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Dear Parents,

**Additional 15 hours of early years funding**

As many of you may know, all 3 and 4 year old children are already eligible for 15 hours of early years funding/free childcare per week during term time. In 2015, the government announced the introduction of an additional 15 hours of free childcare per week for 3 and 4 year olds of working parents who meet certain criteria and it is hoping that providers will be in a position to offer this to all eligible families from September 2017 (see overleaf for more details on eligibility). Since Cambridgeshire Council announced the rate at which ACE Nursery School will be funded for this (£4.04 per hour, which will be frozen until at least 2020) we have been looking at whether or not it is financially viable for us to offer the additional 15 hours to eligible parents from September.

After a lot of consideration, we have concluded that - as a result of the low hourly rate of funding being paid - we are not in a position to offer the additional 15 hours of free childcare per week. It would lead to a substantial drop in our fee income which would then ultimately call into question the future of ACE. We constantly strive to provide all ACE children with the best possible early years pastoral and learning experience and we do not wish to compromise either the quality of our staff team or the existing staff:child ratios required to achieve this aim. Regrettably, having considered various business critical factors, we simply can't continue to realise the ACE vision if we were to offer the additional 15 hours of free childcare. The existing 15 hours of free childcare per week during term time will still be available at ACE from September and we are proposing a simplification to our current fee structure such that the first 15 hours of any week are free for eligible 3 and 4 year old children, with the hours over and above that being charged at a flat rate per hour.

As I have been showing prospective parents around ACE Nursery School in recent weeks, I have talked to them about how we might be unable to offer the additional 15 hours of free childcare given the low funding rate. Feedback from parents has been overwhelmingly positive, with many understanding the long-term financial impact this would have.

We will shortly be issuing a letter to all parents who have indicated they would like their child/children to be at ACE Nursery School in September 2017, asking you to confirm the sessions your child will be attending and committing you to take up the place. We understand that in light of the above, some of you may wish to look for a place elsewhere and would ask that you let us know if this is the case (either by email or by ticking the relevant box on the reply slip that will be attached to the letter to be sent out in the near future). Further information on the additional 15 hours can be found on the Cambridgeshire County Council website: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20064/childcare/643/free\\_30\\_hours\\_childcare\\_for\\_working\\_parents](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20064/childcare/643/free_30_hours_childcare_for_working_parents)

Please feel free to contact any of us if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

**Lisa Tuohy**  
Headteacher

**Michelle Wright**  
Chair of ACE Parents' Committee

**Jerry Toner**  
Treasurer

## Eligibility for existing 15 hours of early years funding

Up to 15 hours per week of early years funding is currently available during term time to all 3 and 4 year old children from the term after the one in which the child turns three. Specific dates apply: those children born between 1 September and 31 December are eligible for funding from 1 January following the child's third birthday; those born between 1 January and 31 March are eligible from 1 April onwards; and those born between 1 April and 31 August are eligible for funding from 1 September onwards. For example, if your child was born on 15 February 2013; he/she is eligible for funding from the summer term 2016 onwards.

## Eligibility criteria for additional 15 hours

The additional 15 hours per week of free childcare is for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds who meet certain eligibility criteria:

For single parents, you are eligible if:

- you are a UK resident and your child/children normally live with you; and
- on average each week you earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours at the national living wage (£115.20) (or if under 25 national minimum wage) and less than £100,000 per year; or
- you are temporarily away from the workplace on parental/maternity/paternity/adoption or sick leave.

For couples, you are eligible if:

- you are UK residents; and
- on average each week you both earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours at the national living wage (£115.20) (or if under 25 national minimum wage) and less than £100,000 per year; or
- you are both employed but one or both of you are temporarily away from the workplace on parental/maternity/paternity/adoption or sick leave; or
- one of you is employed and the other is in receipt of carer's allowance or is disabled or incapacitated and receiving specific benefits.

HM Revenue and Customs will oversee a national system for checking parental eligibility and issuing voucher codes to those who qualify.