



# Willow Tree Nursery & Pre-School

## Parent Handbook

Opening Times: Monday – Friday  
7.45 am – 6.00 pm

Chingford Avenue, Great Clacton, Clacton on Sea, Essex, CO15 4US

Website: [www.willowtree-nursery.co.uk](http://www.willowtree-nursery.co.uk) | Email: [info@willowtree-nursery.co.uk](mailto:info@willowtree-nursery.co.uk) | Phone: 01255 221 473

The Parent Handbook provides important information to parents on how we operate as a nursery. We routinely update the information contained within this handbook and will inform you if there are any changes to the nursery's policies. Our full set of policies is available to read at any time at the nursery. If you have any questions about our policies, please speak to the Nursery Manager.

## About Us

Willow Tree Nursery & Pre-school operates from a spacious purpose-built premises and is rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Our highly qualified staff team are passionate about providing a natural and engaging environment to nurture our children in creating foundations for future life. In addition to our nursery and pre-school, we also offer a range of services for families in the local community including an After School and Holiday Club for children aged 5 to 12 years.

Every child deserves the best possible start in life. Research shows that a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important but good parenting and high-quality early learning together provide the foundation needed for children to fulfil their potential.

The Nursery has 9 rooms, each one devoted to caring for a specific age group and developmental stage. Children move rooms as and when they are developmentally ready, allowing flexibility in this structure.

## Nursery Contacts

Senior Nursery Manager:	Jessica Brading
Deputy Nursery Manager	Nicky Bushell
Designated Safeguarding Lead:	Mel Hughes
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads:	Jessica Brading & Cheryl Hatfield
Office Manager:	Jeanette Sams
Finance Manager:	Richard Aaron
Area Manager:	Hannah Tranah
Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs):	Cheryl Hatfield & Sarah Arnold



## The Storal Learning Values

Choosing the right childcare is one of the most important decisions you will make as a parent. The right setting will nurture your child's uniqueness and help them develop into a happy, confident individual.

As part of the Storal Learning family of nurseries, we benefit from a widespread support system of experienced early years professionals who are all passionate about delivering the best possible care and education to children. This network allows us to transform the latest research into practical everyday activities by sharing ideas and best practice, all with the goal of continuously enhancing the quality of our provision.

Our approach to professional development underpins our philosophy towards childcare. We pride ourselves on having a highly qualified staff team that goes well above and beyond Ofsted's requirements. As such, in addition to the regular training and self-improvement opportunities afforded to our practitioners, we hold two inset days a year where our team learns about new trends in early years research and how to implement this in every day practice.

We want to help you meet all the needs of your child by offering our expertise and resources to your family. Core to everything we do, we always put the needs and interests of the child first.



### Put the child first

If a child is in a happy, loving environment and getting consistently attentive care, then everything else will fall into place



### Individualised Care

We pay careful attention to the needs and interests of each child, encouraging all children to reach their full potential



### Highest Standards

We insist on relentlessly high standards across all aspects of childcare, striving for continuous improvement



### Real Passion

We choose to only surround ourselves with professionals that have a deep-rooted passion for educating children

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Does your nursery also have pre-school classes?**

Yes, we operate a pre-school which runs alongside the normal nursery day. Our pre-school sessions include a mixture of child-led and adult-led activities providing opportunities for children to explore topics of interest to them whilst preparing them for formal education. Our uniquely developed Rising Stars School Readiness Programme introduces children to the exciting world of numbers, letters, phonics and science. To learn more about the advantages of our pre-school classes please see our Introduction to Pre-school pamphlet or speak to our management team.

### **How can I change my child's sessions?**

Parents can choose to increase or decrease their child's sessions subject to availability. At least one month's written notice is required to reduce sessions. To permanently change sessions, please complete a Change of Sessions form; and for a one-off extra session, an Extra Session form.

If you wish to cancel your child's place at nursery you must provide one month's written notice along with a Notice of termination form and return it to the Nursery Manager. All these forms are available in the Nursery office.

