 33 weeks each year.

**For further information on what early education is available, contact the childcare information service on 01603 62 22 92**

## **how do I get my child an early education place?**

You may like to contact your preferred providers and pay them a visit to see which of them best meets your child's needs. When you have made your choice, you may apply directly to the provider for a place for your child. Most

providers have application forms and can help you to complete them. All providers have an admissions policy and rules that they use to prioritise children wanting places.

**want to find out who is providing early education in your area?...call us, our details are on the back page**

### **Please note**

many providers will have waiting lists, so it is a good idea to begin thinking about what you want for your child at least a year before your child's third birthday.

## **how will my child's place be paid for?**

By 2004 all children will be entitled to a free (funded) early education place, of five 2½ hour sessions a week, for a minimum of 33 weeks each year from the term after their third birthday.

At the moment all children are funded for the term in which they become four and for one term before that. In some areas of Norfolk, many children are funded from the term following their third birthday.

**the childcare information service can tell you when your child's place will be funded**

Many providers will offer places to children from the age of 2 to enable them to begin to socialise with other children and gradually build up to five sessions. Parents will be expected to pay for these sessions until their child is eligible for a free place.



## why should my child attend early education ?

Parents are the child's first educator, and will always play a major role in their child's education, but by the time children are three they can benefit from extending their experiences by being with other children and adults.

All children enjoy being with other children and learning how to get on with them. By the age of three most children will also enjoy watching other children at play and sharing their experiences. This can be difficult to achieve within the family environment, which is where joining a pre-school group can come in.

Most young children love to practice doing things for themselves and will try very hard to be independent. It is sometimes difficult to give children the opportunity to practice these skills in the home. Learning to be independent and finding and doing things for themselves and others is an important part of being in a pre-school group.

Young children love new experiences - especially messy ones. Pre-school groups are organised to provide many different experiences which are sometimes difficult to provide at home.

Children need opportunities to focus on activities of their own choosing. This is sometimes difficult to achieve at home when younger or older brothers and sisters are around but can be available in pre-school groups. There will also be opportunities for children to rest or be by themselves quietly.

It is sometimes difficult for parents to leave their children. A pre-school group can help parents to gradually leave their child and help the child to get used to being cared for by other adults.

## what should I look for in early education ?

When you and your child visit an early education provider you should firstly be made really welcome. You and your child should be introduced to staff and children and told what is going on. The staff should be proud of their work and will want to tell you what they do. Remember they have other children to care for, so may not be able to give you their attention for very long unless you make an appointment.

The atmosphere should be welcoming, warm and colourful. If the children are involved in quiet activities they will be absorbed and probably won't even notice you. If they are playing, they will be happy and busy and you will get a really positive feeling about the group.

Here are some questions you may like to think about...

- do the session times meet my child's needs ?
- does the group have a vacancy at the right time ?
- is there a waiting list for places ? How long is it ?
- if your child has special needs, how will these be met ?
- will the sort of food and snacks available to the children meet my child's dietary requirements ?
- are there a variety of activities available for my child to choose from ?
- what opportunities are there for children to play outside ?
- can the children help themselves to books and toys ?
- are the children expected to follow rules and what are they ?
- what extra experiences are on offer e.g. visits or visitors ?
- are the staff proud of their work ? Do they seem pleased to tell you about what they do ?
- do the children seem absorbed, happy, and confident ?







All providers with the exception of independent schools, registered to receive Nursery Education Grant, are registered with Ofsted. This means that when they set up they were inspected by Ofsted to ensure that they meet the expected standards and that they are inspected each year to ensure they remain safe and secure. And all places offering Nursery Education Grant funded early education have an Ofsted Foundation Stage Education Inspection every four years. The staff will have undergone police checks and at least half of them should have a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2 in childcare or the equivalent. The leader of the group should be qualified to NVQ Level 3 or the equivalent.

As part of the requirements for the Ofsted inspections, all places must have the following information available for parents. You may like to ask to see these.

- the name and address of the premises
- a telephone number for emergency contact during session time
- a plan of the rooms used by the group
- an list of equipment used by the group
- a list of all staff employed by the group
- a list of the qualifications held by staff employed by the group
- the number of children the group is registered for
- the ratio of staff to children
- the term dates and, where possible, any closures for the following year
- any fees or extra costs
- policies on:
  - admissions
  - health and safety
  - equal opportunities
  - behaviour management
  - special educational needs
  - staff development
  - complaints procedure
  - child protection
  - employment
  - curriculum documents used for planning
- long, medium and short-term curriculum plans
- a timetable, where applicable
- individual educational attainment and progress reports and records for your child
- Ofsted inspection reports and action plans

Many providers in Norfolk are also working towards a quality assurance standard to give you, as a parent, more reassurance that the early education or childcare provider you have chosen is striving for the highest standards of care and education for the children.



## i live in a rural area and do not have access to a car...will transport be provided?

Unfortunately, there is no funding for transport for early education sessions. However, many groups will help to put you in contact with other people in your area who may be able to help your child get to early education sessions. Ask about this when you first contact the group if you think you may need help.

## my child has additional needs...will s/he be able to access early education?

All providers in Norfolk will try to accommodate the needs of all of their children. Support may be available to enable your child to go to early education sessions. Ask about this when you first contact the group if you think your child may need extra help.

## how can I be involved with my child's group?

Most pre-schools will be grateful for help from parents and value their support. The level of involvement expected of parents varies from group to group. For example, community groups which are registered charities rely on the families using the group to make up their management committee. Other groups may expect parents to help with sessions on a rota.

You may have many skills which the provider may be able to make use of – for example, fundraising, making dressing up clothes, sharing a skill (such as breadmaking or pottery), talking to the children about your job.

Some places will also encourage the involvement of other family members like grandparents, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters. You may like to discuss levels of involvement with the place you have chosen.

## what is the 'Foundation Stage'?

The Foundation Stage is part of the National Curriculum, aimed at three to five year olds.

<b>The National Curriculum Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3-5 years</b>
<b>The National Curriculum Key Stage 1</b>	<b>5-7 years</b>
<b>The National Curriculum Key Stage 2</b>	<b>7-11 years</b>
<b>The National Curriculum Key Stage 3</b>	<b>11-14 years</b>
<b>The National Curriculum Key Stage 4</b>	<b>14-16 years</b>

The Foundation Stage recognises the many and varied experiences that parents have already shared with their children, and aims to build on that valuable work. This can be achieved most effectively where a meaningful partnership exists between parents, the early education provider and the child. All providers should be working to create these partnerships and through play activities develop the children's skills and understanding in the six areas of learning.

## the six areas of learning are:

### Personal, social and emotional

Learning to make friends, enjoy being part of a group, sharing feelings and learning to do things for themselves.

### Communication, language and literacy

Talking and listening to others, enjoying stories and books and learning ways of sharing thoughts and feelings with others.

### Mathematics

Learning to count, share and compare and to see shapes and patterns around them.

### Knowledge and understanding of the world

Learning to see themselves as part of a bigger world and finding out what they can do as part of that world.

### Physical

Finding out about their body and how to use and control it.

### Creative

Using colour, shape, sounds movements and stories to share their thoughts and feelings with other.

when will my child start school?

By law, children must start education full time at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. If a child is offered a school place before they legally have to go school, their parents can choose for them to start school later that academic year.

For community and voluntary controlled schools, children born between 1 September and the end of February may start school full time at the beginning of the autumn term before their fifth birthday.

Children born between 1 March and 31 August, may start school part time at the beginning of the autumn term before their fifth birthday and full time at the beginning of the spring term before their fifth birthday. This policy has been strongly recommended to voluntary aided and foundation Schools

Norfolk County Council as Local Education Authority produces an information booklet for parents whose child will be starting school. For more information about starting school and schools in your area please contact:

Norfolk County Council Education Department  
on 01603 222146

where can I find out about early education providers in my area?

The Childcare Information Service will be able to advise you on early education providers in your area. Information can also be found at [www.norfolkchildcare.info](http://www.norfolkchildcare.info). This website has general information on early years education and childcare in Norfolk. This links to the national childcare website [www.childcarelink.gov.uk](http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk) which can give you information on settings around the country.

where can I get more information about early education?

If you have any questions that have not been answered in this booklet, please contact the Childcare Information Service, our details are overleaf. We will be able to put you in touch with someone to answer your query.



thank you for reading this 'early years education for 3 or 4 year olds' booklet

We hope you found it informative, useful and welcome your comments and suggestions. Please let us know what you think.

was the information in the booklet useful ?    ☐ YES    ☐ NO  
comments

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was it easy to understand ?    ☐ YES    ☐ NO  
comments

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what information did you find most helpful ?

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continued overleaf...



**thinking** about childcare for your own children ?

**thinking** about training to gain more qualifications so that you can progress your existing childcare career ?

**thinking** about childcare as a career, becoming a childminder or playworker, or setting up in business as a nursery or out of school club ?

**thinking** about providing childcare for your employees ?

whatever you're thinking about childcare or early years education please call the

**Norfolk Childcare Information Service**  
on 01603 62 22 92 for details  
or visit our website at  
[www.norfolkchildcare.info](http://www.norfolkchildcare.info)



Available in large print, braille and alternative languages

PA 009 · 02/03

**SureStart**



**Norfolk**  
early years development  
and childcare partnership

did you have any questions about early education that were not answered in the booklet ? ☐ YES ☐ NO

if yes, please ask them here

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please add any other comments that may help us improve on this booklet for future parents

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name

address

postcode

Telephone number

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP**

Please detach and return this questionnaire FREE in an envelope addressed to:

EYDCP, FREEPOST NATE602, Norwich NR2 4BR.