**Funded 15 & 30 hours policy**

As a Community Interest Company, Bell Day Nursery aim to offer the extended entitlement to our families in accordance with the contract with Essex County Council.

The 15 and 30 hours are free at point of delivery however, in order to remain sustainable, we reserve the right to implement a voluntary charge for consumables and extra services /activities which we provide, as per government regulations included in the publication Early Years Entitlement: operational Guidance as copied below:

In its new guidance the Government states:

Government funding is not intended to cover the costs of meals, other consumables, additional hours or additional services.

However, the guidance emphasises the voluntary nature of the charges for all the things that go alongside your child’s funded place. Essentially the Government is offering funded childcare sessions but not paying for all that this entails.

This puts providers like Bell Day Nursery and Bell Day Pre-school in a very difficult position. Recent research by the National Day Nurseries Association found that 92% of nurseries in England do not believe the current funding rates cover our operating costs. For three and four-year-old places the average funding shortall was reported as £2.13 per hour and £1.51 per hour for younger children. If the consumables charge is not paid this could see us having to stop offering funded hours as many settings have already done or potentially us having to close our doors to the community**.** The current extra consumables /activities charge that you pay is £69.83 a month for 15 hours and £139.65 a month for 30 hours.

The average staffing costs for nurseries is going to increase by 15% from April this year and for context the average funding rate will increase by 4.6% for the same period.

We employ a chef to prepare fresh, nutritious meals and snacks for your child each day they are with us. We have to charge you for this service because otherwise we wouldn’t be able to pay the chefs wage or buy the food she prepares.

We do not currently accept packed lunches or snacks from home for each child because:

· Nurseries like ours are inspected by Ofsted against providing multiple nutritional balanced meals and snacks for all the children at our settings

· Some children are in nursery for long days, from breakfast to teatime so time for parents to prepare multiple nutritious meals before children attend our setting could be limited

· If a lot of parents wanted to provide packed lunches, we would struggle with storage space to keep food at the temperature required

· We would have less control over the food brought into nursery and the allergens they contain. We have a number of children with food allergies at the setting and we carefully monitor and cater for their dietary requirements.

 Regarding the consumables we charge for, we know that it could end up being more expensive for you as parents to buy and provide your own nappies and wipes etc because we buy in bulk from commercial suppliers.

In addition to the early education and childcare places that the Government pays for, our nursery offers; higher staff to child ratio than suggested by the government, the allotment, multi sports, Forest School, Born2move, Well-being sessions, extra staffing to support swimming, outings on our minibus, outings in the community. This is optional for your child but a great opportunity to boost their learning opportunities and personal, physical and social development. Without these contributions towards the above we would need to re-look at what we can viably offer.

The Government is requiring us to be open and transparent about these charges and ask you to agree to paying these. We will set out to you what these will entail and ask you to please speak with us if you are genuinely going to struggle to continually pay these. We want what’s best for your child while they are at our setting, but meals, consumables and activities do come at a cost. From January 2026 our invoices will be itemised to show this.

We hope this helps you understand the reasons for and the benefits to you and your child of the current charges we have in place. Unfortunately, if we don’t receive these consumable / activity charges then we will have to raise ratios, stop extra-curricular activities and ask you to provide nappies / wipes and all meals/snacks. If you would like to discuss this with us and discuss what it would mean to opt-out of these, please let us know and we can discuss this further with you.

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| **This policy was adopted on** | **Signed on behalf of the nursery** | **Date for review** |
| *19/02/2024* | G.Searle | *19/02/2025* |