### **My child is a fussy eater, what if they don't like what's on the menu?**

Our in-house cook is experienced with the changing tastes of children and will prepare an alternative for children with specific dietary requirements as well as those who won't eat what is being served. We ensure that children are still offered balanced, nutritious meals during their time with us.

### **Can you cater to my child's allergies or dietary requirements?**

At the nursery we take an individualised approach to care for each one of our children. This includes adapting spaces, activities and meals wherever possible, to suit a child's individual needs. Our nursery cook and your child's key carers can make adjustments to accommodate allergies and dietary requirements including preparing alternative meals and snacks. For further information please speak with our Nursery Manager.

We are a nut-free setting.

### **What steps should I take with the Nursery if my child has a medical condition?**

If your child has a medical condition please mention this on their Registration Form. Prior to your child's first day, this can then be discussed in depth with the Nursery Manager, your child's key person and relayed to the staff members involved in your child's care. We also ask you to outline in writing the nature of the condition, including triggers, symptoms and any medication used to manage the condition on our Medical Requirements form available from the Nursery Manager.



### **Will my child participate in activities outside of nursery?**

From time to time practitioners will organise outings and trips if they feel it will aid the children's learning and development. All trips are risk assessed and consent is obtained from parents on the Registration Form for local trips and via permission slips for less routine outings.

### **Can I still bring my baby to nursery if they are teething?**

Our baby room staff are experienced with teething babies and the symptoms associated with this stage of development. Please feel free to bring in teething powder/gel and complete a medication form with your child's key person or nursery manager.

### **What if I am running late to collect my child?**

If you are running late to collect your child, please call the nursery to let us know. If you do not think you will make it before the nursery closes, please ask an authorised person to collect your child; please inform the Nursery Manager of this person's identity along with a collection password. If you are late, a late pick up fee will be chargeable. Please refer to our Arrivals and Departures Policy and Uncollected Children Policy for more information.

### **When are nursery fees due and how can I pay?**

All fees are due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. These can be paid via Direct Debit, Bank Transfer, Childcare Vouchers or the Tax-Free Childcare scheme. Please see our fee sheet for more information.

### **Do you offer funded sessions?**

We are pleased to offer Early Years funding for eligible 2-year olds (15 Hours Two-Year-Old Entitlement) and for 3-4-year olds (either 15 Hours Universal Entitlement or 30 Hours Extended Entitlement), subject to availability. For further information on how we offer funding, please speak to our Nursery Manager.

You can find out more information on the eligibility criteria and how to apply on [www.childcarechoices.co.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.co.uk)



## Registration and next steps

### Admissions Policy

Our aim is to provide a happy and safe environment with individualised learning for all children. We operate an Inclusion and Equality Policy and ensure that all children have access to nursery places irrespective of their gender, race, ability, religion or belief. As part of creating a positive environment we have a zero tolerance for abusive behaviour towards our children, other parents and staff.

Parents are advised to register their interest by contacting the nursery;

- Parents are then invited to arrange an appointment to see the nursery and to meet the Nursery Manager;
- The Nursery Manager will share the Registration Form, Fee Sheet, Terms and Conditions and Parent Handbook with you;
- Places will be offered to parents on a first come first serve basis. Priority is given to children with siblings already at the nursery and to those that require full time day care (i.e. 5 days per week all year-round)
- After parents complete and return the documents listed below to the Nursery, an acceptance letter will be sent to parents confirming their child's place.

### Documents required to be returned to the Nursery

- ✓ Completed Registration form;
- ✓ Copy of the child's birth certificate;
- ✓ Completed Direct Debit Mandate or Tax-Free Childcare reference number;
- ✓ If applicable, the Parent Funding Declaration and the Parental Agreement on Charges for Funded Sessions.

### Settling In

Our primary aim is to ensure all children feel safe, stimulated and happy in our nursery. Likewise, we want parents to have confidence in their child's wellbeing and understand their role as partners to the nursery.

