
Saplings Nursery

Parent Handbook

2014 / 2015

Our Philosophy

towards the care & education of young children is centred on the principle that each child is an individual, who brings a richness of unique experiences that have shaped them thus far. It is our role to provide an environment that is challenging, welcoming, safe and stimulating to enable them to continue forward and reach their full potential

ORGANISATION

Additional information is available for this section can be found in our Operational Plan, which you received with your Brochure; a copy of which is available in the entrance hall.



Opening Hours, Holidays and Closures
Nursery opening hours are as follows:

	Days	Session	Times
Full Day Care	Monday to Friday	Morning Afternoon All day	7.30am – 1.00pm 1.00pm – 6.30pm 7.30am – 6.30pm
Sessional Day	Monday to Friday		9.00am – 3.30pm

Nursery is closed on all Public & Bank Holidays and 3 staff training days each year, a list of these dates is included separately with this handbook.

How our day is organised

Throughout the day we work to a framework that ensures children are well cared for and all children are offered the same opportunities regardless of whether they attend mornings or afternoons.

Each room have their own individual routine and plan for every day. While certain things will follow a set routine, such as meal times, we prefer to encourage flexibility in other parts of the daily routine so that children & staff together may respond to events happening around us. However, overall we loosely adhere to the outline on page 3.

Contacting Us

You can contact the Nursery by telephone on 01279 851998 (there is an out of hours answer phone service) or by email

For Linda email: saplingsnursery@aol.com

We would appreciate it if you could let us know when your child will be absent from Nursery. It helps us to carry out planned activities better if we are aware of which children will not be attending, especially when you are going away on holiday.

ORGANISATION

GENERAL OUTLINE OF OUR DAILY ROUTINE

7.30am	Nursery opens, full day care children arrive
8.00 – 9.00	Breakfast is served, children have FREE PLAY when breakfast is finished
9.00	Morning session begins. Morning session children arrive.
9.00 – 11.30	Children are engaged in activities appropriate to their needs, planned and/or child initiated; play and learning is supported by adult or child led indoors or outdoors
10.30	Snack time is integrated into play rooms from this time
12md	Some Session children are collected at midday ; all other children prepare for lunch
12md – 1.00	Lunch is served.
1.00	Afternoon session begins.
1.00 – 2.00	Quieter period while some children sleep / rest. Session children arrive & non-resting children are free to access / choose quiet activities like painting, drawing, water play, looking at books & puzzles or outdoor play / walks
2.00 – 3.45	Afternoon session continues with children engaged in activities appropriate to their needs, planned and/or child initiated; play and learning is supported by adult or child led indoors or outdoors
3.30 – 4pm	Session children collected, play continues for full day care children indoors or outdoors.
4pm – 5pm	Teatime. Children have FREE PLAY when tea ends older children are given responsibilities in assisting a member of staff to clear the table.
5pm – 6.30	Children are engaged in play with quieter activities, this is encouraged to provide support for the principle of a pre-bedtime 'wind down' period

The Staff

The staff work together to provide the very best in child care. Saplings have a reputation of employing good staff and retaining a high proportion of staff recruited. This means that your child and any siblings are likely to be cared for by the same staff – in this we are unique! A complete list of staff members, their relevant qualifications and special areas of responsibility can be found in our Operational Plan.

Nursery Registration and Inspection

The Nursery is registered under Ofsted, we are legally required to maintain legislative and regulatory requirements in the provision of services to young children. We are bound by the following principle Acts of Parliament: Children Act 1989, Care Standards Act 2000, Day Care and Child Minding (Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005, the Childcare Act 2006, which imposes new obligations on us as childcare providers and the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012)

Ofsted inspects us regularly. The Certificate of registration is displayed in the entrance and a copy of the inspection report is available on request or on the website at www.ofsted.gov.uk. We were last inspected in July 2011 and are proud to announce that we were judged as 'Outstanding' in every area for the provision of Early Years Education.

Since September 2008, future inspections by Ofsted are under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. Ofsted inspect us against the new *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (2012) when they carry out inspections.

We are also registered to accept Free Entitlement Funding from Essex County Council for 2 year olds and 3 – 5 year olds; Saplings also supports Stansted Mountfitchet Children's Centre and are members of the Pre School Learning Alliance, our Out of School Club, Stortford KidsOut is a member of 4Children and Out of School Alliance.

