



DEAN CLOSE
LITTLE TREES
NURSERIES

DEAN CLOSE NURSERIES LIMITED

Independent Day Nursery

**Funded Childcare - England
(NL037)**

Dean Close Nurseries Ltd is wholly owned by The Dean Close Foundation,
registered Charity No: 1086829

Date of Issue: July 2025
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Owner: Group Operations Manager

DEAN CLOSE LITTLE TREES NURSERIES

FUNDED CHILDCARE POLICY FOR ENGLAND

We understand that the rules surrounding funded childcare entitlements can be confusing, and we recognise that parents often have questions about how the funding works in practice.

Although the government markets these entitlements as 'free', it is important to clarify that the funding provided is intended to cover the basic delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This includes staffing, basic learning resources aligned with the areas of development, certain consumables, overheads, and administrative costs.

However, the actual rates of funding received by providers — which vary by local authority — are significantly below the true cost of delivering high-quality care and education. In practice, this means the funding only realistically covers the basic staffing costs required to meet the minimum EYFS requirements, at best.

In our professional opinion, we believe that delivering the EYFS at this basic level would likely be judged as merely 'adequate' by Ofsted. It does not reflect the enriched, high-quality learning environment that we strive to provide — or the standard of care and education that our families expect.

At our nursery, we are committed to going above and beyond the minimum. To deliver an experience that is engaging, enriching, and meets children's individual needs, we charge for additional services such as:

- Fresh, nutritious meals and snacks
- Specialist activities and enrichment opportunities
- Consumables
- Trips, events, and themed days
- Resources to support a broad and balanced curriculum
- IT Package such as Family

These charges are always made clear to families and are in line with government guidance, which allows providers to charge for extras that sit outside the funded entitlement.

Current Entitlements (as of April 2025 – September 2025 rollout)

Currently, working parents of children aged 9 months and older can access up to 15 hours of funded childcare per week.

From September 2025: Eligible working parents of children aged 9 months and older will be entitled to up to 30 hours of funded childcare per week, until their child starts school.

Key Things to Know

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Funded hours are available over 38 weeks of the academic year (term time), split across three terms (Autumn, Spring, and Summer).

Our Nursery contracts are for 52 weeks of the year, therefore any additional hours taken beyond the funded entitlement will be charged at our standard rates. We do not offer term time only contracts.

Optional Additional Service charges may apply for meals, snacks, trips, IT and enhanced learning experiences. These are clearly outlined in our fee structure and are always discussed transparently with parents.

Funded childcare is awarded using the following eligibility terms:

Child who is either 9 months/ 2 or 3 years old between	Funding starts
1 st January- 31 st March	Summer Term - April
1 st April- 31 st August	Autumn Term - September
1 st September – 31 st December	Spring Term - January

The nursery session times available are as follows:

Session	Times	Hours
Morning Session	8am-1pm	5 hours
Afternoon Session	1pm-6pm	5 Hours
Full Day	8am-6pm	10 Hours

15 Hour Universal Entitlement – 570 hours per year

All children aged 3 & 4 years are entitled to 15 hours of funded childcare per week, for 38 weeks per year (a total of 570 hours). This universal entitlement is available to all families, regardless of income or working status, and remains in place until the child starts Reception at school. There is NO requirement for an eligibility code.

However, all children aged 9months+ up to 3 years old, of working families are entitled to 15 hours of funded childcare per week, for 38 weeks per year (a total of 570 hours). Currently, Parents must apply through the government childcare service and provide the nursery with a valid eligibility code before the start of term.

In addition to Universal Hours; Extended 15 Hour Entitlement – 1,140 hours per year

Currently, children aged 3 & 4 years of working families are entitled to the extended 15 hours of funded childcare per week, for 38 weeks per year (a total of 1,140 hours). Parents must apply through the government childcare service and provide the nursery with a valid eligibility code before the start of term.

From September 2025, all children from working families aged 9 months and older before 31st August 2025, will be eligible to claim the extended 15 hours in addition to the universal hours and you must have applied successfully via the HMRC website and provide an eligibility code to the nursery.

