



CONIFERS SCHOOL

Early Years Funding - Information for Parents





A Guide for Parents and Carers by Conifers School in association with the Family Information Service and West Sussex County Council.



Your Questions Answered:

- What is free entitlement (FE)?
- Is my child eligible?
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Early Years Free Entitlement

What is Free Entitlement?

Free Entitlement (FE) is 570 hours per year of flexible free childcare available to eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds. Free places are available at eligible childminders, pre-schools or day nurseries, known as settings.

Is my child eligible?

FE is for all 3 and 4 year old children attending an eligible childcare setting in West Sussex regardless of disability, additional needs or citizenship.

In addition, some 2 year olds can access funding if the family meet certain eligibility criteria. To check the 2 year old eligibility criteria and find out how to apply, please visit our website, or contact us.

Determining eligibility for the Free Entitlement

Use the table below to check when your child is of eligible age to access FE.

A child born between:	Will be eligible for the Free Entitlement from:
1st April and 31st August	1 September following their 3rd birthday (or 2nd birthday if eligible) until statutory school age.
1 September and 31 December	1 January following their 3rd birthday (or 2nd birthday if eligible) until statutory school age.
1 January and 31 March	1 April following their 3rd birthday (or 2nd birthday if eligible) until statutory school age.

In order for your chosen setting to claim the funding for your child's place, you will be asked to sign a Parent Declaration form and show proof of date of birth for your child. You must let the setting know if you intend to split the FE across two settings.

Can I see my settings policies?

All of our policies at Conifers School are available on our website or in the School Office for any parents, including Early Years, who would like to read them or have a copy of them. This includes, but is not limited to, our Terms and Conditions, Admissions Policy, Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding Policies, insurance documentations and Equal Opportunities Policies.

Is it really free?

The 15 free hours/570 hours per year is free. It does not have a monetary value and is not a voucher or parental subsidy. Therefore, settings must not deduct the amount of funding they receive from your invoice (top-ups). If you are planning to only access your child's free hours, settings must ensure that any of the below fees or conditions of access are optional and not compulsory. These include:

- Payment up front or refundable or non-refundable deposits;
- No requirement for a child to access additional hours on top of the free hours;
- No requirement for the child to access additional weeks on top of the funded weeks;
- No compulsory payments for a lunch provided by the provider;
- No compulsory payments for anything additional such as materials, snacks or drinks.

Settings can set their own rates for additional hours or services but they should let you know, in advance, if you will be expected to pay anything. Details of this are included within the Admissions Policy for Conifers School. For example, if you're accessing more than just the free hours you may be charged for meals. However, if you are only accessing free hours you have the option to provide a packed lunch instead. Packed lunches are only allowed in the main school (from Reception upwards) in exceptional circumstances as agreed by the Head. If you decide to provide a packed lunch for your child, and are claiming EY Funding, then you will be required to adhere to the Conifers School Health & Safety Policy.

What else do I need to know?

Think of the Universal Provision (15 free hours) entitlement as 570 hours per year. These hours can be stretched (see table below) across the whole year dependent on your chosen setting's availability and method of claiming. For example, not all settings will be able to stretch the FE over more than 38 weeks as they are open term-time only. At Conifers, we also accept Extended Provision (30 free hours).

Weeks per year	Hours per week	Total hours across the year
36	15/30	540/1080
37	15/30	555/1110
38	15/30	570/1140

If a setting has any planned closures during FE time (for example, due to holiday, In-Service Training (INSET) days, or bank holidays) then your FE hours will be made available at another time.

When can I use my hours?

The amount of FE hours that can be taken in a day will depend on the admissions policy of your chosen setting. However, the setting is required to work within the following national guidelines.

As a parent, you know your child best and should discuss your child's needs with the setting to help you decide how often your child should attend. A regular pattern of attendance is important to ensure your child's continued development.

At Conifers School, you are able to use your FE hours at the following times:

Monday, 13:30 to 15:30

Tuesday, 13:30 to 15:30

Wednesday, 13:30 to 15:30

Thursday, 13:30 to 15:30

Friday, 08:30 to 15:30

What is an enhanced provision charge?

Children aged three and four years old can claim their funded hours at Conifers School from the term after their third birthday. EYE funded hours can be claimed against all hours that our Pre-School is open, from 8.30am to 3.30pm during term time. Early Years Funding (EYE) hours are accepted up to 30 free hours. As our Pre-School pupils receive a range of lessons delivered by specialist teachers, including Languages, PE, outdoor learning, forest school and music, there will be an enhanced provision charge of £10 for each of these specialist sessions by children eligible for the EYE Grant during our core hours. If you wish to opt out of this enhanced provision fee then please let your child's teacher or the school office know and your child will be able to join in with another class activity.

How long is your notice period?

At Conifers School all families are required to give one full terms notice if they decide to leave the school. For children in Nursery and Pre-School the notice period is 4 weeks. These terms are laid out in our school Admissions Policy. It is important you adhere to the notice periods to avoid any additional or unexpected charges.

If you have adhered to their notice period then the setting will forward any unused funding to your new setting within West Sussex.

Can I increase FE hours part way through a term?

At Conifers, we will always follow the best settling process for your child. If you feel that you would like to gradually increase your child's hours over a period of weeks, or if you would like for them to start full-time straight away then we will work with you and your child to ensure that they are happy and settled at school.

If you choose not to take the full entitlement each week then you will only be able to increase your FE hours at the beginning of the following term.

Do the FE hours include lunch time?

If your FE hours include lunchtime then you will be charged for the meal itself, but not the time. However, if you only wish to access free hours the you have the option to provide a packed lunch for your child instead. If you would like to do this then please discuss this with our Head of Early Years who will be able to share the healthy eating and allergy policies for the school with you

What and when is headcount day?

It is important to know when Headcount Day is as your child may need to be in attendance by this date to access the free hours that term. Headcount days are usually in January, April and September and are when Conifers School confirms all FE children attending to West Sussex County Council. All children claiming FE during that term should be registered at the setting by the Headcount Day. If your child starts after this date, FE cannot be claimed for 3 and 4 year olds until the following term (unless in exceptional circumstances). 2 year olds are able to start at any point during a term.

Where can I go to for help or support?

You can contact us at **Conifers School** anytime if you have any questions at all and we are always happy to help. Here are some useful contact details at school:

Miss Katie Fownes, **School Bursar**
office@conifersschool.com

Mrs Tafflene Henderson, **Head of Early Years**
thenderson@conifersschool.com

Mrs Chloe Pestell, **Head of Admissions**
admissions@conifersschool.com

Miss Emma Fownes, **Head**
head@conifersschool.com

You will also find useful information on our school website -
www.conifersschool.com
or by calling the school office on **01730 813243**

You can also contact the **Family Information Service** at West Sussex County Council for further information and guidance about your family's needs:

Online: www.westsussex.gov.uk/freechildcare

Email: family.info.service@westsussex.gov.uk

Tel: 01243 777807

**West Sussex Family Information Service
Early Childhood Service
1st Floor, The Grange
County Hall, Chichester
West Sussex, PO19 1RG**

**Opening hours
Monday – Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm**