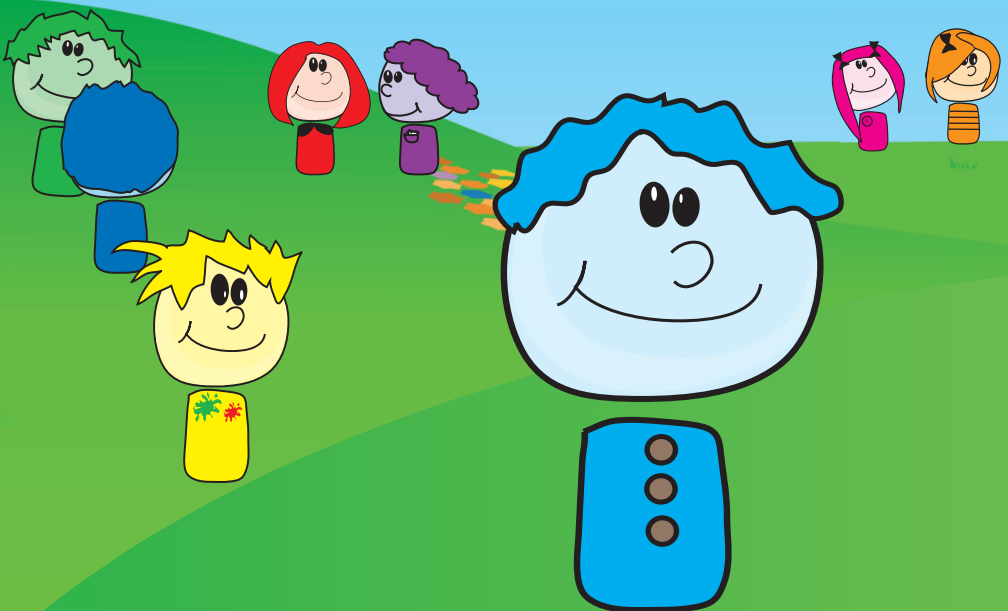


Blackpool  
**Family**  
Information Service  
0800 092 2332



# Free Early Years Entitlement for Three and Four Year Olds



**Keeping Blackpool Families Informed**

# What is the free early years entitlement?

Early years entitlement is an opportunity for your child to join in play based activities in a quality environment in order to continue their learning. All three and four year old residents in Blackpool will have the opportunity to access 15 hours per week of free early years provision for 38 weeks of the year (instead of the previous 12.5 hours per week which is still offered in some local authorities).

You can choose to take this free entitlement at any of the following childcare providers that are in Blackpool and approved by Blackpool Council

- pre-school playgroup
- private day nursery
- a childminder
- an independent (private) school.
- Sure Start Children's Centres

In this leaflet the above are referred to as 'eligible providers'.

Please see separate section on using your entitlement in Maintained nurseries in schools

A complete list of all 'eligible providers' can be obtained from the Blackpool Family Information service on 0800 092 2332.

## What will my child get from attending free early years entitlement?

Your child will have the chance to play and learn in an environment that will help to extend their skills and experiences, develop their confidence and build on what they already know. Supporting them to learn with enjoyment and challenge.

## How can I use the hours?

The free entitlement can be taken flexibly to suit you and your family's needs and where your chosen provider has vacancies. However, there are some guidelines as to how the 15 hours can be used:

- A maximum of **9 hours** can be taken in **1 day**
- A maximum of **14 hours** can be taken over **2 days**
- A maximum of **15 hours** can be taken over **3 days or over**

## When can my child access a free place?

Children will receive the free provision from the term after their third birthday as shown in the table below:

A child born on or between	can access a free place from
1 April and 31 August	September - Autumn term
1 September and 31 December	January - Spring term
1 January and 31 March	April - Summer term

## How do I claim the free early years entitlement?

You will need to choose an 'eligible provider' and agree attendance days and times. They will then supply you with a **Registration Form** to complete for each child. If your child is already attending an 'eligible provider' they should provide you with the form to complete. You will be asked to provide documentary evidence of your address and your child's date of birth, such as their birth certificate or a child benefit entitlement letter. Each term you will be asked to sign a 'headcount form' to confirm your child's attendance and the provider will then be able to receive payment directly from us, Blackpool Council, for your child's free place.

**It is your responsibility as a parent to make sure you do not sign the form unless the name and details of your child and the number of hours your child plans to attend that term has already been completed.**

## How will I know if the provider is right for my child and my family?

It is a good idea to look round more than one type of provider as each one may offer different services that suit you and your child. You may want to take your child with you when you visit the provider to see how staff talk to him or her. Try to visit when children are there so you can see if they are happy, busy and enjoying the activities.

Listed at the back are some typical questions to ask and some things to look for when visiting a provider. Staff should expect you to ask questions and will be happy to answer them. You can get more information by calling the Blackpool Family Information Service on 0800 092 2332.

## Can sessions be mixed between providers?

Yes, you can choose to take up the free entitlement at more than one provider. So, for example, you could have five hours with one 'provider' on one day and ten hours with another over two days. Due to the way the Government currently funds maintained provision on school sites it is not possible to split funding with these.

