



**Thorncombe St Mary's CE Primary
Academy**

Nursery Admissions Policy

September 2024 – August 2025

Policy agreed: April 2025

Policy review date: September 2025

As an academy, the First Federation Trust is the admission authority and has responsibility for setting these admission arrangements and for making decisions regarding admissions applications. The Trust sets its own oversubscription criteria, taking into account the recommendation from its schools.

1. The Ethos of Thorncombe St Mary's Primary Academy.

At Thorncombe St Mary's, we believe passionately that everyone has the potential to succeed. We are committed to providing and developing a positive, safe and stimulating learning environment underpinned by our core Christian values. As a fully inclusive school, everyone can learn, grow and feel uniquely valued and nurtured.

2. Early Years Funding

- 2.1. Parents can check to find out what funding they are entitled to receive through the governments [Childcare Choices website](#).
- 2.2. If your child is two you should also use the checker to see if you can get a funded place [for your two-year-old](#) before you make an application.



- 2.3. If a parent is eligible for both the **targeted 2-year-old funding for working parents** from April 2023 and the **2-year-old funding** school will claim two-year-old funding and parents will remain eligible for this funding even if their circumstances change.
- 2.4. We expect to admit children that will be using their Early Years Funding as well as children whose parents are buying additional hours and those that are both funded and buying hours.
- 2.5. There may be some children who are only attending for bought hours and some that only attend for funded hours.
- 2.6. The maximum amount of funded time that can be taken in a day is 10 hours; parents cannot use more than two sites for funded early years places in one day.

3. Admissions to the Little Acorns nursery.

- 3.1.
 - Thorncombe St Mary's CE Primary academy admits:

- Eligible two-year-olds funded from the start of the funding period following their second birthday.
- Eligible two-year-olds funded as rising three-year-olds at the start of the funding period in which they have their third birthday.
- Non-funded two-year-olds from the start of the funding period following their second birthday.
- Non-funded two-year-olds as rising three-year-olds at the start of the funding period in which they have their third birthday.
- Funded two-year-olds with working parents from the start of the funding period following their second birthday.
- Eligible two-year-olds funded as rising three-year-olds at the start of the funding period in which they have their third birthday.
- Non-funded two-year-olds as rising three-year-olds at the start of the funding period in which they have their third birthday.
- Funded two-year-olds of working parents as rising three-year-olds at the start of the funding period in which they have their third birthday.
- Eligible three-year olds that meet the criteria for two-year-old funding.
- Early Years funded three- and four-year-olds from the start of the funding period following their third birthday.
- Non-funded three- and four-year-olds from the start of funding period following their third birthday.

4. Points of Admission to nursery

- 4.1. Generally, children will start at nursery at the beginning of a term. Eligibility for the Early Years Funding for two-year-olds is from the start of the funding period following a child's second birthday and eligibility for all three-years-olds to receive the Early Years Funding is at the start of the funding period following their third birthday.
- 4.2. This funding will be paid up until the time when the child reaches compulsory school age if the parent chooses to defer or delay entry into school.

If a child is born (or reaches 9 months) between:	Funding can be claimed from:
1 January and 31 March	1 April following the child's birthday
1 April and 31 August	1 September following the child's birthday
1 September and 31 December	1 January following the child's birthday

- 4.3. There is a legal requirement that all children begin **full time education** by the beginning of the term following their **fifth** birthday. All places offered in reception are for **full-time admission** in the September following the **fourth** birthday. This is a legal requirement on schools but not on parents who retain a right to defer admission or send their child part time.

5. Patterns of attendance available

- 5.1. Our school makes an **offer** for the **universal** 570-hour (15 hours) funding entitlement and the 1140 hour extended entitlement (30 hours) funding of:
- Morning sessions of 08.45am - 11.45am
 - Afternoon sessions of 12.15 - 3.15pm
 - All day sessions of 08.45am - 3.15pm
- 5.2. The school has signed the Dorset Local Provider Agreement and is compliant with the requirements for funded hours.

