DEAN CLOSE NURSERIES LIMITED

Independent Day Nursery

Funded Childcare - Wales
(NL038)

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

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DEAN CLOSE LITTLE TREES NURSERIES

FUNDED CHILDCARE POLICY FOR WALES

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 Curriculum for Wales and CIW National Minimum Standards. 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 requirements, at best.

In our professional opinion, we believe that delivering the Curriculum for Wales and CIW National Minimum Standards at this basic level would likely be judged as merely 'adequate' by CIW and Estyn. 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 Famly

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 Spring 2025)
Eligible working parents of children aged 3 and 4 years can access up to 30 hours per week of funded early education and childcare for up to 48 weeks of the year under the Childcare Offer for Wales.

This includes:

- A minimum of 10 hours of early education provided by the local authority.
- Up to 20 hours of funded childcare provided by the Childcare Offer

Additional support may be available for younger children (2 year olds) through Flying Start, but this is area-dependent and not part of the universal Childcare Offer.

Key Things to Know
FPN and Childcare Offer Funded hours are available for 48 weeks of the academic year (term time), split across three terms (Autumn, Spring, and Summer), including the non school week's up until August. The last 4 weeks of the academic year are not funded.

Flying Start Funded Hours are available for 39 weeks of the academic year (term time) split across the three terms (Autumn, Spring and Summer). The other 13 weeks are not funded.

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 2 or 3 years old between	**Funding starts**
1st January- 31st March	Summer Term - April
1st April- 31st August	Autumn Term - September
1st September – 31st 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

The Childcare offer

The Welsh Government childcare offer has been introduced to provide 20* hours of funded childcare. *The number of hours may be slightly different depending on which Local Authority you reside in, if they offer more Educational Hours. For example, if you reside within Cardiff, they offer 12.5 hours Educational hours, and therefore 17.5 Childcare Offer hours.

A maximum 30 hours of combined education and childcare will be offered to eligible working parents of 3 and 4 year olds for up to 48 weeks of the year. Parents in full time education and on training programmes are also eligible.

The offer is available for children from the term after their third birthday until 31st August following their fourth birthday when they are offered a full-time education place in school.

You are eligible for the childcare offer if:

- your child is 3 or 4 years old
- you are working and live in Wales - both parents must work if you are a two parent family, or be in full time education or training
- you work at least 16 hours at the national minimum or living wage
- you earn a weekly minimum equivalent of 16 hours at the national minimum wage (NMW) or national living wage (NLW) (around £111 and £115 a week at the current 21-24 NMW and NLW rate respectively) but less than £100k per year

Parents should be able to access the offer from whichever point they wish during that term, providing their child was eligible from the beginning of that term, or earlier. All parents assessed as eligible to receive the funded childcare will receive a confirmation letter. The funded childcare will begin after parents receive this letter. You will need to provide a copy of this letter to your Nursery Manager in order for the nursery to claim your hours for you.

You can find further information here regarding falling out of eligibility etc:
http://www.newport.gov.uk/documents/Care-and-Support/FIS/Childcare-Offer-May-2018.pdf

Flying Start Funding
The Flying Start programme in Wales provides eligible families with funded childcare for 12.5 hours per week during 39 weeks of the year, aligning with school term times. This equates to approximately 475 hours annually. The sessions are typically structured as 2.5 hours per day, five days a week, focusing on high-quality early childhood development. It's important to note that unused hours cannot be carried over to other weeks or school holidays

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 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 NMS 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 Curriculum for Wales and NMS 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 CIW and Estyn. 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 requirements.

- **IT Package**;
  The CIW National Minimum Standards do not require nurseries to carry out formal or written assessments of children's development. However, providers are expected to monitor children's progress and maintain regular communication with parents or guardians about their child's development, although the standards do not specify the exact methods for doing so.
  At Little Trees, we've chosen to go beyond the minimum requirements by using the Famly 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 Famly subscriptions.

