

Thorncome St Mary's CE Primary Academy



Thorncome St Mary's CE Primary Academy Nursery Admissions Policy

September 1, 2025 – August 31, 2026

Policy agreed: December 2025

Policy review date: September 2026

As an academy school, the First Federation Trust is the admission authority and has responsibility for setting these admission arrangements and for making decisions regarding Nursery Applications -we set our own oversubscription criteria.

The Ethos of Thorncome St Mary's CE Primary Academy

At Thorncome St Mary's, we believe passionately that everyone has the potential to succeed. We are committed to providing and developing a positive, safe and stimulating learning environment underpinned by our core Christian values. As a fully inclusive school, everyone can learn, grow and feel uniquely valued and nurtured.

Early Years Funding

- 1.1 You may be entitled to funding to pay for nursery sessions. There is funding for most families available. [Find out what funding you can get for your child.](#)
- 1.2 The government's website [Childcare Choices](#) gives information about all current and upcoming childcare offers and support available to parents.

- 1.3 If you are a working parent and have an 11-digit code, you are eligible for the 30-hour **working entitlement** and can have up to 1140 hours **stretched across a year** or 30 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year.
- 1.4 The 11-digit code must be passed to school, so they know that you are entitled to 30 hours.
- 1.5 School will ask you to complete an extended funding form for every full term, to collect your information.
- 1.6 School must validate your code through Dorset Council.
- 1.7 If you become ineligible, there will be a 'grace period' in which school will continue to receive funding for your child until the end of the relevant funding period.
- 1.8 If your child is no longer eligible for the working entitlement and the grace period has ended, you will continue to get the 570 hours **universal entitlement** if your child is three or four.
- 1.9 If your child is two, or will soon be turning two, you should also [use this checker to see if you can get a funded place](#) for your two-year-old before you make an application. This is for **Targeted Two-Year-old** funding.
- 1.10 As well as the targeted two-year-old funding, there is **universal funding for three- and four-year-olds** and **working entitlement funding** for children from 9 months. Children can also be supported by **Disability Access Funding**, and the **Early Years Pupil Premium** if the criteria are met.
- 1.11 If you are eligible for both the **targeted 2-year-old funding (15 hours)** and the **2-year-old funding for working parents (30 hours)** school will claim the latter as it is for more hours and will make a note of your eligibility for the targeted two-year-old funding as your child may be eligible for other funding as well.
- 1.12 Please see the table below with dates relating to eligibility for the working parents funding.

Date when parent becomes eligible:	Dorset Council Check Eligibility on:	Grace period ends:
1 January – 10 February	11 February	31 March (end of spring term)
11 February – 31 March	1 April	31 August (end of summer term)

1 April – 26 May	27 May	31 August (end of summer term)
27 May – 31 August	1 September	31 December (end of autumn term)
1 September – 21 October	22 October	31 December (end of autumn term)
22 October – 31 December	1 January	31 March (end of spring term)

1.13 We expect to admit children that will be using their Early Years Funding as well as children whose parents are buying additional hours and those that are both funded and buying hours.

1.14 There may be some children who are only attending for bought hours and some that only attend for funded hours.

1.15 The maximum amount of funded time that you can take in a day is 10 hours; you cannot use more than two sites for funded early years places in a day.

Admissions to the Little Acorns Preschool

Thornccombe St Mary's CE Primary Academy admits

- All funded children from their second birthday term times only
- All non-funded children from their second birthday term times only
- All funded children from their third birthday term times only
- All non-funded children from their third birthday term times only
- Funded and non-funded children from the start of the funding period following their second birthday term times only

Points of Admission to Little Acorns Preschool

2.1 We want children who are eligible for funding to start as soon as they can. If we have a space your child will be admitted.

2.2 If we don't have a space your child's name will be added to a waiting list that is kept in order of their priority for a place. We will let you know if a place becomes available.

2.3 The table above shows the dates when you can claim funding for your child if you are eligible.

2.4 We expect most children will leave the nursery to start full time in reception in the September following their fourth birthday.

