

Payment Policy

Oaklea Montessori Community Interest Company is a not-for-profit social enterprise business. It must operate profitably but any surplus and all its assets are 'locked' to the community it serves.

As a CIC, *Oaklea Montessori* is regulated by the Community Interest Regulator which ensures that we manage our finances to serve the community properly. *Oaklea Montessori* has a responsibility to *all* the children and families using the nursery. This includes the efficient collection of fees and correct use of other funding.

Payments

- Fees and other charges are payable monthly in advance **within 7 days of the issue of invoice.**
- Invoices will be e-mailed to parents/carers at the beginning of the month.
- We encourage you to pay fees by BACS, please use your Bill Payer reference shown on your invoice as the payment reference to ensure your payment is allocated correctly.
- Cash payments must always be checked and countersigned by a member of office staff or duty manager *before* being left at nursery. (*Oaklea Montessori* cannot be responsible for any discrepancy where there is no countersignature).
- We do not accept cheques.
- Fees may be paid using Childcare Vouchers operated both through employer schemes and the Government Tax-free childcare scheme. The Government Tax-free childcare scheme benefits from your contribution being 'topped up' by 20%. For example, for every £8 you deposit, the government will pay an additional £2. If you would like more information, please visit www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

Registration Fee

There is a £40 registration fee which is payable at the time of applying for a place at nursery. The registration fee is to help cover the administrative costs of booking your child a place and is partly used to provide your child with their first piece of *Oaklea* uniform. This will only be ordered once the registration fee has been received along with your completed and signed Registration form. The fee also indicates to us your intention to take up the place offered. If your child is offered sessions that you later decline to take up, it is not possible to return the registration fee.

In some circumstances, where we are unable to offer the sessions you require, it may be possible to return the registration fee.

When completing your child's Registration Form, you have the option to request half of the fee to be returned to you OR to donate half the fee to the CIC when your child leaves *Oaklea* for primary school, *providing that all terms and conditions have been met*. Many parents donate the registration fee to the nursery, and we are extremely grateful for any donations that are given

this way. Such donations are used to benefit the children's play and learning resources.

If, there are any outstanding charges on your account when you leave, this may be deducted from the registration fee held.

The registration fee does not apply where parents only access their free entitlement and where no additional hours or services are bought. However, if parents subsequently change sessions to include additional costs, then a deposit of £40 will be required.

Additional Charges

Additional charges may be charged to your account in the following instances:

- Late payment fees:
Fees not paid within 14 days of issue will incur a £10 charge to cover additional administrative costs. Where families encounter unforeseen financial difficulties, we ask them to discuss their circumstances with the Finance Officer so that we can support those in 'difficult circumstances'. We are unable to help if families are not honest and transparent with us.
- Late collections:
The nursery has a legal obligation to ensure that staff/child ratios are maintained. We manage this extremely carefully, which ensures that our fees are kept low benefitting all families. For this reason, children **must** be collected promptly by the end of their session time. Late collections of children will incur a penalty charge of £5 if the nursery has not been informed of the late collection. Care charges will always apply for any additional time your child is at nursery past the child's collection time. All such charges will be invoiced.

Bank Holidays, Absences & Closure days

Oaklea Montessori has a legal duty to provide staff with statutory paid holidays. Bank Holidays and closure days are accounted for as part of staff holiday entitlement and are therefore charged as other days. This ensures the fees are kept low.

- The nursery is closed for Bank Holidays. If your child is booked in for a Bank Holiday, you will be charged in full (FEEE funding applies). Meal costs will be deducted automatically for these days.
- All the settings have annual Christmas Closure days. For all year round children half fees are payable over these periods. Meal costs will be deducted automatically for these days. Bank Holiday charges still apply during the Christmas closure.
- Where the nursery is closed for staff training, fees are NOT charged, and you will be given half a terms notice.
- If your child is absent due to sickness or holidays, the fees must be paid in full. Meal costs may be deducted where there has been at least one week's written notice of an absence.

