

Am I eligible?

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

Suffolk site below allows you to enter your postcode and filter search by "3&4 yr old funded" places:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/results.page?familychannel=1>

### Starting school

All children will be offered a full time place in a school reception class starting in the September following their fourth birthday.

As a parent, you will need to decide at the time of receiving the offer of a full time place in a reception class, whether:

- You wish your child to join the school full time from September,
- You wish your child to attend the school part time initially, then full time later in the school year.
- You choose to defer (delay starting) the place until later in the school year.  
- If you defer your child's place you could choose to have 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year funded in a private, voluntary or independent nursery, pre-school playgroup or with a childminder who is on the council's 'List of Providers' (LOP).

If your child is already four and you do not have a place in a school, phone the School Admissions Office on: 0845 600 0981 (local rate).



### Contacts

#### Phone:

**Suffolk Families Information Service on: 0845 60 800 33**  
(local call rate number)

Lines are open Monday to Friday  
9:00am to 5:00pm

There is an answering service outside these hours.

#### Email:

[childcare.planning@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:childcare.planning@suffolk.gov.uk)

#### Website:

[www.suffolk.gov.uk/family](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/family)

Please phone us again if you need more help or you are not happy with the information we have sent you.

This leaflet is available in Albanian, Bengali, Chinese, Kurdish, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian and Urdu.

Phone: **0845 60 800 33** if you would like this leaflet in a large print version.



**Information for families  
on Early Learning**



## Children who have good quality early education are more likely to relate well to other people, grow in confidence and thrive.

Some 3 & 4 year olds are eligible for 30 hours Free Childcare a week. However, *US Forces are typically only eligible for 15 hours.* The authorization form may ask for a National Insurance Number (NIN). A NIN is used to verify eligibility for an add'l 15 hours. If a NIN can be provided, a UK passport and UK pay report will also be requested to determine eligibility for add'l 15 hours.

### What is early education?

This leaflet refers to early years provision for 3 and 4 year olds which is 'Free of charge' known as early education. It is sometimes called early learning, nursery or pre-school education.

Children play and learn together, supported and encouraged by qualified professionals. They take part in a range of fun, interesting and challenging play activities both indoors and outdoors.

### Where can my child have this?

Free early education takes place outside a child's home. Children can receive it in day nurseries, pre-school playgroups, with registered childminders and in school nursery classes. The choice will depend on what's available in your local area.

Contact the **Suffolk Families Information Service (FIS)** to find providers near you offering free early education on: **0845 60 800 33**  
Or visit: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/family](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/family)

### What is the free entitlement?

From the term after your child's third birthday until they start school full time, they are entitled to a maximum of 15 hours of free early education each week for up to 38 weeks a year (school term time).

Your child can have just their free hours or you can use the free hours as part of the childcare you need and pay for any extra.

The pattern you take up will depend on:

- What you want for your child and family.
- What the provider you choose is able to offer.

### How much flexibility do providers offer?

The flexibility depends on what is available in your local area and your family's needs.

You will need to talk to the childcare providers you are considering. They can explain what they offer.

## When can my child receive free early education?

If your child's 3rd birthday is between... they can start free early education from...

1 September and 31 December	<b>Spring Term</b> (the term after the Christmas holiday, which starts in January)
1 January and 31 March	<b>Summer Term</b> (the term after Easter holidays, which usually starts in April)
1 April and 31 August	<b>Autumn Term</b> (the term after the long summer holiday, which usually starts in September)

### These are some options you could choose:

- Monday to Friday for 3 hours each day for 38 weeks a year (term time)
- 5 hours a day for 3 days a week for 38 weeks a year (term time)
- 6 hours a day for 2 days a week and 3 hours for the third day for 38 weeks a year (term time)

Suffolk's school nursery classes usually offer 5 sessions of a similar length each day and some pre-school playgroups only offer half days.

Some providers may allow you to spread out your free entitlement so you take fewer hours over more than the 38 weeks as a 'stretched' entitlement.

### How do I get a place for my child?

Phone the Suffolk Families Information Service to find out what's available in your area. We can provide a search of local childcare providers based on your postcode.

Contact the provider and ask for an application form, either phone them or drop in.

Put your child's name down for a place at the day nursery, school nursery class, pre-school playgroup or childminder of your choice and agree the hours you would like your child to take with them.

Once you have agreed the hours you would like your child to take, the provider will ask you to sign a parent/carer authorisation form. This will reserve your child's place and the provider will tell you when your free entitlement can start.

### When can my child start?

All children can have free early education from the term after they are three. Use the table above to find out when this would be for your child or phone the **Suffolk Families Information Service** on: **0845 60 800 33.**