Parents must be working and each earning at least £167 a week (National Minimum Wage average 16 hours a week, over 3 months), but no more than £100,000 a year each. Full details about eligibility and exceptions to the above can be found by visiting <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/15-and-30-hours-childcare-support>

To apply for the extended entitlement (total 30 hours), you need to apply to the Childcare Service (HMRC) to secure your eligibility code. When you receive your code, you must provide the nursery with this, and complete the Funding Claim form from the Authority to ensure you receive the funding in the following term. We ask that this form is returned to us as soon as possible and by no later than a week before term starts. Failure to return a completed form, may mean that funding cannot be applied. If the LA funding portal closes and a completed funding form has not been returned to the nursery, we are unable to offer any funding that term, which is outside of the nursery's control. This is wholly driven by the LA funding team.

Families required to provide an eligibility code to claim their funded entitlement, must reconfirm their eligibility every 3 months. If you fall out of eligibility and the grace period, you will be liable for the full fees, and the Terms and Conditions of the nursery place.

Additional Services Fee

Due to the significant shortfall between the government funding (FEEE) and the actual cost of delivering high quality care and education, nurseries need to set a fee structure that helps keep the nursery running sustainably and ensures we can continue offering the best for your child.

As a result, we ask families to contribute to the optional Additional Services Fee, which allows us to maintain the exceptional quality of our provision.

However, we recognise that some families may prefer not to pay this fee. In these cases, we will always aim to offer a fair and workable alternative that maintains the health, safety, and dignity of the child.

The Additional Services Fee is intended to cover those services, items and provisions above and beyond the EYFS basic requirements.

From January 2026, the Additional Services Fee will be itemised on invoices, however for awareness of what this fee covers, this includes;

- **Catering;**

If providing catering, the basic EYFS framework requires us to provide healthy, balanced, and nutritious food and fresh drinking water, ensuring the menu meets

children's dietary needs and promotes good health. Please note, not all nurseries provide catering services.

At Little Trees, we have chosen to go above and beyond this requirement by ensuring our menu's are nutritionist approved specifically for children aged 0-5 years, including safe alternatives for allergens and cultural preferences. We involve children in food prep and mealtime routines, and in some cases, growing our own food through our vegetable patches. Educating children about healthy food choices through activities and continued monitoring of portion sizes and salt/sugar content. The fee also provides necessary provision to develop children's growing independence through self-serve stations.

- **Enriched Resources, Equipment & Activities;** The EYFS requires us to provide enabling environments that is inclusive, diverse and covers all areas of learning that is accessible for all children, although it does not specify exactly what should be provided. We believe we go above and beyond these requirements when it comes to toys, resources, and the learning environment. These extras not only enhance children's development but also demonstrate a commitment to outstanding practice, as recognised by Ofsted. Using natural and open-ended materials (e.g. wooden blocks, loose parts, real-world items) that inspire creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Prioritising real-life objects over plastic toys to encourage exploration and sensory learning. Designing learning spaces such as role play areas, mindfulness spaces, that reflect children's interests and support different learning styles. Regularly updating and refreshing displays and resources to remain relevant, seasonal, or connected to current topics or projects. Going beyond token gestures by ensuring books, dolls, musical instruments, foods, and artwork authentically represent a wide range of cultures, languages, and family structures. Including accessible resources for children with additional needs (e.g. sensory toys, visual timetables, adaptive tools). Providing rich outdoor environments with mud kitchens, growing areas, real tools, and opportunities for risky play (e.g. wood work, den building). Running forest school sessions or regular nature-based learning activities such as wood work. Letting children co-create areas or choose new resources based on their current interests, empowering their voice and ownership of their space.
Staff observing play patterns (schemas) and tailoring resources to extend that learning. Using tablets or interactive whiteboards for storytelling, mark making, phonics games, or coding, especially with older early years children. All of our environments are of high quality, specifically designed early years furniture to ensure safety.
At Little Trees, we offer a wide range of enriched activities and special events to enhance children's learning experiences and create memorable moments during their early years. These include, but are not limited to, Sports Days, Mini First Aid sessions for children, Graduation celebrations, Concerts, and themed or celebratory events such as Mother's and Father's Day breakfasts, which is also above the basic EYFS requirements.
- **IT Package;**
The basic EYFS framework does not require nurseries to complete formal or written assessments of children's development, apart from the statutory two-year progress check. While it does state that providers should communicate progress with parents, it doesn't specify how this should be done.

