

Statement to support an increase in the number of children from 37 to 42 due to the number of Special Needs children requiring more sessions post lockdown

We currently have planning permission for a day nursery for 37 children at Green Acres Pre-school and Nursery, from 7:30 until 6pm all year round. This was increased from 33 to 37 last year to accommodate the rise in babies being born through lockdown. In actual fact, we have space for 47 children according to Ofsted space requirements.

We are applying to increase our capacity by 5 children, to allow us to care for a maximum of 42 children but at the same time we have changed our admissions policy to reduce the intensity of use of the property.

Reasons for the Increase

Firstly, we have had an unprecedented number of children aged around two, referred to us by Health visitors and who are under the care of paediatricians. These children are showing significant delay due to the pandemic. They have not been able to participate in normal baby groups, support visits by professionals and often parents' mental health has suffered as they have been isolated and, in some cases, had the pressure of home schooling their older children. I am pleased to say that in some cases this has been a temporary developmental delay but would like to increase their sessions to give the children the best start we can.

Secondly, we have a staff member due to return from Maternity leave and have absolutely no space on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for her baby, although we do on the other days, nor can she find space locally. We anticipated that someone would move from the area, but this has not happened.

Reduction in intensity of use of the property

- We no longer provide care to children over the age of five, therefore we no longer have the comings and goings of staff members driving to local schools to drop off children in the morning or collect them after school. Local schools have incredibly good before and after school care and our spaces are very much needed for children below school age. From a highways point of view the increase in numbers from 37 to 42 compared with the school runs we used to do at 3pm each day will actually result in a reduction of traffic.
- Our youngest three children have become teenagers and make their own way from school and normally have activities at school, dancing, or see their friends. By the time they come home, the nursery is almost empty.
- Our planning permission allows us to operate until 6pm, but we no longer offer contracts after 5:30 and a good proportion finish at 3pm. The pandemic has changed the working habits of our families who use us. They generally work from home at least some of the time so don't have to travel so late. I cannot see that it will return to how it was before.
- I believe we are the only nursery in the area to provide term time only care for children aged 0-5. Consequently, over 40% of our families are teachers, who like their children at home with them in

the school holidays. Therefore, our numbers are very much reduced in the school holidays (14 weeks), but we still open for those who require childcare, and this allows our staff to take their own holidays and be with their own children.

- We provide flexible care with drop-offs and pick-ups staggered throughout the day, and we never have a queueing issue. In fact, we offer a popular “school day” session which is pick up before 3pm so the nursery is less than 70% full by 3:15pm

For 38 weeks of the year (term-time) we are completely full on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, almost full on Thursdays but we will always have spaces on Mondays and Fridays due to parents working flexibly. You may think just offer extra sessions on Mondays and Fridays, but this is impossible as these children already do a Monday and Friday. Would you believe that less than 10% of our families work full-time? Often parents work two, three or four days but they always want Friday and/or Monday to attach to their weekend. The provision of five extra spaces, would not increase the intensity of use of the property, when you consider all these things together. However, it would greatly improve the chances of the children to whom I would like to offer additional sessions.

Other Considerations

The addition of five additional places at the setting would require us to employ an additional member of staff but would not require us to make any changes to the existing premises. We would continue to reside at the house, and we would not need to use any of the rooms differently.

We have ample parking (18 spaces) and never fully use the spaces. We do not anticipate a material increase in traffic as the additional five spaces will be throughout the day.

In order to cater for some of the increased demand for childcare in the local area, we opened “Burbage Preschool” in September 2019 at Tilton Road, Burbage. This is now also at full capacity. In September 2020, our daughter opened Sharnford Pre-School at the Evergreen Village Hall and we have been able to “overflow” there for children aged over 2 years.

Finally, several of our families work in the health sector and as mentioned before a considerable number of our parents are teachers. We are providing a vital service in the local area by providing a home from home environment and we are rated good by Ofsted.