



Birch Parents Handbook 2024-2025





Welcome to Caterpillars Pre-school, Birch. This parent handbook has been compiled to provide you with all the information you may need whilst your child is at Caterpillars.

General Information

Our telephone number:

079840 857592. This is a mobile number as we don't have a fixed telephone line into the Pre-school. You may leave a message or send a text and someone will return your call as soon as possible if required.

Email: birch@caterpillarspreschool.org

Website: www.caterpillarspreschool.org

Find us on Facebook, look for: Caterpillars Pre-School in Birch and click on Like.

Our Address:

Caterpillars Preschool (Birch)
Birch C of E School
School Hill
Birch
Colchester
CO2 0LZ

Session times and fees

Caterpillars is open for 38 weeks a year in line with local school term dates. Term dates will be notified to all parents and are available on our website.

Sessions run Monday to Thursday from 9.00 AM and 12.30 PM and/or 9:00 AM– 2:45 PM. (over 3's only)

We would urge all parents to drop off and collect their child at the correct time. Late drop off does lead to disruption for the other children. Late collections will be charged in line with our late collection policy.

Fees are charged on a per session basis but based on the following hourly rates;

- Under 3's – £8.10 per hour
- Over 3's - £6.75 per hour

All non-funded hours will be invoiced electronically on a half termly basis.

The under 3-year-old rate (£8.10) will be charged until the term after your child turns 3.

Snack time:

Snack time is an important part of the Caterpillars morning sessions. As well as being a social activity for the children to sit together and eat, it also enables the children to get involved in the preparation, cutting, spreading etc which helps develop their independence and fine motor skills as well as providing opportunities to try a variety of foods in a shared experience with their friends.

Caterpillars will provide your child with a healthy daily snack. The snacks will be varied and we also link the food choices in with any festivals or celebrations we are learning about throughout the year.

A charge for each morning session your child attends will be charged as part of the daily consumables charge and will be invoiced electronically on a half term basis the same as the invoices for fees.

Funding:

Parents can claim the **15 hours** a week of universal government funding for their child from the start of the full new term (Autumn, Spring, Summer) after their 3rd Birthday.

Working parents of children over the age of 3 can also be entitled to a further 15 hours of funding, making a total of up to 30 hours a week from the term after your child turns 3.

From April 2024, working Parents of children under the age of 3 can also claim up to 15 hours a week of funding.

If you qualify for funding, Parents will be asked to complete a funding form when your child joins and then this will be returned to you to update for each subsequent term. Once submitted, the funding form covers the whole of that term and additional days/hours cannot be claimed for during that term after what Essex County Council refer to as the 'headcount date' (usually around the 19th of the month in which the term starts).

Please visit www.childcarechoices.gov.uk to find out more about funding for your child's preschool hours and how to register for either the 2 year old funding or the 30 hours funding for children over the age of 3.

For those parents that qualified for the scheme, we do accept childcare vouchers as a means of paying for Caterpillars fees.

Changes to Agreed Sessions & Notice periods

If you need to reduce the number of sessions your child attends or find that their place is no longer required then 4 weeks' term time notice is required. If 4 weeks' term time notice is not given then the fees for the sessions your child would have attended remain payable for the duration of the notice period.

If your child receives funding and you wish to increase your child's hours after the 'headcount' date, then any additional hours your child attends would have to be paid for until the start of the next terms funding

Parents and Carers

We welcome your support and contributions throughout your child's time at Caterpillars. Parents are invited to come in to watch sports day and other craft and social activities throughout the year.

Learning Journey viewing

At the end of each term we welcome parents/carers to view their child's learning journey and report. Parents can see what their child has been doing at Caterpillars, view their progress and be involved with their next steps of learning. You can then take your child's learning journey home to share with your family and we value any comments made on the Learning journey report.

Communication to Parents

Communication is a two-way process and we try to provide as much information to parents/carers whilst giving you an opportunity to communicate with us.

Facebook/Website

We have lots of information on our Facebook page and on our website – www.caterpillarspreschool.org

Please note Facebook has their own terms and conditions of use.

Parents Information Point

We have lots of information available for our Parents at the entrance to our setting. This area is updated with information on key person groups, library days and information from other agencies as well as committee contact information. We regularly email information to parents also.

A list is on display to show you who your child's key person is. We are happy to discuss concerns or other issues with you throughout your child's time at Caterpillars.