If your child is born (or reaches 9 months) between:	You can claim funding from:
1 January and 31 March	1 April following the child's birthday
1 April and 31 August	1 September following the child's birthday
1 September and 31 December	1 January following the child's birthday

2.5 If you choose to defer or delay entry into school the Early Years Funding is paid up until the time when your child reaches compulsory school age.

2.6 There is a legal requirement that all children begin **full time education** by the beginning of the term following their **fifth** birthday. All places offered in reception are for **full-time admission** in the September following the **fourth** birthday. This is a legal requirement on schools but not on parents who retain a right to defer admission or send their child part time.

2.7 If your child is offered a staggered or part time start in school, you will not be funded to also attend nursery because the school is funded for your child to attend full time in the reception class.

Sessions available in Little Acorns Preschool

- Our school makes an **offer** for the **universal** 570-hour (**15 hours**) funding entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds and **targeted two-year-old funding** as well as the 1140 hour extended working entitlement (**30 hours**) funding for children from two of:
 - Morning sessions of 8.45am – 12.00 pm or 12.30 pm if you would like your child to stay for lunch
 - Afternoon sessions of 12.00/12.30 pm – 3.15pm
 - All day sessions of 8.45am – 3.15pm

3.2 We only open for 38 weeks of the year which is during school term times.

3.3 The table below sets out the session times that you can choose. When applying for a place please use the nursery application form.

3.4 These are the sessions that you can choose. If you decide to collect your child early or drop them off later, you must tell us. By doing this you will either lose out on some of your funded entitlement hours or be paying for time that you have chosen not to take.

Session choices	Hours	Bought, Funded or both?
08.45 – 12.00	3.25	Either
12.00 – 12.30	0.5	Either
12.00 – 3.15	3.25	Either
08.45 – 3.15	6.5	Either

3.5 The school has signed up to the Dorset Local Provider Agreement and is compliant with the requirements for funded hours and for charging.

Charges

4.1 There is no charge for applying for a place, for admission or for the provision of the funded entitlements.

4.2 We will not request donations before or during the admissions process and any donations made to the school following admission are entirely voluntary.

4.3 No bought activities are compulsory.

School Lunches

5.1 All children are offered the opportunity to either buy a school lunch or bring a packed lunch if they attend during lunch time.

Help with the cost of childcare

6.1 We accept childcare vouchers. Please contact our office if you wish to check the vouchers you have are eligible to be used

6.2 We are registered for [Tax-Free Childcare](#), and [Universal Credit Childcare](#).

- 6.3 If you are under 20 and a student, you may get help with childcare costs through [Care to Learn](#).
- 6.4 If you are a full-time student in higher education and you qualify for student finance - you may be able to get a [Childcare Grant](#).
- 6.5 If you receive an [NHS Bursary](#) and you are a medical or dental student – you may be able to get a [Childcare Allowance](#) (CCA) through the NHS Business Services Authority.
- 6.6 If you are unemployed your work coach may be able to support you with the cost of childcare. Please speak directly with them.

Visiting Little Acorns Preschool

- 7.1 We welcome visits from parents and children who are considering applying for a place here. This is an opportunity for you to see what we have to offer.
- 7.2 Visits are not a compulsory part of the admissions process and will not affect decisions on whether a place can be offered. If you would like to visit us, you should contact the school to make an appointment on 01460 30535.
- 7.3 We currently have a free 'stay and play' session each Thursday from 10-12. We also offer a taster session that can be attended before applications are made for a place.

Before you apply

- 8.1 If your child is almost two or has had their second birthday - before making an application, please check your [eligibility](#) for **Targeted 2-year-old funding** [here](#).
- 8.2 If you are a working parent please check your [eligibility](#) for the **working entitlement funding** (30 hours) [here](#).
- 8.3 Evidence of **eligibility will be checked before an offer of a place is made**.
- 8.4 You should check to see if you can [get extra funding for your early years provider](#) through **Early Years Pupil Premium** funding before making an application for a place.
- 8.5 If you need more childcare than the funded entitlement allows, you can set up a [childcare account](#) to benefit from **Tax Free Childcare**.

How to apply for a nursery place

- 8.1 You must complete the Nursery application form and return it to the school.

