



Parent/Carer Guide

At Little Discoveries children are valued as individuals and respected accordingly. Practitioners act as guides, supporting each child's early development educationally, emotionally, creatively and physically, preparing them for their formal learning years.



Welcome!

Welcome to Little Discoveries Day Nursery and Preschool, where children grow and learn through play. We're a small nursery and preschool with a big heart, focusing on each child as an individual. Children are supported by trained practitioners who will support your child's development in all areas and provide them with the environment they need to grow.

Parents and extended family are an important part of our community and are encouraged to participate in day to day aspects of the setting, which include contributing to planning, sharing their children's interests and working on their holistic development by recording their achievements using our online journal. We pride ourselves on our home from home feel and the benefits of working together to help your child to flourish and achieve their potential.

If you have any questions after your visit, please do not hesitate to call.

Little Discoveries Day Nursery is registered for 36 places, offering full day care for children aged 3 months to 5 years, from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. We're registered with Ofsted, the governing body for childcare providers, adhering to all the regulations.

Little Discoveries opened in 2013 and has been owned and operated by Somerset Skills & Learning (SS&L) since 2020. SS&L are a Community Interest Company and specialise in supporting early years settings by providing high quality staff training and development.

We spend a large amount of time outdoors here at Little Discoveries. We're very lucky to have the surrounding gardens offering regular outdoor play opportunities. In addition to this, we carry out occasional walks and trips to enhance your child's learning and gain knowledge of the world around them.

Our team is made up of a management team and practitioners, all of whom hold a full and relevant childcare qualification. Additionally, we're fully supportive of those beginning their careers in childcare and welcome apprentices and students studying for either a childcare qualification or healthcare related qualification. We also welcome Year 10 students from our local senior schools who are taking part in the work experience programmes. We take the safeguarding of the children in our care seriously and therefore all staff and students must be cleared to work with children in line with the Vetting and Barring Requirements, (with the exception of work experience students, as they're classified as children and don't require checks by law). Students are monitored at all times and never left alone with the children.

Our team work on their Continuous Professional Development (CPD), which means they carry out various training to develop their knowledge and support the children further in our care.

Child centred learning

The nursery is separated into three specific areas: our baby area (Dormice Room) focuses on the youngest children aged 0-2 years; our toddler area (Squirrels Room) is for our children aged 2-3 years and the preschool play room (Owls Room) is for the children aged 3 years and over. We have a covered decking area that allows the preschool to free-flow during the day, having outdoor play accessible at all times. We have a fantastic patio and garden area including a sensory garden and our very own allotment on the premises.

Our curriculum is adjusted appropriately for the different learning levels and styles across the nursery with a care based principle for the babies, an active learning platform for the toddlers and for the preschool children a rich, wide, adult-supported, child-led experience to help prepare them for their journey to school.

Supporting transition to childcare

All children need a consistent routine so we work with parents to support these. Once you've registered with us we will arrange some settling in sessions for you to come with your child and get to know the team and what we do. These are free sessions. We also use this opportunity to get to know you and your family and how we can support you here at Little Discoveries. During these sessions we'll discuss home life, routines and ask you about your child's development in the three prime areas and four specific areas of learning that the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum covers. These are Personal, Social and Emotional development (PSED), Communication and Language (CL), Physical Development (PD), Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding of the World and Expressive Art and Design.

To help your child to settle, we ask that you bring along an 'All About Me' book. This is a book about your child, the important people in their lives, their pets and favourite toys. This can be added to as and when you feel necessary with any special occasions, new pets and family members and days out. This helps your child to identify and recall. All children love sharing their pictures and experiences - no matter how big or small they are.

Once your child has settled in with us, we observe them through play. This could be joining in and engaging or observing from afar. We then record their development, supporting them where necessary and in those areas that are more challenging. These observations are so we can gather knowledge and some evidence to produce an initial assessment. This is a formal report to assess where your child is developing and what we're going to focus on next in their journey. You can help by telling us when your child does something new, or by logging onto our online journal called Tapestry. Observations are really helpful to make sure we're supporting and developing your child in the right way for them.