Requesting Additional Sessions

If you request any additional sessions, please ensure that your account balance is cleared. Unfortunately, if there is an outstanding balance on your account, we will be unable to process your request. Please note that we are unable to fulfil all additional session requests as this will depend on the settings availability.

Government Funding

Parents/carers are required to complete a Parent Declaration form to access this funding. This form will be issued by the nursery the term before it applies. Parents need to update and re-sign the form every term, with the hours their child will be attending. Please ensure you read through the form carefully and complete all relevant sections. If you require any assistance with your form, please contact the office. Please be aware you will not be able to access your entitlement on bank holidays or transfer to use on another day. Therefore, you will not receive your full entitlement where there are bank holidays within the funded weeks attended. Please note that if we do not receive a signed and completed form by the deadline set up by Oaklea, then your funding entitlement may be affected, and you may need to pay for your fees in full.

The **funded early education universal entitlement (FEEE)** is available for *all 3- & 4-year-olds* from the term following your child's third birthday. Universal FEEE currently provides up to 15 hours per week (over 38 weeks/year) or 570 hours for the year (15 hours per week x 38 term time weeks = 570 hours per year). This funding entitlement can be stretched over 50 weeks of the year should you wish your child to attend all year round. Please be aware that when funding is stretched over 50 weeks your weekly entitlement is reduced to 11.4 hours per week (570 hours per year / 50 weeks per year = 11.4 hours per week). If your child attends the setting for more than 11.4 hours per week, then all extra hours will be chargeable.

Children from **eligible working families** may be entitled to **15 hours FEEE** per week (over 38 weeks/year) or 570 hours for the year (15 hours per week x 38 term time weeks = 570 hours per year) from the term after they turn 9 months. This funding can also be stretched to 50 weeks should you wish your child to attend all year round. Please be aware that when funding is stretched over 50 weeks your weekly entitlement is reduced to 11.4 hours per week (570 hours per year / 50 weeks per year = 11.4 hours per week).

Children from **eligible working families** may be entitled to **30 hours FEEE** per week (over 38 weeks/year) or 1,140 hours for the year (30 hours per week x 38 term time weeks = 1,140 hours per year) from the term after they turn 3 years. This funding can also be stretched to 50 weeks should you wish your child to attend all year round. Please be aware that when funding is stretched over 50 weeks your weekly entitlement is reduced to 22.8 hours per week (1,140 hours per year / 50 weeks per year = 22.8 hours per week).

Sessions over the universal FEEE (15 hours) will be charged for unless a validated entitlement code has been received (starting with 500. Please ensure this code is passed onto the setting along with your National Insurance Number as without this we are unable to make a claim for your child).

Eligibility must be re-validated every three months; you will receive a

notification email reminder from HMRC (please be aware that this will not be supplied by Oaklea). Families **MUST** notify the nursery immediately if they fall out of eligibility or of any changes in circumstance that may affect it. Although there is a short 'grace period' for families no longer eligible, fees will be chargeable if the entitlement is revoked. The grace period should be used to notify the nursery of a reduction in hours required (4 weeks' written notice period).

FEEE hours may also be supplemented for some children by the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP). The EYPP is payable direct to the nursery and is used to provide targeted resources to support those children who are entitled to it. If you think you may be eligible for this, please ensure you complete the relevant box relating to EYPP on the parent/carer agreement form for funded sessions.

FEEE2 is also available for some **two-year-old** whose families meet the following criteria:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income not exceeding £16,190
- Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after their employment finishes or after they start to work less than 16 hours per week

FEEE2 provides up to 15 hours per week of funding but can only be used in a single setting. If you think you may be eligible please go along to the childcare choices website (see address at the bottom of this policy) where you can find out more information regarding this funding. Please let us know as soon as possible if you have been accepted, you will be given a code starting TYF, please ensure this is sent to the setting as without this we will not be able to make a claim for your child. Funding for eligible 2-year-olds can only be claimed the term after your child is eligible (the term after they turn 2 years old).

