# WELCOME INFORMATION

## INTRODUCTION

Elmwood Preschool first opened as a playgroup in 1983 at the old annexe site in Hullbridge Road, moving to a demountable in the infant playground of Elmwood School in 1994, where a purpose built Early Years unit stands today. We are registered to take children from two to five years. Preschool caters for up to 26 children per session with at least 5 members of staff and Little Learners for up to 20 children with 2/3 members of staff.

We have a robust policy structure. Key policies can be found on our website and others can be viewed by parents on request. You can read about our vision and objectives, our experienced team and see many excellent testimonials on our website.

## OFSTED

Our Ofsted registration is EY482970 and our latest inspection report which gave an ‘Outstanding’ grading is available on our website, under ‘Links’. If a parent has any concerns about Preschool or the care of their child, they can contact Ofsted on 03001231231.

## SAFEGUARDING

If staff have significant concerns about the welfare and safety of a child, it is our duty to report these concerns to the Local Authority, and if considered necessary, without a parent’s consent.

## POLICIES

We have a robust structure of policies which are reviewed by the Management Team on a regular basis. All our policies are available to read on request, however, we do recommend that you read our fourteen key policies available on our website under ‘Information’.

## SESSION TIMES (TERM TIME ONLY)

Morning: 8.30 am – 11.30 pm

Lunch: 11.30am – 12.30pm

Afternoon: 12.30 pm – 3.30 pm

We generally advise that younger children start on two sessions per week and there are opportunities to increase sessions 3 times per year, although we will try to accommodate each family’s individual needs. Additional sessions should be requested via an e-mail to Jane. Prices and funding information are available in the Parents’ Terms section below. The allocation of sessions is always dependent on availability at the time.

We offer a limited number of lunch sessions - these can be tagged onto a morning or afternoon and also offer the flexibility of all day care. Parents should provide a healthy packed lunch adhering to our no-nut policy. Our children eat their lunch in a room in the main school, supervised by Preschool Lunchtime Assistants, but are expected to be able to sit for a period of time to eat their lunch.

## STARTING PRESCHOOL

Parents should enter the infant playground via the green gate and make their way over to the Preschool building, walking around the edge of the playground when children are present. Children are dropped off at the door and assisted by a member of staff to find their name tag and hang up their coat and bag. There will be a trolley outside on which to put lunch boxes. A member of staff will sign in your child.

In the rare event that staff are struggling to settle or distract a child we will contact the parent to suggest an earlier pick-up and staff will ordinarily let parents of new children know how they got on when collected. Parents should be assured that they will be made aware of any problems or concerns.

If your child is to be collected by someone other than their parent or regular carer, that person must be over the age of sixteen and we ask that you confirm who will be collecting in advance. We have a password system in place to ensure the safety of the children.

## SNACK TIME

Children are given milk or water and a healthy snack during session – this is usually cereal in the mornings and fruit/vegetables in the afternoons. It is **essential** that parents make us aware of any food allergies or intolerances that their child may have. We will ask parents of children having a dairy allergy to bring in alternative milk for them, usually oat or soya milk (we cannot accept almond or coconut milk due to being a nut-free setting). Occasionally treats are brought in on children’s birthdays to share with their friends and we may provide party food at snack time to celebrate special events.

## TOILETING AND CHANGING

Children do not need to be toilet trained to attend Preschool, but it is important that they are dry before they start sessions in Little Learners where there are no changing facilities. (This will be the 2-3 terms before they start school.)

Parents should include a change of clothes and nappies/wipes where necessary, in their child’s bag. Parents should inform us when their child is being toilet trained along with any additional information that may help staff. We ask that children only wear pull-ups once they are actively toilet training. If a child’s clothes are changed whilst in Preschool, a note will be put into their bag explaining why.

## UNIFORM

The children wear a uniform on their top half and this consists of a tee shirt or polo shirt and a sweatshirt in royal blue with the Preschool emblem on it. Uniform is available to purchase at any time and should be ordered via e-mail from Jane. Current prices can be found in the Parents’ Terms section. **All uniform should be clearly named.**

## KEY WORKING AND TAPESTRY

Children are allocated a key person who will do observations on each of their key children. Records of all the children’s achievements are logged onto Learning Journey software called ‘Tapestry’. Logging on with a secure username and password, parents can view all of their child’s observations and photographs from their time with us. Parents can receive notifications via e-mail to advise when a new observation is available for you to view. This will enable you to follow your child’s individual progress and you can reflect upon their achievements with your child.

Staff use ‘Development Matters’ and their professional judgement to track each child’s development, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage, but not all observations will be referenced to this curriculum. Parents receive a ‘two-year check’ report towards the end of their child’s first term which looks at how their child has settled, any concerns their key person may have, and areas of the curriculum have been identified as ‘next steps’. In addition, a summary report will be produced for each child when they leave us to start school. In order to manage expectations, we must make it clear that each key person looks after up to fifteen children and due to all of our staff working part-time, it is typical that a key person is not in Preschool for all of a child’s sessions. Staff do, however, work very closely and get to know all the children very well, so this should not be detrimental to your child in any way.

