

Non-Payment of Fees Protocol

AIMS

We recognise that parents may experience short term financial difficulties, especially when first applying for tax credits or educational grants. At Chichester Nursery School, Children and Family Centre we hope to support parents through financial difficulties, but recognise that the sustainability of childcare provision depends on the timely collection of nursery fees. The following procedures aim to establish a protocol for the sensitive collection of unpaid fees.

FEES AND LATE PAYMENT PENALTIES

Nursery fees are payable one month in advance on a non-refundable basis for absences (planned or unplanned). Nursery invoices are sent out electronically on the first working day of the month and payment is expected by the 10th of the calendar month. Failure to pay by the 10th incurs a £5 late payment charge. Fees not paid by the 20th of each month incur a further £5 charge. Payment can be made by cash, cheque, card or electronic bank transfer.

A copy of this policy is enclosed with the contract that all parents and guardians must sign, and return to the Nursery School along with a deposit of one month's fees, before starting sessions. This also includes parents who request regular extra sessions after they have taken up their Nursery place or at any other point during the Nursery year.

PAYMENT RECLAMATION

If a parent or carer has not paid their bill by the 20th, a member of the administration staff will make a sensitive query to discuss when a payment can be expected. Depending on the reasons for the failure to pay, a number of options may be taken (e.g. an agreed repayment plan; a reduction of childcare sessions; pursuit of childcare vouchers, funding through college, Care2learn, etc.)

If nursery fees remain unpaid for a second month with no reasonable explanation, childcare sessions will cease, to avoid placing the parent into significant debt. Where possible, the childcare place will be held until the fees are paid in full, at which time parents may restart childcare sessions. This cannot be guaranteed however, as the nursery must maintain high capacity to cover running costs. Children who occupy C and D (split week) places and whose parents and carers are

persistently late in paying for lunches will be moved to morning and afternoon places if available.

At the point of a child's departure from nursery, any unpaid fees will be deducted from the initial deposit. If unpaid fees are in excess of the deposit, again, parents will be solicited for payment. If parents and carers fail to pay unsettled bills their details will be passed to West Sussex County Council, Litigation Department for the collection of outstanding payments.

EARLY NOTICE

Chichester Nursery School, Children and Family Centre aims to help parents and families facing financial hardship. It is therefore vital to inform the setting of any difficulties there may be in making payment as soon as possible. With early notice, for legitimate reasons, the Headteacher is able to waive late payment charges and will work with other agencies, where appropriate, to access financial support on their behalf.

NB: This policy should be read in conjunction with the Lost or Uncollected Children policy.

Date: Spring 2016

To be reviewed: Spring 2019