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At Little Trees, we've chosen to go beyond the minimum requirements by using the Family App to share meaningful observations, assessments, weekly updates, and photos that parents really appreciate. This platform also allows us to manage all nursery communications in one place, helping to keep you informed and connected with your child's learning journey. This fee helps to cover the cost of the increased WIFI facilities across the nursery, tablets for staff to complete this work, and the cost of the Family subscriptions.

- **Staffing;**

The basic EYFS requirements around safer recruitment and ongoing CPD is clear with regards to keeping knowledge up to date and reflective. This includes safeguarding, child development, curriculum approaches, SEND and inclusion and behaviour management. However, it does not specify how this is delivered. We believe we go above and beyond in our efforts of CPD and continuous development and self-reflection by ensuring staff have access to high quality training materials, regular inset training sessions inhouse, a fully comprehensive induction programme that far exceeds these minimum standards.

For example, the EYFS requirement is to have at least one qualified paediatric first aider available at all times. We believe this is minimum, and to ensure our nurseries are safe and ready for any emergencies, we aim to have a minimum of 90% paediatric first aid qualified staff.

We also aim to exceed the minimum requirements of qualified childcare staff, which is 50% of the team, and so continue to invest in our 'Grow our Own' qualified team members through apprenticeships and continued professional development, including upskilling team members.

The nurseries meet the regulatory requirements with regards to ratios at all times, however in times of need to support a child/ children, we do where possible, enhance the ratios to ensure the best possible care is provided.

- **Consumables;**

The EYFS makes clear the need to provide facilities to change children, and the number of toilets and basins needed for children aged over 2 years. It also details the nurseries requirement for infection control; to promote the good health of children and prevent infection from spreading where possible.

However, there is no specific detail to provide the consumables that is required to meet this. We believe we go above and beyond this requirement by ensuring that there are regular routines for cleaning and sanitising all environments and resources. We provide dishwashers/ washing machines/ dryers which often require fixing or replacement due to being used at least 3 times a day each to ensure eating utensils are sterile and safe, particularly when managing allergens/ and bedding and flannels are clean. Items such as antibacterial sprays, cloths, hoovers, sterilising equipment etc to keep our spaces clean and hygienic for children, particularly important as season's change and virus's spread. We provide the necessary tissues, toilet paper, paper towels, hand wash, sanitiser, laundry detergent and softeners, bottle making facilities and sterilising.

- **Additional Hours**

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The funding is only intended to cover the specific hours, and so additional hours of childcare provided during a funded week, is charged at the hourly fee. Additional hours of childcare provided during the non-term time periods, covering the full year, are charged at the normal sessional fee.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but instead, give parents a flavour of what the Additional Services fee contributes to across the nursery.

Alternative Options to the Additional Services Fee

Unfortunately, our Additional Services package comes as one package, and it is not possible to pick and choose what or what isn't provided by the Nursery and home. It is either a fully opt in, or fully opt out.

Families who choose not to pay the Additional Services Fee are expected to:

1. Catering;

Provide Packed Breakfast, Lunch and or Tea and Snacks daily;

Parents may opt to provide their child with a healthy packed sitting and/or snacks instead of participating in nursery-provided meals. These must comply with the following:

- Environmental Health Officer (EHO) Guidance requires that perishable packed lunches must not be out of refrigeration for more than 4 hours in order to be considered safe for consumption. As we are unable to store packed lunches in refrigerated conditions throughout the day, parents must ensure:
 - Meals are clearly labelled with the child's name and date, and all ingredients listed per item packed including allergens.
 - Cold packs are included to keep food safe, particularly important during warmer months.
 - Foods provided are non-perishable or are safely insulated
 - Packed meals are provided with the correct utensils needed
 - We reserve the right to refuse food that poses a health risk due to temperature, allergens, or hygiene concerns.
 - For children attending a full day, parents will be required to deliver the afternoons packed meals during the day, to ensure it is safe for consumption at tea time.
 - All contents, including the left overs/ rubbish will be sent home at the end of the day.
 - The nursery will not heat any items, or prepare any items from home. Food must be served as it arrived in the packed meal.
- It is important to note, that if a child does not eat what the parent has provided, and the nursery is required to offer an alternative, then the Catering fee will be added to your invoice retrospectively.

2. Enriched Resources, Equipment and Activities;

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We understand and respect that individual families may choose not to have their child participate in certain activities such as Forest School/ Wood-work or events due to personal, cultural, or religious reasons such as Graduations/ Sports Days etc. Opting out of these activities does not affect your child's entitlement to the full basic EYFS learning and development opportunities.