Supporting Caterpillars

Caterpillars is a registered charity and is therefore run by an elected parent management committee. Without parents volunteering to be part of the committee, Caterpillars cannot run so we are always grateful to parents that can spare the time to join the committee.

The committee meets every term to discuss policies, fundraising and any other issues related to the running of the Pre-school.

Fundraising

As a registered not-for-profit charity, we rely on donations and fundraising to pay for new and updated resources for the children and are always on the lookout for new fundraising ideas.

Throughout the year, we may be in need of extra support from parents, carer, grandparent or friends to spare a few hours to help run our coffee mornings, fete and other fundraising events.

Any help you can give is greatly appreciated.

Your Child's time with us

Whilst with us, your child's key person will be following your child's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The Key person observes this progress through small observations and taking photographs and collates this to make your child's Learning Journey. We very much value your input into your child's Learning Journey by bringing in photos of home or special times in your child's life and sharing with us milestones in your child's learning and development.

The EYFS curriculum consists of seven areas. There are 3 Prime area and 4 specific areas;

Prime Areas

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language, Listening and Attention
- Physical Development

Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

The characteristics of Effective Learning describe behaviours used in order for children to learn.

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creative and Critical Thinking

The Characteristics of Effective Learning and the Prime areas and Specific areas of learning and development are all interconnected

Whilst with us we encourage good manners, kindness and respect to do this we have simple rules which we share and use daily these are:

- Walking indoors
- Washing hands
- Sharing
- Listening to each other
- Being kind to others.

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

We welcome all children into our setting: your child may already have been identified as having Special Educational Needs or there may be something we may pick up on in the setting with our daily observations of your child. This could be from slight speech delay to signs of Autism. In our setting we have a special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) she is a highly trained member of the staffing team who alongside her childcare qualification has been on extra Special Educational Needs courses. For full details of the services we offer please feel free to look at our document Local Offer which can be found on our Website and we have paper copies in pre-school.

Child Development norms

The 2 ½ year old should:

- Combine 2 and 3 words in a sentence
- Name common pictures
- Use past tense and plurals in speech
- Follow new commands
- Know “big” and “little”
- Begin to understand action words
- Use “p,b,w,n” and “m” in words

The 3 year old should:

- Use sentences of 3 to 4 words
- Have vocabulary of 300 – 1,000 words
- Be able to tell a story or idea
- Count to 3
- Ask simple questions
- Consistently say “t,d”, and starting to use “f” in words
- Know “in, on” and “under”
- Understand “what, where” and “how many?” questions

The 4 year old should:

- Use sentences of 3 to 5 words
- Begin to use complex sentences
- Use contractions such as “it’s” or “there’s”
- Ask “who, why” and “how” questions
- Be understood 90 – 100% of the time
- Consistently say “k,g,y” and starting to use “s” and “sh”
- Understand “in front” and “in back of”
- Follow instructions with 3 parts

Please remember all children are individuals who learn at their own pace, if you have any concerns or would like more information about child development please do not hesitate to talk to your child’s key person.

Frequently Asked Questions

Signing in

Currently, a member of staff will sign your child in and out as they enter and exit the premises.

My child is unable to attend today what should I do?

If your child is unable to attend a session for any reason, we would appreciate you contacting Caterpillars on their mobile 079840 857592. A text message or WhatsApp is acceptable.

It is important that any child suffering from diarrhoea or sickness should be kept away from pre-school for at least **48 hours** after the last bout. Any child suffering from contagious infection should not be brought to Caterpillars. Please inform us of anything that we can inform other parents to be aware of i.e. Chicken Pox, head lice. We will of course maintain confidentiality in such cases but as you can appreciate the spread of such outbreak can be minimised if parents are aware.

I am unable to collect my child:

If for any reason you are not able to collect your child and someone else will be collecting them on your behalf, please let Caterpillar's know either at drop off or during the course of the morning. The person will need to be able to use the correct password as identified on your admission form.

What happens during the day?

During the day we have free flowing indoor and outdoor play in all weathers! We have a broad range of activities in both areas. There will be a rolling snack where the children can come and have snack when they are ready. We all join in with tidying and get ready to go home.

Do I need to provide a Snack?

