Nursery Admissions Policy

Acorns and Seeds nursery provision

Together we learn, grow and achieve.
From tiny seeds grow mighty oaks.

Policy lead: Headteacher
Approval date: September 2026
Review: Annually, and sooner if guidance or provision changes

1 Purpose and scope

Dunn Street Primary School welcomes children and families into a safe, inclusive and nurturing nursery. This policy explains how families apply, how places are allocated and how we support a successful start. It covers Acorns for children aged two to three and Seeds for children aged three to four. It does not determine admission to Buds Reception or to any separate daycare provision.

Our foundations are Be kind, Be ready to learn and Be responsible. We work with families to remove barriers to early education and treat applications fairly and consistently.

2 Responsibility and available places

The headteacher oversees nursery admissions, supported by the admin team and Early Years leader, within the Trust's governance arrangements. The school maintains a record of applications, decisions and the reasons for them.

Places depend on the child's age, suitable space, staffing and the requirements of the current Early Years Foundation Stage framework. The school publishes the available session patterns, funded hours, any optional charges and application arrangements before allocating places. An entitlement to funded childcare does not guarantee a place at a particular nursery or a preferred session.

Before adoption, the school will confirm the operational details listed in section 16. Approval of this draft must not be treated as confirmation of an unverified capacity or session offer.

3 Age and funded eligibility

Children may join Acorns from age two and Seeds from age three, subject to a place being available and funding or other agreed payment arrangements. A birthday does not automatically trigger a funded start date. The office will confirm eligibility and the earliest available start in writing.

- Universal entitlement: all three- and four-year-olds are entitled to 15 funded hours a week over 38 weeks, normally from the term after their third birthday.
- Early Learning for two-year-olds: eligible children whose families receive qualifying support may access 15 funded hours a week over 38 weeks. Families apply through South Tyneside Council.
- Working parent entitlement: eligible working families can access up to 30 funded hours a week over 38 weeks. For three- and four-year-olds this includes their universal 15 hours. Dunn Street's nursery admission age remains two or above.

The office checks funding evidence before confirming funded sessions. Working parent codes must be valid for the relevant term and verified before use; parents must reconfirm eligibility through their childcare account when required. Foster carers should seek eligibility assessment through the responsible local authority.

If eligibility changes, the school will check any applicable grace period with the local authority and discuss the options before changing sessions. Children receiving Early Learning for two-year-olds retain those hours until eligible for the universal entitlement even if their family circumstances change. Universal hours for three- and four-year-olds are not dependent on parental employment.

4 Applying for a place

Nursery application forms are available from the school office. Families may apply after their child's first birthday for two-year-old provision, and after their second birthday for three-year-old provision. The school requests a birth certificate and evidence relevant to eligibility or admission priority. Staff will help families who have difficulty providing documents or completing the form.

Applications should give the child's details, parental responsibility and contact information, home address, preferred start date and sessions, and any relevant funding information. Families should tell us about support needs so that we can plan with them. Disclosure of a need is not a reason to disadvantage an application.

The office acknowledges applications and explains the next allocation point. Registering interest or joining the application list is not an offer. Families must tell the school promptly if their contact details, address or preferences change.

5 Funded hours and optional charges

Funded hours are free. Families will not be required to buy additional hours, meals, consumables or activities to obtain a funded place, and there will be no top-up fee for funded provision or charge for SEND support within funded hours. Any optional costs will be published, itemised and agreed separately. Families may opt out; reasonable alternatives, such as supplying their own items or a charge being waived, will be available. No application fee will be charged for a funded place.

6 Allocation when applications exceed places

Applications for the same available intake or session are considered together. Eligible children are ranked using the following order, reflecting the priority order in the school's published Trust admission arrangements:

- First: looked-after and previously looked-after children, including qualifying children adopted after state care outside England.
- Second: children with a sibling attending the school when the nursery place begins. This includes adoptive, foster and step siblings sharing the parent or carer and home address.
- Third: all other children.

Within a priority group, places go to children living nearest the school, measured in a straight line from the centre of the home to the school's main entrance using the local authority's geographical information system. Relevant supporting evidence will be requested. Nursery decisions will not be based on ability, interview performance or a parent's willingness to pay for extras.

For an exact distance tie where all tied applicants cannot be offered a place, this draft proposes independently witnessed random allocation, with the method and outcome recorded. For twins or other multiple births, each child has an application; the school will seek to offer places together where lawful staffing and space permit. It will explain any restriction and discuss alternatives with the family.

Where an Education, Health and Care Plan names the school for the provision concerned, the headteacher and SENCO will liaise with the local authority to secure admission in accordance with the plan and applicable duties. Such arrangements are addressed before allocating remaining places through the oversubscription order.

7 Waiting lists and later applications

The office maintains separate records for Acorns and Seeds, including the start date and session pattern requested. Waiting lists are ranked by the criteria in section 6; the date of application alone does not establish priority. A child's position may change as new applications or updated evidence are received.