- 8.2 These forms are available online for you to download and complete or as hard copies from the school office.
- 8.3 If you would like help completing the forms, please mention this to the school office or to someone in the nursery.
- 8.4 If there are places immediately available your child may be able to start right away.
- 8.5 If there are no places available and if there is also a waiting list for places; this may particularly be the case for children starting in September, the following dates will be in place so we can manage the applications.
- 8.6 The closing dates for applications for the nursery intake are 1 April, 1 July and 1 January. You can apply after these dates, but your application may not be considered until after all the applications that were on time.
- 8.7 If you couldn't apply before because, for instance, you moved to this area, you should make sure that you inform the school. If the reason for applying after the closing date is accepted, your application will be considered at the same time as everyone who did apply on time if this is still possible.
- 8.8 No places will be held in reserve for a child who applies late; the school cannot hold places empty if another child applies for admission. We will publicise the need to apply on our website but the responsibility for making an application will be with you as the parent.

Information provided in an application

- 9.1 We would like all applications to be fully and honestly completed. It is important that where we offer places to some and refuse others we do so fairly and consistently. Where we have reason to believe that information is false and has been provided knowingly, we may withdraw the offer of a place. This is particularly relevant where an address is given which is not the one from which a child will actually attend nursery, and this disadvantages another child.
- 9.2 If you know or believe that your **child's address will change** before admission, you must inform the school as this may affect your application.
- 9.3 You will be asked to provide **date of birth evidence** so we can check your child's age.

What happens next

- 10.1 If there are fewer applications than places, then no application will be refused. Only if there are more applications than there are places available

will the trustees prioritise applications according to the oversubscription criteria.

- 10.2 We do not consider the sessions requested when prioritising who should have a place.
- 10.3 We will endeavour to give the hours requested. It is inevitable, however, that some parents will not get the hours they have requested. In these instances, we will offer times (days/hours/weeks) that fall closest to the hours requested.
- 10.4 By 1 May, 1 October, and 1 February we will contact successful parents to welcome them to the nursery and to plan for your child to start.
- 10.5 You will also be contacted if we do not have a place available so that you can apply to another provider.

10.6 **Overview of the Admissions Process**

Visit the nursery:	Spring term	Summer term	Autumn term
Apply by:	1 May	1 September	1 January
Admissions panel meet:	May	September	January
Receive a letter about your application before:	May half term	October half term	February half term
Reply to the letter:	within 2 weeks to accept a place (or if you wish, to ask why you did not get a place).	within 2 weeks to accept a place (or if you wish, to ask why you did not get a place).	within 2 weeks to accept a place (or if you wish, to ask why you did not get a place).
Start at Nursery (or at the start of term closest to that month)	September Autumn Term	January Spring term	April Summer term

Published Nursery Admissions Number (PNAN)

- 11.1 This is the number of places we intend to make available in our nursery.

11.2 Once we set this number, we will not refuse admission for applications below the PNAN. If there is unexpectedly high demand and we believe we could admit more children, we will take more children - above the PNAN, or we will increase the PNAN.

11.3 The number of children that can be admitted will depend on their age, the amount of floor space we have and whether additional staff will be required.

11.4 The trustees also factor in the local demand for places. If there is a change to the PNAN part way through the year this will be published on the school website.

11.5 If there is an increase in the demand for places, we may decide to increase the PNAN to accommodate children on the waiting list and conversely reduce the PNAN if there is a very low demand.

11.6 The table below sets out our **PNAN for September 2025 – September 26**.

The maximum number of 2,3 and 4-year-old children that will be admitted at any one time is:	5
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11.7 Where the number of applications exceeds the number of places available the trustees will use the following oversubscription criteria to prioritise applications for both funded and bought hours:

NURSERY ADMISSIONS OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA

September 1, 2025 – August 31, 2026

To be used when the number of applications exceeds the number of sessions available in the nursery for all ages of children.

A child with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) naming the school or nursery will be admitted [11].

