



Sessions and Fees Policy



**CULMSTOCK
PRE-SCHOOL
PLAYGROUP**

SESSIONS

Culmstock Pre-School runs a full-day care setting during term time from Monday to Friday, with times as follows, though sessions may alter at times of low demand.

0915-1145 morning session
1145-1245 lunch club
1245-1515 afternoon session

Term dates will be set by the committee in April of each year when fees are reviewed following the annual funding changes set by Devon County Council.

Term dates can only be set by the committee and cannot be altered at short notice other than by committee discussion and agreement.

Only in exceptional circumstances will the Pre-School issue a short notice change of date or closure. Such instances include closure due to Polling Day or other notice of premises closure issued by our landlord, extreme severe weather (e.g. snow/heating problems) or any critical incident which requires closure for health and safety reasons (please refer to our critical incident policy).

Where it is possible we will try to provide flexibility in using your funded session entitlement on another day that week in the event that we are forced to close on the day you would normally have used that entitlement.

The number of sessions available to each child is decided in accordance with the criteria set out in our Admissions Policy. Children may attend the Pre-School for up to three sessions before their third birthday, subject to availability. A parent or carer must stay during these sessions.

Fees and Funding Entitlement

Early Years Entitlement **15 hours per week**

Culmstock pre-school is registered to take children from 3 to 5 years of age.

Each child has government funded childcare, known as their Early Years Entitlement. Currently each child is entitled to 15 hours of government funded childcare per week in term time for up to 38 weeks per year commencing the term after the child has turned 3 years old. From April 6th 2010 the rate we receive per hour per child in our care is £3.62 for the hours stipulated by the parents.

Note: At present we operate on a Sessional system; you are entitled to take your 15 hours as you wish cross both sessions and the lunch club, within some restrictions. However, we encourage you to observe our sessional hours as we find that these work well within our setting, that is we encourage that you drop off and pick up your children at the following set times: 09:15, 11:45, 12:45 and 15:15. Should your needs require more flexible timings please discuss this with Dian.

As at March 2010 the conditions set by Devon County Council provide the following framework for

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minimum/maximum use of the funding entitlement:

- Minimum of 2.5 hours in 1 day
- Maximum of 10 hours in 1 day
- Maximum of 12.5 hour over 2 days
- 15 hours to be used over a minimum of 3 days
- Can be accessed Monday to Friday

Parents are advised to talk to Dian if they wish to split their entitlement between two or more childcare providers. Please note your entitlement may be taken in full or half hour increments, but cannot be broken down into a quarter of an hour or other increments.

Toddler/Pre-funded fees £2.50 per hour/£6.25 per session

A child who has turned three after the start of a term usually will not qualify for the Early Years Entitlement until the start of the next term (note the qualifying cut-off dates vary each term, please check with Dian if your child qualifies).

Children who don't yet qualify for funding can attend pre-school at the discounted rate of £2.50 per hour.

Additional hours £3.62 per hour/ £9.05 per session

If spaces are available your child can attend more than the 15 hour entitlement per week at a rate of £3.14 per hour (£7.85 per session). This rate tracks the Early Years Entitlement rate we receive from Devon County Council, and is reviewed each March.

Lunch Club Hour £3.50 per hour

You may use your entitlement towards the lunch club, or you may wish to book the lunch club separately, in which case we charge £3.50 per lunch hour.

Booking Procedure, Funding and Payment Terms

Pre-School Booking Form

Bookings are taken at the start of each term and parents are requested to indicate the hours they book as funded sessions, extra sessions and lunch club hours. This booking is signed by both the parent and group leader and forms an agreement as to the hours you require that term. A copy will be made and returned to you for your records.

Bookings are made in hours and one session equals two and a half hours of time; all bills are raised against the hours booked. We can only book in half hour increments: quarter hours are not permitted. While we aim to provide flexibility to parents, we request that you observe our sessional pattern for planning the day and stick to booking times that fall within these hours as drop-off or collection outside of these times can be disruptive.

Devon County Council Funding

Parents of new starters will be given funding forms at the beginning of the term. These must be completed and accompanied with proof of your child's date of birth, e.g. as a birth certificate, allowance book or passport. This will be returned to you after a copy is made and sent to the handling office. In order to guarantee government funding, it is imperative that the forms are returned by the given deadline.

