

# FUNDING AND FEES POLICY (March 2024)

## Policy statement

"The diversity of individual and communities is valued and respected. No child or family is discriminated against". EYFS, DfES, 2008

Riding Mill Outdoor Preschool (RMOP) believes every child should be able to access a preschool place regardless of economic background, and that the preschool is a valuable resource to the local community.

RMOP aims to provide a suitable method of financing the running of a quality early years setting, whilst acknowledging that the first years of a child's life can be the most financially draining on a family.

## Procedures

Under the constitution adopted by the RMOP committee, it has responsibility for setting the levels of charges for a session of attendance at the preschool. As far as possible the fees to be charged will be kept to a minimum, whilst remaining competitive within the local market and helping to maintain RMOP as a viable concern.

Local authority funded places (Early Years Funding - EYF) are available under the terms of Northumberland County Council. The local authority provides 15 hours per week of your 3 year old's preschool fees, starting in the term following their third birthday. Some families are eligible for an additional 15 hours (30 hours total). From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours childcare support. It is anticipated that from September 2025, eligible working parents with a child from 9 months old up to school age will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare a week.

RMOP charges for excess hours not covered by the Early Years Funding - currently this is £6.00 per hour (under 3s) or £5.50 per hour (over 3s). From April 2024 this will increase to £7.00 per hour (under 3s) and £6.00 per hour (over 3s). More information on funding eligibility is available on our website: [www.rmop.co.uk](http://www.rmop.co.uk)

A session at RMOP is either 4 hours (morning 9.00am-1.00pm) or 6 hours (full day). Sessions can only be claimed for when RMOP is open (i.e. during term time). It is possible to split funded hours (15/30) between two or more preschool provisions, providing no more than the entitled hours are claimed for in any one week. It is up to parents/carers how to divide funding between settings. If your child attends a setting outside Northumberland, please DOUBLE CHECK with them on their policy. In the event that you use both core and wraparound provisions at RMOP, any EYF you are entitled to will be used towards RMOP core provision first (9.00am - 3.00pm). If there are any surplus hours available from your entitlement, you can then opt to use them for wraparound hours. Please see our Terms and Conditions document for further information.

As part of the registration process, parents/carers will be asked to sign a childcare agreement, which sets out the terms for payment of fees and for claiming funding, as well as confirming the hours required.

### **Payment of fees**

If you are not entitled to EYF (or booking extra hours outside the EYF funded entitlement) you will be responsible for paying our fees. Non-EYF Payments can be made by:

- Online direct to our bank account - preferred option - details are included on every invoice.
- Employer Childcare Voucher
- Government Tax Free Childcare Scheme

### **Please note we do not accept cash for fee payments**

Fees continue to be payable if a child is absent for a short time. In cases of prolonged absence, parents/carers should consult the committee about fee payment. If you choose to take family holidays during term time, fees will continue to be payable. Children will not be permitted to take extra sessions in lieu, if sessions are missed due to sickness or holidays. Each child's attendance at RMOP is conditional upon continued payment of any necessary fees, which can, by arrangement, be paid by instalments.

If you require regular 'Scurries' wraparound sessions each week, and would like to secure a space for your child please let the RMOP Leader know when you confirm your required sessions for the term. You will then be invoiced for these at the start of the term. Note that these regular booked Scurries sessions will be considered part of your child's core hours and therefore all fees are payable regardless of absence.

Invoices are issued at the beginning of each term and payment is required in full within 7 working days of receipt. Invoices that are not paid in full within this period will incur an automatic £10 late payment charge. Payments overdue for more than one month are subject to interest at 10%, calculated and payable on a daily basis until full payment is made, unless weekly payments have been organised. If we must use formal proceedings to recover the debt, we will also recover court fees and costs for recovery.

Where families have financial difficulties making fee payments, the committee will work together with the parents/carers to determine a suitable payment schedule. The details of these discussions and consequent arrangements will remain confidential at all times and individual to families' circumstances. Such arrangements will not be seen to be a general alteration of the terms of the contract and will remain in force for as long as the circumstances remain the same.

### **Other payments**

We ask for a voluntary contribution from parents/carers of £1 (AM session) or £2 (FULL DAY session) per day their child attends. This is to contribute to snack, cooking activities and other costs. This is added to termly invoices and can be paid via BACS at parent/carer's convenience.

## **Late collection**

All children **MUST** be collected on time. We ask parents/carers to arrive 5 minutes before the end of session in order that children leave the preschool on time.

If parents/carers think they may be late they should contact RMOP as soon as possible.

Late collections result in increased staff costs so if parents/carers are late in collecting their child they may be charged. Please see our website for our late collection charges. Persistent late collection may be considered a breach of the RMOP terms and conditions and may result in RMOP withdrawing their services.

If we have not heard from a parent/carer, or managed to contact any emergency contacts, after half an hour, we will contact social services and start the process by which the child will be placed into their care.

**Please be aware that by law, 2 adults need to be present with your child whilst at preschool. It may not be possible for RMOP to fulfil this requirement after the end of the session. So whilst we will try to keep 2 staff members available for half an hour, it may be that we are unable to do so and will need to contact social services earlier.**