Applications received after an advertised allocation date will be considered for remaining places and then placed on the appropriate waiting list. They will not displace an accepted offer already made correctly. Vacancies are offered to the highest-ranked eligible applicant whose requested provision can be accommodated.

Waiting lists will be reviewed each term and families asked whether they wish to remain on them. Families may ask to be removed at any time. If a preferred session is unavailable, the school will explain any alternative offer and whether the child can remain on the list for their preference.

8 Moving from Acorns to Seeds

The Early Years leader will discuss the move with families in advance. Attendance in Acorns does not by itself guarantee a Seeds place or the same session pattern. Available Seeds places are allocated fairly under this policy; staff will explain the outcome, funding changes and transition arrangements before any move.

9 Offers and acceptance

Offers are made in writing and set out the start date, sessions, funded hours, any separately agreed paid provision, acceptance deadline and information still needed. Families should accept by the stated deadline and complete the parental funding declaration before funded attendance begins. The declaration records the hours and attendance pattern, any other providers and optional charges chosen by the parent.

Families using more than one provider must tell each provider how their funded hours are shared. The same hours cannot be claimed twice. Any request to change sessions is considered against availability and confirmed in writing.

If a family does not respond to an offer, the office will make reasonable contact attempts and explain the consequence before reallocating it. An offer based on materially false information may be reviewed by the headteacher. The family will have an opportunity to explain and will receive a written decision. Administrative errors will be addressed fairly, with the child's circumstances considered.

10 Inclusion and support before starting

We welcome children with special educational needs and disabilities, medical needs, developmental differences and English as an additional language. We will make reasonable adjustments and plan support with parents, the SENCO and relevant professionals. Admission will not depend on a child having an EHCP, securing additional funding or reaching a particular developmental milestone.

Children do not need to be toilet trained to take up a nursery place. Staff will agree sensitive intimate care and toileting arrangements with families. A child's need for personal care will not, by itself, delay admission or reduce their agreed sessions.

Where a child has allergies, medication or other health needs, a care plan and any necessary staff preparation will be arranged before attendance. Parents should share relevant information promptly so that care is safe and appropriate.

11 Induction and safeguarding

Before the start date, staff will arrange an introductory discussion and opportunities for the child and parent to become familiar with the nursery. Each child will have a key person. Staff will learn about the child's interests, routines, communication, home language and previous experiences, and agree how information will be shared.

Parents must provide emergency contacts, details of parental responsibility, authorised collectors and relevant court orders. The school will explain collection arrangements, absence reporting and how to raise a concern. Records from a previous setting will be requested and transferred securely where appropriate.

Any settling-in arrangement will be agreed with the parent, tailored to the child and reviewed promptly. It will not be used as a routine means of withholding a child's agreed provision. Safeguarding concerns are referred to the designated safeguarding lead and managed under the school's safeguarding procedures.

12 Attendance and leaving nursery

Regular attendance helps children build secure relationships and benefit from early learning. Parents should bring children punctually for their agreed sessions and report absence to the office on the first day. Unexplained absence is followed up through the school's absence and safeguarding procedures. Nursery attendance is not compulsory, but a missing child or an unexplained change in attendance may require safeguarding action.

When attendance becomes irregular, staff will contact the family, explore barriers and agree support. A place will not be withdrawn automatically for absence. If a child is no longer attending, the headteacher will make reasonable enquiries, consider safeguarding and local funding requirements, and contact the family before a written decision about the place is made. Families should notify the office in writing when leaving or transferring; any notice arrangements will be set out in the offer.

13 Admission to Buds Reception

A nursery place does not guarantee admission to Reception. Parents must make a separate application through South Tyneside Council by its published deadline. The office will remind families and offer help with the process. Reception applications are determined under the relevant published school admission arrangements, separately from this nursery policy.

14 Concerns and review of a decision

Parents may ask the headteacher for a written explanation and review of a nursery decision, including whether the criteria and evidence were applied correctly. If unresolved, they may use the school or Trust complaints procedure. Nursery admission does not carry the statutory independent school admission appeal right that applies to Reception. Queries about funding eligibility should be referred to South Tyneside Council or HMRC, according to the funding route.

15 Information and monitoring

Personal information is handled under the school's privacy notices, retention arrangements and data protection procedures. Information is shared only where lawful and necessary. The headteacher will review admissions, waiting lists, concerns and access for vulnerable families at least annually and report through the appropriate governance arrangements.

16 Adoption and review record

Before publication, the school and Trust will confirm: the approving body and delegated decision maker; capacity in each age group; session times and weeks offered; the availability of 30-hour and paid places; allocation dates and response deadlines; arrangements for exact distance ties and multiple births; and any leaving-notice requirements. The office will then publish these operational details alongside the approved policy. No approval is implied by this draft.

Contact

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