

Frequently Asked

Questions



How does the funded allocation of childcare work?

The Scottish Government's new [National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare](#) ensures the delivery of a "provider neutral approach" and applies to all childcare providers regardless of whether the funded hours are provided by a Council nursery or a private nursery.

This means that **EVERYONE** is entitled to 1,140 hours of funded childcare for their 3 & 4 year olds (and some eligible 2 year olds) each year and you can choose to use this in your local Council nursery or with Wonder Woods, as we are a "partner provider" with West Lothian Council.

You can therefore use your **free** allocation of funded childcare hours for your child to enjoy and have adventures in our woods and have experiences like nowhere else. We can guide you through this enrolment process. Payment for funded hours is made directly to us by West Lothian Council.

You can spread this as you want, for example:

- 1) Wonder Woods can provide 30 hours per week, spread over Monday to Thursday, for 38 weeks (term-time) per year, in a pattern that suits you: just discuss your needs with us

OR

- 2) 20 hours per week, for 50 weeks, over 2 full days, or one full day and 2 half days, Monday to Thursday from 8am to 6pm daily (this will leave a balance of 140 flexible hours that can be used over the year = 28 additional half days)

Alternatively, if your child is already using their Council funded allocation at another nursery, you can always buy an additional half day or two at Wonder Woods each week, to expand their experiences. And if you need full-time childcare then you will have to pay for

anything beyond the maximum 30 hours per week yourself anyway, so why not complement a traditional nursery with a fully immersive experience that is rooted in nature.

NB. You do not have to stick tightly to the session start/finish times. Your child will be allocated a 'place' at Wonder Woods and can attend for the full session times on the days/sessions allocated or you can drop off late or pick up earlier if you wish, as long as staff have been advised in advance.

How much does it cost?

All children get 1,140 hours per year free (20-30 hours per week, as detailed above), which can be used with Wonder Woods. For additional bookings, we offer full day or half day sessions. These are priced at £23 for a half day (8am/1pm or 1pm/6pm) and £39 for a full day. This includes the cost of all meals and snacks.

Why choose an outdoor nursery?

Wonder Woods is part of a new and growing movement of woodland play and early learning initiatives across the country. They have been proven to improve children's health and wellbeing, boost their immune systems and build their resilience. This is particularly important for children these days as we see rising obesity levels, deteriorating eyesight from excess screen time and increased anxiety from the Covid pandemic.

All early years providers are required to offer some form of outdoor play but only a *fully* outdoor nursery, like Wonder Woods, totally immerses them in nature: As Sir David Attenborough states *"If children do not grow up learning and appreciating the natural world, they won't understand it. If they don't understand it, they can't protect it. If they don't protect it.....who will?"*

Maree Todd, Minister for Children and Young People in Scotland, said she was so pleased to see a facility like Wonder Woods, in West Lothian. She went on to state that outdoor nurseries, like Wonder Woods, show children, from an early age, that being outdoors is fun and it's an exciting place to be. She confirmed that playing and learning outdoors helps to improve wellbeing, helps to build resilience and mental development.

We all know how inspiring the outdoors is at any age, but especially in the informative early years. As the Minister said, it is the best learning environment for children. It is even more

important in these difficult times, as being outdoors is the safest place to be and nature has the power to refresh and energise us.

According to Inspiring Scotland, immersion in the outdoors improves physical health, physical activity levels, the ability to risk assess, respiratory health, fundamental movement skills, bone density, eyesight, Vitamin D levels and boosts children's immune systems.

Playing and learning in the outdoors improves well-being: meaning confidence, self-esteem, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and regulation of emotions, thereby contributing to positive mental health and happiness.

Are the woods safe?

According to the Care Inspectorate, Covid has proved that the safest place to be is outdoors. This is why the first facilities to re-open, after the initial pandemic lockdown, were fully outdoor nurseries.

We have handwashing stations on site and all of the trees around the nursery are inspected regularly and maintained.

Our "base camp" area has clear natural and identified boundaries and the children learn these quickly. Staff also observe where the children are playing to monitor these. When the children walk to other part of the wider area, they are accompanied and supervised by staff.

What should my child wear?

Suitable and appropriate clothing is essential for an enjoyable experience. We can support families, if needed, by supplying appropriate clothing and footwear and this can be arranged with us prior to your child starting.

If providing your own clothing, we strongly recommend a warm base layer, a second base layer, e.g. a pair of fleece bottoms and a long sleeved top along with a durable and fully waterproof outer layer. Wellies are only suitable for river walking but not as an all-day shoe, as they can be restrictive and are not warm enough in autumn/winter months. We can advise you on footwear brands.

What about the weather?

A key part of being an outdoor nursery is experiencing and engaging with the elements, all year round. Research and our own experience, show us that children love the different seasons and weather, that comes with them. The right clothing ensures that the children are kept warm and dry.

We are fairly sheltered in the woods and there are many great spaces that keep us moderately dry, even in heavy rain. We have varying degrees of shelters available to us, including tarpaulin canopies, a bell tent with a wood stove and our wooden cabin, which also has a wood burning stove.

