

## Frequently Asked Questions

Welcome to Chestnut Playgroup. We are delighted you've chosen us and hope that both you and your child will enjoy your time here. Starting at playgroup is one of those big milestones for you and your child. It can also be a bit worrying thinking of leaving your child in the care of a childcare setting, maybe for the first time. We have put together this list of Frequently Asked Questions to help during this period of change.

### **Can my child start playgroup if they are still in nappies?**

We recognise that children are individual and develop at their own pace, therefore *some* children will not be dry when they start playgroup. If you would like us to, we can help you with a toilet training programme for your child and will support your chosen approach.

### **What snacks and drinks are provided?**

We encourage children to adopt a healthy and nutritious diet whilst still providing choice. We therefore allow the children to choose from a range of fresh, healthy snacks with a savoury choice alongside a fruit/vegetable choice. This might include e.g. Bagels, bread, malt loaf, fruit, raw vegetables, breadsticks or crackers. Snack time drinks are restricted to water or milk. In the summer term, we often use produce from our garden at snack time. Children with special requirements/allergies are accommodated.

### **How much outside physical activity do the children participate in?**

We are fortunate to have a fully enclosed fenced outside play area including play equipment on a soft surface, a woodland area with a mud kitchen and a fruit/vegetable and flower garden. In Spring 2022 we also created a sensory garden for the children to explore. Children have access to the outside space throughout the session all year (except in extreme weather conditions) and outside play is actively encouraged to help in their development. Outside play includes planned activities which involves the children's interests through free play. During the Spring and Summer terms (weather permitting), we expand our indoor activities to the outside giving children the freedom to move in and outside as they wish and children are also encouraged to self-select activities. The children are also encouraged to engage in gardening to help them understand about their natural environment, seasons and growth and decay over time, and the wildlife that lives in our immediate natural world.

### **What does my child need to bring with them?**

- A named bottle of water.
- Small named bag or rucksack containing spare underwear (including socks) and spare changes of clothes (weather and season appropriate). Spare nappies, wipes and nappy sacks should be included if required.
- Named clothing appropriate to the weather conditions - in colder months please provide a warm hat & gloves, wellies and a warm (preferably waterproof) coat. We provide wellies and hat boxes for items to be left at the playgroup if preferred. In warmer months please provide a sun hat and sunscreen, and a lightweight raincoat for rainy days. The children will be playing out in snow, rain and sun so need to be adequately prepared. On hot days, please note your child should come with sun cream already applied. Sunscreen cannot be shared so each child must have their own individually labelled bottle of sunscreen. Sunscreens must not contain nuts.
- Please provide a packed lunch box if your child will be staying at lunchtime. We have no provision for refrigeration of lunch boxes so please provide an ice pack, especially in warm weather. **Parents/carers need to be aware of our strict NO NUTS policy, so please no items that contain nuts** within the ingredients. If you have made anything at home please just pop in a list in the lunch box with a list of ingredients that you have used. We appreciate that you may want to give your child a treat in their lunch box such as a biscuit or a chocolate bar which we are happy for you to but we only allow one - please no multiple sweet treats. We have also noticed that some foods have age warnings on them - if a child is 2 years old and their food has an age warning of it e.g. 36 months+ then we will not give this to your 2 year old child. Please ensure to check all packaging on the items going into your children's lunch boxes.
- **Cutting up foods:** Please remember to **cut all small round foods into quarters** such as cherry tomatoes, grapes, or anything of the similar size as these can cause choking. This can be quite time consuming for staff to cut up many grapes before the children can eat them.

## **Clothes to Wear**

It is best to wear old clothes for playgroup as Chestnut children can get messy and learn best when uninhibited. Sweatshirts and polo shirts, in a range of colours, with the playgroup logo, are available to buy online through 'My Clothing', if you wish to purchase them (<https://myclothing.com/chestnut-playgroup/6343.school>). It is best to put your child in clothes that are easy to undo such as elasticated trousers and shoes with velcro. This helps your child when they go to the toilet and can undo their own clothes. Staff will help them, but, as children are learning independence, they do not always want this, preferring privacy. To help with their self esteem it is important that they can achieve small targets for themselves.