Therefore, before your child starts with us, they are given a series of bespoke settling in sessions which offer a happy and smooth transition into our nursery. During these sessions, your child will be assigned a key person who will spend time getting to know you and your child. The key person's role is to:

- Ensure every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs;
- Help the child become familiar with the setting;
- Develop a settled relationship with the child;
- Work with parents to ensure a smooth transition into nursery, the next age group and school;
- Build a strong relationship with parents.



Once you and your child's key person agree your child is settled and ready to start nursery, we will book in their first day. We judge a child to be well settled when they have formed a relationship with their key person and other staff, are familiar with the environment and participate in activities alongside other children.

### **What to expect on your child's first day**

On your child's first day, it is normal for a few tears at drop-off and pick up time but if your child is inconsolable during the day, your key person will call you to collect your child.

If English is not your child's first language, it may be helpful to leave a list of words for our practitioners to use when communicating with your child. This will make your child feel understood and help them settle into their new environment more quickly. Please feel welcome to call the nursery during the day to see how your child is doing.

### First Day Checklist:

- ✓ A bag of spare clothes (for health and safety reasons, please do not use plastic bags.)
- ✓ Nappies, wipes and nappy cream
- ✓ Sun hat
- ✓ Wellies
- ✓ Comforter
- ✓ Any long term or emergency medication

### **Parental Involvement**

We believe that, for children to receive the highest quality care and early years education, nursery staff should work closely with parents to develop a strong partnership and facilitate two-way communication. Some of the ways we look to involve parents include:

- Creating opportunities for parents to talk to each other through open days and parent evenings;
- Informing parents about their child's daily routines, food provided and activities within the setting;
- Updating parents on their child's progress and development, both verbally and through learning journals.



## How We Learn

We recognise that children develop at different rates and learn in different ways, and it is therefore vitally important for us to provide individualised care and learning opportunities to all children, especially in these formative years. Our team of early years practitioners prepare structured and stimulating days, using the learning through play approach. Taking into consideration children's age, abilities and interests, our team organise engaging activities presenting opportunities to learn and develop.

The Nursery follows the Early Years Foundation Stages (EYFS) which sets the standards for children's development from birth to 5 years old. There are seven areas of learning and development within EYFS. Whilst all are important and inter-connected, the framework splits learning into three 'Prime Areas' and four 'Specific Areas'. The Prime Areas are fundamental to igniting a child's curiosity and building their capacity to learn whilst the Specific Areas strengthen and apply the Prime Areas. Together these seven areas form the foundation for learning in later life.



Learning extends into the outdoors, where children are encouraged to learn about the natural world. Our outdoor space provides exciting challenges, chances to refine their coordination, their motor skills and their confidence.

As part of the EYFS Curriculum, the Nursery may take children on planned outings. We ensure all outings are beneficial to the children, enhancing their learning experiences whilst keeping in mind their safety and wellbeing. Please refer to our Outings Policy for more information.

The Nursery may also invite external providers to lead special events and extra-curricular sessions.

### Online Learning Journals

Regular observations and feedback are sent home via eyLog, an online portal where you can view details on your child's time at nursery and development. As part of our partnership with parents we encourage you to share what your child is doing at home by uploading your own photos, videos and observations. This facilitates a continuity of learning across nursery and home life as we celebrate their achievements and milestones together.





## Rising Stars School Readiness Programme

Our Pre-schoolers follow our own proprietary Rising Stars School Readiness Programme which supplements the EYFS Curriculum. We developed the Rising Stars Programme following our research that showed parents were often confused about how best to prepare their child for school. The Programme is specifically designed to further enhance your child's sense of independence, wellbeing, confidence and problem-solving skills as they prepare for their transition into formal education.

## Healthy Eating

Our nursery is committed to offering children healthy, nutritious, balanced meals and snacks that meet the individual requirements of all children. The nursery benefits from a full-time cook, who prepares wholesome meals and snacks daily.

Our cook works alongside our Nursery Manager to design a varied menu which encourages curiosity whilst considering the dietary and nutritional needs of the children in our care. If your child has a special dietary requirement, please note this on the Registration form.