- i) Looked after Children [12] and children who were previously Looked After but immediately after being Looked After became subject to an adoption order, a child arrangements order (CAO), or a special guardianship order (SGO) [13] including those who were in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care because they were adopted.
- ii) Priority will next be given to children or parents with an **exceptional medical or social need** [14] to attend this nursery.
- iii) Priority will next be given to children who live in the schools **designated area** and are eligible for **targeted two-year-old funding** or **Early Years Pupil Premium** or **Disability Access Funding**.

- iv) Priority will next be given to children who live within the schools **designated area** and whose parents are **eligible for the working entitlement**.
- v) Priority will next be given to children who live in the schools **designated area** who have a **sibling** at the school or nursery.
- vi) Priority will next be given to all other children who live in the schools **designated area**.
- vii) Priority will next be given to children who live **outside** of the schools designated area with a **sibling** at the school or nursery.
- viii) Priority will next be given to children who live **outside** the schools designated area who are **eligible for targeted two-year-old funding, Early Years Pupil Premium or Disability Access Funding**.
- ix) Priority will next be given to the children of **members of staff** who have been employed at this school for at least two years or who were recruited within the last two years to fill a vacancy for which there is a skills shortage.
- x) **Other children.**

[12] These children are Looked After by or provided with accommodation in the exercise of its functions (see the Children act 1989 section 22 (1)) by a Local Authority.

[13] These children meet the eligibility criteria for targeted two-year-old funding and for Early Years Pupil Premium.

[14] Evidence from a medical specialist or social worker must be provided.

[15] Parents must be encouraged to check their eligibility through the [Citizens Portal](#) before making an application.

Waiting lists

- 12.1 Following the allocation of nursery places the school will retain a waiting list. Waiting lists will be kept in order of the oversubscription criteria. Places on lists will not be prioritised according to how long a child's name has been on that list or by the age of the child or by whether the sessions are funded or bought. It is possible that a child's name could go down on a list as well as up.
- 12.2 If a place is only available for a short period of time, i.e., half a term or less, then the school will discuss with the parent whether it would be in the child's best interest to attend the nursery for such a short period of time before

having to find a place at another provider. Continuity and consistency of care is most important in the early years and having lots of transitions can be disruptive for a child.

12.3 Parents with children that are not due to start within the next two terms, will be asked to complete one of our forms and will be told when they should apply.

Admission appeals

13.1 If a nursery place is refused, you can go through the school's complaints process [here](#) to express your concerns. The trustees will review the decision and decide whether the refusal was justified on the grounds that the nursery is full. Even if it is agreed that the nursery was full, the panel will consider the impact of the decision on your child and family and may still award a place at the nursery if there is both the physical space and sufficient staff available.

Transport

14.1 No transport is available for nursery children.

Uniform

15.1 Children attending Little Acorns nursery **are not** expected to wear a uniform but can do so if they wish. Details of where to buy uniform from can be found on our website or please ask the office if you would like support. Parents unable to purchase items of uniform or equipment will not be penalised, wearing uniform in the nursery is optional. We have a second handrail in school if parents wish to look here before buying new uniform.

Claiming the Early Years Funding

16.1 Early Years Funding can be taken at more than one provider; you cannot use providers on more than two sites in one day. Each provider claims the funding on your behalf based on the sessions that have been booked and up to the amount that you are eligible to have.

16.2 It is important that everyone can clearly see what time is taken as funded and what time is being bought.

16.3 You must not claim more than you are entitled to receive, checks are carried out to ensure that over claims are not made.

Changes to attendance

- 17.1 Changes to the times that your child attends will generally be agreed with our admin staff.
- 17.2 The oversubscription criteria will be applied to both a) and b) below to determine within each list which children should be given priority for the unfilled sessions.
 - a. Children already attending the nursery wishing to **increase, decrease or change the times attending**.
 - b. **New applications** from parents whose child does not yet attend the nursery and are on the prioritised waiting list.
- 17.3 It is expected that you will ensure that your child attends at the times agreed so that a good routine can be established.

Induction and transition arrangements

- 18.1 Children can start for the full amount of agreed time at the start of term if they wish so. This is up to parents to decide what the best amount of time will be for their child and hours can be steadily increased if this is preferred.

Contacts and further information

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Nursery Contact:	Mrs Claire Stockford
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