



**Free early  
education**

**(3 & 4 year olds)**

To help you choose  
what is right  
for your child

# What is early education?

It's pre-school education for children aged 3 and 4 and is the first part of the Early Years Foundation Stage which is completed in reception class at school. (Children in the Rochdale Borough start school in the September after their fourth birthday.)

The Government funds Rochdale Council to provide up to 15 hours of free early education per week in settings (providers of early education) that have been inspected by Ofsted.

You don't contribute towards this minimum entitlement but may be charged fees for any services or childcare additional to the free place.

You choose whether early education is right for your child and what setting you would like your child to attend.





## Who is eligible?

All children in the Rochdale Borough (Heywood, Middleton, Rochdale and Pennines) are eligible for free early education from the term after their third birthday.

<b>Date of birth (3 year olds)</b>	<b>Term eligible (same as schools)</b>
1 Sept – 31 Dec	Spring (Jan – Mar)
1 Jan – 31 Mar	Summer (Mar/Apr – July)
1 Apr – 31 Aug	Autumn (Sept – Dec)

Rochdale Borough Family Information Service can advise you about your child's eligibility.

## Flexibility

Children in the Rochdale Borough can have their free 15 hours per week of early education in any combination of hours, over a minimum of 3 days per week between the hours of 8am and 4pm. It has to be financially viable for providers to offer a service and there has to be enough parents/children requesting a service at a particular time to make this a reasonable enough demand.

# Where can my child go for early education?

Early education is offered at many different settings. It may suit you to use more than one setting for your child but remember that you will need to pay for any additional hours of childcare and the cost of any meals. Regardless of what setting you choose, your child will benefit from Early Years Foundation Stage education; a learning, development and care structure.

Before you make a decision, visit the setting with your child and look at the care, education, early years workers, resources and equipment provided and how the setting will meet the needs of your child. Your Family Information Service will help you find early education settings in your area and give you tailored and impartial advice and information including a 'choosing childcare and early education' checklist.

The following is a very brief guide to early education settings so you can choose the best option for your child.

**Preschool playgroups** are run at various settings and introduce children to group environments and structured activities.

**Age range:** 2 – 5 years

**Opening hours:** Term-time only sessions in the morning and/or afternoon. Some open longer and a few offer full daycare.



**Day nurseries** are mostly run as private businesses with some based in children's centres and workplaces.

**Age range:** Usually from 6 weeks – 5 years

**Opening hours:** Mostly year round Mon – Fri all day, the earliest opening at 7am and the latest closing at 7pm.



**Childminders** look after your child in the childminder's own home. (Five childminders in the Rochdale Borough are currently registered to deliver early education for 3 and 4 year olds.)

**Age range:** Birth – 16 years

**Opening hours:** Most work from 8am to 6pm but are usually flexible, some offer weekends/overnight and emergency care.



## **Nursery classes and schools**

Classes are usually attached to a primary school but please remember, attendance can't automatically guarantee a place at that school. Local Authority nursery schools take preschool children only. There are four in Rochdale; Derby St, Howard St, South St and Sunny Brow.

**Age range:** 3 and 4 year olds eligible for free early education.

**Opening hours:** Term time only, five morning or afternoon sessions per week. Each session is for three hours although some nursery classes can offer flexible hours spread across a school day.



**Nursery units of independent schools** are run by the private sector and feed into the school's reception class at age 4. Beech House is currently the only independent school in the Rochdale Borough.

**Age range:** 2 to 4 years

**Opening hours:** Term time only but nearly year round care with holiday club provision. Open all day, sessions available when parents require them.

## How do I apply?

Contact your chosen setting for vacancy information. See the leaflet 'List of place providers (early education)' for a list of settings. For nursery schools, you'll need to make contact early in the autumn term following your child's second birthday and request an application form. For all other settings, make contact before your child becomes eligible for early education.

Once your child has a place, you'll be asked by the setting to sign a brief contract (agreeing to a minimum of a school term) and provide proof of your child's date of birth (birth certificate or NHS Medical Card). The setting will forward the details to Rochdale Council who will provide funding directly to them for up to 15 hours per week over 38 weeks per year.

Remember you may be charged fees for any services or childcare additional to the free place and that, other than in exceptional circumstances, the contract is binding for a term.





## Special educational needs

All settings should be able to provide an inclusive environment which meets all children's individual needs.

If your child has difficulties in some areas of their development, the setting will receive support from the Area SENCO (special educational needs coordinators) team, contact them on 0845 226 5511.

For advice and support about early education options for your child, contact the Inclusion Officer on 01706 747256.

## Moving settings

It's unlikely that you'll want to move settings once your child is settled, but in exceptional circumstances, this may happen. These circumstances may be due to changes in living arrangements, employment, a sibling's schooling, a child's primary carer or due to health and safety issues. In any other circumstances, a free place will only be provided from the beginning of the following term.



# Childcare costs

There's some help available to meet the additional costs of childcare if you're working or training.

- Childcare element of Working Tax Credit
- Childcare Vouchers
- Free childcare for Training and Learning for Work

Contact the Family Information Service for more information and to find out what you can claim.



## Useful contacts

### **Family Information Service**

**Tel:** 01706 719900 Mon – Fri  
8.30am – 5pm

**E:** [family.info@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:family.info@rochdale.gov.uk)  
[www.rochdale.gov.uk/family](http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/family)

### **Tax Credit helpline**

**Tel:** 0845 300 3900  
[www.hmrc.gov.uk/TAXCREDITS/](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/TAXCREDITS/)

### **Ofsted**

**Tel:** 08456 404040  
**E:** [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)