6. Extended Hours

- 6.1. Families with three- and four-year-olds that have an 11-digit code because they are working and eligible for the 30-hour **extended entitlement** can have up to 1140 hours **stretched across a year** or 30 hours a week over 38 weeks of the year. NB: some families may choose to attend more than one provider and want to stretch the entitlement across the year in one provision and take some funded sessions during term time in another.
- 6.2. Many working families with two-year-olds will get **570 funded hours from April 2024**; this increases to 1140 funded hours from September 2024 so is the same as the extended entitlement for three- and four-year-olds. We will offer these places from April 2024.
- 6.3. From **September 2024 children from nine months of age whose parents are working could get 570 funded hours**. From September 2025 this increases to 1140 funded hours. We are unable to offer these places. You will need to use another provider if you are entitled to this funding.
- 6.4. We are unable to offer a longer day for nursery/preschool children.
- 6.5. When allocating places, the schools Nursery Admissions Panel take the extended services for three- and four-year-olds that are run by the school to be an integral part of the nursery/preschool provision.
- 6.6. If parents want to buy additional hours on top of the 15 funded hours or the 30-hour extended entitlement, they can do this during most of our opening times. We sell extra hours at £6 per hour for two-year-olds and £5 per hour for three and four year olds.
- 6.7. The table below sets out the session times that you can choose. When applying for a place please use the school application form.
- 6.8. **We only consider requests for sessions AFTER the oversubscription criteria have been applied.**

Our Model is:

Session choices	Hours	Bought or Funded
08.45 - 11.45	3	Either
11.45 - 12.15	0.5	Either

12.15 - 3.15	3	Either
08.45 - 3.15	6	Either

- 6.9.** These are the sessions that you can choose. We claim funding on this basis. If you decide to collect your child early or drop them off later, you must tell us. By doing this you will either lose out on some of your funded entitlement hours or be paying for time that you have chosen not to take.
- 6.10.** Our nursery is open term time only, i.e., 38 weeks per year.

7. Charging

- 7.1.** There is no charge for applying for a place, for admission or for the provision of the funded entitlements. We will not request donations before or during the admissions process and any donations made to the school following admission are entirely voluntary. No bought activities are compulsory.
- 7.2.** The school must comply with Dorset County Councils Provider Agreement

8. Help with the cost of childcare

- 8.1.** Our school accepts childcare vouchers. Please contact our office if you wish to check the vouchers you have are eligible to be used.
- 8.2.** Our school is [registered](#) for [tax free childcare](#).
- 8.3.** Find the right offer for you on [Childcare Choices](#).

9. School Lunches

- 9.1.** [Free school meals](#) (FSM) must be provided for children (whose parents meet the [eligibility criteria](#) **and** if their child attends **both** before and after the lunch time period. This generally means an all-day session. A free school meal will be provided whether the child is attending for funded or bought time and regardless of their age. Parents must check eligibility [here](#).
- 9.2.** Children who do not meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals in our nursery are offered the opportunity to either buy a school lunch or bring a packed lunch.

10. Visiting

- 10.1.** We welcome visits from parents and children who are considering applying for a place here. This is an opportunity for you to see what we have to offer. Visits are not a compulsory part of the admissions process and will not affect decisions on whether a place can be offered at our nursery. If you would like to visit us, you should contact the school to make an appointment. Please call the school office on 0146030535.
- 10.2.** We currently have a free 'stay and play' session each Thursday from 10-12. We also offer a taster session that can be attended before applications are made for a place.
- 10.3.** Most children will start at the nursery at the start of the term. Other children join us at other times. This may be because they are new to the area or would like to transfer from another early year's provider. However, if we have places available and an application is submitted, we will offer a place.

10.4. To apply for a place here you must use the nursery application form.

10.5. Places are not allocated to a child automatically, even where:

- there is an older sibling attending the school.
- a child attends a particular toddler group or Children's Centre attached to the school.
- a parent has expressed an interest at any time in the school; or
- the child has always lived close to the school.

10.6. No places will be held in reserve for a child who applies late; the school cannot hold places empty if another child applies for admission. We will publicise the need to apply on our website but the responsibility for making an application will be with you as the parent.

