What is a Pre-School?

A pre-school offers children from 2-5 (under statutory school age) an opportunity to learn through play.

Some pre-schools are privately owned and some are run by voluntary committees, opening times vary but generally most sessions run for 3 hours either in the morning or afternoon during school term time only.

All pre-schools are registered with Ofsted and are required to meet the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – this framework consists of standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. To find out more about EYFS visit www.Foundationyears.org.uk

All pre-schools included on this list are registered with Ofsted.

We recommend that you make yourself a shortlist of Pre-schools you are interested in visiting and contact them to arrange an appointment.

Please read the attached factsheet “Visiting Childcare Providers” and prepare some questions to ask the pre-school. Below is a list of some questions you may consider asking.

What should I look for when I visit and what questions should I ask?

- Is the setting warm and inviting?
- Is there a lot going on/are the children stimulated and busy?
- Do the children seem happy and contented
- Are there plenty of toys and books on show?
- Do the staff respond to the children?
- Are the children well supervised?

The following questions will help you to remember some of the key things you should ask when deciding on whether the care they can provide is suitable for your child.

Costs and Availability:

- Are there vacancies - is there a waiting list and, if so, how long is this?
- Do you have to pay a deposit? If so, what’s it for? Is it returnable?
A pre-school provides sessional care to children aged 2-5 years old.

- How much do they charge per hour/day? Do you have to pay for meals/happies/other activities?
- How can you access the free 15 hours? And are there additional services, if so what is the charge for these?
- Do they accept childcare vouchers (if this is an option from your employer)?
- Do they offer a settling in period? If so, how long for?

Staff qualifications:

- What is the ratio of staff to children?
- What qualifications do the staff hold and have they undertaken regular training or professional development?
- The leader should hold a minimum of a level 3 or equivalent qualification (some settings have an Early Years Professional or qualified teacher)
- Is there a safe and secure outdoor area?
- Ask to see a copy of their Ofsted registration certificate and a copy of their latest report
- Do you keep a daily record of what the children do?
- Can I see your policies? Can I have hard copies to read at home?
- What is your policy on discipline – how will you work with me to manage challenging behaviour?
- What happens if I’m late to collect my child?

Useful websites:

www.pacey.org.uk
professional association of childminders and early years
Tel : 0845 880 0044

www.daycaretrust.org.uk
Tel : 0845 872 6260

www.ofsted.gov.uk
Office for standards in education
Tel : 0300 123 1231

www.foundationyears.org.uk
Information on the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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