Summer of 2009, we were selected by representatives of Essex County Council Early Years Team, to participate in the Government funded pilot Initiative 'Every Child a Talker (ECAT). We were delighted with this invitation as it offered us opportunity to invest even more into resourcing the nursery, create additional opportunities and further develop as an Early Years provision to the benefit of parents, children & staff.

Quality Matters

Quality improvement lies at the heart of our philosophy; the local authority has a duty to improve the 5 Every Child Matters Outcomes for all children aged 0 -5 and reduce inequality; The Early Years Foundation Stage is our vehicle for delivering high quality provision, implemented well, it ensures that every child has a quality experience in their early years, building the foundation for future success. Essex Early Years monitor the 'quality' of their settings and have awarded us a 'high quality' provision, carrying the 'green flag' across 14 criteria. We endeavour to implement quality improvements continuously and we are always looking at ways to create, maintain and improve the nursery in order to offer parents the best there is in child care with the highest quality experiences for their children.

ORGANISATION

Policies and Procedures

As part of the registration requirements we are required to prepare a number of policies for the smooth running of the Nursery.

Our policies are intended to act as guidelines for good practice and are in place to ensure the well being of the staff & children. However they are considered to be working documents and as such are subject to change to meet the demands of changing conditions, attitudes or legislation.

A complete set of policies are available to parents on a CD, please request a copy should you require one. More information can also be found in our Operational Plan.

Allocation of Day Nursery Places

The Nursery exists to provide day care and session care for the pre-school children of parents whether working or not in and around the East Hertfordshire / West Essex area. There is always a high demand for places at Saplings, a waiting list exists only for parents currently accessing our services and requiring more places than available at the initial time of booking; when the vacancy becomes available parents are offered them on a first come first served basis.

We do not operate a waiting list for parents that apply greater than 6 months in advance. Where demand is greater than availability, places will be allocated at the discretion of the Nursery manager and held until they become available.

Additional Sessions

If you require a one-off additional session, please try and give as much notice as possible; you may be asked to complete an extra session booking form, but an email will also suffice. Wherever possible we will try to accommodate your needs but this may not always be possible because of the demand for places or staff leave. Fees for extra sessions are charged at the usual rate and invoiced automatically with your next invoice. Once booked, the session is liable for payment, whether the place is used or not.

Please note that it is not possible to swap an additional session for a normal day of attendance, all extra sessions must be paid for.

Withdrawal of Children from the Nursery

If you wish to withdraw your child from the Nursery, or reduce the number of sessions attended you must provide us with 6 weeks written notice. (Please refer to our Terms & Conditions)

Late arrival

The Nursery closes promptly at 6.30pm; children attending for half days or mornings, the session ends at 12 midday, 1.00pm or 2pm; in the afternoons the session may end between 3.30pm and 5pm. If you are going to be late collecting your child please inform the Nursery as soon as possible, we reserve the right to levy a late collection fee of £5 for each 15 minutes or part thereof for parents/carers who persistently arrive late. If you wish to discuss your child's day in Nursery with a member of staff you should arrive at least fifteen

minutes before the end of the session or make a separate appointment to speak with them at a time that is mutually acceptable.

Minibus Service

Our minibus is used for outings for the children. Linda and Cheryl are both fully qualified to drive the minibus. In addition, staff are always present on the bus in addition to the driver. We have a variety of seats suitable for tiny babies upwards, Please refer to our Driving Policy for more detailed information about drivers, routes and maintenance of the vehicle.

BEING HEALTHY

Meal Times and Snacks



Throughout the day we provide your child with high quality, healthy meals, drinks and snacks. There is drinking water in each room so the children can access water, the health benefits to children drinking water throughout the day is well documented, we adopt the approach that encourages children to drink plenty of water.

‘Drinking adequate amounts of water regularly throughout the day can protect health and contribute to well-being.’ Water is Cool in School Campaign

‘The key to boosting the capacity to learn is to keep well hydrated throughout the day’ Water is Cool in School Campaign

Our cook plans weekly menus that are nutritious, healthy and meets the daily dietary requirements that apply to children. All meals are freshly prepared and cooked on the day. We shop mainly at Tesco, but some produce are locally sourced and organic. Alternative menus are offered for vegetarians and those children on restricted diets.