11. How to apply for a nursery place

11.1. Parents must complete the Nursery Application Form and return it to the school.

11.2. The closing dates for applications for the nursery intake are 1 April, 1 July and 1 January. You can apply after these dates, but your application may not be considered until after all the applications that were on time. If you couldn't apply before because, for instance, you moved to this area, you should make sure that you inform the school. If the reason for applying after the closing date is accepted, your application will be considered at the same time as everyone who did apply on time if this is still possible.

12. Information provided in an application.

12.1. We would like all applications to be fully and honestly completed. It is important that where we offer places to some and refuse others we do so fairly and consistently. Where we have reason to believe that information is false and has been provided knowingly, we may withdraw the offer of a place. This is particularly relevant where an address is given which is not the one from which a child will actually attend nursery and this disadvantages another child.

12.2. Before making an application parents need to have checked their eligibility for 2-year-old funding [here](#) and the extended entitlement funding (15 and 30 hours) [here](#) evidence of eligibility will be checked before an offer of a place is made.

12.3. Parents with three- and four-year-olds should check to see if they are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium funding before making an application by completing this form. Please contact our office if you need support with this process.

12.4. If you know or believe that your child's address will change before admission, you must inform the school as this may affect your application.

12.5. You will be asked to provide **date of birth evidence** so we can check your child's age.

13. What happens next.

13.1. If there are fewer applications than places, then no application will be refused. Only if there are more applications than there are places available will the Trust prioritise applications according to the oversubscription criteria.

- 13.2.** The applications will be listed in order of priority. We do not consider the sessions requested when prioritising the applications.
- 13.3.** We will endeavour to give the hours requested. It is inevitable, however, that some parents who have been prioritised will not get the hours they have requested. In these instances, we will offer times (days/hours/weeks) that fall closest to the hours requested.
- 13.4.** By 1 May, 1 October, and 1 February we will contact successful parents to welcome them to the nursery and to make arrangements for admission itself. You will also be contacted if we do not have a place available so that you can apply to another provider.

14. Overview of the Admissions Process

Visit the nursery in:	Spring term	Summer term	Autumn term
Apply by:	1 May	1 September	1 January
Admissions panel meet in:	May	September	January
Receive a letter about your application before:	May half term	October half term	February half term
Reply to the letter	Reply to the letter within 2 weeks to accept a place (or ask why you did not get a place). You can telephone, email or write to the school	Reply to the letter within 2 weeks to accept a place (or ask why you did not get a place). You can telephone, email or write to the school	Reply to the letter within 2 weeks to accept a place (or ask why you did not get a place). You can telephone, email or write to the school
Start at Nursery (or at the start of term closest to that month)	September Autumn Term	January Spring term	April Summer term

15. Published Nursery Admissions Number (PNAN)

- 15.1.** This is the number of places we intend to make available for our normal nursery intake. Once we set this number, we will not refuse admission for applications below the PNAN. If there is unexpectedly high demand and we believe we could admit more children, we inform Dorset Council's Early Years and Childcare Team and either some children will be admitted above the PNAN or we will increase the PNAN. The number of children that can be admitted will depend on their age, the amount of floor space we have and whether additional staff will be required.
- 15.2.** The Trust also factor in the local demand for places. If there is a change to the PNAN part way through the year this will be published on our website.
- 15.3.** If there is an increase in the demand for places the Trust may decide to increase the PNAN to accommodate children on the waiting list and conversely reduce the PNAN if there is a very low demand.

- 15.4. The table below sets out our Published Nursery Admissions Number (PNAN) for the current academic year.

The maximum number of 2, 3 and 4-year-old children that will be admitted at any one time is:

6

- 15.5. Where the number of applications exceeds the number of places available the Trust will use the following oversubscription criteria to prioritise applications for both funded and bought hours:

OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA FOR TWO YEAR OLDS

A child with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) naming the school or nursery will be admitted^[6].