Tapestry also provides the facility for parents to add comments to the entries so that we as staff find out about which activities our children really enjoyed, and parents can also post their own observations. We ask that parents post at least once a week about something their child has done at home. This could be an activity, trip to the park or a day out. It helps the key person get to know the children and provides opportunities for conversation to develop language. Tutorials are available to parents to help them use the different functionality.

All of this information is stored on a highly secure server which is monitored closely. E-safety is of paramount importance at Elmwood Preschool, therefore parents are asked to sign an e-safety agreement before their child starts with us.

**On a child’s first day, their parent will receive a link via e-mail, enabling them to set up a password for their child’s Tapestry account. Once this is set up, the Tapestry app can be downloaded onto a mobile device and accessed using a 4-digit pin.**

## EARLY YEARS CURRICULUM AND CONTINUOUS PROVISION

In Preschool and Little Learners, we follow the Early Years Curriculum through our 'Continuous Provision'. All 7 areas of the curriculum are represented through at least one activity in the setting at all times, namely: Communication & Language, Physical Development, Personal, Social & Emotional Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Art & Design. More information can be found about the different curriculum areas in the 'EYFS Development Matters' document under 'Links' on our website.

We believe that children learn the social skills of sharing and taking turns through play activities. Our aim is that they soon gain independence and self-confidence, as well as developing self-discipline based on consideration for others.

In addition to all areas being represented, there are certain resources or activities which are always available to the children. For example, there will always be one of each of the following types of activity available: messy play, construction, small world and home corner/role play. Children will also always have access to a range of IT and sensory resources. We do have a theme running each week and these are communicated to parents on a half-termly basis. Not all activities are planned however, and specific child interests will lead to some child-led spontaneity. 'Free flow' enables children to decide whether they would like to play inside or outside enabling children to have the opportunity for physical outside play on every session. Our large outdoor area includes a den area, a music shed, a gravel pit with diggers, a fairy garden, a tool station, a mud kitchen and bubble cars. The undercover area enables outdoor play even in wet weather.

In the window by the front door, there is a document which lists all of the activities that have been on offer throughout the week.

## ‘HOME LEARNING’

The Early Years Curriculum, advocates ‘Learning through Play’ so the best way to support your child at home is to play with them.

Inside, try to incorporate a variety of vocabulary and numbers whilst playing with your child; encourage role-play using dolls or figures; read stories with your child, sing songs and say nursery rhymes; play simple card or board games; outside, practice throwing, catching and kicking a ball; reinforce our golden rules of sharing, kind hands, kind feet, kind words, taking turns, indoor and outdoor voices. The internet is also a fantastic resource for activity ideas.

We ask that once a week, parents post about something their child has done at home onto their Tapestry account. This could be an activity, a trip to the park or a day out. It helps the key persons get to know their children and provides opportunities to develop language.

## LITTLE LEARNERS

Our Little Learners setting, currently situated within the main school, helps to provide a seamless transition for those children who will be attending Elmwood Primary School. Children will attend some of their sessions in Little Learners for 2-3 terms before they start school. The group is slightly smaller and the sessions are more structured. Children do P.E. in the school gym and have story-time with the reception teachers in the summer term.

## FIRST AID AND MEDICATION

All sessional staff receive training in pediatric first aid and parents are required to consent to staff administering emergency first aid to their children via the Consent Form.

If a child has an accident during session-time, an **Accident Form** will be completed and the parent asked to sign at the end of the session. If the accident is any form of head injury, the parent will be contacted via telephone immediately.

If a child arrives at Preschool presenting a prior injury, e.g. a bruise or cut, the parent will be asked to complete an **Existing Injury Form**, detailing the nature of the injury.

Staff can administer medication prescribed by a doctor and allergy medication to the children. Parents will need to complete a **Medication Form** detailing dosage and time.

## ELMWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Although we have a close relationship with Elmwood Primary School, attendance at our Preschool does not guarantee entry into the school. Please contact the office in Elmwood Primary School directly, for any queries relating to entrance criteria. Parents will be advised when on-line applications for primary school are open.

## GENERAL COMMUNICATION

Communication to parents is managed via e-mail. We send out a half-termly newsletter which includes lots of information including term and event dates.

We also send out a weekly e-mail on a Friday including any reminders and up and coming events. Please ensure that you read this e-mail so as not to miss vital information. Parents should notify Jane of any change to their e-mail address or other contact information. We also run two Facebook pages: our closed page ‘Elmwood Preschool and Little Learners Parents’ is particularly useful for sharing information, urgent announcements, and spontaneous events and we use our public page ‘Elmwood Preschool CIC’ to increase our prominence in the community. Parents are urged to join both.

## OPEN DOOR POLICY

Parents are welcome to visit and spend time with their children, we just ask for prior notice to be given, so that we can manage the number of adults in the settings.

## USE OF INCOME

Elmwood Preschool is a non-profit making Community Interest Company. Parents’ fees and government funding cover our overheads which include but are not exclusive to:

Rent, insurance, staff training, staffing costs, maintenance, cleaning materials, office supplies, telephone/broadband/IT costs, birthday presents, craft materials, resources, snack.

## AGENCIES

We may work with outside agencies to achieve the best possible outcomes for our children. These include Elmwood Primary School, Department of Education, Ofsted, Essex Early Years Education Partners, Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service, Inclusion Partner (regarding SEND), Essex Education Operations (regarding funding), Other local Early Years settings and Chelmsford College.