



**Achieving for Children Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead  
3 & 4 Year Old Universal Entitlement and Working Parents  
Entitlement for Children 9 Months plus, 2 Years and 3 & 4 Years  
Information for Parents/ Carers 2026-27**

All children aged 3 & 4 are entitled to up to 15 hours a week (term-time, maximum 38 weeks per year) of funded hours of early learning and childcare - equivalent to a maximum of 570 hours per year. This is called the 3 & 4 Year Old Universal Entitlement.

Children become eligible for the 3 & 4 Year Old Entitlement at the start of the school term after the term in which they turn 3, and the entitlement lasts up until the end of the term in which they turn 5 (the term of their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday), as long as they are attending an Early Years Provider, and entry to maintained school Reception has been deferred.

A child must attend school the term after they turn 5 (Statutory School Age).

There is an additional 15 hours per week term-time (maximum 38 weeks per year) for eligible families of 3 & 4 Year Old children – this is called the 3 & 4 Year Old Working Parents Entitlement (previously referred to as the 3 & 4 Year Old Extended Entitlement).

Children first become eligible for the 3 & 4 Year Old entitlement from the start of the term after the term in which they turn 3 –

*Children turning 3 between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> March become eligible from the start of the subsequent summer term.*

*Children turning 3 between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> August become eligible from the start of the subsequent autumn term.*

*Children turning 3 between 1<sup>st</sup> September and 31<sup>st</sup> December become eligible from the start of the subsequent spring term.*

For the Working Parents Entitlement for both children aged 9 months to 2 years and children aged 2 years the offer is a maximum of 30 funded hours per week term-time (maximum 38 weeks per year) – 1140 hours per year.

Eligible parents of children aged 2 Years can start accessing the Working Parents Entitlement from the start of the term after the term in which their child turns 2 –

*Children turning 2 between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> March become eligible from the start of the subsequent summer term.*

*Children turning 2 between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> August become eligible from the start of the subsequent autumn term.*

*Children turning 2 between 1<sup>st</sup> September and 31<sup>st</sup> December become eligible from the start of the subsequent spring term.*

Eligible parents of children aged 9 Months plus to 2 Years can start accessing the Working Parents Entitlement from the start of the term after the term in which their child turns 9 months -

*Children turning 9 Months between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 31<sup>st</sup> March become eligible from the start of the subsequent summer term.*

*Children turning 9 Months between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> August become eligible from the start of the subsequent autumn term.*

*Children turning 9 Months between 1<sup>st</sup> September and 31<sup>st</sup> December become eligible from the start of the subsequent spring term.*

**The dates are set by the DfE (Department for Education) and cannot be changed by RBWM AfC or the childcare provider.**

Parents do not have to apply for the 3 & Year Old Universal Entitlement – this is an automatic entitlement once the child is age-eligible.

For all elements of the Working Parents Entitlements – 9 Months plus, 2 Year Old and 3 & 4 Year Old – parents must meet the eligibility criteria and apply for an Eligibility Code at the appropriate time. Information regarding the Working Parents Entitlements and how to apply can be found at [Homepage | Best Start in Life](#)

Parents must apply for an Eligibility Code by the end of the term preceding the term in which they wish to start accessing the entitlement –

*For the spring term, parents must apply by the preceding 31<sup>st</sup> December.*

*For the summer term, parents must apply by the preceding 31<sup>st</sup> March.*

*For the autumn term, parents must apply by the preceding 31<sup>st</sup> August.*

The Eligibility Code must be given to your chosen childcare provider for them to check the code and confirm that it is valid for the term in which you wish to access the entitlement. Providers should not offer the Working Parents Entitlement unless they have seen and validated an Eligibility Code and confirmed that it is valid for the term in which parents wish to access the entitlement.

Parents must reconfirm their eligibility to the entitlement by revalidating the code by the valid-to-date of the code – a code usually has a validity of around 3 months.

Children cannot start accessing a Working Parents Entitlement place at a new provider in a new term if the valid-to date of the code has passed (the valid-to date is in the previous term).

