



Parents' Handbook



Welcome to Diggle Dandelions

Diggle Dandelions is a not for profit community pre-school and playgroup providing the highest quality care and education for local children aged two to five years. We aim to offer a safe, supportive, vibrant and stimulating environment in which children can play, explore, talk, learn and have fun together.

We are located in the grounds of Diggle Primary School with whom we share strong links. This helps many of the children who attend our pre-school to make an easy transition to Diggle School's reception class when it's time for them to move on.

Diggle Dandelions is a community interest company run by the staff team. We are registered with Ofsted and are proud to have been judged as 'outstanding' in all areas when we were inspected in November 2015.

This handbook is intended to give you the key information about our pre-school. If there is anything more you need to know, please talk to the Pre-school Manager or your child's key person who will be happy to help and advise you.

Opening times

Diggle Dandelions is open from 9.00am to 3.00pm on Monday to Friday. We offer a maximum of 20 places per session to children aged two to five years. All sessions are subject to availability and may change depending on demand.

Parents may choose from the following options:

Option 1	Morning session	9.00am - 12.00pm
Option 2	Full day	9.00am -3.00pm
Option 3	Afternoon session	12.00pm - 3.00pm

Fees

As a not for profit community pre-school fees are intended to cover our basic expenses such as staff wages and rent whilst fundraising helps to pay for other outgoings such as new toys and equipment. Fees are payable monthly in advance, during school term-time, upon receipt of our invoice. Fees must still be paid during absences, for example term-time holidays or illness, as our overheads remain the same. In the event that we are forced to close due to adverse weather conditions, for example snow, we will refund 50% of the fees payable for the sessions missed. Fees must be paid in full within the time period specified on our invoice in order for your child to keep their place at our pre-school.

Diggle Dandelions is registered with a number of organisations that operate workplace childcare voucher schemes. If you are wish to pay your fees through a voucher scheme, please speak to the Pre-school Manager.

Free nursery education

All three and four year old children are entitled to free part time nursery education for up to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year. Children become eligible for a free place from the term after their third birthday. Many working parents of three and four olds in Oldham will be eligible for 30 hours of free childcare per week. When your child becomes eligible for free nursery education we will discuss your requirements and guide you through the application process.

Some two year old children are entitled to free part time nursery education for up to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year. To see if your two year old is eligible please contact your local sure start centre.

Staff

Whilst the environment, furniture and resources are important, we believe the most important resource of all is the staff. We employ a team of well qualified, experienced and skilled staff who are committed to providing a high level of care and education for your child.

To provide the best possible care, our staff ratios are high:

2 - 3 years	1 staff per 4 children
3 - 5 years	1 staff per 8 children

Along with our small group sizes, this helps us to give generous time and attention to each child; talk with the children about their interests and activities; help children to experience and benefit from the activities we provide and allow the children to explore and be adventurous in safety.

We encourage staff to continue their professional development by gaining relevant qualifications and by taking part in further training to help them to keep up-to-date with thinking about early years care and education.

Starting with us

Your child may start with us at any time during the pre-school year once they have reached the age of two, subject to availability of a place. This may be the first time your child is left with anyone outside their circle of family and friends and we do not underestimate how big a step this is for everyone. We want your child to feel happy and safe at Diggle Dandelions and to make sure that this is the case; the staff will work with you to decide on how to help your child to settle into pre-school. Please feel free to discuss any queries or concerns you may have. The more we know about your child, the easier the settling-in process will be.

Your child's key person

We operate a 'key person' system. This means that each member of staff has a group of children for whom they are particularly responsible. Your child's key person will be the member of staff 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 Diggle Dandelions they will help your child to settle and throughout your child's time with us will help your child to benefit from the pre-school's activities.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. It describes seven areas of learning and development that are all important and inter-connected. These seven areas consist of:

Three Prime Areas

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development
- Communication and Language

Four Specific Areas

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design

For more information please see the Parents' Guide in our Parents' Information Pack or on the Parents page of our website.

Learning through play

A high quality pre-school education is about much more than colours, shapes, numbers and letters. Young children learn by doing things for themselves, by exploring and investigating, watching and listening, talking and discussing, creating and thinking - in other words - by playing. Our environment is organised so that all the children can become enthusiastic, confident and independent learners. We plan a range of purposeful play activities each day, across all seven areas of learning and development that are appropriate for the children's different ages and stages of development. In some of these activities children will decide how they will use the activity and, in others, an adult takes the lead in helping the children to take part in the activity.

Your child's Learning Journey

We keep a record of achievement and progress for each child. This is their Learning Journey. Your child's key person will work in partnership with you to keep this record. We will collect information about your child's needs, interests, activities and achievements through close observation and photographs, where staff capture and record what they see and hear children doing at pre-school, and through information shared about what your child likes to do at home. This information enables us to identify your child's current stage of progress and helps us plan activities to meet your child's individual needs. The Learning Journey is in the form of a file which is kept in your child's own tray and is available for you to look through at anytime. We hope you will treat this as a shared document, one that we can all enjoy and feel a sense of ownership of. You are welcome to take the file home to share with the family, although we do ask that you inform your child's key person first.