All types of FEEE will automatically be deducted from your monthly invoice with a properly completed and signed termly parent/carer agreement form.

For all types of funding you will need to complete a Parent Declaration form, which is updated and signed termly showing the number of funded hours per week you are claiming for. This is returned to Oaklea, who can then apply this funding to your child's account.

Funded Sessions – at Oaklea Montessori funding can be applied to our core sessions; 9am to 12noon, 9am to 3pm or 1 to 4pm. Hours outside of these are charged at the full rate.

Notice Period

A four-week notice period is required for all cancelled sessions. For the whole notice period, fees are payable in full, including funded sessions.

FEEE can only be claimed for a child if they attend nursery on Headcount Day. If the child leaves before Headcount Day, FEEE cannot be claimed for the term, including any sessions the child has already attended. In such circumstances, full fees for the sessions attended as well as the four-week notice period are chargeable.

Where FEEE has been claimed for the term and a child moves to a different setting later in the same term, unused FEEE (calculated after the end of the four-week notice period) may be passed to another provider. This arrangement will be managed between providers and authorised by Essex County Council.

Failure to comply with policy

Where a parent/carer fails to comply with these procedures or with any special arrangements agreed with the Manager and Finance Officer, and therefore falls into arrears, *Oaklea Montessori* will be obliged to take the following action.

1. **First reminder.** The Finance Officer will issue a first reminder after the first 7 days has elapsed, reminding the parent/carer of the debt, and requesting payment within 7 days. If payment is not made within this time frame an administration fee of £10 will be added to your account.
2. **Second reminder.** If no response or payment is received within 14 days of issue, the CIC Finance Officer will issue a second reminder (with associated late payment fees, as listed above). Failure to respond or failure to adhere to an agreed payment plan will result in step 3.
3. **Final Notice.** The setting Manager and Finance Officer will issue the parent/carer one week's notice before changing the childcare arrangements to 'funded sessions only'. The purpose of this action is to safeguard the family from incurring further costs and outstanding payments do not continue to grow. The child's previous sessions may be re-instated when the Finance Officer is confident that the family are able to pay all costs.
4. Finally, we reserve the right to remove all sessions and to pass the debt to an outside agency or the small claims court.

Please note, the above actions are taken reluctantly. They are in place to safeguard the service and responsibility we have for all families. If you are having trouble with paying nursery fees, please speak to the Finance Officer at the earliest opportunity.

Oaklea Montessori endeavours to manage the efficient collection of fees and funding respectfully and according to the procedures set out above. Abusive and rude behaviours and attitudes directed to staff will **not** be tolerated.

Special Circumstances

Special arrangements may be considered in certain circumstances. These can only be arranged when parents and carers have been open and honest about their financial circumstances. Complete confidentiality will be

maintained unless stage 4 is reached (see above – failure to comply with policy).

Useful contacts

<i>www.direct.gov.uk</i>	Here you will find further information regarding multiple topics. For example: Benefits, Childcare and Education etc.
<i>www.childcarechoices.gov.uk</i>	Details regarding help with childcare costs provided by the Government. For example: Tax-Free Childcare, 2 Year funding and working entitlement funding.
<i>www.employersforchildcare.org</i>	They offer free, impartial, and confidential advice for parents on the financial support available towards childcare costs. Email: hello@employersforchildcare.org Tel: 0800 028 3008 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)

BACS PAYMENTS

- When making a payment always quote your Bill Payer ID number (as shown on your invoice).
- Please contact your Bank or Building Society and use the following details as a reference

ACCOUNT NAME:	Oaklea Montessori CIC
SORT CODE:	08-92-99
BANK ACCOUNT NUMBER:	65326619
YOUR BILL PAYER ID NUMBER:	(See invoice)

