

Innsworth Preschool Admissions Policy

Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Aims

1.1 Overview: This policy outlines the structured admissions process and criteria for Innsworth Preschool.

1.2 Assessment: The process is designed as a careful, two-way assessment to ensure a successful and positive placement for the child, the family, and the preschool community.

1.3 Aims: Our aim is to operate a fair, transparent, and legally compliant procedure.

1.4 Conditional Admission: Admission is based on objective criteria to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and staff. Places are offered on the condition that:

- We can meet the child's individual needs safely within our staffing ratios, premises constraints, and reasonable adjustments.
- Parents agree to comply with all safety procedures, policies, and lawful directions while on site.
- Parents provide accurate and complete information regarding medical, dietary, and developmental needs to support safe care planning.

2. Statutory Framework

2.1 Compliance: This policy supports our compliance with relevant UK legislation, specifically:

- The Childcare Act 2006.
- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE): Setting the standards for learning, development, and care.
- The Equality Act 2010: Ensuring non-discrimination and the duty to make reasonable adjustments.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice.
- DfE Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance (regarding optional charges).
- Food Safety Standards: We obtain, record, and act on information about children's dietary needs, allergies, and intolerances, keeping it up to date.

3. Service Packages & Operational Model

3.1 Optional Services: Innsworth Preschool operates a specialist "Farm Experience" curriculum alongside a comprehensive "Full Nourishment" meal service. These are optional services available to all families. Where we provide meals/snacks, these must be healthy, balanced, and nutritious; we have regard to DfE nutrition guidance.

3.2 Government Funding: Government funding covers the delivery of the statutory EYFS curriculum and care only. It does not cover the cost of meals, consumables, specialist farm equipment, or take-home produce. Children accessing funded hours receive the full EYFS curriculum regardless of whether they purchase optional services.

3.3 Opting Out (Parental Provision): Parents accessing funded hours have the right to opt out of the additional charges. Opting out requires parents to provide their own meals and consumables in line with strict safety standards.

3.4 Safety Standards (The Opt-Out Checklist): Parents providing their own food must adhere to the following safety rules to protect the setting.

Storage Constraints: We do not have refrigeration facilities for individual packed meals and we do not have space to store children's food bags in the building. Parents opting out must provide food in a single sealed, wipe-clean, rigid lunchbox (no bags) with a frozen ice pack(s) inside.

Temperature Control Capacity: Lunchboxes are placed on arrival into our designated temperature-control storage system (e.g. lidded cool boxes) under staff control. Temperature-control storage capacity is limited. If capacity is reached, we will offer:

- Switching to the meal service for that period (invoiced at the standard rate); OR
- An alternative attendance pattern where packed provision can be accommodated.

Allergen-Controlled Environment: We care for children with severe, life-threatening allergies (including children prescribed adrenaline auto-injectors). Because staff cannot be isolated from core duties and children cannot be reliably segregated, we operate setting-wide allergen restrictions to reduce the risk of exposure.

Prohibited Items:

- **Prohibited Allergens:** Peanuts and all tree nuts in any form (including nut spreads/oils).
- **Homemade/Unlabelled Goods:** No homemade baked goods or foods without full ingredient labelling (original packaging or a complete printed ingredient list).
- **High Risk Items:** No whole grapes, popcorn, hard sweets, or glass containers.
- **Unlabelled Loose Food:** Food not in a named, sealed container with the child's name and date is prohibited.

Choking Prevention: All high-risk foods (e.g. grapes, cherry tomatoes, sausages, blueberries) must be cut lengthways and into small pieces at home. Staff will not routinely cut or modify home-provided food beyond reasonable supervision; parents must prepare food safely at home.

Handover Protocol: Food bags are not permitted in the building due to space and safety constraints. Only a compact lunchbox may be brought to the handover point. Lunchboxes must be handed directly to staff at drop-off (not left unattended).

Temperature Disclaimer: We cannot guarantee packed food temperature once provided by parents. Parents must choose foods suitable for being kept cool and must use frozen ice packs. Staff may refuse to serve food if it presents a safety concern.

Emergency Provision (Consequences): At enrolment, parents opting out must select one of two protocols for when packed provision is deemed unsafe or unavailable:

- **Option A (Emergency Food Authorisation):** If packed provision is unsafe/unavailable, we may provide a basic safe alternative and invoice at the published emergency provision rate.
- **Option B (No Emergency Food):** If packed provision is unsafe/unavailable, the parent must provide a safe replacement within 30 minutes or the child may need to be collected for welfare reasons.