We aim to be outdoors regardless of the elements and will use them to influence our play activities for the day. We have clear weather protocols to follow that ensure our children are kept safe and well.

How will they go to the toilet?

The dignity and privacy of all our children is central to our ethos. We know how important and essential toileting is to us all. We have Care Inspectorate approved toilet facilities at various locations around the site.

We understand that while outdoors we may not always make it to a physical toilet. If we cannot make it to a physical toilet, we will always ensure the comfort and dignity of your child is maintained.

As stated above, there are also handwashing stations around the site to maintain hygiene.

What about the curriculum?

As a Council partnership nursery, which is also registered with the Care Inspectorate, Wonder Woods delivers the national [Curriculum for Excellence](#) and meets the [National Care Standards](#). We are also guided by [My World Outdoors](#), [Space to Grow](#) and [Food Matters](#).

"The outdoors provides opportunities for learning across the whole spectrum of the curriculum – they learn by being in a different environment as well as learning about that environment. The sights, the smells, the sounds of being in the woods or the beach or even

in a field – the seasons, the weather – are all opportunities to teach and learn.” My World Outdoors

Research has shown that children who are curious and think creatively are more likely to have better attainment. Similarly, children who experience a range of environments and learn as they do, will fare better in attainment.

Will outdoor learning prepare my child for school?

“Anything you can teach in an indoor classroom can be taught outdoors, often in ways that are more enjoyable for children.” Cathy James

Some parents ask how an outdoor setting prepares children for school life.

All pre-school nurseries work to the same curriculum and to the same standards (above), which includes staff being qualified and experienced to the same levels as school nurseries.

Outdoor learning is expanding within schools and they are increasingly moving away the desks, moving outside and re-learning what it means to learn, not just in but from the outdoors. P1 and 2 in many schools are embracing a more play-based curriculum that supports the transition for children from the play-based learning they have been used to. The question we need to be asking is not ‘is my child ready for school?’ but ‘is the school ready for my child?’

“If we want our children to move mountains, we first have to let them get out of their chairs.” Nicolette Sowder

A [study](#) was carried out at two day nurseries, one was an outdoor nursery, and the other a traditional nursery in new, spacious premises. The researchers studied the children’s behaviour as a whole: how they played, how often they were outside, their play routines, and also the development of motor function and powers of concentration during the course of a year. This showed that, when it came to concentration capacity, the children within the outdoor pre-school were more than twice as focused as children within the ‘normal’ pre-school. Their motor skills were better, they were less frustrated, restless and sick.

Further [research](#) also states that children in an outdoor setting develop their motor skills and concentration better than their peers at an indoor nursery. *“Proximity to, views of, and*

daily exposure to, natural settings increases children's ability to focus and enhances their cognitive abilities."

If your child is settled and happy in their setting, you don't need to move them to a nursery at a local primary school. They will receive good education and care from our qualified staff at Wonder Woods.

We will liaise with your chosen school so that your child attends the transition programme that is set up for all children – that is where they will start to 'get used to' their new environment, with their peers who are all experiencing the same stage. And don't worry about 'friends moving up together' – going from (any) nursery to school is a transition for all children and there is no guarantee that they will stay with friends that they made in nursery class or that they will not make new ones, as children do so naturally.

"Children are naturally friendly and curious – they will approach their peers and make friends with ease. Do not be put under pressure and made to feel guilty about keeping your child at [another] nursery's pre-school where they are already happy and confident there." Naturallylearning.co.uk

Do I need to provide food?

Morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack are provided and eaten together as a group. Fruit, vegetables and healthy snacks are available throughout the day. As part of our ethos around healthy eating, we practice inclusive eating to support every child, regardless of their dietary requirements. Lunch is served between 12:00-12:45pm so is available to children attending the morning/full day session.

Can my child attend two different childcare providers?

A cornerstone of the Scottish Government's National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare is 'funding follows the child'.

At the moment this means that you can only allocate your funded places to one provider of your choice but once the Government brings back the full statutory requirement on local Councils on August 2021, you will be able to split your funded hours, up to your maximum allocation of 1,140 hours, across different providers, to suit the needs of you and your child.

In the meantime, you can still use different providers for your childcare but you will need to pay for the second provider.

Please contact us for more information about all of the above.

My child is still wearing nappies, can they still attend?

We have nappy changing facilities on site but aim to work with parents and children to support children through toilet training.

I don't have access to transport, is there a way my child could still attend?

Wonder Woods can provide transport in some cases, meaning that we can, if necessary, support children who may otherwise not be able to attend. Please contact us for more information.

I live outside West Lothian, can I apply for a place at Wonder Woods?

Yes. Under the principle of 'funding follows the child' you can apply for a funded place within West Lothian. To do so you should apply via West Lothian Council's website and we can guide you through this process.

Can I arrange a visit with my child?

Absolutely! We'd love to meet you and your child and to give you a tour and answer your questions. Please contact us to arrange this safely admin@simplyplay.org or 01506 856444.