

## CHOOSING A NURSERY CLASS OR A NURSERY SCHOOL

Nursery classes and nursery schools provide early education and childcare for groups of young children. They offer full or half days and they are staff by teachers and assistants.

Nursery classes are part of primary or independent schools. They are usually for three and four year olds.

Nursery schools are separate services which are for children under five. Some are private and some are provided by the State.

Children who attend nursery classes or nursery schools get the chance to play and learn alongside other children and acquire skills which will give them a head start at school. Working parents may need to arrange for other childcare to fit around the hours.

Plus points

- your child will play and learn and have fun with friends
- your child will be in a group led by a trained teacher

**Q** How do I know my child will be safe and secure?

**A** First of all you know your child best – look for a nursery class or nursery school you will suit your child. Help in making this decision is provided on a separate sheet “Top Ten Questions to Ask”.

These services are all registered and inspected. Different systems apply to the different types of service. You can ask to see the latest inspection report and registration certificate.

**Q** How many children will there be in a nursery school or nursery class?

**A** In nursery classes and nursery schools there will usually be between 10 and 26 children learning together. There may be many more children in the school or nursery school. Numbers of staff vary in the different services but there should be at least one member of staff for every 13 children. There should be a qualified teacher to lead the group.

**Q** What age range are the children in a nursery school or class?

**A** Normally children in nursery schools and classes will be between three and five years old. But some nursery schools have places for younger children as well.

**Q** When are nursery schools and classes open?

**A** Nursery schools and classes usually open at 9am and close at 3.30pm. Some children will be offered a part-time place. This means an afternoon or a morning session of around two and a half hours. Nursery schools and classes are likely to close for school holidays of at least 13 weeks in the year. However some private nursery schools stay open during school holidays.

**Q** What about full-time childcare?

**A** Many families need more childcare to fit around these hours. You could employ a childminder or nanny to help out. Or you might find there is an out of school group that fits around your nursery school/class hours.

**Q** How much does a nursery class or nursery school cost?

**A** Some nursery classes and nursery schools are part of the State education system and are free except for meals and trips. Some are run by or voluntary sector organisations and they charge fees. The fee vary enormously depending on whether the service is private or voluntary sector. Many private and voluntary sector providers offer free early education for three and four year olds funded by the Government. See funding sheet.

**Q** How do I find a nursery school or a nursery class?

**A** Ask your local Children's Information Service (0116 265 6545) for more information. They will help you find out about your local options and they will also help if you need extra childcare to match your working hours.  
Early learning goals

If your child is three or four and using a free part-time pre-school or early education place, staff will make sure your child is able to move towards the 'early learning goals' to give him or her a head start at school. These include learning about numbers, learning about reading and writing and learning to take care of him or herself, so that by the time they are nearly six and are entering Year 1 they can count to ten and know the alphabet.