Childhood Illness

Children who are ill should not be brought into the Nursery. The day is too demanding for a sick child and they will be more prone to infections and communicable diseases. You would also be placing other children and staff at risk. We recognise that you have work responsibilities and are confident that you will recognise our responsibility towards the health of all of the children. If a child becomes ill while in Nursery we will notify you and ask you to collect your child as soon as possible. It is therefore very important that you advise us of any changes to your contact details as soon as they occur. A list of childhood diseases and their exclusion periods can be found on our Policy disk or you may request a printed copy.

Administration of Medicine

We are only able to administer medicines that have been prescribed by your child’s GP.

Please do not ask the staff to give children ‘over the counter’ medicine. If your child needs medicine while in Nursery you will need to complete a medication form at the beginning of each day and sign it when you collect your child to ensure that you are aware of the medicine given to your child on that day. If your child has been prescribed antibiotics they should be absent from Nursery for at least 48 hours and then only return to Nursery if they have sufficiently improved.



CHANGED ... NEW!

Calpol. While it is acknowledged that Calpol is very effective at reducing children's temperature, it is however also very good at masking symptoms when there may be something more seriously wrong with a baby or child. For this reason, we have amended our policy to not keeping bottles of Calpol in Nursery for children. We will only administer Calpol to treat the specific problem for which a doctor has prescribed an individual child. We use traditional methods to bring a child's temperature down e.g. tepid sponging, removing clothing and in seriously high temperature circumstances, 'fanning' thereby reducing the body's temperature. In any event, we would contact parent/carers to inform you of your child's condition. For children prone to febrile convulsions associated with a sudden rise in temperature, as in a viral infection, we will enter into an individual action plan with the parents/carers in association with the recommendations from your GP or Paediatrician.

Accidents

Each member of staff holds a recognised paediatric first aid certificate; currently, they are renewed every three years.

Although every effort is made to ensure your child is kept safe, accidents do happen. If a child is involved in an accident, emergency first aid treatment will be given, an assessment of the child's condition made, and an account of the accident and treatment given will be recorded in the accident book. Serious accidents will be notified to parents immediately, otherwise, for more minor accidents, you will be informed of the accident at the time of collecting your child and asked to read and sign the accident sheet/book. In the event that the accident requires hospital treatment, you will be informed immediately and arrangements made to meet you at the hospital. In all instances where it is felt necessary to take a child to hospital an ambulance will be called. It is very important that you inform the Nursery staff if your child has had an accident at home prior to coming to nursery.

STAYING SAFE

Babies' Bottles:



It is our policy, as we have the facilities to prepare babies milk feeds and sterilise bottles, to strictly ask that parents DO NOT bring their own bottles, readymade or not into the nursery. Parents pay an all inclusive fee that includes milk feeds. In addition, we take full responsibility for all food hygiene processes in the nursery and have a strict hygiene code for the preparation and storage of babies' milk feeds. It is therefore vital that no previously prepared milk feed from home are accepted for use in the nursery. If bottles of milk are sent in with a baby or child, the milk will be discarded and the bottle returned. If you are still breastfeeding and expressing breast milk you may bring your own milk into nursery, fresh or frozen, but a signature from you will be required which exempts us from food hygiene responsibilities.

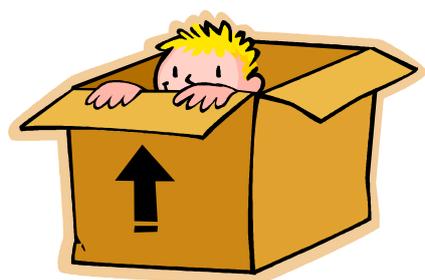
Child Protection

We are required by law to inform the relevant agencies of any concerns that we have about a child who is or may be at risk of harm. Should this occur you would be informed by the Nursery Manager of our concerns and any actions to be taken. Nursery staff will then support you and your child in every way possible. All Nursery staff receive Child Protection training required by the local Area Child Protection Committee which is regularly renewed.

Password

We operate a password system for the collection of children by unfamiliar persons. The application form requires parents to provide us with a password in the event that you are unable to collect your child and require the services of another person to do so on your behalf who are strangers to the nursery staff. The nominated person collecting your child will only gain access to the nursery to collect your child if they have the correct password. In the event you forget your password, you can elect to change it as long as we are informed of the new password.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT



'Babies and young children start learning from birth. They thrive on new experiences and learn through a variety of activities, interaction with people and by exploring the world around them'.