Mealtimes are a happy, social occasion where staff sit with children, modelling good table manners and healthy eating habits. Children are encouraged to feed and serve themselves, developing their fine motor skills and promoting independence. Our children learn about different types of food and how it helps them grow, which allows them to make smarter choices now and in the future. We find that including children in the process of growing, preparing and cooking their own food works wonders with the fussiest of eaters as they learn where their food comes from and how it is made.

We are a **nut-free and kiwi-free setting** and we kindly ask parents **not to bring in food containing nuts or kiwis** as this may cause problems for other children with allergies. For young babies, parents are asked to provide their own clearly labelled formula milk.

If your child develops an allergy after Registration, please inform the nursery immediately and we will make the necessary adjustments.

In special circumstances, e.g. our cook is off sick for an extended period, the nursery may use outside specialist childcare caterers to provide meals for the children.

## Help with Fees

The Government have introduced several schemes to make nursery and pre-school places more accessible to parents. These initiatives include Tax-Free Childcare and Early Years Funding. To check your eligibility, log on to: [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk)

## Tax-Free Childcare



Tax-Free Childcare is a scheme for working families of children aged 0-11 years. For every £8 you pay in to your TFC account, the Government will contribute an extra £2, up to a maximum allowance of £10,000 per child per year. This scheme has replaced Childcare Vouchers, which have now closed to new applicants.

## 2, 3 & 4-Year-Old Early Years Entitlement

We are pleased to offer Early Years funding for eligible 2-year olds and for all 3 and 4-year olds, subject to availability. Eligibility for 15- or 30-hours funding begins the term following your child's second or third birthday. The funding start dates are as follows:

Your child's date of birth	Availability of Free Early Education Entitlement
Children born between 1 Sept - 31 Dec	Funding starts the following January
Children born between 1 Jan - 31 March	Funding starts the following April
Children born between 1 April - 31 Aug	Funding starts the following September

### How to Claim Funded Hours

If you would like to claim funded hours at our nursery, you are required to complete a Parent Declaration Form, issued by the Local Authority, confirming they will access their hours at our setting. Please speak to the Nursery Manager if you have not been provided with this. In addition to this, parents must sign a Parental Agreement for Charges on Funded Session Form which explains how funded hours are allocated and the cost of sessions after these hours have been deducted. In order to claim 30 hours of funding, we require a valid 30 Hours Code. This can be obtained by completing the online application on the Childcare Choices website.

If your child joins the nursery after the final count has been submitted to the Local Authority, funding cannot be claimed until the next term, so it is important you check this deadline with the Nursery Manager. In cases where the nursery is provided with incorrect information on funding eligibility, and the Local Authority invalidates the funding claim, parents are required to make payment for the fees due in full.

### 30 Hours Renewal Cycle

If you are claiming 30 hours funding, you need to confirm your eligibility every 3 months on your online account and you will be prompted by HMRC by email or text to do so. If you miss the deadline, your code becomes ineligible and the grace period will come into effect. Ineligibility would only affect extended hours – your child can still have their universal 15 hours.

Date child becomes ineligible	End of grace period
1 <sup>st</sup> September to 21 <sup>st</sup> October	31 <sup>st</sup> December
22 <sup>nd</sup> October to 31 <sup>st</sup> December	31 <sup>st</sup> March
1 <sup>st</sup> January to 10 <sup>th</sup> February	31 <sup>st</sup> March
11 <sup>th</sup> February to 31 <sup>st</sup> March	31 <sup>st</sup> August
1 <sup>st</sup> April to 26 <sup>th</sup> May	31 <sup>st</sup> August
27 <sup>th</sup> May to 31 <sup>st</sup> August	31 <sup>st</sup> December



## Health and Safety

### Safeguarding

Safeguarding is fundamental to our setting as a registered childcare provider, not only as part of our legal requirements of our Ofsted registration, but also as a duty of care both to the children in our setting and their families. This is reflected in our recruitment process, practices as well as our policies and procedures.

