Preschool Charging Policy

Raynsford
Church of England Academy

Forgiving **R**espectful **I**nclusive **E**mpathetic **N**eighbourly ***D***etermined

"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed.
If one person falls, the other can reach out and help"

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Approved by:	Finance, Personnel, Audit and Risk

Our vision, deeply rooted in Christian values is that, all thrive in a safe environment, where they are celebrated for their uniqueness and are empowered to meet their full potential

Contents

Section 1:	Aims	2
Sectoin 2:	Legislation and guidance	2
Section 3:	Scope	3
Section 4:	Government funded childcare	3
Section 5:	Sessions and structure	3
Section 6:	Fee structure	4
Section 7:	Admissions	4
Section 8:	Registration and payment terms	5
Section 9:	Absence and holidays	5
Section 10:	Late Collection	5
Section 11:	Communication and Transparency	5
Section 12	Monitoring and Review	5

Our Vision

Our vision, deeply rooted in Christian values, is that our children thrive in a safe environment, are celebrated for their uniqueness, and are empowered to meet their full potential. This policy supports that vision by ensuring our preschool provision remains inclusive, sustainable, and of the highest quality.

Section 1: Aims

This policy outlines the arrangements for charging, admissions, and funded early education at Raynsford Academy Preschool (Rayndrops). It ensures that all families understand how our fees operate and what is included within their government-funded childcare entitlement.

Our aims are to:

- Provide clear and transparent information to parents and carers about charges, funded entitlement, and optional services.
- Ensure full compliance with Department for Education (DfE) guidance, the Education (Charges for Early Years Provision) Regulations 2012, and the Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Early Years Funding Agreement.
- Maintain high-quality provision that supports the developmental, educational, and wellbeing needs of all children in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- Support equitable access to early education by ensuring that funded hours are free at the point of delivery and accessible to all eligible families.
- Operate in a financially sustainable way that enables the preschool to continue delivering an enriching and inclusive early years experience.

Section 2: Legislation and guidance

This policy is informed by the following statutory requirements and national/local guidance:

- Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE, 2023)
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (DfE, 2024)
- The Childcare Act 2006 and Childcare Act 2016
- The Education (Charges for Early Years Provision) Regulations 2012
- Central Bedfordshire Council Early Years Funding Agreement and Provider Handbook
- HMRC Tax-Free Childcare and Childcare Choices guidance

- Consumer Rights Act 2015 (for transparency in fees and services)

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Charging and Remissions Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Early Years Foundation Stage Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Privacy Notice (relating to the handling of personal and funding information)

Section 3: Scope

This policy applies to all children attending Raynsford Academy Preschool (Rayndrops), including:

- **Funded two-, three-, and four-year-olds** accessing their 15-hour universal entitlement or the 30-hour extended entitlement.
- **Children attending additional paid sessions** beyond their funded hours.
- **Children not eligible for government funding**, who access preschool provision on a paid basis.

This policy also applies to:

- **Children with SEND**, including those with EHCPs or receiving Early Years SEND support.
- **Children eligible for the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)** or other discretionary support.
- **Families choosing to take only funded hours**, without purchasing additional hours or services.

Rayndrops Preschool is committed to ensuring that:

- Funded hours are accessible to all eligible children and are free at the point of delivery.
- No child is disadvantaged or denied access to their funded place because of a parent's ability or decision to pay optional charges.
- Families may choose to take up funded hours without being required to purchase additional hours, services, or consumables.

Section 4: Government funded childcare

4.1 Entitlement

Raynsford Academy Preschool offers:

- **15 hours per week** of funded early education for eligible two-, three-, and four-year-olds.
- **Up to 30 hours per week** for eligible working families with three- and four-year-old children.

Funded hours are provided over **38 weeks per year**, in line with the school's published term dates.

All funded early education hours are free at the point of delivery, and parents are not required to purchase additional hours, services, or consumables in order to access their child's funded place.