'It is never too early to learn'. Our high quality service of providing your with child care and early education will help give your child the best start to their development and learning, which stays with them as they start school and beyond.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

How we provide for Development & Learning

Children start to learn about the world around them from the moment they are born. The care and education offered at Saplings helps children to continue to learn by assisting them to engage in child led, adult supported play that emphasises active learning and helping them to think creatively and critically

The EYFS practice guidance sets out the Early Learning Goals and we provide parents with access to the latest document on our website downloads page. These goals state what it is expected that children will know and be able to do by the end of their reception year or by 31 August after their 5th birthday.

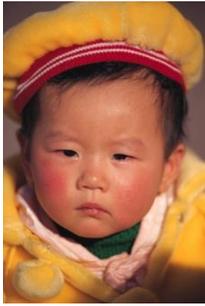
The practice guidance also sets out in 'Development Matters' the likely stages of progress a child makes along their learning journey towards the early learning goals. Our setting has regard to these matters when we observe children and plan for individual learning. Michelle Barker is the lead practitioner for the implementation of the EYFS in the nursery, supported by Debra Roach who takes responsibility in preschool.

General principles that apply to babies & two year olds

We place great emphasis on children learning as they play through self-discovery and adult support. Planning for activities is based on our knowledge and understanding of the child's interests as much as your child's stage of development. Not all children learn in the same way; children under three can demonstrate patterns of repeatable behaviour called schemas - we use these schemas as a starting point to assist us in planning to create opportunities for children on an individual basis that are meaningful to them.

Often, play arises through the use of natural materials that children can safely explore including pebbles, feathers, sand, water, different textured fabrics, cork, heavy glass, items made from metal and wood, fir cones and so on. We are always grateful for any donation of these types of items and frequently circulate letters requesting help to build up our collections. Older children are often seen to use the lovely rural environment to explore further what natural materials are around them.

Babies



We prioritise and respect the importance of doing our best to re-create your baby's home routines and individual needs during the early days at nursery. When you first bring your baby to nursery staff will discuss your routine with you so that we can, to our best ability follow the pattern you have established and fit it into the framework of the daily routine.



OUR ANIMALS

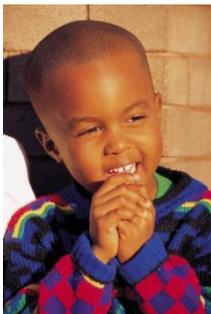
Take time to check out our animals – the guinea pigs are in the Messy Room upstairs, the fish and the Turtle are in the main hall and our 2 hens and 1 cockerel are living in the front garden.

Two Year Olds



As your child matures we offer a wider range of activities including paint, malleable materials, fine motor and gross motor activities, indoor and outdoor play, stories, music and pretend play / role-play. The day has order, but it is not structured in a rigid way, toddlers are encouraged to make choices for where and how their playing to learn will take place.

Three to Five Year Olds



Saplings pre-school children build upon the experiences gained earlier in the Nursery. The children are encouraged to take responsibility, have respect for others and their environment. There are group times but there is also plenty of time for 'free' play and experiential learning indoors and outdoors. Inevitably, our location in a rural environment means that often children are exposed to the natural world of rural, farm life as the seasons unfold. Children are observed closely and staff assess their progress with parents regularly. We encourage parents to become involved in planning the experiences we offer the children and are always looking for ways to

bring home and nursery together, so that we care for & provide relevant learning experiences for your child, in partnership together.

Our aim is to enable preschool children to be ready for school. we do our best to ensure children reach their full potential; being equipped with the necessary skills and confidence to make the transition into school as smooth as possible.

Settling into Nursery

We would recommend that you help your child to settle into the Nursery by attending some introductory visits. This will involve a few visits, initially with you present, then gradually leaving your child with us for longer time periods. Each child is different and some children will find it easier to settle into Nursery than others. It is therefore important that the introductory period is negotiated individually.

Moving up the Nursery

The process is similar to starting at the Nursery - your child will make some introductory visits to the new room with their Key Person who will stay with them. Gradually the length and frequency of these visits will increase to include a meal time, working towards a permanent move when they are ready. Parents will be introduced to the new room and the staff once your child is permanently settled.