Each child will be supported by a key worker who you'll be introduced to when settling in. You're able to view your child's journal at any point. We advise that you make an appointment with your keyworker to discuss this and explain anything you're unsure of. We also seek your input when putting together an assessment.

What do you need to bring each day?

The first day is always a little nerve racking for both yourself and your child. Here's a list of the things you will need to pack.

Dependent on your child's stage of development:

- Spare clothes and underwear (extras when toilet training). Socks, tights, t-shirts, trousers, dress, jumper, wellies, waterproof coat, sun hat, warm hats and gloves. Keep in mind weather changes. Lots of parents choose to keep items here such as a sun hat and wellies.
- Any comforters. We do ask that toys remain at home unless they're linked to a learning topic. We can't be responsible for lost toys.
- A named water bottle/beaker, (2 years and above).
- Any medication required (please see Medication Policy).

Please make sure all belongings are named

Your child's day

Each day is very different and that's how it should be, but we do follow a daily routine so the children know what's happening. We use photos and pictures to help the children with this. Additionally, we use a transition method of a timer to support the transition so that the children have an awareness of the upcoming transition rather than it just happening.

When the children arrive, a practitioner will mark them in our register. Please let us know how your child has been since they were in last; please allow a little extra time when dropping off to do this. If you need to talk in private, please let us know. If you have a contact book in place please make sure you've completed this before leaving. We'll fill this in during the day.

The nursery opens at 8:00am. The children have access to breakfast on arrival and this finishes at 8:45am. Breakfast includes cereal and toast.

The day is a little different in each room, depending on their routine. Please ask for a copy of the routine if you wish.

A snack will be offered mid-morning with a cooked lunch at midday. In the afternoon a second snack will be offered around 2pm and high tea at 4.15pm. This is a light meal before heading home at the end of a session. We follow the 'Eat Better, Start Better' voluntary guidance on meals for children aged 1-5 years in day care settings.

All children have access to a variety of toys and equipment, which they choose from during the day. For those children who have English as an additional language and children whose speech is still developing, we'll use picture cards to assist choice. In both the morning and afternoon we have an adult led activity based around the theme and children's interests. These are also planned with children's next steps in mind. In the preschool room this is more of a focussed time working on concentration skills, which they will need for school, and stimulates deeper thinking. We offer outdoor play throughout the day. Twice a day we have a 'Get Up and Move' session either to music or as an imagination play experience for the toddlers and preschool children. Our babies also participate in dancing activities in the morning and afternoon.

Attendance

We ask for a minimum booking each week of 2 sessions (morning or afternoon). Three and four year olds accessing the 'stretched offer' can book a minimum of 2 x ½ sessions per week (see Funding Section). By having a minimum attendance, children can learn effectively without large breaks from the nursery. If your child is not going to attend, please let us know no later than 1 hour prior to their session start time. Funded children with attendance below 75% for the term will have details passed to Somerset County Councils Early Years funding team as part of our commitment to enhancing children's learning.

Funding

We are able to offer the extended hours (30 hours).

Children aged over three years old, (from the term after their 3rd birthday), are entitled to Early Years funding of up to 570 hours nursery care each year, (which equates to 15 hours per week), extending to 30 hours (depending on criteria and offer). **Parents accessing the term time only sessions** may book in extra sessions on an ad hoc basis subject to availability and are charged at the published rate. Additional sessions are charged in full. Meals are charged in addition to the funded session and the cost is the responsibility of the parents as per the Fees Policy. The minimum attendance of 2 x ½ sessions per week must be booked/paid for. There are limited spaces for the term time only access. Please note that funding covers 570 hours per year for 38 weeks. There are 39 term time weeks across the year and the outstanding week's fees are payable by parents. For those children who access term time only care, we implement inset days to cover the week not funded.

However, you can book in and pay for these sessions if you wish. There would need to be a month's notice to allow for the appropriate staff ratios to be covered. We offer spaces for funded 2 year olds, (please check the criteria for this with Somerset County Council).