Government funding covers early education and care only. It does ***not*** cover:

- Meals and snacks
- Consumables (e.g., nappies, wipes, sun cream, art materials, baking ingredients)
- Additional childcare hours
- Lunch supervision time (11:30–12:00)
- Trips, visits, or optional enrichment activities

These may incur additional charges (see Section 6).

4.2 Funding Eligibility

Eligibility for funded childcare is determined through **Childcare Choices (HMRC)**.

Parents must:

- Apply for the 30-hour extended entitlement where relevant
- Provide a valid HMRC eligibility code before the start of term
- Renew their code every three months to maintain eligibility

If a code lapses, funded hours may be withdrawn in line with the CBC Funding Agreement.

4.3 Nursery Education Funding (NEF) (Effective from September 2025)

Nursery Education Funding (NEF) is government funding provided to early years childcare providers (nurseries, preschools, childminders, etc.) so that eligible children can receive a certain number of free early education hours each week

***Age Groups**:*

- **3 and 4-year-olds:** All children in England are entitled to **15 hours** of free early education per week, for 38 weeks per year (the school term time).
- **Working families** may be entitled to **30 hours** per week (the "extended entitlement").
- **2-year-olds:** Some are eligible for **15 hours** per week if they meet certain criteria (e.g. low-income families, special educational needs, or children looked after by local authorities).

Settings that can claim NEF:

- Registered nurseries**,** preschools, and childminders that are approved by the local authority
- Funding goes directly to the childcare provider**,** not the parents.

What it pays for:

- The education and care during the funded hours.
- Providers cannot charge for the funded hours, though they may charge for meals, trips, or extra hours outside the entitlement- see pre-school
- Funded hours are free at the point of delivery, and parents are not required to purchase additional hours, services, or consumables in order to access their child's funded place. Parents may take up only the funded hours if they wish.
- Please find out more about these schemes and other ways to save money on childcare by visiting; **www.childcarechoices.gov.uk**

Non-funded Charges are

2 and 3 year old:	£8.20 per hour
3 and 4 year old:	£6.20 per hour
Consumables Fee:	£3.00 per session (voluntary)

Fees and Provision:

From April 2025**,** government guidance requires all Early Years providers offering funded places to clearly show parents how any charges for consumables**,** additional services, or enhanced provision are applied.

At Rayndrops Preschool, we have always been transparent about what is included in our funded offer. This information is shared with families and published on our website.

What is included?

- What is included within your government-funded early education hours**,**
- What we offer beyond the funded entitlement**,** and
- Why we apply a small consumable charge to help cover the cost of the resources, materials, and experiences that enrich your child's time at Rayndrops.

What's Included in Your Funded Hours

Your government-funded early education hours cover:

- **Qualified staff-led learning and play** designed to support your child's development across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- **Daily indoor and outdoor activities** that help develop social, physical, creative, and cognitive skills.
- **Routine care and supervision** during your child's funded hours.

- Access to basic learning resources such as books, puzzles, and play equipment.

These hours are fully funded**,** and there is no charge for the educational care and learning provided during these times.

What the Consumables and Enhanced Provision Charge Covers

While the funded hours cover your child's core learning and care, we provide additional resources and experiences that enrich their time at Rayndrops Preschool. Our **consumables/enhanced provision charge** helps cover:

- **Craft and creative materials** used in art, sensory, and cooking activities.
- **Snack ingredients or optional cooking activities** that extend learning experiences.
- **Special resources or equipment** used for enhanced provision (e.g., themed days, seasonal activities, or outdoor learning materials).
- **Optional enhancements** such as additional activities beyond the funded curriculum, where appropriate.

