



FACTSHEET

A guide to nursery classes and nursery schools

What are nursery classes and nursery schools?

Nursery classes are attached to primary schools, and nursery schools are separate units with their own governing bodies. Both provide integrated early learning and care under the Early Years Foundation Stage for children aged between 3 and 5 years. All provide free part time places during school hours in term time. Increasingly many are able to provide additional sessions or wrap around childcare for which there may be a charge, but unlike most day nurseries they are not generally able to provide childcare in the school holidays, or for children under 3.

Nursery classes and nursery schools must be led by a qualified teacher and at least one member of staff must hold a level 3 qualification. There is a minimum of one staff member for 13 children. All nursery classes and nursery schools are registered and inspected by Ofsted on a similar basis to schools. You can view the inspection report of any provider on Ofsted's website: see 'Useful contacts and information'. For more information please ask for our factsheet, 'A Guide to Registration and Ofsted'.

What will my child do in a nursery session?

Nursery classes and schools aim to promote all aspects of a child's learning, development and care. Children should be given the opportunity to:

- Learn through play with natural materials, toys and equipment both indoors and outdoors
- Concentrate on chosen activities, exploring and working things out
- Have the encouragement of adults who help without taking over
- Talk and play with other children and start to become part of a group
- Enjoy having a life away from parents and home

Nursery classes and nursery schools are required to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which finishes at the end of the academic year in which they turn 5 (end of school reception class). The emphasis is on individualised learning, development and care that supports children to make progress at their own pace. Children who need extra support to fulfil their potential should receive special consideration.

The EYFS includes a set of early learning goals and educational programmes covering areas such as personal, social and emotional development, communication, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development.

Nursery staff will work to deliver these overlapping learning goals through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult led and child-initiated activities. For more information on this please ask for a copy of our factsheet, 'Making Sense of Early Learning Goals'.

All children under 5 are entitled to free milk when they attend nursery. Most nurseries will also provide an additional snack, for which there may be a small charge. Additionally some nursery classes and schools may provide a school dinner that will be charged at a standard rate set by the local authority.

What is Free Early Learning?

The government gives funding to Local Authorities to provide free early years places for children aged 3 and 4. This is called Free Early Learning. It can also be taken at most day nurseries, children's centres, independent and special school nurseries, and with some playgroups and some childminders. Many of these providers can also provide additional childcare, although there may be a charge for this. For further information on Free Early Learning please ask for our factsheet.

How do I choose a nursery school or class?

Arrange to visit the nursery with your child. You may in fact want to visit several. Do you both feel welcomed and happy with the atmosphere? There are other things that you might want to observe and questions you may want to ask on your visit:

Points to consider

- Do the children look happy, settled and busy?
- Are the staff welcoming and engaged with the children?
- Is there a key worker for your child?
- Are the premises well cared for and attractively lay out?
- Are there facilities for role play, painting, clay or dough, sand play, enjoying books, music, cutting, sticking and making, drawing and writing, construction?
- Is there a safe outdoor play area?
- Do toys and activities reflect a variety of cultural backgrounds and cater for any special needs?
- How is children's progress recorded and how well are parents kept informed and involved?
- How does the nursery deal with discipline and difficult behaviour?
- Are the premises warm, clean, light and well ventilated?

Can I access extra sessions to cover me for work or college?

There is an increasing recognition that parents may be working, studying or need more time to themselves, and many nursery classes and nursery schools are able to offer additional services, which could include:

- more flexibility as to how the free entitlement hours are taken, for instance taking the hours in 3 blocks of 5 hours, or other combinations of hours
- Lunch cover when full days are taken, although there may be a charge for this

- Some full time places for older children or children with special needs
- Extended hours to cover the working day – many schools are now moving towards becoming extended schools offering childcare from 8.00am – 6.00pm. There will generally be a charge for extended hours
- Arrangements with other local childcare providers such as playgroups or childminders to provide extended childcare

Many parents use childminders or nannies to provide the extra care they need.

Childminders and nannies will often pick up and drop off at a nursery.

How do I get a place at a nursery class or school?

You should contact the nursery to see if they have any vacancies. Some may operate waiting lists that you can join if they do not have vacancies or if your child is not yet old enough to attend. Priority is given to children and families in need, and to children with special needs. Most nurseries then admit children in age order (oldest first) to give the maximum amount of free entitlement time in nursery.

Nursery classes attached to schools are not linked to the school's admissions procedure and do not have catchment areas. Attending a nursery class will not guarantee your child a place at the school. Nor do you have to use a school's nursery class to get a place at the school.

Any disputes concerning your child's admission to a nursery class or school should be referred to the school's governing body.

How can children with special needs access nursery education?

Most children with special needs can attend mainstream nursery classes. Under the Early Years Foundation Stage all providers are required to have effective policies for supporting children with learning difficulties and disabilities, and a specific Special



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Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). Additional support may be made available depending on the child's needs. Some nursery classes or schools have Integrated Resource Units for children with special needs.

For children with severe and complex disabilities there are nursery units attached to special schools.

SIL provides a specialist information service for families with children who are disabled or have special needs. The service, called SIGN, can provide information on services, support and specific conditions and disabilities. SIGN is based at the Ryegate Children's Centre and has an enquiry line. For details see 'Useful contacts' section below.

Useful contacts and information

Sheffield Information Link (SIL)

Tel: 0114 275 6699 (out of hours answerphone) • Textphone 0114 249 4939
11 Leopold Street, Sheffield, S1 2GY

Drop-in Service & Library Opening Hours: Mon: 9.30am to 5.30pm, Wed: 9.30am to 6.00pm, Fri: 9.30am to 4.00pm (Telephone service available daily. Out of hours answerphone.)

Email: info@sheffinfoolink.org.uk

For information and guidance on finding childcare and services for children and young people in Sheffield. SIL produces a range of useful factsheets, including one on Children and Young People's Rights; these can be viewed on our website: www.sheffinfoolink.org.uk

SIGN Information Service

Ryegate Children's Centre, Tapton Crescent Road, Sheffield S10 5DD

Drop in and phone service Monday – Friday 10.00am – 1.00pm

Tel: (0114) 266 9476 (out of hours answerphone)

Email: sign@sheffinfoolink.org.uk

Free information for parents and carers with children or young people with special needs or disabilities

OFSTED

Tel: 0845 640 4040 – Helpline and Complaints

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Ofsted is responsible for regulating the standard of education and care provided in schools and early years settings

Early Years Education and Childcare Service (EYECS)

Tel: (0114) 281 1881

Website: www.sheffield.gov.uk/eyecs

Email: eyecs@sheffield.gov.uk

Floor 1, Castle Market Buildings, Exchange Street, Sheffield, S1 2AH

Monday – Thursday 8.45am – 5.15pm, Friday 8.45am – 4.45pm

Part of Sheffield City Council's Children and Young People's Directorate. EYECS is the service responsible for helping to deliver the government's childcare strategy throughout Sheffield. Their responsibilities fall under four main areas - to maintain the city's childcare places, to fund and ensure there's enough nursery places for eligible 3 and 4 year-olds, to help develop the childcare workforce, and to deliver the city's Children's Centres.