No, you do not need to provide a snack as we will provide a healthy snack for child. Snack is a wonderful social experience where all 7 areas of learning are supported. Children use China plates, glass bowls, cutlery, glasses to drink from and glass jugs to pour their milk or water from.

What should my child wear to each session?

Please send your child in suitable clothing – we do provide aprons but cannot guarantee that clothes will stay clean! As much as possible, children need to be able to manage their clothes – pushing up sleeves to wash their hands or managing at the toilet – difficult fastenings etc. make it frustrating for a child learning to become independent. Shoes should be easy enough for your child to remove and replace when necessary and appropriate for running, climbing etc. No laces please.

Caterpillars uniform is advisable, but not compulsory. Wearing the uniform not only helps the children feel part of the Caterpillars community but also helps prevent home clothes becoming damaged

We use the outdoor area throughout the year. We recommend wellies and waterproof warm coats for winter, sun hats and sun cream in the summer. We do have sets of waterproofs and wellies should your child come to Pre-school without them.

How will I be billed for my child's fees?

Invoices are emailed out to parents every half term and payment is requested within 21 days. Please ensure that the setting has the correct email address for you. All fees, including for consumables (including snack) are required to be paid electronically and bank details are included on the invoice.

As a charity, Caterpillars relies on prompt payment of fees in order to continue its good work. Our policy on non-payment of fees can be viewed on request and is available on our website.

If you have any difficulties in making payments, please contact a member of Caterpillars staff as early as possible. All conversations regarding finance are kept confidential.

How do I order Caterpillars uniform?

We do have Caterpillars t-shirts, jumpers and book bags available for sale from the main desk.

- T-shirts - £6.50
- Jumpers - £12.00
- Book bags – £7.50

New starter packs are £18.00 each. This includes a t-shirt, book bag and a comprehensive folder of information leaflets for parents

For £30, this starter pack can include a Caterpillars Jumper.

Do you ever have to close at short notice?

In very rare occasions that we are not able to open, for example due to snow, lack of heating or staff sickness every effort will be made to contact you prior to your arrival at Caterpillars and we will also text the number you have provided us with. There may be some occasions where we will not be able to contact you in advance and we have to notify you on arrival.

My child has developed an allergy?

It is important that we are aware of an allergy or illness following completion of your admission forms. Full details should be made in writing along with appropriate medical information (if required) to ensure any relevant forms and care plans can be completed.

My child needs to take medication whilst at Caterpillars:

We can only give necessary prescribed medicines providing the relevant consent forms have been completed and the manager is satisfied that the relevant knowledge/training is in place. All medication should be clearly labelled and handed to a member of staff.

I want to increase/reduce my child's sessions:

Please speak to the Pre-school Manager about increasing the number of sessions for your child and they will be able to advise if there is availability.

If you want to reduce the number of sessions for your child or you are leaving Caterpillars, then 4 weeks- terms time notice in writing must be sent to Caterpillars before the end of the current half term.

Who do I speak to about my child?

Your child will be assigned a Key person. This member of staff will work closely with your child, observing and supporting them daily. The Key person takes observational pictures for your child's Learning Journey book. At the end of term all the observations are put together in the book along with a written learning journey report based on the observations. This will be available for you to look at, write any comments and sign to say that you have read it.

The learning journey belongs to the child and their family.

I have an issue and I want to discuss this further:

We hope your child enjoys their time at Caterpillars Preschool but if you have any problems, please do not hesitate to speak to your child's key person. If you are unable to do this then please speak to the Manager, or any member of the Caterpillars Management Committee. For your information a brief outline of our complaints policy is contained at the back of this book.

Our Staff:

The team below are currently employed at Caterpillars Pre-school, Birch, however changes may occur within teams as staff may leave and new staff join. We communicate all changes to the team as they happen to minimise any disruption to the children.

You can review our team's qualifications and certificates in the Certificate Files which are on the wall by the entrance door.

