

*Childcare***Link**

www.childcarelink.gov.uk

0800 0 96 02 96

**Lines open 8am - 8pm weekdays,
9am - 12pm Saturdays**

Choosing a Pre-school (Playgroup)

department for
education and skills

What age range are the children in a pre-school?

Children in pre-schools are usually aged between three and five but often there are places for two year olds as well.

When are pre-schools open?

Pre-schools usually open for sessions of around three hours. Children often attend for morning or afternoon sessions. Sometimes there will be two sessions a day five days a week and sometimes the pre-school just opens once or twice a week. Some pre-schools are open all day. Most pre-schools have the same term dates as local schools.

What about full-time childcare?

Some parents arrange for children to go to pre-school with a childminder or consider other types of daycare, e.g. nursery – please see separate leaflet, “Choosing a nursery class or a nursery school”.

How much does a pre-school cost?

Pre-schools cost about £2 to £5 per session but many also provide free part-time early education for four year olds, and now some three year olds, funded by the Government.

How do I find a pre-school?

Ask your local Children’s Information Service (CIS) to tell you more about pre-schools near to your home. The ChildcareLink freephone service will provide details of your local CIS on 0800 0 96 02 96.

What will my child do at pre-school/playgroup?

Children in funded early years settings work towards achieving the Early Learning Goals. Through well-planned play, children will develop skills such as speaking, listening, persistence, concentration, learning to work together and co-operate with other children.

They will also learn about reading and writing and numbers which will prepare them for Key Stage 1.

Pre-schools, also known as playgroups or playschools, are for young children to learn and play in small groups, often close to their homes. They are registered with OFSTED’s Early Years Directorate and inspected every year. Some pre-schools also provide free early education.

Most pre-schools open for sessions of around two and a half hours at a time but some are open for the whole day.

Pre-school staff work with the children and parents often help out. They offer

a range of fun activities for children and lots of opportunities to learn.

Plus points

- Your child can enjoy learning and playing in a small group.
- Your child can acquire skills for a head start at school.
- You can meet and get to know parents in your area.

How do I know my child will be safe and secure?

First of all you know your child best – look for a pre-school you feel will suit your child. Help in making this decision is provided on a separate leaflet, “Choosing high quality childcare”.

Registration and inspection of pre-schools is arranged by OFSTED’s Early Years Directorate.

This means annual checks are carried out to ensure that the pre-school staff are suitable to look after children. At least half the staff must be trained to work with children.

A check on the pre-school premises is carried out to make sure the building is safe and suitable for children. Once the pre-school is registered, every year an inspection is carried out to make sure the pre-school is continuing to provide a safe and suitable service.

There should be a set number of staff to work with the children. It is recommended that there is one member of staff for every eight children aged three to five and one adult for every four children aged two to three. However, there will often be more adults if parents help out.

You can ask to see the pre-school’s registration and inspection certificate.

How many children will there be in the pre-school?

Most pre-schools will provide places for between 10 to 20 children.

There should be no more than 26 children in a group but there may be more than one group within the pre-school.

Copies of this factsheet can be obtained from:

DfES Publications

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