



LEWESTON
NURSERY

**Early Years
Funding Guide
2025-26**

What's available?



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Universal funded childcare

Available to all 3 and 4 year old children

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Supported 2 year old funding

Eligibility dependent

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Working families funding

(Eligibility Dependent - 9 months plus get 15 hours.) (Eligibility Dependent - 3 and 4 year olds get 30 hours). Funding is made up of two parts: 15 hours universal for all children plus an additional potential 15 extended dependent on individual family circumstances

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Tax free childcare vouchers

Eligibility dependent

Funded hours have expanded!

- As of September 2025, all eligible children aged from 9 months to school age have access to 30 hours of funded childcare.

Funded hours - what you need to know...



Universal Funded Childcare

All parents of 3 and 4 year-olds are entitled to the 15 hours funding from the term after your child's 3rd birthday and until they start school, you can get 570 hours of government-funded childcare a year.

It is known as the 15 hours funding since it relates to 15 hours of funded care a week for 38 weeks of the year (term-time).



Supported two year old funding

Some parents will be able to apply for 15 hours funding for 2 year-olds. If you are in receipt of certain benefits such as Income Support or Universal Credit, or your child has Disability Living Allowance or an education, health and care (EHC) plan, you may be able to get 15 funded hours for your child. You would need to speak to someone at your local council to set this up for you.



Working families funding

Children aged 9 months plus whose parents meet the eligibility criteria are able to claim 15 hours term time (570 hours per annum). 3 and 4 year olds may get the additional 15 hours if eligible. You must be working and earning at least the equivalent of 16 hours a week at the national living or minimum wage, but less than £100,000 a year. If you are a couple, then this applies to each of you – if one of you does not work, or one of you earns over £100,000, you will not be eligible.

How do I get it?

You need to apply for the working families funding through the government's website (see link at the end of this guide). Applying for working families funding childcare usually takes people around 20 minutes. You will need your National Insurance number (or your Unique Taxpayer Reference if you are self-employed). If you are a couple, you will need this information for each of you. If your application is successful, you will receive a code and we will require this when you complete a funding form.

Making it work for you...

Once you have made your claims with the government, you will be ready to tell us at Leweston about your eligibility. Each term, we must send out a new claim form for the term ahead and this form will ask for all the necessary information about your eligibility. This form will come out to you from Mrs Gillett, who collates all the forms as they are returned, and will chase up any that are outstanding. Without these forms we cannot legally claim any funding for you.

Once your form has been received, we will process a claim to County for all the correct amounts. Once County has confirmed the correct eligibility and total hours for you, we will then allocate the correct amount of funding for the term ahead against your account. Each term, County dictate the number of weeks that are to be funded, and the maximum number of hours that can be used in the period.

A total of 38 weeks' funding can be used annually, to mirror the number of weeks in a standard school year. That is 570 hours for children who receive 15 hours per week and 1140 for those who receive 30 hours. For children on a term-time only contract, this makes it very straightforward, as all the weeks that they attend will be funded. For children on an all-year round contract, it is a little more complicated.

Term time only	Termly stretch	Annual stretch
Your funding will not be spread over the full 49 weeks we are open. You just elect to receive funding for term-time weeks and you pay full bills in the holidays	This is our default spread, and all parents who are on an all-year-round contract will have their funding spread this way unless they inform us that they'd like to do it another way. When we are provided with the termly total number of hours that you are eligible for by County, we will then spread those fairly across the full number of actual weeks in the period. For example, in Autumn 2024 there were 14 funded weeks, making a universal total of 210 hours. There were actually 16 weeks in that period of time, so you would see 13.12 funded hours on your bill for that full time. During the summer term, this does mean that bills are a little higher. On average, around 13 weeks are funded, with 22 weeks of actual time for it to spread over. This means that there would be 8.86 hours of universal funding available each week.	In order to use this option, you must commit to the hours you are using for any September and then make no further changes for the year. The amount you are eligible for in the entire year is then divided by 12 and fairly allocated by County, making your deduction exactly the same each month. We rarely recommend this option, as the inability to make any changes for a full year make it challenging for young families, for whom things often need to change. You can only begin this in a September.

When do I apply?

For the purposes of funding, there are 3 terms each year:

Spring term begins on 1st January

Summer term begins on 1st April

Autumn term begins of 1st September

This never changes. You should apply for funding in the term before your child becomes eligible, as their funding begins the term after their birthday (or the term after they reach the age of 9 months). So, if your child turns 3 in February, they will become eligible for 3 and 4 year old funding from 1st April, so you need to claim before then. You will always receive a funding form for the term ahead from in plenty of time, and this can prompt you to claim with the government so you can provide us with your eligibility code.