Safeguarding is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing the impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes
- Protecting children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) works closely with outside agencies to safeguard children and ensures all staff members receive up to date child protection training. Our full Safeguarding Policy is available at the nursery.

### Medical and Dietary Requirements

Before your child starts nursery, his or her specific needs will be discussed with the Nursery Manager and their key person during settling in. We ask that you complete a Medical Requirements/Allergy Form to communicate any medical conditions or dietary requirements. All relevant information will then be shared with the members of staff involved in your child's care. In some cases, specialist advice may be required, and specific training given to staff.

Careful consideration is made for children with medical conditions or allergies when planning activities to ensure individual needs are met and that children are not put at risk. Risk assessments are carried out where necessary.

Nursery is a fun, stimulating and, on occasion, noisy environment. We recognise, however, that this is not the best environment for a sick child, who needs special care, comfort and sometimes, medical attention. Therefore, we request that any child who is unwell does not attend the nursery. If in the opinion of a member of staff, a child is or appears to be unwell, we will contact you and request that you pick up your child as soon as possible.

The nursery follows guidelines issued by the Department of Health which state how long a child must remain at home after certain infections. This list is displayed on the parent board within the nursery.

We ask that if your child is ill and will not be attending nursery, that you contact the nursery at least one hour before the child's session to let us know.



If your child falls seriously ill while at nursery, we will immediately call the emergency services and then contact you and arrange to meet you at the hospital or nearby walk in centre if necessary. If we are unable to reach you, the Nursery Manager will assume charge and, if necessary, accompany the child to the hospital along with his/her medical details as recorded on the Medical Requirements/Allergy Form, Permanent Medication Form, Permanent Medication Administration Form, Prescribed Medication Form and Registration Form, if relevant. Remaining staff will continue to attempt to contact you.

### **Medication**

It is our policy that a child is excluded from nursery for the first 24 hours after taking medication prescribed by a doctor in case of any side effects or allergic reactions. They may return to attend their normal sessions once this period has passed without any side effects.

Before we administer prescribed medication, we require a Medication Form to be completed and signed which states the medication, duration that the medicine is to be administered for, dosage, reason the child is taking the medication, and the time of day the medication should be administered. Please note the nursery will not make changes to dosages and times on the original parent instruction- if any changes are to be made, a new form should be filled out.

Calpol and Piriton are only administered in an emergency if a parent has given consent on their child's Registration Form. If either Calpol or Piriton has had to be administered the parent is obliged to pick up their child from nursery.

If a child is on long term medication such as inhalers, a signed and completed Permanent Medication Form will be required from the parents detailing the dosage and times it is to be administered, along with any special instructions. This will be kept in your child's personal file.

### **Sun Protection**

Our aim is to enable children to safely learn and play outside and provide adequate protection from the sun. Parents are asked to bring their own sun cream for their children. Please ensure this is a minimum Factor 30 sun cream with a minimum 4-star rating.

If parents do not bring their own sun cream, the nursery has its own sun cream and will apply it accordingly. We may apply a charge for this.

Consent for applying sunscreen is given on the Registration form. Children who do not have sunscreen consent may be restricted from playing in the sun in accordance with our Sun Protection Policy.



## Other Useful Information

### Arrivals and Departures

Children are usually dropped off and collected by their parents or by those who hold parental responsibility. The nursery is informed about who holds parental responsibility on the Registration Form.

We understand that occasionally it might not be possible for parents/guardians to collect their child from nursery. In those situations, you must inform the Nursery Manager as soon as possible. We ask that you give the Nursery Manager the name of the person collecting the child, as well as a password. We will not release the child to anyone except to the named person, who will also be asked for the password and photo ID.

This person will be considered an authorised person solely for the day of pick up and not on an ongoing basis. To provide authorisation on an ongoing basis please complete an Authorisation of Collection form and return to the Nursery Manager. The authorised person must be over the age of 18.