Parking and Dropping Off/Picking Up

The car park is one way. Parents may use our car park for dropping off / collecting their child from nursery. During events or meetings when a large number of vehicles are expected, we have permission to use The Barn car park. Please drive carefully along the access road, this is also a public footpath. The maximum speed is 5 mph, vehicles may not be parked on this access road / footpath.

Home Toys and Personal Belongings

The need for children to bring something from home to Nursery is a very important stage in a child's development and because of this we are happy to allow children to do so. However, it is important that anything that is brought from home is clearly marked with your child's name. Many of the toys that children have at home can also be found in Nursery and it would be impossible for the staff to keep track of an individual toy; **we therefore cannot take any responsibility for these home toys.** Anything found in Nursery that isn't recognised as being a Nursery toy will be placed in the entrance hall. It is your responsibility to check this from time to time for anything that might belong to your child.

Childrens' Personal Clothing

Please could you send your child to Nursery with at least one complete set of spare clothing (more if they are being toilet trained) which are clearly marked with your child's name. Please label your child's bag and avoid using plastic carrier bags for their belongings for safety reasons.

Parent/Carer Involvement

Parents are regarded as members of our setting who have full participatory rights. These include a right to be:

- valued and respected
- kept informed
- consulted
- involved

Our Commitment

To ensure that each child:

- is in a safe and stimulating environment
- is given generous care and attention, because of our ratio of qualified staff to children
- has the chance to join with other children and adults to live, play, work and learn together
- is helped to take forward her/his learning and development by being helped to build on what she/he already knows and can do
- has a personal key person who makes sure each child makes satisfying progress
- is in a setting that sees parents as partners in helping each child to learn and develop and
- is in a setting in which parents are encouraged to help shape the service we offer.

Parents/carers are more than welcome into the Nursery at any time and are free to spend as much time as is needed to ensure that their child is settled and happy.

The baby room staff will prepare a daily report book for you to take home that will give you all relevant information about your baby's day.

We try to keep parents as up to date with what is going on in the Nursery as is possible. We do this by sending out letters, usually put into home bags, or putting up posters and notices. You may also visit the news and events page of our website www.saplingsnursery.co.uk. In addition, you will be invited to join Parentmail and our Facebook group.

Please take the time to read any information sent to you, as it will often contain important pieces of information.

Parent Evenings will be held three times a year, one each term, a Calendar is available from the website. Parent meetings are usually organised on an appointment basis and will be an opportunity for you to discuss your child's progress with his/her key person and to share any thoughts or concerns you may have.

We have a Parent Working Group with 6 representatives that meet twice a year, more often if required. The names of the representatives are on the notice board in the entrance hall. Parents may find that discussing issues with a Parent Representative may help to answer questions or allow us to keep in contact with the needs of parents too.

How Parents take part

Saplings Nursery recognises parents as the first and most important educators of their children. All of the staff see themselves as partners with parents in providing care and education for their child. There are many ways in which parents take part in making the setting a welcoming and stimulating place for children and parents, such as:

- exchanging knowledge about their children's needs, activities, interests and progress with the staff;
- helping at nursery social events;
- sharing their own special interests with the children;
- being part of the Parent Representative Group of the setting;

- taking part in events and informal discussions about the activities and curriculum provided by the setting;
- joining in community activities in which the setting takes part; and
- building friendships with other parents in the setting.

Joining In

Parents can offer to take part in a session by sharing their own interests and skills with the children. For example, if you play a musical instrument or are a collector of interesting objects/artefacts or photographs, you might like to share these with the children. We would welcome parents to drop into the nursery to see us at work or to speak with the staff.

Key Person and your child

Saplings uses a key person approach. This means that each member of staff has a group of children for whom she/he is particularly responsible. Your child's key person will be the person who works with you to make sure that what we provide is right for your child's particular needs and interests. When your child first starts at nursery, she/he will help your child to settle and as your child progresses through the nursery, the key person will help your child to benefit from the activities on offer.

Learning Opportunities for Adults

As well as gaining qualifications in early years care and education, the staff take part in further training to help them to keep up-to-date in early years care and education.

Saplings also keeps itself up-to-date with best practice in early years care and education, as a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, through a variety of subscription commitments to a number of early years journals & publications.