Breach of Safety: Repeated breaches of the Opt-Out Checklist are treated as serious safety breaches and may trigger the staged responses in this policy, including suspension/termination in serious cases.

3.5 Farm Limitations: Parents opting out acknowledge that while their child will access the full curriculum, they will not receive the specific "Farm School" take-home produce, eggs, or optional paid farm items.

4. Eligibility, Readiness & Parental Conduct

4.1 Age Range: Innsworth Preschool provides care for children from the age of two until they reach statutory school age. Admission is not automatic.

4.2 Multicultural Ethos: Innsworth Preschool is a diverse, multicultural setting. We actively promote Fundamental British Values.

4.3 Parent Conduct Standards: We maintain a safe and respectful environment for all. We do not tolerate "Repeated Unreasonable Conduct".

- **Definition:** This includes refusal to use the designated complaints channel, sending repeated abusive or aggressive messages, refusing to engage with investigations, or excessive contact volume that materially disrupts operations.
- **Escalation Ladder:** Breaches will be managed through a staged response:
 1. Written Warning.
 2. Restricted Communication Channel (e.g. email only).
 3. Appointment-Only Access.
 4. Suspension or Termination of the child's place (for serious or repeated breaches).
- **Immediate Risk:** In cases of serious abuse, threats, or violence, we reserve the right to suspend or terminate immediately without prior steps.

4.4 Suitability for the "Farm Experience": Innsworth Preschool operates a unique "Farm Experience" curriculum involving resident poultry (ducks/chickens) and outdoor allergens (hay/straw).

4.5 Medical Safety Assessment: We will conduct a risk assessment for children with known allergies or medical needs.

- **Evidence:** We may request relevant medical evidence (e.g. an Allergy Action Plan or clinician letter) to complete this assessment.
- **Review:** If admission is refused due to unmanageable risk, we may reconsider the decision if circumstances change (e.g. a new medical management plan or reduced risk profile).

4.6 Toileting & Nappies: We support children who are not yet toilet trained.

- **External Support:** We may ask parents to engage with health visiting, continence support, or SEN support services, and we will coordinate with them where consent is provided.
- **Delayed Start Triggers:** We reserve the right to agree a delayed start date if the child's needs present specific risks, such as: repeated staff injury risk (e.g. manual handling), inability to maintain legal supervision ratios while meeting care needs, or safeguarding risks.
- **Review:** Delay decisions are time-limited and reviewed every 4 weeks.

4.7 Information Accuracy: Parents must provide accurate and complete information regarding medical, dietary, and developmental needs. Withholding or misrepresenting material information that affects safety may result in a delayed start, suspension pending assessment, or termination in serious cases.

5. The Admissions Process (A Four-Step Assessment)

5.1 Format: Our admissions process is a formal, multi-stage assessment.

Step 1: Initial Enquiry and Pre-Booked Visit: Visits are by appointment only. The attendance of the prospective child is normally required to allow for an initial assessment of needs, though exceptions will be considered (e.g. for safeguarding or disability-related reasons).

Step 2: Mutual Assessment: Senior staff will make a professional judgement on our ability to meet the child's needs and the family's ability to work within our required safety and operational standards.

Step 3: Decision to Offer an Application: We reserve the right to decline to proceed if there are objective grounds to believe essential standards will not be met. Examples include: refusal to follow allergy rules, refusal to provide medical information, or abusive conduct.

Step 4: Formal Offer of a Place: A formal offer is conditional upon a space being available and the successful completion of the "Probationary Trial Period".

5.2 Capacity & Staffing Pause: We reserve the right to pause admissions or defer start dates where staffing levels, ratios, or premises constraints mean we cannot safely admit new children at that time.

6. The Probationary Trial Period (3 Months)

6.1 Applicability: This clause applies to ALL children, including returning students.

6.2 Operational Probation: During this period, the child is subject to increased monitoring and settling reviews (e.g. at Week 2, 6, and 10).