Parents as partners

Our pre-school recognises parents as the first and most important educators of their children. We see ourselves as partners with parents in providing care and education for their children and encourage two-way flow information. Any information shared with us will be dealt with in total confidence.

Effective communication with all parents is vitally important for the success of Diggle Dandelions. Information is posted on the notice board outside the main room or on the front door. We issue regular newsletters about activities, important diary dates and social events. Our Year Book is always on display and is added to regularly to help you keep up to date with the activities and experiences offered to the children. Our website provides an additional source of information and news for parents, family and friends. Take a look at www.diggledandelions.org.

There are many ways in which parents help to make the pre-school a welcoming and stimulating place such as:

- exchanging knowledge about their children's needs, interests, activities and progress;
- reading a story to the children at group time;
- volunteering to help out at a session;
- providing a healthy snack for the children to share at café time;
- joining in community activities in which the pre-school takes part;
- building friendships with other parents in the pre-school.

We welcome parents to drop into the pre-school to see it at work or to speak with the staff.

Food and drink – making healthy choices

We regard meal times as an important part of our day, when children and adults come together socially to eat. We provide a healthy snack during each morning and afternoon session. The children are invited to 'café' where they are able to choose a drink of fresh milk or water and a nutritious snack, e.g. fresh fruit, toast, cheese, dip, bread sticks and savoury biscuits.

If your child is staying for lunch, please provide a packed lunch and drink in a named lunch box with an ice pack. We encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit and milk based desserts such as yoghurt. We discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, fizzy and sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort.

Do tell us about your child's dietary needs or any known food allergies by completing the appropriate section on the Registration Form, and by talking to us, and we will make sure that these are met.

Clothing

Playing can be a very messy business and, although children do wear aprons, accidents can happen. The best way to avoid becoming upset about children getting messy is to send them in play clothes that don't matter. It is very sad when a child refuses to get involved in an activity in case they 'get dirty'. We ask that parents encourage their children to feel uninhibited and free to play.

We encourage children to gain the skills that help them to be independent and look after themselves. These include taking themselves to the toilet and taking off, and putting on, outdoor clothes. Clothing that is easy for them to manage will help them to do this, e.g. tracksuit bottoms rather than trousers with buttons and belts. In case of accidents please provide a named bag containing a set of clean clothes.

If your child is still in nappies/pull-ups please provide a named bag containing spare nappies/pull-ups, wipes and a set of clean clothes.

Please clearly name any items of clothing that your child is likely to take off at pre-school, e.g. coats, pre-school sweatshirts and wellington boots. We encourage outdoor play throughout the year so please ensure that your child has appropriate seasonal clothing and footwear. Wellington boots are needed at every session your child attends so we strongly suggest that a named pair is left at pre-school.

Policies and procedures

Our Organisational Plan brings together all our policies and procedures. It can be found on the Parents page of our website or copies are available on request. The pre-school's policies help us to make sure that the service provided is a high quality one and that being a member of our pre-school is an enjoyable and beneficial experience for all children and their parents.

Safeguarding children

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them. Our pre-school has a duty under the law to help safeguard children against suspected or actual significant harm. We have, and implement, a set of policies and procedures to safeguard children including an explanation of the action to be taken in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff and a separate policy covering the acceptable use of mobile phones and cameras in the pre-school. These can all be found within our Organisational Plan.

Special needs

We provide an environment in which all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, are supported to reach their full potential. We identify the specific needs of children with special education needs and disabilities and meet those needs through a range of strategies, working in partnership with parents and other agencies, and ensuring that our provision is inclusive to all children. The pre-school has regard for the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.

Emergency contact information

All parents must complete a Registration Form before their child starts at Diggle Dandelions. This form includes emergency contact numbers so that you or another named person can be contacted in the event of illness or accident. Please ensure that the information we hold about you and your child is kept up to date.

Illness

If children are not well they are better off at home, whatever they say! If you are unsure about whether your child should attend, please check with a member of staff.

If your child becomes unwell whilst at pre-school we will use your emergency numbers to contact you so that you or another named person can come and collect your child.

Sickness and diarrhoea: In the case of 'tummy upsets' it is vital that children stay at home for **at least 48 hours** after the last incidence of sickness and diarrhoea to prevent it spreading to others.

Asthma: We need to know if your child has asthma and, if an inhaler is used, we need to keep one at pre-school, labelled with your child's name.

Childhood infectious diseases: There are lots of common infectious diseases that your child will invariably have at some time, perhaps at pre-school. Please let us know as soon as you suspect an infection, or have a diagnosis, so that we can inform other parents. We can also advise you about the minimum exclusion periods.

No-smoking

We comply with health and safety regulations and the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage in making our pre-school a no-smoking environment - both indoor and outdoor.

Complaints

We welcome suggestions on how to improve our pre-school and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the pre-school. If you have a concern or complaint about any aspect of Diggle Dandelion's provision please talk to the Pre-school Manager. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach but if this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns. Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints procedure. Their details are displayed on our Parents' Notice Board and on the Links page of our website.

Contact us

We hope that you and your child enjoy being members of our pre-school and that you all find taking part in our activities interesting and fun. We are always ready to talk to you about your ideas, views or questions.

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