## How do I claim my entitlement in a Maintained nursery?

If a child attends any of the following Maintained nurseries (part of a Local Authority school) they are deemed to be already receiving free nursery education entitlement and you do not need to submit a claim. However, they are entitled to the free 15 hours. You will need to discuss with the school the days that you can use the 15 hours flexibly.

**Baines Endowed Primary**

**Bispham Endowed Primary**

**Boundary Primary**

**Christ the King Primary**

**Claremont Primary**

**Devonshire Road Primary**

**Kincraig Primary**

**Marton Primary**

**Mereside Primary**

**Moor Park Primary**

**Revoe Primary**

**St Cuthberts RC Primary**

**St John Vianney Primary**

**Waterloo Primary**

**Westcliff Primary**

**St Johns Primary**

## What if I need more or less than 15 hours?

If your child attends a provider for more than the 15 hours free entitlement, you will only pay for the additional hours taken. Please check with your provider how they will charge you for the additional hours. The first 15 hours MUST be provided free of charge and you do not have to take any extra hours over and above these. You can also choose to take less than your weekly entitlement of 15 hours.

## Can the lunch hour be part of the free entitlement?

Yes, if the provider agrees, a child's free entitlement can be taken up around a lunch hour. The provider may make an additional charge for the lunch or you may be given the option of providing a packed lunch for your child.

## What if we live outside Blackpool ?

Children who live outside Blackpool but attend an 'eligible provider' in Blackpool can still claim the full 15 hours.

## Signs to look for and questions to ask

### Some signs to look for:

- children appear confident and settled. They are involved in what they are doing and enjoying themselves
- the staff have a caring and friendly relationship with the children, they are involved in their play and there are no raised voices
- the setting is safe, well lit and clean
- there is a broad range and generous supply of toys and equipment easily available for children to choose from, including many natural materials
- enough space for children to play
- a quiet area where children can rest and sleep if they need to
- comfortable areas where children can relax
- toys, books and displays that represent and promote different cultures and lifestyles in a positive way
- clean, appropriately sized toilets and hand basins with individual or disposable towels provided
- a secure and safe outdoor play area
- a broad and balanced play-based curriculum offering a wide range of activities and experiences
- staff who are engaged with children and interested in what they are doing.

## **These are some questions that you might want to ask**

### **How long have staff been working in the setting?**

*Children need to develop stable relationships with the adults caring for them. That is more likely to happen with providers where there is a low turnover of staff.*

### **What training have staff had for the job?**

*Appropriately trained staff usually provide better quality care and education for young children. Ask what training opportunities and qualifications the staff have.*

### **Do the staff enjoy being with children and why?**

*It is important that the adults providing early years free entitlement enjoy their work. Their job is to support parents in providing young children with a variety of stimulating and exciting opportunities to learn and develop to the best of their abilities.*

### **Can I look around the building to see the rooms and outside play area?**

*The setting should be safe, welcoming and stimulating. Look for a variety of toys, equipment and materials, stored so that children can get at them easily and clean toilets with hand dryers or disposable paper towels. There needs to be enough space so children can move around freely. Outdoor play is important. Check how the providers plan for this.*

### **Where will my child rest?**

*Some young children may still need to rest during their time at nursery. Rest areas should be quiet, dimly lit and have soft furnishings.*

### **What kind of food and drink will children have?**

*Ask if children have fresh fruit and vegetables, and are able to drink water when they need to or want to. All food and snacks should contribute to a healthy diet.*

### **What will my child do during their time at nursery?**

*Children need to get involved with interesting activities, both quiet and*

*active. Activities should be varied and give children opportunities to choose what they want to do.*

### **How do you deal with challenging behaviour?**

*Challenging behaviour needs to be dealt with sensitively. Providers should have a written policy on how they deal with more challenging behaviour and should aim to understand and help the children to manage this behaviour appropriately.*

### **Will my child be with a regular group of children? How old are they?**

*Friendships are very important to children. Being part of a regular group can help. However children can also benefit from being with others older or younger than themselves. The providers should do all they can to support special friendships and encourage children to mix with others.*

### **How will you make sure I know how my child is getting on?**

*You should expect to be given regular updates on your child's progress and achievements. Parents should contribute to their child's records too. Ask your chosen provider how they will do this. The following tips can also help you to decide:*

- you may wish to speak to other parents/carers about your chosen providers to get their opinions and experiences*
- you know your child best so always trust your own feelings about the provider and the care and education they receive*
- ask if they have a quality assurance award, self evaluation or a continuous improvement plan, e.g. the Blackpool Quality Steps to Quality Framework*
- ask if they have an Early Years Professional - a more highly qualified member of staff*



# How can I get more information?

**Please contact:**

**Blackpool Family Information Service  
on 0800 092 2332**

**Email: [freentitlement@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:freentitlement@blackpool.gov.uk)**

**Or write to us at the following address:**

**Blackpool Family Information Service  
Early Years & Childcare Team  
Children and Young People's Department  
Progress House  
Clifton Road  
Blackpool Council  
FY4 4US  
0800 092 2332**