

# Free early learning for 3 and 4 year olds

## What is free learning?

Also called early years care and education, nursery, or pre-school education. Children play and learn together, and are supported by qualified professionals. They take part in fun, interesting and challenging play activities, both indoors and outdoors.

### Who can receive free early learning?

Any child, no matter the family's circumstances, is entitled to receiving free early learning from the term after their third birthday, until they start school full time. Your child is entitled to a maximum of 15 hours of free early learning each week for up to 38 weeks a school year.

### When can my child receive free early learning?

The term in which a child born in April is entitled to receive their early learning entitlement is changing from September 2012. However, due to the short notice for parents, we will honour the April birthdays for Summer Term 2013.

The table below shows the date of birth and the term when your child can start being funded:

<b>Child's date of birth between dates:</b>	<b>Term they can receive funded early education:</b>
1 May 2009 - 31 August 2009	<b>Autumn Term 2012</b> (the term which starts after the Summer holiday, which usually starts in September)
1 September 2009 - 31 December 2009	<b>Spring Term 2013</b> (the term which starts after the Christmas holiday, which usually starts in January)
1 January 2010 - 30 April 2010	<b>Summer Term 2013</b> (the term which starts after the Easter holiday, which usually starts in April)
1 May 2010 - 31 August 2010	<b>Autumn Term 2013</b> (the term which starts after the Summer holiday, which usually starts in September)
1 September 2010 - 31 December 2010	<b>Spring Term 2014</b> (the term which starts after the Christmas holiday, which usually starts in January)
1 January 2011 - 31 March 2011	<b>Summer Term 2014</b> (the term which starts after the Easter holiday, which usually starts in April)
1 April 2011 - 31 August 2011	<b>Autumn Term 2014</b> (the term which starts after the Summer holiday, which usually starts in September)

1 September 2011 - 31 December 2011	<b>Spring Term 2015</b> (the term which starts after the Christmas holiday, which usually starts in January)
1 January 2012 - 31 March 2012	<b>Summer Term 2015</b> (the term which starts after the Easter holiday, which usually starts in April)

### How much free learning is my child entitled to?

Children are entitled to 15 hours per week free early learning for 38 weeks a year.

### How long can my child continue to receive free early learning?

If your child already attends a day nursery, pre-school or playgroup or childminder, you can choose to keep them there until your child is of compulsory school age. Compulsory school age is the beginning of the term after a child's **fifth** birthday.

### Can I split the free early learning between two settings?

Yes, as long as the total combined number of hours claimed by the settings does not exceed the maximum number of hours the child can receive, based on the total combined number of days per week the child attends both settings. Please see the table above.

Hours can be split as follows:

- between a maximum of 2 settings
- between a maximum of 1 setting and 1 School Nursery Class (by prior agreement with the school only)

From September 2011, once a parent has accepted a full or part time reception class place at school, they have no early learning funding to use elsewhere (unless the place had been deferred.)

### Where can I find early learning for my child?

You can find out about the early learning in you area by:

- asking a friend or family member
- asking at a local pre-school, day nursery or the local primary school (if it has a [nursery class](#))
- searching for childcare by entering your postcode in the [Family Services Directory](#)
- contacting the [Suffolk Families Information Service](#).

Please note that before your child can start their free early education, you will need to complete a Parent/Carer Authorisation Form, which your childcare provider (school nursery, pre-school playgroup or day nursery) will give you. You will also need to show them proof of your child's date of birth.