

Little Stars Pre school LTD
At The Mill Primary School
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11th January 2021

Dear Families,

Little Stars want to advise you of the current situation which is completely out of our hands and it is with deep regret we have to write to you.

You may have heard current news press around funding. The situation around Free Entitlement for Early Years, two three and four-year-olds.

Little Stars have contacted Local MP's, West Sussex Local Authority and Vicky Ford the secretary of state for children and families.

Some local authorities are funding free entitlement even if the child is not in attendance during the week commencing the 18th January on "headcount week".

Exceptions to this are for example – your child is ill, or your family is in self isolation
A snapshot of the guidance is in the paragraphs /link below

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

- not penalised for short term absences of children, for example sickness, arriving late or leaving early, or a family emergency through withdrawing funding, but use their discretion where absence is recurring or for extended periods taking into account the reason for the absence and the impact on the provider
- aware of the local authority policy in the area in which they practice on reclaiming funding when a child is absent from a setting
- not penalised through withdrawal of funding for short term closures of a setting, for example, as a result of local or national elections or damage to the premises

If your child is not attending during headcount week without a valid reason Little Stars will not be able to claim funding for your child until **"Summer term"** which falls into the bracket after Easter term Week commencing 19th April. Little Stars return date would be 20th April. West Sussex have advised us that we would need email confirmation if this is your decision.

West Sussex Local Authority free entitlement has advised us that this is the procedure and action we must adhere to, however as with everything during this unprecedented situation this guidance may change, and the government may do a complete and utter U-turn.

The government announced on Monday 4th January that schools must close as it's not safe for all children to attend but it is for early years settings, I'm sure you've seen in the press different views on all of this.

We would like to make this clear, it is your parental choice.

We would urge you to consider this position and email immediately as we need to look at sustainability and viability for the long-term business of Little Stars during this current situation. We may have no choice but to close our doors for the rest of this term even to key workers and extremely vulnerable families.

We have been in constant discussions with the local authority, but no meaningful guidance has been offered and it is a sad day that Little Stars has to consider the temporary withdrawal of support to the local community unless West Sussex and the Department of Education come together with a positive outcome similar to 33 other local authorities who have shown extreme value to the early years sector.

With Kindest regards
Heather
Manager
On Behalf of Little Stars

Company number 7838922 registered England