<p>Chrystal Birch Manager SENDCO</p> <p>First Aider Lead Safeguarding Health & Safety Food Hygiene</p>	<p>Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education</p> <p>Chrystal has worked in Childcare since 1991. Chrystal worked in a nursery before joining the Birch team as the Assistant Manager in September 2010. Chrystal took on the Managers role in September 2013.</p> <p>Chrystal completed the level 3 award in the role of Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) in 2016</p> <p>Chrystal's SENCO role makes her responsible for; Supporting children and the parents/carers of children with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) If you have concerns regarding SEND or if you wish to talk to someone about your child's development, please speak to your child's key person or Chrystal.</p>
<p>Donna Deputy Manager Equality Named Co-ordinator (ENCO) First Aider Safeguarding Food Safety</p>	<p>Nursery Nursing Examination Board</p> <p>Donna started her career in 1993 working in pre-schools and as a nanny as well as working at other local pre-schools for 3 years before joining Caterpillars in September 2018.</p> <p>Donna is our ENCO (Equality Needs Co-ordinator). Her role is to ensure that this policy is applied to all aspects of the pre-school and that all children and their families are treated equal respect and concern.</p>
<p>Sharon Senior Practitioner Health & Safety Lead First Aider Safeguarding Food Hygiene</p>	<p>Level 3 Diploma in Pre-school Practice</p> <p>Sharon started her childcare career at our Marks Tey setting as a regular parent helper which she enjoyed so much that it lead on to her completing her childcare qualification. Sharon moved to Caterpillars at Birch when it opened in September 2009.</p> <p>Sharon's role as Health & Safety lead is to ensure risk assessments are completed and the welfare of children and staff is supported.</p>
<p>Michelle Early Years Practitioner First Aider Safeguarding Food Hygiene Level 3 Child Psychology</p>	<p>Level 3 Diploma in Childhood Studies</p> <p>Michelle has worked in Early Years settings since 2000, initially as Pre-School room leader, then Nursery manager.</p> <p>Michelle also worked as a Learning Support Assistant in reception class for 4 years before returning to Pre-schools in 2020.</p> <p>Michelle completed her Level 3 Child Psychology in 2017, giving her a great insight into supporting children's mental health & well-being.</p> <p>Michelle is our 2-year-old coordinator. Michelle ensures our 2-year-olds are supported fully and have access to what we offer at our preschool.</p>

Policies

Caterpillars has a set of policies and procedures in place that we encourage Parents to be aware of. These can be found on our website and in our policy folder which is in our reception area.

Please note we ask parents/carers **not to use mobile phones in the setting.**

Summary of Policies

Safeguarding Children

- We abide by Ofsted requirements all staff have Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS) to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
- We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the setting.
- We work with the local safeguarding Children Board guidelines.
- We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording their concerns.
- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff or volunteers in a one to one situation without being visible to others.
- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers in the group.
- Parent's/Carers can report concerns of an **allegation against a staff member** to Chrystal Clark manager or can contact the Early Help and Advice Hub on Tel: 0345 6037627.

First Aid

- Caterpillars staff are able to take action to apply first aid treatment in the event of an accident involving a child or adult.
- All staff are First Aid trained. This is updated every 3 years.
- First aid box is accessible to adults.
- No un-prescribed medication is given to children.
- Parents sign a consent form for their child to receive emergency medical treatment by emergency services.

Administering Medication

- Children taking prescribed medication should be well enough to attend the setting.
- Only prescribed medication is administered. It must be in date and prescribed for the current condition.
- Children's prescribed medicines are stored in their original containers, are clearly labelled and are inaccessible to the children.
- Parent's give prior written permission for the administration of medication.
- A risk assessment is carried out for each child with long term medical conditions that require ongoing medication.

Special Educational Needs

- We have a dedicated member of staff who is trained in the area of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Her name is Chrystal.
- We liaise with other professionals involved with the children with special educational needs and their families including transfer arrangements to other settings and schools.

Information sharing

- We recognise that parents have the right to know that information the share will be regarded as confidential as well as be informed about the circumstances, and reasons when we are obliged to share information.
- We are obliged to share confidential information without authorisation from the person who provided it or whom it relates if it is in the public interest. That is when:

- It is to prevent a crime being committed or to prevent harm to a child or adult.
- Not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.
- Parents are asked to give written consent to share information about any additional needs their child may have, or to pass on child development summaries, to the next provider/school.

