

Frequently Asked Questions

We have compiled the following list of frequently asked questions about childcare in Camden.

If your question is not answered here, please email fis@camden.gov.uk

Or call 020 7974 1679

What age do children start at nursery?

It really depends on why your child is attending nursery. If you are returning to work after maternity leave you may need childcare when your baby is six months to a year old. The traditional age to start nursery has been from about 2 years 8 months (when they're out of nappies) to three. Some children may be ready to start before this and recent research has shown the advances made by children who start nursery at the age of two.

Some nurseries start at a particular age (perhaps two or three years of age), if you have one that you are particularly keen on you may wish to start at that point.

What days and times can my child attend nursery?

Some nurseries/ pre-schools offer set sessions such as mornings (from around 9.00/9.30am to 12.30/1.00pm) or afternoons (from around 12.30/1.00pm to 3.00/3.30pm). On top of this they may offer longer morning sessions that cover the lunch time period and early morning or early evening sessions that extend the day from 8.00am to 6.00pm. Once you have decided which session your child is attending you have the same pattern for 5 days a week.

Other nurseries, in response to the needs of working parents, offer more flexible packages with some full days and some part days offered to fit in with the hours that parents work. These nurseries start around 7.30/8.00am in the morning and are usually open until 6.00/6.30pm.

What time of the year can my child start nursery?

Many nurseries take children as soon as they have places available others may suggest a start date at the beginning of the next term so there would be three starting times a year (September, January and March/April). This is particularly likely to happen if a place becomes available or your child reaches the appropriate age in July or August as many nurseries take a break in August a group of children may start together in September.

The exception to this is nurseries that are attached to maintained primary and infant schools who only have one intake in September each year.

When should I apply for a nursery place?

Apply as soon as you can, some nurseries have long waiting lists. Nurseries that are attached to maintained primary and infant schools have a set timetable for applications. Your child would start

in the school nursery in the academic year in which they turn 4 years old (from 1st September to 31st August). You apply in the January of the year before this, so for example, applications for September 2014 are made in January 2014. All applications are made directly to the nurseries themselves so you can make as many as you wish.

How do nurseries work out their fees?

If the nursery is receiving funding from Camden to provide free nursery education for your child (called Nursery Education Funding) those hours (570 per year) must be free. However any other hours or services (such as meals) that you have from the nursery will be charged for. We encourage nurseries to provide clear invoices itemising their costs but this part of their contract with parents is outside our control. If you feel that your nursery is charging you for the free hours please contact fis@camden.gov.uk or phone the family information service on 020 7974 1679.

Does the council offer any help to pay for childcare?

Camden Council administer the government scheme that gives free places for two year olds from low income families and the nursery education funding scheme that gives free places to all 3 and 4 year olds (15 hours per week). Nurseries that are attached to maintained primary and infant schools will be offering free full time places (25 hours per week) from September 2013. The council's children's centres will also be offering this to 3 and 4 year olds and subsidised rates for younger children based on family income.

There are other sources of funding (from various sources) based on what the parent is doing see the "Help with the costs of childcare" booklet.

How can I find out if my child's nursery is part of the free 15 hours scheme (called Nursery Education Funding)?

All nurseries and pre-schools operating in the borough have been invited to become part of the scheme, most of them participate, a few have declined as it has not suited their business model. To find out if your chosen nursery is part of the scheme see the childcare search;

<http://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/education/pre-school/search-for-childcare-in-camden.en>
(Search for Nursery education funding providers only)

How can I apply for the two year old scheme?

Free Part-Time Early Education for two year-olds

Eligibility Criteria

- 1) A Camden Resident
- 2) The family meets the criteria for Free School Meals:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
 - Income-based Employment and support Allowance

- Child Tax Credit with a taxable income of no more than £16,190 and not in receipt of Working Tax Credit
- The Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit.
- Support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS)

To apply, pick up an application pack from any children's centre;

<http://maps.camden.gov.uk/Nearest/Nearest.aspx?find=Children%27s%20centre>

Parents/carers can apply once the child is two. Applications cannot be assessed before the child's second birthday. The scheme starts the first full term after the child's second birthday.

How can I apply for the 3 and 4 year old scheme?

You do not have to apply. The childcare provider claims the money directly from Camden Council. Just check that your provider is part of the scheme by looking at:

<http://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/education/pre-school/search-for-childcare-in-camden.en>

What is the difference between a childminder and a nanny?

The main difference is that childminders work from their own homes, nannies work in the family's home. Other differences are; Childminders are self-employed, nannies are employed by a family (who have to ensure that their tax and national insurance is paid and they receive a payslip), childminders are inspected by Ofsted (Office for standards in education) and it is voluntary for nannies to be on the Ofsted register.

How can I be sure that the childminders on the council lists are good ones?

No council officer can recommend one childminder above another. All childminders shown on the web site and lists supplied in answer to phone calls are Ofsted registered. To see a copy of their latest inspection see their individual records on;

<http://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/education/pre-school/search-for-childcare-in-camden.en>

I live in a neighbouring borough can my child still attend a nursery in Camden?

There are no restrictions on what borough your child attends nursery but if you wish to apply for the two year old scheme we only deal with Camden residents so you would have to apply to your own local authority.

I have heard there is a great nursery nearby but I'm not sure of the name, how can I find out more about it?

Our childcare search allows you to search for nurseries, after school clubs, childminders etc by name and even if you do not know the full name you may have enough to find them. It will also produce the list starting at your post code so can check by address as well. See;

<http://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/education/pre-school/search-for-childcare-in-camden.en>

How can I find out about nurseries and childminders in other boroughs?

All local authorities have Family Information Services. For our neighbouring authorities:

Barnet; Helpline: 0800 389 8312 Email: fyi@barnet.gov.uk
Web site: www.barnet.gov.uk/.../fyi

Brent; Helpline: 020 8937 3001 Email: cfis@brent.gov.uk
Web site: www.brent.gov.uk/.../childcare

Haringey; Helpline: 020 8489 1000 Email: childcare@haringey.gov.uk
Web site: www.fisd.haringey.gov.uk

Islington; Helpline: 020 7527 5959 Email: fis@islington.gov.uk
Web site: www.islington.gov.uk/.../fi

City of London; Helpline: 020 7332 1002 Email: fyi@cityoflondon.gov.uk
Web site: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/.../fy

Westminster; Helpline: 020 7641 7929 Email: fis@westminster.gov.uk
Web site: www.westminster.gov.uk

For other local authorities see;

<http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/pages/nafis.html>