

Friday 24th February 2026

Dear Parents & Carers,

It is again that time of year where I have to sit down and review the budget in regards to rising costs our fees and the sustainability of Little Poppets.

The minimum wage increases this year by 4.1% and must be reflected across our staff team to ensure retention and ensure they continue to feel valued for the wonderful work they do.

Last year was particularly difficult as nursery felt the impact of increased electricity costs, the new National Insurance increase and new re-cycling costs along with the general increase in the cost of living that I'm sure you all felt too.

As with all our provision to families, we aim to deliver the best quality to you and your children, from their environment, to quality resources, and the very best staff.

Good quality and nutritious food has and always will be, a key part of provision to our children. Establishing healthy eating habits from a young age is crucial for children's overall wellbeing and development. I know I do not need to remind any of you how the cost of living is impacting on the weekly grocery shop!

The roll out of the new 'free' funding scheme launched by the government is now well established within nursery with all eligible two-year-olds and children from 9 months now receiving funding in nursery to reduce your invoices.

I will always do all I can to support all funding schemes that help give our families some financial support towards childcare costs but I must balance this with sustainability and the high quality of provision that you all sign up for – something that is synonymous with our reputation and which I am not prepared to sacrifice.

I am very happy that the funding allocated to our 2yr olds and Under 2's is set at a sensible level to more than meet our fees and ensure we can invest in staff retention, training and qualitative provision. However, the funding we receive for our 3 & 4 year olds in nursery continues to fall short of even meeting fees and costs nursery significant amounts of money each month. Whilst FREE to parents it is most definitely not free for nurseries!

From April 2026 the local authority will pay us £5.88ph for all 3 & 4 year olds – this is significantly less than our fees and presents a financial burden on our budget month on month.

I really don't want to withdraw funding from nursery – I know how much this helps with your nursery costs and in the current financial climate I know how important this funding package is to you. However we will continue to ask for a Voluntary contribution fee to this age group to help minimise the impact this under funding has on nursery provision. Thank you to you all for making these voluntary contributions, it really tells me that you recognise the quality of provision we strive to offer and understand that this comes at a cost not met by funding alone!

The 'Voluntary contribution' will ensure we continue to be able to meet the rising costs of consumable items, high quality resources, additional services such as Didi Dance and French, snacks, family events, trips out to the Theatre, treats at the ice-cream parlour in town and many other trips out into town to explore the market, the café and feed the ducks (the list is not exhaustive).

The 'contribution charge' will remain at £50 (or a proportion of that if your child is not claiming the full 30 hours) and will continue to be added to your invoices. The additional charge will mean that all families can continue to benefit from the extra funding available to them, without adding financial burden to Little Poppets, or pushing us to make reductions on quality and provision.

I must stress that this not a 'top-up fee' and that it is a VOLUNTARY contribution that will ensure we are able to continue to offer the additional extra's that nursery provides that the funding alone simply does not cover.

I am trying my best to protect funding packages and continue to accept them as a payment option in nursery. However, it is your entitlement to give notice of your child's place with us before these new charges take effect in April 2026, with March being your full calendar month notice period if you choose to do so.

General fees will see a small increase from £6.75ph to £7.00ph

Extra session fees will see an increase from £9.00ph to £9.50ph

Breakfast will remain @ £3.00

Lunch will remain @ £3.75

Tea time will remain @ £3.50

Late Payment Fee – I would much prefer NOT to implement this fee at all, so please, please, ensure your invoices are paid on time and avoid this fee altogether! This fee will remain @ £30 and will be implemented to your next invoice, if fees are paid late!!

Late Collection Fee

I would much prefer NOT to implement this fee either. We do allow a buffer of ten minutes before a late collection fee is implemented but this is intended to be used rarely and not a regular arrival time. Currently our charge for late collections is £15 implemented if you are more than 10 minutes late – this will be increased to £20 and I will be using it more consistently from April. Please also be mindful that insurance on our building for your children is up to 6pm so collections after this time leave everyone vulnerable.

I also want to use this as an opportunity once again to remind everyone that handovers at the end of the day are to inform you of your child's day with us in general. If you want/need to speak to us about something specific that requires more time, please can you make an appointment for this so that we are able to staff it appropriately and give you the time you need.

I know that any price increase is unfortunate and I have tried to keep this as low as possible to sustain our current provision in the current climate. I will continue to monitor the 30 hours provision for 3 & 4 year olds and the impact this underfunding has on nursery. I do not want to withdraw it all together but I must ensure it does not compromise quality of provision for all.

Thank you all for your continued support – we truly value all our families and again I am happy to report Nursery is full now until September 2028!!! Seems bizarre to us but we are all extremely grateful!

Kindest regards, Louise x