Achieving Positive Behaviour – Self Regulation and Executive Function

- We acknowledge considerate behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share.
- We support each child in developing self-esteem, confidence and feelings of competence
- When children behave in inconsiderate ways, we help them to understand the outcomes of their action and support them in learning how to cope more appropriately.
- We never send children out of the room by themselves, nor do we use a 'naughty chair' or a 'time out' strategy that excludes children from the group.
- We never use physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking. Children are never threatened with these.
- When children under three behave in inconsiderate ways we recognise that strategies for supporting them will need to be developmentally appropriate and differ from those for older children.
- We recognise that very young children are unable to regulate their own emotions, such as fear, anger or distress, and require sensitive adults to help them do this.
- Common inconsiderate or hurtful behaviours of young children include tantrums, biting or fighting. Staff are calm and patient, offering comfort to intense emotions, helping children to manage their feelings and talk about them to help resolve issues and promote understanding.
- If tantrums, biting or fighting are frequent, we try to find out the underlying cause - such as a change or upheaval at home, or frequent change of carers. Sometimes a child has not settled in well and the behaviour may be the result of 'separation anxiety'.
- We focus on ensuring a child's attachment figure at Caterpillars, their key person, is building a strong relationship to provide security to the child.
- We support social skills through modelling behaviour, through activities, drama and stories. We build self-esteem and confidence in children, recognising their emotional needs through close and committed relationships with them.
- We help a child to understand the effect that their hurtful behaviour has had on another child; we do not force children to say sorry, but encourage this where it is clear that they are genuinely sorry and wish to show this to the person they have hurt.
- We support social skills through modelling behaviour, through activities, drama and stories. We build self-esteem and confidence in children, recognise their emotional needs through close and committed relationships with them.

Valuing Diversity and Equal Opportunities

- Caterpillars pre-school is committed to anti-discriminatory practice to promote equality of opportunity and valuing diversity for all children and families.
- We aim to provide a secure and accessible environment in which all our children can flourish and in which all contributions are considered and valued.
- We seek out training opportunities for staff to enable them to develop anti-discriminatory and inclusive practices, which enable children to flourish.
- The curriculum offered encourages children to develop positive attitudes about themselves.
- We encourage parents/carers to take part in the life of the setting and to contribute fully.

Complaints procedure:

(See policy documents for more details)

- Complaints or problems should be brought to the attention of and discussed with the Pre-School Manager.
- If the outcome is unsatisfactory, complaints should be made in writing to the Manager and Chair of the Pre-School Management Committee.
- A meeting may be held with the Manager and Chair of the Pre-School Management Committee. An agreed written record will be made with all parties required to sign and retain a written copy.

- A mediator may be involved from the Early Years Learning Alliance for an individual parents meeting or joint with the Pre-School management.
- Parents may approach OFSTED directly at any stage by contacting: OFSTED Early Years Regional Centre on 0300 123 1231.

British Values:

The fundamental British values of *democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs* are already implicitly embedded in the 2014 EYFS and are further clarified below, based on the *Fundamental British Values in the Early Years* guidance (Foundation Years 2015):

- **Democracy** - making decisions together (through the prime area of Personal, Social and Emotional Development)
- **Rule of Law** - As part of the focus on self-confidence and self-awareness Rule of law understanding that rules matter (through the prime area of Personal, Social and Emotional Development)
- **Individual Liberty** - or freedom for all (through the prime areas of Personal, Social and Emotional Development, and Understanding the World) Children should develop a positive sense of themselves.
- **Mutual respect and tolerance**, or treating others as you want to be treated (through the prime areas of Personal, Social and Emotional Development, and Understanding the World)

Other useful contacts:

Department for Children, Schools and families	www.education.gov.uk
Ofsted - 0300 123 1231	www.ofsted.gov.uk
Government information	www.gov.uk www.essex.gov.uk/Early Years & Childcare
Information on Downs Syndrome, hearing and visual impairments	www.earlysupport.org.uk
Online Safety	CEOP (Child exploitation Online Protection) www.ceop.police.uk www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents www.nspcc.org.uk www.childnet.com
Be a mathematician	www.beam.co.uk
Net mums	www.netmums.com
Parentline -0808 800 2222	www.parentlineplus.org.uk
Lone Parent's -0800 018 5026	www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk
Contact a Family - Support for parent's of disabled children - 0808 8083 555	www.cafamily.org.uk
Dyspraxia Foundation - 01462 454988	www.dyspraxiafoundatuion.org.uk
Association for all speech impaired children (Afasic)	www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk
Social Care – Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations about a staff or volunteer. 0345 603 7627	Essex Safeguarding Children Board www.escb.co.uk

Our vision for your child's time with us at Caterpillars Pre-School