- **Staffing;**
  The basic NMS 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, ALN 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 NMS requirement is to have at least one qualified paediatric first aider for every 10 children 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 NMS 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**
  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;
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 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 Curriculum for Wales and National Minimum Standards 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 Famly 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

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 Free Childcare Hours

- 3 year olds - Up to 30 hours of childcare delivered to you across 48 weeks of the year.
- 2 year olds – Up to 12.5 hours of childcare delivered to you across 39 weeks of the year.
- Dean Close Little Trees operate for 52 weeks of the year, therefore sessions that fall out of the funded entitlement will be subject to our normal fees.
- Funded weeks under each scheme is stipulated on page 5.
- For Childcare Offer claimants - A Funded Holiday week does not mean taking a 'holiday' from the nursery with no fees liable. A funded holiday week simply means that during what would otherwise be a half term or school holiday, that the Childcare offer can still offer funding during this time, for those 9 week's only.
  Funded holiday weeks are accrued at 3 weeks per term. Therefore, if your child was eligible for funding from the Spring term in January, you are only eligible for the 6 weeks funded holiday weeks. However, this has all been scheduled into the academic year for parents so to maximise their funding entitlements from the beginning of September until the end of July.
  Sessions cannot be more than 10 hours in any one day.
- The Childcare offer and Educational Hours can be taken in a variety of ways. –
  1. The 20 hours childcare offer can be used on any sessions, i.e. 10 hours in one day or two half day sessions.
  2. However the FPN hours can only be taken subject to the Local Authorities guidelines. In Newport, you must attend the nursery on three separate days to claim the educational hours, which are given as 2 hours each day. In Monmouthshire there are no restrictions on the number of days, however 2 hours can only be given as a daily allowance.
  3. To claim the full 10 FPN education hours, your child needs to attend nursery five days a week, whether that is half days or full days is your decision.
- The Flying Start Hours can be taken in a variety of ways. –
  1. The 12.5 hours can be used on any sessions, i.e. 2.5 hours in one session
  2. Or alternatively use 2.5 hours in each session that makes up one full day, utilising 5 hours in a full day attendance.
- Any additional childcare hours during the funded weeks 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 providers as long as they are registered with the CIW e.g. a Childminder and a playgroup. You must inform your Nursery Manager of this before the beginning of the term to ensure that 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 can-not be changed mid-term. You can change sessions at the beginning of the following term subject to the nurseries availability and that the correct notice has been given in conjunction with the nursery's terms and conditions.
- Any hours not taken up are not claimed and are not accrued. For example, if you attend nursery on 2 days per week, no FPN hours can be claimed in (Newport only), therefore effectively losing the FPN entitlement.
- However, during the 9 weeks holiday Childcare Offer funding, dates as stipulated below, we can claim for the full 30 hours when the FPN hours are not applicable.
- We use our Nursery Management Software system, Famly, and will automatically allocate funding to the earliest sessions within the week in accordance with the claims being made for the funding. For example, the FPN education hours will be allocated in their 2 hourly sessions for the relevant days attended, and the Childcare Offer will wrap around these hours starting from the beginning of the week, before the full entitlement has been exhausted. Any hours outside of this will be invoiced at our hourly rate.

Payment and your bills

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

- Your invoice will clearly show the number of funded hours allocated within that calendar month, even if there is nothing for you to pay. The Local Authority pays us directly for those hours accessed.
- You DO NOT have to pay towards any Funded hours.
- Your invoice will show the total sessions attended but the charge on the invoice will only be for the unfunded sessions
- The food & consumables charge fee will be clearly identified on your invoice.
- Any chargeable services, such as trips, swimming lessons or clubs that you chose your child to take part in, will be invoiced to you.

Welsh Funded Term Dates for 2025/2026

Autumn Term 2025

September 1st – October 24th (8 weeks)
CCO ONLY - 1 week holiday applied to 27th October – 31st October
November 3rd – December 19th (7 weeks)
CCO ONLY – 2 weeks holiday applied to 22nd December – January 2nd

Spring Term 2026

January 5th – February 13th (6 weeks)
CCO ONLY - 1 week holiday applied to 16th February – 20th

February 23rd – March 27th (5 weeks)
CCO ONLY - 2 weeks holiday applied to March 30th – April 10th

Summer 2026

April 13th – May 22rd (5 weeks & 4 days – minus Bank Holiday on 4th May)
CCO ONLY – 1 week holiday applied to 25th May – 29th
June 1st – July 20th (7 weeks & 1 day)
CCO ONLY – 2 weeks holiday, applied to 21st July -August 3rd