1. Looked after Children^[7] and children who were previously Looked After but immediately after being Looked After became subject to an adoption order, a child arrangements order (CAO), or a special guardianship order (SGO)^[8] including those who were in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care because they were adopted.
2. Priority will next be given to children or parents with an exceptional medical or social need^[9] to attend this nursery.
3. Priority will next be given to children who live in the **designated area** and are eligible for **two-year-old funding**^[10] and **Early Years Pupil Premium and /or Disability Access Funding** (from April 2024).
4. Priority will next be given to children who live in the **designated area** and are eligible for **two-year-old funding**^[11]
5. Priority will next be given to children who live within the schools **designated area** and whose parents are working and **eligible for targeted two-year-old funding for working parents** [the extended entitlement of *15 hours from April 2024 or 30 hours from September 2025*] and **Early Years Pupil Premium and/or Disability Access Funding**.
6. Priority will next be given to children who live within the schools **designated area** and whose parents are working and **eligible for targeted two-year-old funding for working parents** [the extended entitlement of *15 hours from April 2024 or 30 hours from September 2025*].
7. Priority will next be given to children who live in the schools **designated area** who have a **sibling** at the school or nursery.
8. Priority will next be given to all other children who live in the schools **designated area**.
9. Priority will next be given to children who live **outside** the schools designated area who have a sibling at the school or nursery and are **eligible for two-year-old funding and Early Years Pupil Premium and /or Disability Access Funding**.
10. Priority will next be given to children who live **outside** the schools designated area who have a sibling at the school or nursery and are **eligible for two-year-old funding**.
11. Priority will next be given to children who live **outside** the schools designated area who have a **sibling** at the school or nursery and are eligible for **targeted two-year-old funding for working parents and Early Years Pupil Premium and/or Disability Access Funding**.

12. Priority will next be given to children who live **outside** the schools designated area who have a **sibling** at the school or nursery and are eligible for **targeted two-year-old funding for working parents**.

13. Priority will next be given to all other children who live **outside** the schools designated area who have a sibling at the school or nursery.

14. Priority will next be given to the children of **members of staff** who have been employed at this school for at least two years or who were recruited within the last two years to fill a vacancy for which there is a skills shortage.

15. **Other children.**

^[6] These children meet the eligibility criteria for two-year-old funding.

^[7] These children are Looked After by or provided with accommodation in the exercise of its functions (see the Children act 1989 section 22 (1)) by a Local Authority.

^[8] These children meet the eligibility criteria for two-year-old funding and for Early Years Pupil Premium

^[9] Evidence from a medical specialist or social worker must be provided.

^[10] Parents must be encouraged to check their eligibility through the [Citizens Portal](#) before making an application.

^[11] Parents must be encouraged to check their eligibility through the [Citizens Portal](#) before making an application.

OVERSUBSCRIPTION CRITERIA FOR **THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR OLDS**

A child with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) naming the school or nursery will be admitted^[12].

1. Looked after Children^[13] and children who were previously Looked After but immediately after being Looked After became subject to an adoption order, a child arrangements order (CAO), or a special guardianship order (SGO)^[14] including those who were in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care because they were adopted.

2. Priority will next be given to children or parents with an exceptional medical or social need^[15] to attend this nursery.

3. Priority will next be given to children who live in the **designated area** and are eligible for **two-year-old funding**^[16] (and **Early Years Pupil Premium and/or Disability Access Funding** from April 2024).

4. Priority will next be given to other children who live in the schools **designated area** who are eligible for **Early Years Pupil Premium and/or Disability Access Funding**.

5. Priority will next be given to children who live within the schools **designated area** and whose parents are working and **eligible for the extended entitlement** of 15 hours from April 2024 or 30 hours from September 2025.

6. Priority will next be given to children who live in the schools **designated area** who have a **sibling** at the school or nursery.

7. Priority will next be given to all other children who live in the schools **designated area**.

8. Priority will next be given to children who live **outside** of the schools designated area with a **sibling** at the school.

9. Priority will next be given to children who live **outside** the schools designated area who are three years old and **eligible for two-year-old funding and Early Years Pupil Premium and/or Disability Access Funding** (from April 2024).

