

Types of early education for 2 to 5 years

Pre-school education

Early childhood is crucial in terms of children's development and well-being. Growth is rapid and a significantly high proportion of learning takes place from birth to six years old. It is therefore a time when children particularly need high quality learning and development experiences. Here are some highlights of the most common terminology and phrases that parents will come across during these formative years.

Types of early education

There are a number of different types of settings or providers of early education (sometimes referred to as nursery or pre-school education) for young children. Although each type is different, they all have some things in common.

If a setting or provider wishes to receive Government funding from local authorities so it can offer free early education to three and four year olds, it must:

- Be registered with their local authority
- Work in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.
- Be inspected on a regular basis by education inspectors appointed by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)
- You'll find good-quality early education in a variety of places. Here is a round-up of the most popular types of settings for children under five years old:

Pre-Schools or Playgroups

- Pre-school playgroups generally take children between the ages of two and five years old.
- Most playgroups offer sessions of 2.5 to 3 hours long.
- Not all are open all day or for the whole week, but some provide longer hours for parents who want it.
- They are usually non-profit making and managed by committees, often including parents.
- There must be at least one adult for every eight children and at least half of the staff must have a qualification recognised by the local authority.

Day nurseries

- Day Nurseries take children under five years old for the whole working day from 8am to 6pm or half days 8am to 1pm or 1pm to 6pm.
- They are be run by private companies or individuals.
- Children attend part-time or full-time, depending on their parents' needs.
- There must be at least one adult for every eight children and at least half of the staff must have a qualification recognised by the local authority.

Childminders

- Childminders look after children under five years old as well as school-age children after hours and in the school holidays.

- Childminders look after children in the childminder's own home.
- Ofsted decides how many children a childminder can look after.
- Childminders who have a good or outstanding Ofsted outcome are able to register to receive the Free Entitlement funding.

Private nursery schools

- Private nursery schools take children between the ages of two and five years old.
- They offer half or full-day sessions and some stay open in the school holidays.
- There must be at least one qualified teacher for every 20 children.

Maintained nursery schools

- Maintained, nursery schools take children from the age of three or four.
- They are open during school term time and normally offer five half-day sessions a week.
- There must be at least one qualified teacher and one qualified nursery assistant for every 20 children.

Nursery Classes in Primary Schools

- Nursery classes in Primary Schools take children from the age of three or four years old.
- They are open during school term time and normally offer five half-day sessions a week.
- There must be at least one qualified teacher and one qualified nursery assistant for every 26 children.

Reception classes in state primary schools

- Reception Classes take children at four or five years old.
- Some start children off with half day sessions and build up to full-time attendance.
- Class sizes are limited to 30 children.
- Most Reception Classes also have assistants.

Free early education

- Wherever you live in England, your three or four year old child is entitled to 15 hours of free, early education per week. Your child is eligible from the 1 September, 1 January or 1 April following their third birthday.

Related Links:

- [The Pre-School Learning Alliance](#) [External Site]
- [Office for Standards in Education \(Ofsted\)](#) [External Site]
- [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#) [External Site]
- [Department for Education](#) [External Site]