However, children who do not take part in the enriched or celebratory events will continue to be included in age-appropriate, high-quality learning and care, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements. Alternative activities will be provided during the event to ensure the child is meaningfully engaged and supported.

The decision to opt out will be treated respectfully and without judgment, and staff will work with families to ensure the child feels safe, secure, and included during alternative arrangements.

3. IT package;

Parents choosing to opt out will essentially forfeit their option to have a Family login to access the detailed information on their child's development, observations and weekly blogs. The alternative will mean that the nursery will provide you with the necessary verbal progress updates during our Consultation Evenings with the Key Person. Items such as medication, accident forms etc will be completely through paperwork and stored within the nursery.

4. Staff;

Parents cannot opt out of, or provide alternatives to, our enhanced staffing structure or training approach, as these are essential to meeting our preferred approach in operating high quality day nurseries including our legal and safeguarding duties.

5. Consumables;

Parents may opt to provide their child with their own daily consumables. This includes tissues, toilet paper/ wipes/ nappy sacks/ hand wash/ sanitiser, own bedding and blankets. Please note the nursery does not have the storage facilities to store home based items for individual children from one day to the next, and so this will need to be provided for each day in attendance. Failure to provide such items will result in the fee being invoiced to you retrospectively.

Working Together

We are committed to supporting all families, and we will always try to find solutions that balance individual needs with the sustainability of our high-quality service. Parents who are unable or unwilling to pay the additional services fee are encouraged to speak to us directly to explore suitable alternatives.

We appreciate open dialogue and remain committed to every child receiving outstanding care, regardless of circumstances.

Unable to Pay Additional Services Fee

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We understand that some families may experience financial difficulties from time to time, which could impact their ability to pay the additional services fee for services such as meals, trips, and enrichment activities.

We are committed to supporting all families and ensuring that financial constraints do not prevent children from receiving the best possible care and educational experience. Our policy is designed to be flexible whilst remaining compliant and safe, and understanding in these circumstances.

What We Offer:

- Payment Plans

If a parent or guardian is unable to pay the full additional services fee, we may offer the option of a payment plan, allowing the fees to be paid in smaller, manageable instalments. Parents should contact Nursery Billing to discuss this option.

- Fee Waivers

In certain circumstances, and where appropriate, we may offer temporary fee waivers for the additional services fees. This would typically apply where the parent or guardian is facing significant financial hardship, such as loss of employment or a temporary financial crisis.

- Subsidised Fees

We also offer subsidised fees to qualifying families based on financial need, which could help to reduce the cost of additional services. These subsidies are available for those who meet specific criteria, such as being in receipt of government benefits such as Tax Credits or Universal Credit. Parents can inquire about eligibility at any time. Evidence of receipt of these benefits must be provided and in date for the period of funded hours claim.

- Alternative Solutions

In cases where neither a payment plan nor a fee waiver is feasible, we will explore alternative solutions where possible. This could include offering opportunities for the child to participate in activities on a case-by-case basis, or through other means that ensure no child misses out on opportunities due to financial reasons.

How to Request Support:

Parents who are struggling to pay the additional services fee should contact the nursery directly as soon as possible. We encourage open communication, and we will always do our best to find a suitable solution. Requests for either of the above options should be made in writing to Nursery Billing, and the Nursery Senior Management will assess each case individually.

What You Can Expect When Claiming your Funded Childcare Hours

In addition to the above;