## **Eligibility Dates for 3 & 4 Year-Old Universal Entitlement and Working Parents Entitlements**

### **9 Months plus to 2 Years Working Parents Entitlement –**

Summer term 2026 – for children who have turned 9 months by 31.03.26

Autumn term 2026 – for children who have turned 9 months by 31.08.26

Spring term 2027 – for children who have turned 9 months by 31.12.26

Summer term 2027 – for children who have turned 9 months by 31.03.27

### **2 Year Old Working Parents Entitlement –**

Summer term 2026 – for children who have turned 2 by 31.03.26

Autumn term 2026 – for children who have turned 2 by 31.08.26

Spring term 2027 – for children who have turned 2 by 31.12.26

Summer term 2027 – for children who have turned 2 by 31.03.27

### 3 & 4 Year Old Children - Universal Entitlement and Working Parents Entitlement (if eligible)

Child's Date of Birth/ age	Summer Term 2026	Autumn Term 2026	Spring Term 2027	Summer Term 2027
01/04/21 to 31/08/21	Eligible 4 Year Old (last term - child is 5 this term)	Statutory School Age	Statutory School Age	Statutory School Age
01/09/21 to 31/12/21	Eligible 4 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old (last term - child is 5 this term)	Statutory School Age	Statutory School Age
01/01/22 to 31/03/22	Eligible 4 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old (last term - child is 5 this term)	Statutory School Age
01/04/22 to 31/08/22	Eligible 3 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old (last term - child is 5 this term)
01/09/22 to 31/12/22	Eligible 3 Year Old	Eligible 3 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old
01/01/23 to 31/03/23	Eligible 3 Year Old - First term child is eligible	Eligible 3 Year Old	Eligible 3 Year Old	Eligible 4 Year Old
01/04/23 to 31/08/23	Not eligible	Eligible 3 Year Old - First term child is eligible	Eligible 3 Year Old	Eligible 3 Year Old
01/09/23 to 31/12/23	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible 3 Year Old - First term child is eligible	Eligible 3 Year Old
01/01/24 to 31/03/24	Not eligible	Not eligible	Not eligible	Eligible 3 Year Old – First term child is eligible

#### Where can a child access their place?

Children can access their funded place at a variety of childcare providers – these include:-

- **Local Authority Maintained Nursery Schools or Nursery Class** – We have some standalone nursery schools in the borough, and a number of our first, infant and primary schools have a nursery class. Attendance at a nursery school/nursery class does not guarantee a place for your child in that school
- **Pre-School Provider** – Normally these open for part of the day, possibly mornings or afternoons and are open term time. These can be privately run or charities run by a committee
- **Day Care (Nursery) Provider** – A private business, usually open around 8am to 6pm, up to 52 weeks a year
- **Independent School Nursery** – A nursery class in an independent school
- **Childminders** – a number of our childminders are registered to offer funded places

The majority of the providers and some childminders in the borough offer the funded entitlement hours. A couple of the Independent School nurseries are not registered for Early Education Funding. You can obtain details from the providers themselves.

To be eligible to offer parents the funded entitlement, childcare providers must be approved by the Early Years Team. They must offer high quality care and meet the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The majority of childcare providers in RBWM have a current good or outstanding Ofsted (or new equivalent grading) rating or Independent Schools Inspectorate rating. All childcare providers, irrespective of their Ofsted/ ISA rating, are only allowed to continue to offer funded childcare places, if the Early Years Team is satisfied, they offer childcare of sufficiently high quality.

### **When will a child be able to access their Funded Entitlement hours?**

Many providers choose to offer their funded entitlement in blocks of three or six hours, 5 days a week; some may offer 5/10 hours a day, 3 days a week. The funded entitlement hours can be taken between 6am and 8pm, and no funded entitlement session can be longer than 10 hours per day.

Providers can offer the funded entitlement hours over 38 term-time weeks (maximum 15/30 hours per week). Providers open all year can spread ('stretch') the funded entitlement hours over the weeks they are open, which gives parents fewer hours per week over more weeks of the year e.g. a provider open 52 weeks could offer parents approximately 11 Universal or Extended funded entitlement hours per week.