What financial difference does it make?

The funding only covers the cost of childcare and not all the essentials and extras that make Leweston Nursery the most outstanding learning experience for your child. To ensure we give your child the best start in life, we'll ask you to pay for these. They include all the key essentials like food as well as all of the additional experiences that make our Nursery unique, such as our Forest School, yurt, wider facilities, grounds, specialist teaching, phonics provision and much more.

To simplify things, we charge for all these extra things in one simple voluntary charge, called a 'food funding charge' that remains for you to pay in each hour that you use funding.



The 'Food Funding Charge'

Our food funding charges are:

Term-time only - Under 2s No charge, 2-3 year olds £1 per hour, 3-4 year olds £3.05 per hour

All year-round - Under 2s No charge, 2-3 year olds 33p per hour, 3-4 year olds £2.40 per hour

This means that each funded hour deducts our hourly rate, minus this fee. For all-year round contracts that is £7.55 per hour, minus these fees, and for term-time only contracts that's £8.22 per hour, minus these fees. You can opt out of these payments, and attend on a 'care-only' basis if you wish.

The additional charges that we make for 'food and funding' are voluntary, meaning that you can 'opt out' of paying them.

At Leweston Nursery this means you can choose to attend on a 'funded-only' basis, meaning that you opt out of the additional voluntary charge per hour for consumables and extras.

It is important to note that the amount of government funding provided does not enable us to run Leweston Nursery in its current format. We are forced to charge an additional amount for consumables to ensure that we can continue to offer an outstanding provision.

At the moment, all children under 2 pay no extra for any hours as the government fund this at the same rate that an hour costs. We pass this straight on to parents so you can benefit from over a year of 15 hours totally free attendance at Nursery. This will increase from September 2025 to 30 hours of completely free attendance.

	2-3 years	3-4 years
Voluntary food funding charge	33p per hour (AYR) £1 per hour (TTO)	£2.40 per hour (AYR) £3.05 per hour
What if I opt out?	<p>If you opt out of this voluntary payment, we will need you to provide;</p> <p>Daily packed lunch, packed tea and 2 x snacks for your child Cookery ingredients for your child – 1 x per fortnight</p> <p>1 x glue stick, 1 x set of colouring pencils, 1 x ream of A4 paper, 3 x baby wipes termly Your child will not be able to take part in any enhanced activities, such as sports in the sports hall or special events. This is because the government funding covers basic care only. We will arrange for your child to join another age group when these activities take place.</p>	<p>If you opt out of this voluntary charge, we will need you to provide:</p> <p>Daily packed lunch, packed tea and 2 x snacks for your child Cookery ingredients for your child – 1 x per fortnight 1 x glue stick, 1 x set of colouring pencils, 1 x ream of A4 paper, 3 x baby wipes termly</p> <p>Your child will only be able to access basic care, so will be unable to attend the following extra provisions (we will accommodate your child with another age group during these times):</p> <p>Forest School Spanish PE sessions Swimming lessons Music</p>

So, how much will it cost?

We now have flat hourly rates to make it much easier for you to calculate what you will pay. Each term you need to know how many hours funding you are entitled to and this will enable you to work out what you will save on your bill. It is important to remember that funding is only for 38 weeks of the year, so your saving will vary if you are on an all-year round contract.

	Under 2	2-3 years	3-4 years
Term time only funded hour saving	£8.22	£7.22	£5.17
All-year round funded hour saving	£7.55	£7.22	£5.17

Let's look at some examples

Example 1 - Term time only, 3 year old

Jamie is 3 and he attends Nursery for 3 days per week and is eligible for 30 hours funding. Each day is 9 hours long, so they can use 27 funded hours per week for 38 weeks, so a total of 1026 hours over the course of the year. As Jamie attends term-time only all of his weeks in Nursery are funded. 27 hours would normally cost £221.94, but the funding will result in a deduction of £139.59 per week. His remaining bill would be £82.35.



Examples - continued

Example 2 - Term time only, 1 year old

Bella is 1.5 and she attends Nursery for 2 days per week and is eligible for 15 hours funding. Each day is 9 hours long, so they can use funding for a day and a half each week. They use 15 funded hours per week for 38 weeks, so a total of 570 hours over the course of the year. As Bella attends term-time only all of her weeks in Nursery are funded. 18 hours/2 days would normally cost £147.96, but the funding will result in a deduction of £123.30 per week. Her remaining bill would be £22.66.

Example 3 - All year round, 2 year old

Gemma is 2.5 and she attends Nursery for 2 days per week and is eligible for 15 hours funding. Each day is 9 hours long, so they can use funding for a day and a half each week. They use 15 funded hours per week for 38 weeks, so a total of 570 hours over the course of the year. However, Gemma attends all-year-round so not all her Nursery weeks are funded. This term, 12 weeks are funded, but Gemma will be here for 15 weeks. She is eligible for 12 weeks of funding, so 180 hours, which is split evenly across the 15 weeks, making for a reduction of 12 funded hours per week. 18 hours/2 days would normally cost £135.90, but the funding will result in a deduction of £86.64 per week. Her remaining bill would be £49.26.

Example 4 - All year round, 1 year old

Brynn is 1.5 and he attends Nursery for 3 days per week and is eligible for 15 hours funding. Each day is 9 hours long, so they can use funding for a day and a half each week. They use 15 funded hours per week for 38 weeks, so a total of 570 hours over the course of the year. However, Brynn attends all-year-round so not all his Nursery weeks are funded. This is the summer term, so 14 weeks are funded, but Brynn will be here for 22 weeks. He is eligible for 14 weeks of funding, so 210 hours, which is split evenly across the 22 weeks, making for a reduction of 9.5 funded hours per week. 27 hours/3 days would normally cost £203.85 , but the funding will result in a deduction of £67.95 per week. His remaining bill would be £135.90.

Example 5 - All year round, 3 year old

Gwen is nearly 4 and she attends Nursery for 5 days per week and is eligible for 30 hours funding. Each day is 9 hours long, so they can use funding for 3 and a bit days each week. They use 30 funded hours per week for 38 weeks, so a total of 1140 hours over the course of the year. However, Gwen attends all-year-round so not all her Nursery weeks are funded. This term, 11 weeks are funded, but Gwen will be here for 13 weeks. She is eligible for 11 weeks of funding, so 330 hours, which is split evenly across the 13 weeks, making for a reduction of 25.4 funded hours per week. 5 days would normally cost £340, but the funding will result in a deduction of £131.31 per week. His remaining bill would be £208.69.

Tax Free Childcare

Am I eligible?

The rules for tax free childcare are similar to those of the 30 hours funding, for example you (and your partner) need to be working and earning more than national minimum wage but less than £100,000 a year.

Does Leweston accept tax free childcare?

Yes, we do. In order to accept payment from a tax-free childcare account, a setting must be registered with Ofsted. We are an Ofsted registered, outstanding setting, so can accept these funds.

How does it work?

You open an online account through the government website which you use to pay for your childcare. For every 80p you pay in, the government will top up an extra 20p. So, for every pound you pay for your childcare, you are getting a 20% contribution from the government: this is equivalent of the tax most people pay - 20% - which is how the scheme got its name. The government will top up the account with 20% of childcare costs, up to a total of £10,000 - the equivalent of up to £2,000 support per child, per year (or £4,000 for disabled children). The scheme covers all your children, including adopted children, provided they live with you and are under the age of 12 years, (or 17 for children with disabilities).

How do I apply?

If you have checked your eligibility and have decided that the tax-free childcare scheme is right for you and your family, you can apply in about 20 minutes. You will need your NI number (or, if you are self-employed, your Unique Taxpayer Reference) and, if you have a partner, you will need theirs too.

What about childcare vouchers?

The tax free childcare scheme was set up by the government to replace the Childcare Vouchers you could get from your employer. If you joined the Childcare Voucher scheme before 2018 you can continue to use it, but you cannot use both schemes at the same time.

FAQS

Where do I go to claim funding?

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-childcare-if-youre-working>

Can I use funding on additional ad-hoc sessions?

No. Unfortunately the funding received is set in advance, so no changes can be made to a term once it has begun, and that includes ad-hoc sessions.

What if my child only doesn't use all their funding?

Unfortunately, you can only claim for funding on the sessions you have booked in at the start of a term, and not for any ad-hoc or extra holiday sessions. This means that, if you only do a couple of sessions a week and can only make use of 12 hours funding, the remaining funding will just go unclaimed.

When does the funding stop?

Children are eligible for funding up to and including the term in which they turn five. If your child stays at Leweston in Reception, the funding can be deducted from the school fees – please contact our admissions team for more information about this. If your child transfers to a state primary school, the funding will be automatically applied to them.

How much funding can I use each day?

At Leweston you can use a maximum of 9 hours funding per day (for 38 weeks per year), or 4 hours per session, between the hours of 8am and 5pm.

Do you do 'Funded Only' places?

You can choose to attend on a 'funded only' basis, by opting out of the voluntary food funding charge. If you opt out, there are several things you will need to provide for your child, and that they won't be able to participate in. You'll be able to opt out of the voluntary charge on your acceptance form when your child joins us.