**Fees Letter September 2024**

**Basic fees:**

£ 9 per hour

We do not charge a different hourly rate for breakfast club (8.30am – 9am). Most settings do. The hourly rate is the same for all hours attended.

**Daily consumables fee for funded places:**

£6 per session for fully funded children, those accessing 3/4 year old funding and for full day sessions (if your child stays until 12.30pm onwards).

£5 per session if your child is funded but only attends until 12.30pm or is accessing 2-year-old funding for working families.

**Forest School:**

£6.50 per session.

This is to contribute to the cost of the minibus. This does not cover the entire cost; the preschool subsidises the rest. Without the minibus the sessions cannot take place. The fee is charged monthly in advance and is still due on the rare occasion that the weather is too bad for the sessions to go ahead. The minibus booking is made monthly in advance and the preschool is charged regardless.

**Afternoon Activities:**

Currently all other afternoon activities are covered by the preschool to include yoga, Spanish. Music and movement and food preparation. This may change in the future if external companies are to provide particular sessions or the cost of offering the current sessions becomes unmanageable for setting.

**Payment of Fees:**

Fees are charged monthly in advance. Invoices are sent out on around the 24th of each month and are strictly due to reach us by the last day of the month. We rely on fees being paid on time for the smooth running of the setting. Where fees are not settled by this day late payment fees will be added to invoices as per your terms and conditions.

**Other fees:**

Late collection fees will be applied for parents who are consistently late collecting children at their agreed time. If you know you are going to struggle to make an agreed collection time, please talk to us about a later collection time. The latest collection time available is 3.30pm. Late collection fees are as per our terms and conditions.

**Funding:**

The situation surrounding funding for settings is not a happy one. Funding is explained to parents as free childcare, but the very low rates paid by councils to settings means that remaining financially viable without charging consumables fees is impossible.

There are ongoing campaigns (Champagne nurseries on Lemonade funding are one such campaigning group) for the government to increase funding rates for providers as we cannot continue to provide the very high-quality care that we do without bridging the gap between the funding rate and the hourly rate we charge to simply maintain the setting. Many amazing settings nationwide have had to close because the financial pressure placed on them by low funding rates has made the settings non-viable. While finding claims to offer free childcare the rates paid actually have the effect of reducing choices of settings for parents and the number of childcare spaces available when settings have to close.

 It is however **illegal** for settings to simply charge parents the difference between the funded rate (just £5.77 per hour in Hertfordshire for 3 and 4 year old’s) and our hourly rate of £9 per hour BUT many settings do this anyway. Settings are allowed to charge, what is termed, consumables fees for everything required to run the setting over and above the hourly rate for care. How this is done is completely at the discretion of the individual setting. Some settings charge the difference between the two rates, some settings charge consumables as high as £10 just for a 3-hour morning session which again covers the difference between the funded rate and their hourly rate.

Currently we charge £6 per full day session and £5 per half day and for children claiming working families funding for two-year-olds as two year old’s are funded at a slightly higher hourly rate because the required staff to child ratio is higher for 2 year old’s.

We as a setting try always to strike a balance between being fair, competitive and affordable for parents while continuing to offer the very high-quality care that we do. We are an Ofsted outstanding Montessori preschool and nursery meaning that we offer a specialist and unique environment and experience for your children. Other Montessori settings in the local area charge as much as £12 per hour, charge for all extra activities and do not accept funded children. We want the beauty and brilliance of Montessori to be available to ALL children so work very hard to ensure our fees and stance on funding make this a reality.

Our staff are exceptionally well qualified to degree and masters standards. Montessori teachers are specifically trained to a very high standard, beyond the normal early years standard, to be able to offer the Montessori method of education. Our staff are passionate about and very committed towards creating the best experience for your children that we can. We all work many hours beyond the nursery opening hours. Working in early years however is a vocation and not a path chosen for those who are financially motivated. To be able to continue to maintain amazing staff who, after years of study are paid probably less than an Amazon employee, we have to ensure the setting is financially viable.

As a setting we will accept 15 and 30 hours funding. Many settings cap funding at 15 hours per child or have a maximum amount of 30 hours spaces available that parents need to go on waiting lists for. Again, in a bid to keep the setting accessible to a range of family income brackets, we do accept 30 hours funding for all children eligible.