The year is divided into 3 terms or funding periods (spring, summer and autumn). Each term/ period has a maximum number of funded hours dependent on the number of weeks in the term/ period and which method (term time or stretched) the provider has adopted.

Childcare providers can choose for themselves when/ how they offer the funded entitlement hours.

Parents may not be able to access all or any of their funded entitlement hours at their first choice of provider. Parents can access their funded entitlement hours across a maximum of two childcare providers in one day. Parents will need to speak to providers individually to find out if and when they have available sessions. Individual providers manage their own waiting lists, admissions and offers of places.

### **What will parents have to pay for?**

Early Education Funding is intended to deliver 15 or 30 hours a week term-time (570/1140 hours per year) of free, high-quality, flexible early learning and childcare. It is not intended to cover the cost of meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional services. Providers may make additional optional charges for meals, snacks, consumables, trips and specialist tuition as part of a funded entitlement place. Parents should speak to the childcare provider directly to find out what they offer, and parents should check with them in advance of their child starting what optional extras they may be asked to pay for. All childcare providers should communicate any optional charges and fees clearly with parents. Invoices and receipts should be clear, transparent and itemised, allowing parents to see that they have received their child's funded entitlement completely free of charge and understand optional fees and charges paid for additional hours or services. Invoices and receipts should include the provider's full details so that they can be identified as coming from a specific provider.

If parents only want to take up the funded entitlement hours, and no extra hours or any of the additional optional services, they need to check with the provider beforehand. Providers cannot make it a condition that families have to take up additional fee-paying hours to be able to access the funded hours. Please note that some providers only have a limited number of places for children who just want to

take up their funded entitlement hours (and nothing else), so parents should find a provider who can meet their needs.

### **What will parents have to sign?**

The childcare provider should ask parents to sign an agreement prior to their child taking up a place, which should detail all the provider's terms and conditions and charges. Parents should check this carefully before signing, to ensure that they are clear about the sessions being offered, any optional extra charges/ fees and any notice period.

Parents will also be asked to sign and complete a Parent Declaration Form when the provider starts claiming the Early Education Funding for a child; parents will be asked for proof of a child's date of birth.

### **Can Early Education Funding be claimed in another Local Authority?**

Yes – the childcare provider will still claim the Early Education Funding. Parents should check with the childcare provider their Local Authority's policy for funding, as it may differ from the RBWM AfC one. Parents can also split the funded entitlement between 2 providers in different local authorities, but this must not exceed the 15/30 hours maximum per week (term-time), 570/1140 hours per year, and parents must communicate to both providers how they wish to split the entitlement, and sign and date accordingly on a parent form at each setting.

### **How / when the funding is claimed?**

Childcare providers claim the funding from the local authority each term. The funding is paid directly to the childcare provider. It is used by the childcare provider to cover the cost to them of providing the funded entitlement hours in terms of staffing, resources, running costs etc. Funding does not go directly to parents.

The childcare provider submits funding claims by the agreed dates each term.

### **Starting School**

All children can start school in the September of the academic year in which they turn five i.e. they start school in the September following their fourth birthday.

However, children do not legally have to start school until the beginning of the school term following their fifth birthday. Parents can choose to defer the time their child starts school if they wish. If parents defer their child's start date at school, the child continues to be eligible for Early Education Funding at an Early Years provision. Once the child starts/ is registered at maintained school, they are no longer able to access Early Education Funding.

If you wish to discuss any issues regarding your child's entry into school, please contact the School Admissions Team: -

[rbwm.admissions@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:rbwm.admissions@achievingforchildren.org.uk)

If parents have any questions or need advice, in the first instance please speak to your childcare provider.

If you need further help, please email the Early Years Team at: -

[rbwm.earlyyears-childcare@achievingforchildren.org.uk](mailto:rbwm.earlyyears-childcare@achievingforchildren.org.uk)