

CHOOSING A PRE-SCHOOL

Pre-schools, also known as playgroups or playschools, are for children from 2½ up to 5 years, to learn and play in small groups, close to their homes. They are often held in church halls or community centres. They are registered with OFSTED and are open to inspected.

Most pre-schools open for sessions of around 2 and a half to 3 hours at a time and operate between 2 -10 sessions per week.

Ideal if:

- You have a pre-school child who you'd like to mix and socialise in a small group in a home community
- You want your children to have access to different toys, equipment and stimulation
- You have a pre-school child who you'd like to meet up with other children who may be going to the same school
- You want to meet other parents and learn about child development.
- You wish to supplement existing childcare arrangements. A childminder could pick up your child from playgroup for instance.

Q How many children will there be in the pre-school?

A Most pre-schools will provide places for between 10 to 20 children. There should be no more than 26 children in one room. Pre-school will maintain a staff/child ratio of:

Children aged 2-3 years: 1 adult – 4 children

Children aged 3-5 years: 1 adult – 8 children

Q What about full-time childcare?

A Parents can arrange for children to be taken and collected from pre-school by a childminder or nanny, this is called wrap around care.

Q How do I find a pre-school?

A First of all you know your child best – look for a pre-school that you feel will be suitable for you and your child.

Here are a few questions for you to consider:

- How many of the staff/helpers are qualified or have experience working with young children?
- Can you stay and join in at least two sessions so you can be sure it's right for your child?
- Will you be contacted if your child is unhappy or becomes unwell?

Always check whether:

- The premises are safe and well-maintained. Are toys and equipment clean and in good condition?
- Staff and helpers are creative and if they communicate well with children
- Back-up staff are able to cover absences
- The children are happy, well supervised and offered a range of activities

For more information and advice
Contact Leicestershire's Family Information Service
0116 305 6545 or email family@leics.gov.uk