- Funded Childcare will only be offered for 38 weeks of the academic year, split into 3 terms, each differing in length, and slightly less than a typical school year due to the 5 school inset days.
- Funded Childcare will be applied to the Term dates as confirmed on Page 5 of this policy.
- Dean Close Nurseries will not be offering to stretch the Funded Childcare Offer.
- Dean Close Nurseries operate for 52 weeks of the year, therefore sessions that fall out of the Funded Dates will be subject to our normal fees.
- Sessions cannot be more than 10 hours in any one day.
- The nursery may be subject to an LA audit of Funded hours at any time. If the LA deems that a child has not used all of their funding hours, including but not limited to, arriving later than 8am, and being collected earlier than 6pm for example, then the LA may decide the 'claw back' this funding. Eg, claiming 30 hours per week for three days childcare 8am-6pm, but consistently arriving at 8.30am, and collected by 5.30pm, therefore consistently utilising 27 of the 30 hours per week, then the LA may choose to claw back this one hour per day, for every day funded day. If this were to happen, then the hours reclaimed back from the Nursery, will be invoiced to you at the normal hourly session rate.
- Attendance and Funding records are held in the nursery for 3 years.
- If funding is clawed back, then the parent will become liable for those fees. Please note, this audit could happen after your child has left nursery.
- Funded Childcare can be taken in a variety of ways;
 1. Example for accessing 15 hours as three half day sessions 8-1pm or 1-6pm, or a combination of one full day 8-6pm and one half day.
 2. Example of accessing 30 hours as two full days 8-6pm and two half days 8-1pm or 1-6pm.
- Any additional childcare hours during the 38 weeks term time that is required will be subject to booking the required sessions and payable at those session rates.
- The nursery Terms and Conditions are still valid for funded only places.
- We have assumed all parents opt in to the Additional Services Fees, unless specifically communicated to us in writing, detailing your alternative arrangements.
- Additional Services fees will remain chargeable, as with any childcare sessions, during any absence from the nursery.
- You can choose to use your FUNDED hours at one provider or split the hours between two e.g. a Childminder and a playgroup, however you must ensure the nursery has been informed of the shared provider by the beginning of the term so that the funding claims are correct.
- The Nursery Enrolment fee is still payable and non-refundable as this provides a new child starting nursery with entitlement to settle in sessions that are free of charge.
- Funded sessions cannot be changed mid-term. You can change sessions at the beginning of the following term subject to the nurseries availability and that prior notice has been given in conjunction with the nursery terms and conditions.

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- Any hours not taken up are not claimed and are not accrued. For example, for a 30 hour per week entitlement, if you attend two full days a week, which is 20 hours, then we will only claim for 20 hours per week. The other 10 hours are effectively lost.
- Our Nursery Management Software system, Family, will automatically allocate funding to the earliest sessions within the week, therefore meaning Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday for the full 30 hours depending on the child's agreed booking schedule.

Dean Close Little Trees Nursery, Tutshill

Little Trees Tutshill Nursery, is an English nursery based in South Gloucestershire, registered with Ofsted. This means that families attending this nursery either live in England, or across the border in Wales. Tutshill Nursery can claim the Childcare Offer funding available in Wales, which is 20 hours per week for 48 weeks of the year, please see specific policy NL038 Funded Childcare - Wales.

As the Tutshill nursery is not registered within Monmouthshire, they are unable to provide the Educational hours funding through Monmouthshire.

Therefore, for ease of funding, parents can decide which funding stream they would like to claim subject to eligibility and approval. However, the nursery will only claim funding through one scheme per child, and therefore will not offer dual funding.

Dean Close Little Trees Nursery, St Arvans

Little Trees St Arvans Nursery, is a Welsh nursery based in Monmouthshire, registered with Care Inspectorate Wales. We are aware that some of our families are indeed living just across the border in England. We are aware that there are a very few children claiming Funded Childcare through Gloucestershire in this nursery. This is always subject to, and remains subject to, approval by Gloucestershire Early Years Manager. For ease of funding, parents can decide which funding stream they would like to claim, subject to eligibility and approval through either county. The funding can not exceed the number of hours eligible and the nursery will not dual fund across two schemes.

Payment and your bills

You will still receive a monthly invoice from Dean Close Little Trees whether your child's place is completely Funded to you or otherwise.

- Your invoice will clearly show the number of funded hours allocated per week within that calendar month, even if there is nothing for you to pay. The Local Authority pays us directly for those hours accessed.
- Your invoice will clearly show the number of hours Additional Services Fee is applied per week within that calendar month.
- Your invoice will show any additional sessions booked that remain fully payable by you.
- Any chargeable extra-curricular external services, such as Rugby Tots, Moo Music clubs that you chose your child to take part in, will be invoiced to you and clearly itemised.

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Gloucestershire Funded Term Dates for 2025/ 2026

Autumn Term 2025

September 1st – 24th October (8 weeks)
November 3rd – 19th December (7 weeks)

Spring Terms 2026

January 5th – 13th February (6 weeks)
February 23rd – 27th March (5 weeks)

Summer Term 2026

April 13th – 22nd May (5 weeks & 4 days - minus 4th May Bank Holiday)
June 1st – 13th July (6 weeks 1 day)

*Dates outside of those above, are payable at the normal session price.