Important Notes:

- This charge is voluntary, and your child will still receive the full funded hours and entitlement whether or not you choose to pay.
- Parents are given the choice to provide their own consumables (e.g., snacks or craft materials) if they prefer not to pay the contribution.
- Any additional services or sessions beyond the funded hours (e.g., lunch clubs) are charged separately and clearly itemised.
- All invoices clearly separate funded hours (shown as £0.00) from any paid-for sessions, optional consumables, or additional services, in line with national funding transparency requirements.

Section 5: Sessions and structure

Session	Time	Notes
Morning	08:30 – 11:30	Counts towards funded hours
Afternoon	12:00 – 15:00	Counts towards funded hours
Full Day	08:30 – 15:00	Uses up to 6 funded hours; includes a 0.5-hour lunch period (unfunded supervisory time)

Children attending full-day sessions may bring a packed lunch or order a school meal through our provider.

Attendance Expectation

To support strong routines, emotional security, and continuity of learning, Rayndrops Preschool expects children to attend a minimum of two sessions per week wherever possible. This expectation is not a requirement for accessing a funded place, and families may take up their funded hours without needing to attend a minimum number of sessions. Regular attendance helps children settle, build relationships, and make good progress.

Families may take up their child's funded hours in a pattern that suits their needs, subject to availability and the structure of our sessions.

Accessing funded hours is not conditional on attending a minimum number of sessions.

Section 6: Fee structure (from September 2025)

Category	Fee
Unfunded 2–3-year-olds	£8.20 per hour
Unfunded 3–4-year-olds	£6.20 per hour
Consumables Fee	£3.00 per session (morning or afternoon)
Lunch Period Fee (additional)	£3.10 per day / £4.10 (age dependent)
Administration Fee (one-off, includes book bag)	£20.00 per child (for new starters)

All charges are reviewed annually and parents will receive at least four weeks' notice of any changes.

6.1 Consumables Fee

The consumables fee supports the cost of items not covered by government funding, such as:

- Snacks and drinks
- Nappies, wipes, sun cream, and hygiene products
- Art and craft materials, cooking and sensory play ingredients
- Cleaning and hygiene products specific to children's care
- Additional resources to support enhanced play and learning opportunities

This fee is **£3.00 per session** (morning or afternoon) and is applied to all children accessing funded or unfunded places.

Children accessing funded hours will be able to access their funded entitlement in full regardless of whether parents choose to contribute towards consumables.

Important notes:

- This fee is **voluntary** for families accessing funded hours.
- Children will not be treated differently if families choose not to contribute.
- Parents may choose to provide their own snacks or consumable items (e.g., wipes, nappies, craft materials) if they prefer not to make the voluntary contribution.
- Children in receipt of **EYPP** or other discretionary support **may be exempt** from this charge.

All charges relating to consumables are clearly itemised on invoices, separate from funded hours (which always appear as £0.00).

6.2 Lunch Period Fee

Rayndrops Preschool offers an optional **Lunch Club** from 11:30am to 12:00pm, which is available as an extension to the funded morning session. This session falls outside the funded entitlement, meaning there is **no** charge for education, but parents may choose to pay for the additional 30 minutes of supervision.

Parents may either:

- Purchase a meal directly from our approved external food provider, **or**
- Provide a packed lunch from home.

Lunch Club is entirely optional, and children who do not access it can be collected at 11:30am. Access to your child's funded hours is not affected by whether or not you choose to use the Lunch Club.

Parents may access their child's funded entitlement without accessing Lunch Club or any additional paid service

6.3 Optional Activities

Voluntary contributions may be requested for optional trips, visitors, or enrichment opportunities.

- No child will be excluded if a voluntary contribution is not made.
- Activities will only proceed if sufficient contributions are received to make the event viable.