While your child is with us they will be encouraged to find their wellies and coats before we go outside to play. This can take quite some time in the first few months. Your child will be encouraged to try to put these items on for themselves – staff are always on hand to assist them until they are able to do this. At school this is very important as your child will be expected to dress themselves for outdoor play.

### **EVERY ITEM BROUGHT INTO PLAYGROUP SHOULD BE NAMED.**

## **My child cries whenever I leave him/her at playgroup what should I do?**

We understand that your child's first few days at playgroup may be upsetting for both you and your child, especially if this is the first time that they have been away from you in a childcare setting. Some children will settle very quickly, whereas others may take a little longer, and we are sympathetic to children who do find this time difficult.

At Chestnut Playgroup, we have experience of helping children to settle into our playgroup. In our experience, children do settle better if their parent does not stay during the first few sessions as it can often prolong the settling in process. However, we understand that each child will react differently. We are therefore flexible in our approach. We will work with each child and their parents/carers to find the best way to proceed; a well-balanced approach to ensure that your child settles well.

Your child may be upset when you leave and we realise it can be very distressing for you too. We will however keep you informed about your child throughout the session, by phone, and will not expect your child to stay for the whole session if they are very distressed.

If you have concerns, please speak to the Pre-school Leader, when your child starts playgroup for the first time.

## **Does the playgroup teach the children letters and help the child to write?**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which starts at pre-school and extends into the Foundation Stage at school, outlines development expectations and goals for young children.

At Chestnut Playgroup, we focus developing the early skills such as mark-making e.g. handling and using pencils, scissors etc. that increase a child's fine motor skills and manual dexterity in preparation for writing, and pre-reading skills e.g. singing nursery rhymes and poems, joining in stories and predicting what might happen next from pictures. Children are also encouraged to recognise their name and write this if they choose to do so. If a child shows an interest and an ability to read and write before they start school, we will encourage and help them to develop in this area. Children are encouraged to observe and recognise letters from their own environment.

## **Sharing and Turn Taking?**

Children of this age often find it hard to take turns and share toys with their peers. Whilst at playgroup, we encourage your child to share as they learn to take turns in various ways. Sharing with a large group of children is not the same as it may be in a home environment and we are confident that the children learn these skills quite quickly. If we feel there are any problems with your child in learning to share, we will talk to you.

Personal, social and emotional skills are extremely important for the children, so that they can learn to interact with their peers and talk in a familiar group. This encourages the children in their self confidence and self awareness development. We focus on this area encouraging children to choose and do activities for themselves by self-selection and, in our experience, this helps children when they start at school. The EYFS recognises that children need less formal learning in their early years.

**Behaviour**

Please share with us any home situations that may be affecting your child. Any conversations you have with us will be dealt with professionally. Sometimes, children have ways of showing their feelings that can result in behaviour that is out of character for them at the playgroup. This can be concerning for us as we get to know them well, but it can help if we know what may be behind it. Sometimes there is cause for concern regarding a child's behaviour and should this be the case, we will talk to you and work out a programme together. Our aim is to work with you for the benefit of your child.

**When is it necessary to use my child's password?**

When your child is being collected from playgroup by a person who is not known to the staff, or the staff have not been informed prior to collection that a particular person will be collecting your child then the password will need to be given before the child can leave. The child will NOT be released otherwise. Passwords can be changed at any time but only by the person with parental responsibility.

**What should I do if my child can't attend a particular session?**

If your child is ill please phone or text the playgroup and let us know. If you are unable to attend a session due to holiday etc. please complete a Holiday Form (found in the foyer or on our website).

**How do I know how my child is getting on?**

We write 'Learning Journeys' for all of our children. Children are observed throughout the year by their Key Person and other staff in line with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Your child's Individual Learning Journey is placed in a file and made readily available for you to read daily. This allows us and you to be able to plan learning for your child on a daily basis. It also assists us with their development if we also know about their interests and experiences at home. When your child starts playgroup, we ask you to fill in an 'All About Me' document about your child's likes, favourite toys etc at home and regularly update this to keep us informed. It is not always possible or productive to give feedback daily especially if confidentiality is required but you are welcome to approach us for an appointment to discuss your child whenever you wish to do so. We will talk to you if we have concerns regarding your child.