In each term parents are asked to sign a Devon County Council 'Headcount' form to indicate the

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number of funded hours they wish to use. This form is posted during 'Headcount Week' as designated by Devon County Council (typically week three or four of a new term).

Parents who wish to request additional government funded sessions after the funding forms have been completed and sent to Devon County Council are advised to speak with the Chair about funding availability.

Once bookings for the term have been taken any changes to the hours a child attends can only be made by advance request in writing to the committee and are subject to session availability.

Billing

Funded hours do not incur any bill – all you need to do is complete the paperwork as indicated above and make sure you sign the headcount form each term. **Please note the minimum attendance requirements below.**

Bills for extra hours, toddler fees and lunch club hours are usually issued in the penultimate week of the half term. All fees are payable in arrears at the end of each half term. Payments by cash, cheque or employer voucher are accepted. We cannot process credit card payments, but can accept direct debit arrangements for ease of payment. You are requested to post payments in the red 'suggestion box' in the foyer, placing your payment in a sealed envelope marked for the attention of the Co-Treasurer. Receipts are issued via Dian within a couple of days.

Late Fees Policy

All bills must be paid by the end of the half term in which the bill is issued, or as per the payment date stated on the bill.

Should you encounter any difficulty in paying a bill issued to you for your childcare that term we ask that you discuss this with the Treasurer/Co-treasurer as soon as possible. If a parent has not paid their bill by the deadline stated they will be invited to discuss the matter with the treasurer. Following discussion an agreement should have been reached regarding payment and this will be put into writing with timescales stipulated.

If discussion is declined, or if a payment method is not agreed and committed to, we will inform the parent in writing that no further non-funded hours will be available to their child until the arrears have been paid in full (but we will not withhold your 15 hours entitlement). If the issue remains unresolved we will seek legal advice.

All discussions will be treated in confidence and we aim to work with parents/carers to reach a positive and realistic solution.

Attendance Requirements

Missed hours and Absence for Funded Hours

Absence due to illness must be recorded and signed for by parents/carers; Dian will present a form for this on return from absence.

Funded hours are covered by an 'Authorised Absence' clause where by if the hours booked are missed due to illness, hospital/medical appointment or other health reasons then this is permitted with no impact to your right to entitlement.

In addition funded hours also have a holiday allowance – see below.

Missed Hours and Absence for Non-Funded Hours.

Time booked which is not funded, that is extra hours, toddler fee hours and lunch club hours, are not subject to the Devon County Council 'Authorised Absence' clause. All such hours booked, agreed to and signed for on the booking form will be billed at the normal rate in any event of

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illness or medical/health related appointments.

In the event that hours booked cannot be attended due to a medical appointment the parent can request that their child attends another time that week in lieu of the booked time, subject to availability of space.

Exceptional circumstances e.g. long term illness more than two weeks long or regular recurring medical appointments, may be reviewed on a case by case basis and parents are welcome in any instance to discuss their case with the committee.

Failure to attend the minimum number of hours

The Early Years Entitlement claimed for each child and paid to the pre-school is subject to each child attending a minimum number of hours per term, with allowances made for authorised absences (sickness, appointments, holiday).

If a parent signs the booking and headcount forms and then the child does not attend the minimum required number of weeks in accordance with Devon County Council's funding rules THE PARENT WILL BE LIABLE TO PAY THE FUNDING FOR THE ENTIRE TERM back to the preschool as the preschool will have to refund Devon County Council for the ENTIRE TERM'S FUNDS it received for that child. Please speak to Dian if your child needs to take time out of preschool so we can complete the required paper work.

Holiday Entitlement Clarified

The financial year for the pre-school funding runs April through March, with holiday entitlement being two weeks worth of the Early Years Entitlement per funding year. That is two weeks worth of the normal hours they claim per week.

e.g. If a child attends for 7.55 hours per week, say Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, then they are entitled to take two weeks worth of 7.5 hours = 14 hours of holiday for the funding year.

At the end of each term we are required under our contract with Devon County Council to self audit the attendance figures for each child claiming funding and confirm that the minimum attendance has been reached for each child and that all absences are accounted for e.g. parent signed to confirm illness.