From time to time we hold learning events for parents in the form of Workshops or Special Event Days. These are designed to support parents as they bring up their children. Workshops have been running since April 2009 and have been a successful way of sharing beneficial information with parents. All parents are welcome to attend, further information is available on the notice board and we would welcome suggestions from you should you like us to address a specific aspect of learning or development.

Courses on similar topics are held locally by the Pre-school Learning Alliance; watch out for information about these if you are interested.

Compliments, Comments and Complaints

We are always happy to listen to any compliments, comments or complaints you may have about the Nursery. You are welcome to contribute by posting on our Facebook page or within the Saplings Parent Group page.

In the hall you will find a Testimonial Box for you to use. Please write a short sentence or two about your experience of Saplings, for us to post to our website testimonial page, even if you have conveyed this verbally to a member of staff as we are required to keep a record of parents' comments by Ofsted.

If you have any complaints about the service being offered by the Nursery please discuss this in the first instance with the staff concerned. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of these discussions or actions please put your complaint in writing to the Michelle Barker who will respond to your complaint within 14 days. You will be invited into the Nursery to discuss your complaint and a suitable remedy. In the event that you are still not satisfied a formal written complaint can be made to Linda Davies. The complaint will be considered and a written response sent to you. Ultimately you have the right to withdraw your child from the Nursery.

You may also complain directly to our Registering Authority:

Ofsted National Business Unit Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2WD

TEL: **0300 123 4666**

Student Training

We accept students from local schools on work experience, college students on practice placement and University students carrying out research projects or casual employment during holidays. Students will not be left alone with children and are always supernumerary to staffing levels. You may be approached by a student for permission to undertake a child study or observations on your child. There is no obligation to say yes. If you should participate in any such work it is expected that you will be shown the student's final work. Please do not attempt to discuss your child's day with a student - they have all been instructed to refer you to a member of staff.

Baby Sitting Services

The nursery does not provide a babysitting service outside of our operational hours. If a parent/carer should decide to employ current or past employees for babysitting, it is their responsibility to ensure the suitability of the individual. Saplings Nursery does not accept any liability for the conduct of an individual outside of their contractual commitment for work in the Nursery.

Nursery Hens

In October 2009, we had 12 fertilised eggs delivered as part of an educational hatching programme offered to schools / preschools. We succeeded in hatching 9 out of the 12 eggs sent and between 13th – 17th October the chicks hatched – 4 roosters and 5 hens. To this day our chickens remain a favourite with the children and they have regularly observed new hatchings each year.

NURSERY FEES

As the costs of running the Nursery increase year on year it is inevitable that Nursery fees may also increase. Wherever possible these increases are kept to a minimum. Information on the collection of fees is given to you in our Initial Information Pack, you will also find

details in the Terms & Conditions. All fees are fully inclusive of meals, milk, nappies, outings etc.

If your child is absent from Nursery on days where sessions have been booked, (whether because of illness, holiday or unplanned changes to arrangements), full fees must still be paid as the Nursery is unable to recover expenses by offering places to other children. Fees are due for all Nursery closures as staff continue to be paid and staff salaries are our greatest expense.

Our Fee Structure is available from our Website and is included in our Initial Parent Information Booklet

The submission of a signed booking form is considered to be acceptance of the offer of a Nursery place, if you should then fail to take up the place offered you will be liable for fees in lieu of notice in the event that the required notice period is not given.

Financial Support for Childcare

Childcare Vouchers

The Nursery is registered to accept all childcare vouchers which can be obtained via an employer.

Free Entitlement Funding

This is provided from the DfES through the LEA (Essex County Council) and is claimed for on your behalf. You will be asked to sign a declaration that confirms that your child is attending our setting. All children are entitled to this funding from the term following their third birthday. Funding has no monetary value to parents, instead, parents are entitled to request 15 hours a week FREE. 15 hours a week is available over three terms up to 38 weeks of the year and may be shared between two nursery settings; parents must access a total 15 hours a week and are no longer able to access less.

Tax Credits

Working Tax Credit /Child Tax Credits with/or without the Child Care Tax Element is available if you are on a low income and work 16 hours or more a week. Contact Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs for more information <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/Taxcredits/>

Please refer to our Terms & Conditions alongside this Handbook

We provide for children's social, emotional, physical, intellectual and moral development to enable them to grow and develop to their full potential. We strive to create an atmosphere of working in partnership with parents and carers so that the children are happy to attend and you feel confident about leaving your child with us.

Saplings Nursery
January 2010