



Tips and guidance on choosing a nursery

Choosing a nursery that is right for your child is a difficult decision, especially for new parents. This guide will give you some tips to help you to make a decision that's right for your child and for you.

First and most important, make sure that the nursery is registered with Ofsted. The registration certificate will be displayed along with an insurance certificate.

The most recent Ofsted report is available online from Ofsted, or usually on a nursery's website, or you can request to see a copy during your visit. The Ofsted report contains the findings of an inspection and will indicate if the nursery is complying with all the welfare, safeguarding and educational standards that the Government sets.

Prior to visiting a prospective nursery, make a list of all the nurseries that you are interested in, that provide the service you need and are located in the right place to suit you. There are a number of questions that you can ask of the nurseries prior to any visit, such as:

- What hours/sessions does the nursery provide. Does this suit you?
- What are the costs? What is included in the fee? Does the nursery accept childcare vouchers, Government tax free childcare payment and do they offer funded places?
- Are places available for your child to attend the sessions that you need?

You can use these questions to shortlist those nurseries that you would like to visit and ask more questions in person.

What to look for during your visit.....

There are hundreds of questions that you may want to ask, here are a few of them:

- How was your introduction to the nursery? Was it warm and welcoming?
- Does the nursery feel inviting and homely?
- How many children is the nursery registered to care for? This will give you an indication of the size of the nursery and if this suits your child's personality, as some children prefer a smaller quieter environment whilst some like lots of children around them.
- What is the ratio of staff to children? Do they exceed the basic minimum requirement, are there plenty of staff around?
- How does the nursery accommodate your child's daily routine into nursery life?
- What is the nursery's policy on managing behaviour?
- If appropriate, how does the nursery support those children with additional needs (SEND)?
- Is there a safe but stimulating outside space?
- How does the nursery plan activities for your child?
- Do the children in the nursery appear happy, engrossed in their play and relaxed?
- Is the interior of the nursery clean, bright and attractive? Are there plenty of resources for the children to use?
- Is the equipment that the children use clean, good quality, safe and age appropriate?
- Is the food fresh? Is it prepared on-site? Are the menus healthy? Can the nursery provide for special diets? Are menus available for you to look at and are they changed regularly?

- Are there parking facilities? Is there a car park or is it on-street parking?
- Who is in charge of the nursery? What experience do they have and what are their qualifications? Does the manager work on site?
- Do the staff feel confident, well presented and calm?
- Ask the manager about staff having enhanced DBS checks? What other checks are made on those who will be caring for your child?
- Are the staff welcoming, happy and relaxed? Are they interacting with the children?
- How many staff are qualified? To what level are they qualified?
- How many staff are Paediatric First Aiders?
- How does the nursery interact with parents? How is feedback about your child's day given? How are the children's achievements, development and activities recorded and feedback to you?
- Who will be your child's key worker? How does this relationship work? Who will be your main contact at the nursery?
- Does the nursery listen to parent's views and take action as a result? Do they have ways in which parents can give feedback?

Seek references.....

Speak to parents who already attend the nursery. Look at social media content and any active parents groups in the locality as they can give you their insight into the nursery and their experience. Try and avoid here say and speak to parents whose children attend or have attended the nursery.

If you would like additional information about choosing a nursery have look at the following sites:

www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/five-steps-choosing-childcare

www.babycentre.co.uk/a541470/signs-of-a-good-day-nursery

www.ndna.org.uk/NDNA/Stakeholders/Parents_resources/finding-and-choosing-a-nursery.aspx