Parents using the setting throughout the year can access the 'stretched offer' of 11 hours per week, (22 if using extended hours). Charges for care outside this entitlement are charged in full. All parents are invited to meet with the manager before their child accesses the free entitlement to discuss their needs. Parents in receipt of additional government support are required to complete the Pupil Premium forms, which will be provided by us.

Alterations to funded access must be arranged one full term ahead.

All funded children must provide suitable proof of birth. Please ensure you supply us with a photocopy of your child's birth certificate, (a translated copy is required when not written in English). Each child will need to be registered with Somerset County Council for the funding. We'll ask you to complete a short form for this and send it to the County Council on your behalf. Every term you will need to complete a Parent Declaration form stating how and where you would like to use the funded hours.

If accessing 2 year old funding, you must provide us with the letter confirming your entitlement. If this confirmation is not provided, the parent will be invoiced for the costs incurred that are usually covered by the funding.

Funding is broken down into three terms; autumn (Sept-Dec), spring (Jan-March) and summer (April-Aug). Each term has a different value to it, subject to the length of the term.

Meals

The nursery's lunch meals are prepared each day in the nursery. We hold a 5* food rating from the Food Standards Agency.

We support children with specific food intolerances such as dairy, egg and nut allergies, as well as supporting different food choices, such as vegetarianism. Although every care is taken, we cannot guarantee foods purchased may not have been produced or packaged in a nut free environment. It is essential that you let us know of any specific dietary requirements prior to your child starting so that we have time to prepare and ensure we are able to meet those requirements.

All staff handling food will have an up to date Basic Food Hygiene certificate as required by law.

Meal charges are included in the cost of care except for funded children where the full cost of the meals is charged each week, (2-4 year olds).

Staff

Our team is made up of highly qualified and experienced practitioners. Staff photos are on display on the parent board in the foyer. The management team consists of the Nursery Manager (Naomi Bartin), Assistant Manager (Charlotte Townsend) and Supervisor (Gemma Jones).

Fees and charges

Our current fees and charges are available from the nursery manager and are reviewed annually in March.

Nursery Place Fees (payable on applying for a nursery place): £50 non-refundable. This fee is payable at the time of a request being made for your child's place, as we hold this place for you, often for a long period of time. Children accessing only the funded hours for 2, 3 & 4 year olds are not required to pay a registration fee in line with the Somerset Code of Practice.

All fees are payable one month in advance, (except for children only accessing funded hours as this is paid to us directly each term from Somerset County Council). Parents wishing to cancel their child's place on the waiting list must give one month's notice in writing. Failure to do this will mean that an invoice for the first month will be raised and is payable.

Late payment of fees: 10% of the total is charged on each outstanding invoice if payment is not received by the due date. Unpaid invoices will be passed to a credit collection agency and your child's place will be at risk of being cancelled. If you have booked a session please note that the charges will be processed unless cancelled with 4 weeks' notice; sessions are not transferable. Please see full Fees and Payments Policy for details.

Help with fees: Parents are encouraged to speak to their employers about childcare vouchers to help with costs. Child Tax Credits can be claimed via HMRC.

Nursery closure (Christmas to New Year & Bank Holidays): The nursery is not operational on Bank Holidays or during the period between Christmas and New Year's Eve. Parents are not charged for the close down period between Christmas and New Year's Eve. Bank holiday closures are accrued into the charges across the year for all children. There is no further holiday entitlement from the nursery.

We regret we are unable to support families requiring flexible places as this limits our intake of children.

Fees are to be paid by the 25th of each month, (BACS and childcare vouchers).

Childcare vouchers can take a while to process so please bear this in mind.

Policies and procedures

The nursery is governed in effect by its policies and procedures. These are reviewed annually as part of our quality assessment, but from time to time these may need adjusting. When parents join the nursery they are in effect agreeing to the terms and conditions of the setting. Therefore we urge parents to read through these in full before signing the contract.

All policies will be available in full in the nursery office. Core policies are available via our website: <https://www.littlediscoverieschildcare.co.uk>

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