### Child Absence

We recognise that, from time to time, children may have to miss nursery because of illness or family circumstance. However, we do require parents to inform us of any absences, either in advance or on the same day. If your child is not present in nursery one hour after his/her session started, the Nursery Manager will contact you and you will be asked to explain your child's absence.

The Nursery Manager, along with your child's Key Person, will then undertake a review of your child's circumstances to establish whether your child is vulnerable to harm and/or has a history of non-attendance. A decision will then be made whether to involve outside agencies.

### Complaints Procedure

We believe that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt care attention and we aim to provide a high quality, efficient and accessible service to parents and children. However, from time to time, a complaint may need to be made about some aspect of the setting or indeed an individual member of staff. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly through an informal channel, but if this does not achieve the desired result, this can be escalated as needed. A copy of our complaints procedure is displayed in the nursery.

### Extreme Weather

The extreme weather policy exists to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, staff and visitors. The Nursery reserves the right to prevent children from going outside if the Nursery considers it unsafe.

In rare cases, should the weather be too extreme to operate safely, the setting may be forced to close. In these situations, fees will not be refunded.

### Intimate Care



Intimate care routines are essential throughout the day to ensure a child's basic needs are met. This includes nappy changing, supporting toileting, changing clothes, first aid treatment and specialist medical support.

To maintain privacy, these actions will take place on a one-to-one basis and, wherever possible, will be actioned by the child's Key Person, except for first aid treatment, which is always to be conducted by a qualified first aider.

We wish to ensure the safety and welfare of all the children involved in intimate care routines and safeguard against any potential harm. We also wish to ensure that the staff member involved is fully supported and able to perform their duties safely and confidently.

Parents are asked to provide their own wipes, nappies and nappy cream.

### **Outings**

As part of the EYFS Curriculum, children may be taken on planned outings out of the nursery. Outings can help children develop in many ways, including independence, exploration/investigative skills, risk taking and self-esteem. The nursery will ensure that all outings are beneficial to the children, enhancing their learning experiences whilst also ensuring their safety and wellbeing. Outings will be made accessible to children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Parents are asked to give consent for walks in the local area on the Registration Form and are asked to sign a consent form for other outings. If we do not have consent from the parents, the child will not be taken on the outing.

### **Photographs**

Our nursery uses photographs to document children's learning and development either in paper or online learning journals. Parents grant consent for this on the Registration Form. We recommend parents give consent for this, as photographs are a key tool for documenting a child's progress and sharing key moments with parents, all of which bolster parental engagement.

On occasion external photographers come to the setting to photograph the children for events e.g. fêtes or graduation. The nursery will inform parents of these events in advance. The nursery must receive parental consent for photographs to be taken at these events where an external photographer is involved. If you do not respond to the consent request, we will assume you have not given your permission.

### **Privacy Notice**

The Nursery is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information. The privacy notice describes how we collect and use personal information about you before, during and after your relationship with us, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It applies to all parents, pupils and other interested parties. A full copy of our Privacy Notice is available on our website and within the nursery.



## Uncollected Children

If you anticipate that you will be late to collect your child, you should call the nursery to advise of your situation, ask an authorised person to collect your child if you are unavoidably delayed, and inform the Nursery Manager of this person's identity along with a safety password.

If a child is not collected at the nursery's closing time:

- The Nursery Manager will attempt to contact all parents/guardians as shown on the Registration Form;
- If unsuccessful, the Nursery Manager will contact your child's emergency contact as noted on the Registration form;

If after 30 minutes the child has still not been collected and the nursery has been unable to contact a parent or emergency contact, then:

- The nursery will contact the local authority social services;
- Your child will remain at the nursery with two members of staff until the child is collected either by the parent or social services;
- Social services will attempt to locate the parent, but if they are unable to do so, they will admit the child into the care of the local authority.

*If you have any questions regarding the information in this handbook please speak with the Nursery Manager. A full copy of all our policies and procedures are available to view at the nursery upon request. Thank you for taking the time to read through our helpful guide and we look forward to welcoming you and your family to our setting.*