10. Priority will next be given to the children of **members of staff** who have been employed at this school for at least two years or who were recruited within the last two years to fill a vacancy for which there is a skills shortage.

11. **Other children.**

- [\[12\]](#) These children meet the eligibility criteria for two-year-old funding.
- [\[13\]](#) These children are Looked After by or provided with accommodation in the exercise of its functions (see the Children act 1989 section 22 (1)) by a Local Authority.
- [\[14\]](#) These children meet the eligibility criteria for two-year-old funding and for Early Years Pupil Premium
- [\[15\]](#) Evidence from a medical specialist or social worker must be provided.
- [\[16\]](#) Parents must be encouraged to check their eligibility through the [Citizens Portal](#) before making an application.

16. Waiting lists

- 16.1.** Following the allocation of nursery places the school will retain a waiting list. Waiting lists will be kept in order of the oversubscription criteria. Places on lists will not be prioritised according to how long a child's name has been on that list or by the age of the child or by whether the sessions are funded or bought. It is possible that a child's name could go down on a list as well as up.
- 16.2.** If a place is only available for a short period of time, i.e., half a term or less, then the school will discuss with the parent whether it would be in the child's best interest to attend the nursery for such a short period of time before having to find a place at another provider. Continuity and consistency of care is most important in the early years and having lots of transitions can be disruptive for a child.
- 16.3.** Parents with children that are not due to start within the next two terms, will be asked to complete the Note of interest for a nursery place form and told when they should apply.

17. Increasing the hours attended

- 17.1.** If there are parents of children that already attend the nursery who want to either take up additional funded hours and/or buy extra hours a list of those parents will be made, and the oversubscription criteria will be applied to determine who should be given priority for the available session/s.
- 17.2.** The admissions panel should work their way down this prioritised list until everyone has been offered the sessions available.
- 17.3.** If there are unfilled sessions remaining after those in attendance have been given the sessions those sessions will be made offered to children on the prioritised waiting list.

18. Admissions appeals.

- 18.1.** If a nursery place is refused, parents can go through the school's complaints process [here](#) to express their concerns. The Trust will review the decision and decide whether the refusal was justified on the grounds that the nursery is full. Even if it is agreed that the nursery was full, it will also consider the impact on the child and family and may still award a place at the nursery if there is both the physical space and sufficient staff available.

19. Transport

- 19.1.** No transport is available for nursery children.

20. Uniform

- 20.1. Children attending Little Acorns nursery **are not** expected to wear a uniform but can do so if they wish. Details of where to buy uniform from can be found on our website or please ask the office if you would like support. Parents unable to purchase items of uniform or equipment will not be penalised, wearing uniform in the nursery is optional. We have a second handrail in school if parents wish to look here before buying new uniform.

21. Claiming the Early Years Funding

- 21.1. The Early Years Funding can be taken at more than one provider; parents cannot use providers on more than two sites in one day. The provider claims the funding on your behalf based on the sessions that have been booked.
- 21.2. It is important that both the school and parent can see what time is funded and what time is being bought.
- 21.3. Parents must not claim more than the 570 or 1140-hour entitlement, checks are carried out to ensure that over claims are not made.

22. Changes to attendance

- 22.1. Changes to the times when a child is attending will generally only be agreed to take effect from the start of a term. The oversubscription criteria will be applied to both a) and b) below to determine within each group which children should be given priority for the unfilled places.
- a) Parents whose children already attend the nursery to **increase or change the times their child attends**.
 - b) **New applications** from parents whose children do not yet attend the nursery and are on the prioritised waiting List.
- 22.2. It is expected that parents will ensure that their child attends at the times agreed so that children can establish a good routine and be ready to start school.

23. Induction and transition arrangements

- 23.1. Children can start for the full amount of agreed time at the start of term if they wish so. This is up to parents to decide what the best amount of time will be for their child and hours can be steadily increased if this is preferred.

24. Contacts and further information

Headteacher	Mrs Jessica Evans
Nursery Contact	Mrs Claire Stockford
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Website:	https://stmarys.acornacademy.org