Twice per year, we hold 'Parents Evenings', where you can sit down with your child's Key Person and discuss your child's learning and development. You will also receive a Summative Assessment at Parents Evening which is a record of your child's development.

**Who do I talk to if I have a concern about my child?**

You can arrange to talk to the Pre-school Leader/Deputy Leader or their Key Person.

**Why does my child not bring any pictures home?**

The ethos of the playgroup is to give the child freedom to develop their own means of self-expression and to learn to make choices. So do not be concerned if your child does not come home with any "end product". Your child will have had the opportunity and will have taken part in a number of activities but might not have wanted to do a creative art activity. The children are encouraged to create freely for themselves without adult intervention, i.e. we will not direct the child to put in for example; "eyes, nose and mouth" to where we, as adults believe they should be. If you do, over time, have greater concerns regarding your child's participation or development, then do speak to us.

**What reason would there be for late opening?**

In the interest of the children's safety we have to carry out a detailed daily risk assessment each morning, which includes health and safety, before playgroup can open and we take this very seriously. All Early Years settings have this requirement. However, as we share our community building with other users, the premises and grounds are not always in the same state as we leave them in the day before, and sometimes additional preparation and checks have to be done to ensure the setting is up to health and safety standards.

### **My child will be going to school this year how does the playgroup help prepare him/her?**

By the time the children are ready to leave, they have gained many skills giving them independence in caring for themselves and self-confidence in their abilities. Activities include developmental learning, like letter sounds and recognition and skills learning such as changing into their PE kit and putting on a coat and wellies to go outside.

We have strong links with Linton Infant School and we work closely with the school to ensure that each child and their family is involved in preparing for school. We welcome the Foundation Stage teachers to visit playgroup during the summer term before your child starts school. This gives the Foundation Stage teachers and our practitioners the opportunity to discuss each child and for pre-schoolers to become familiar with their new teacher. Together, we organise events where pre-schoolers can visit the school for story time sessions with their parents/carers so they are familiar with the school environment and meet other children who will be their classmates. All the schools in the village have Move Up Day in July where the top year group of each setting/school moves up to the next school (without parents/carers) for a couple of hours. We also talk positively about school to all the children who attend playgroup, which makes the prospect of moving on to school less daunting and more exciting.

More information will be given to the parents of pre-school children at the appropriate time.

### **Child Protection**

Whilst your child is in our care, we follow strict child protection policy and procedure at all times; all our staff are DBS (formerly CRB) checked and volunteers and visitors to the setting are not left alone with any child.

If you should have any concerns, or if we have concerns about your child, the Pre-school Leader/Deputy Leader will discuss these with you.

Please make yourself aware of the Child Protection Policy, which is available on our website, or as a paper copy in the Policies folder foyer.

### **Confidentiality**

It is of the utmost importance to us that all parents/carers and staff maintain confidentiality at all times. If you have any concerns please speak to our Playgroup Leader or Deputy. If you are uncomfortable about approaching the Leaders or staff, please talk to the Chair of the playgroup committee.

### **As a parent/carer how can I help the playgroup?**

We are always grateful for any assistance in running the playgroup; this may be achieved by joining the voluntary committee, helping with fundraising or by coming in and talking to the children about your work, hobby, or culture/way of life, as we try to educate the children about different ways of life.

We welcome parents/carers to help out at a session of your choice. Unfortunately, for insurance reasons, parent/carer helpers cannot bring a younger sibling under the age of two into the setting during the session.

Please speak to a member of staff or the committee if you are interested in joining the committee or helping out at a session.

We hope you have found this information useful. However, if this still leaves a question unanswered, then please contact the playgroup on 07817 069696 or email our Playgroup Leader on: [chestnut.pg@gmail.com](mailto:chestnut.pg@gmail.com) or our Administrator on: [adm.chestnutpg@gmail.com](mailto:adm.chestnutpg@gmail.com). Our website also has lots of up to date information: [www.chestnutplaygroup.org.uk](http://www.chestnutplaygroup.org.uk) .