6.3 Termination During Probation:

- **Immediate Suspension:** In cases of serious safety risk, violence, or safeguarding concerns, we may suspend the place immediately pending an investigation.
- **Termination:** Following investigation, or for persistent serious policy breaches, the place may be terminated.
- **Standard Early Termination:** For issues regarding settling or suitability that do not pose an immediate risk, we may terminate the placement with a shortened notice period (e.g. 1 week), following documented support attempts (e.g. a settling plan and review meeting).

6.4 Refunds: Refund rules are set out in the Fees Terms. Generally, fees for unused sessions are refunded unless the contract allows retention for breach.

7. Settling-In & Parental Communication

7.1 Settling Guidance: We provide guidance to parents on the settling-in process. We expect parents to work with us to support their child.

7.2 Managing Concerns: If parents raise concerns, we will investigate and respond professionally. However, we do not tolerate unreasonable conduct.

- **Unreasonable Conduct:** Includes abusive messages, threatening staff, filming without permission, repeated breaches of confidentiality, or harassment.
- **Action:** Such behaviour triggers the Escalation Ladder (see Clause 4.3).

8. Confidentiality & Data

8.1 Policy: We operate a strict confidentiality policy to protect all children and families.

8.2 Waiting List: We do not disclose third-party personal data regarding the waiting list. We may provide general information about current availability and a child's own status.

8.3 Operational Information: We share information necessary for the child's care and safeguarding (e.g. the name of their Key Person). We do not disclose detailed staff rotas or staff personal data.

9. Admissions Prioritisation Criteria

9.1 Ranking: Where the number of applications exceeds the number of available places, places will be allocated according to the following criteria, in descending order:

1. Looked After Children (CLA).
2. EHCP Holders: Where an EHCP names the setting, admissions will be handled in line with statutory SEND processes and our ability to deliver the provision specified, with the local authority involved as required.
3. Siblings (Subject to Capacity): Siblings of children currently attending. (Note: Sibling priority applies only when a physical space is available. It does not override strict legal staff:child ratios).
4. Staff Children.
5. All Other Applicants: Prioritised by date of application.

10. Fees, Funding & Liability

10.1 Parental Responsibility: Parents are solely responsible for providing valid government funding eligibility codes (e.g. 30 Hours) by the published local authority deadline. We require evidence of code reconfirmation each term.

10.2 Funding Code Validation: If a code is not provided by the deadline, or later becomes invalid:

- We will invoice the parent at the Standard Private Rate for the affected period; OR
- We may adjust the sessions from the next practicable date to match what can be self-funded.

10.3 Late Payment: We operate a staged payment escalation process: Reminder -> Final Notice -> Suspension of optional services -> Suspension of attendance (as a last resort).

11. Annual Nature of Places & Attendance Patterns

11.1 Annual Allocation: Places are offered for one academic year only. Re-application is required annually.

- **Prioritisation:** Existing children seeking to continue their current attendance pattern are prioritised before new applicants, subject to capacity and staffing.
- **Guarantee:** A place is not guaranteed if capacity or staffing levels change.

11.2 Session Allocation: We allocate sessions based on operational viability. If a requested pattern is not viable, we reserve the right to offer an alternative pattern.

12. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEND)

12.1 Commitment: We are committed to inclusive practice.

12.2 Information Sharing: Parents must share all known information relevant to safe care. We may request an initial meeting and care plan before the start date.

- **Consent:** We may ask parents to consent to us liaising with external professionals (e.g. Health Visitors, Speech and Language Therapists) to support the admission.

12.3 Assessment: We will assess if we can safely meet the child's needs. If a child requires intensive support (e.g. 1:1) that cannot be safely provided within our ratios and reasonable adjustments, we will document our assessment and discuss options.

13. Decision Recording & Review

13.1 Decision Note: Any decision to refuse admission, delay a start date, or terminate a place will be recorded in a Decision Note. This will include:

- The decision type (Refusal/Delay/Termination).
- The objective criteria relied upon (citing specific clauses).
- A summary of evidence (e.g. risk assessment, incident logs).
- Equality Act reasonable adjustments considered and the rationale for the decision.
- SEND considerations and engagement with professionals (where relevant).

13.2 Internal Review: Parents who disagree with an admissions decision may request a formal internal review in writing within 14 days.

13.3 Outcome: The review will be conducted by a senior member of staff not involved in the original decision. A written response will be provided within 21 days. Parents may also use our Complaints Procedure if they believe this policy has not been applied fairly.