Section 7: Admissions

7.1 Criteria (in priority order)

Rayndrops Preschool allocates places in line with the school's Admissions Policy and the Central Bedfordshire Council Early Years Funding Agreement. The following criteria are applied when allocating preschool places:

1. Three-year-olds living in the catchment area
2. Two-year-olds living in the catchment area who qualify for funded places for reasons other than working-family entitlement
3. Two-year-olds living in the catchment area accessing working-family funded
4. Vulnerable children (including those with SEND, those with an Early Help plan, or Children Looked After)
5. Children of staff employed by Raynsford Academy (beyond probation period)
6. Three-year-olds living out of the catchment area
7. Two-year-olds living out of the catchment area

Places are allocated subject to availability and the age-appropriate ratios and staffing levels required by the EYFS Statutory Framework.

No child will be disadvantaged or refused a place because a family does or does not take up additional paid sessions.

7.2 Places and Ratios

A maximum of **eight two-year-olds** may attend in any one session, to ensure compliance with EYFS staffing ratios and environmental requirements.

Rayndrops Preschool **does not offer 30 funded hours to two-year-olds** due to space, staffing ratios, and the need for a dedicated rest/sleep area.

Admission is confirmed once the registration process has been completed and the place has been formally offered.

Children with SEND or vulnerable children may be prioritised for available places in line with the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010, SEND Code of Practice (2015), and EYFS requirements.

Section 8: Registration and payment terms

- A £20 administration fee is payable prior to the child's start date. This is a one-off charge and includes a book bag.
- Invoices are issued termly and must be paid by the stated due date.
- Payments may be made via BACS, Tax-Free Childcare, or childcare vouchers.
- Late payments may incur a £10 administration charge per week. This applies only to unpaid charges relating to non-funded sessions or optional services
- Persistent non-payment may result in the suspension of non-funded sessions only. A child's funded hours will not be withdrawn or restricted for non-payment of fees.
- Families experiencing financial difficulty are encouraged to contact the school office so that support or a payment plan can be discussed sensitively and confidentially.

A 4-week written notice period is required to withdraw a child or alter sessions (funded or unfunded). This supports staffing and ratio planning. No notice period or charges will be applied to funded hours taken as a standalone offer.

Section 9: Absence and holidays

Fees for **paid (unfunded) sessions** remain payable during absences due to illness, holidays, or other reasons, as staffing and operational costs continue.

Families accessing **funded hours only** will not be charged for any absences within their funded entitlement. Access to funded hours is never affected by absence, provided CBC requirements for attendance monitoring are met. However, we encourage regular attendance as this supports children's wellbeing, security, and progress.

In exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher may authorise a fee waiver for paid sessions.

Section 10: Late Collection

To ensure staff ratios, safeguarding requirements, and the smooth running of the preschool, children must be collected promptly at the end of each session.

A late collection charge of **£5.00 per 15 minutes** will apply after a 5-minute grace period. The charge reflects the additional staffing and supervision costs incurred by the preschool.

Repeated late collection will be discussed with families so that appropriate support or adjustments can be put in place where needed.

Section 11: Communication and Transparency

- All charges will be published on the school website and included in preschool welcome packs.
- Parents will receive at least four weeks' notice of any changes to fees or charging arrangements.
- Queries about invoices, payments, or funding should be directed to the school office.
- Invoices clearly separate funded hours (shown as £0.00) from any paid-for sessions, consumables, or additional services, in line with national funding transparency requirements.
- Parents may request information at any time about how their child's funded hours are being allocated or claimed.
- Complaints about charging arrangements will be handled under the school's Complaints Procedure.
- Parents will be provided with a clear schedule of charges before accepting a preschool place.

Section 12: Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the Headteacher and approved by the governing body, or earlier if statutory guidance or local authority requirements change.

Rayndrops Preschool remains committed to ensuring that all charging arrangements comply fully with:

- DfE Early Education and Childcare statutory guidance
- The Central Bedfordshire Council Early Years Funding Agreement
- The Education (Charges for Early Years Provision) Regulations 2012

All fee levels will be benchmarked against comparable local providers to ensure fairness, sustainability, and value for families. The governing body retains oversight of the financial and operational impact of this policy as part of its responsibility for effective leadership and management.