

What is a pre-school playgroup?

A pre-school playgroup provides care and education for children between two and a half years and five years of age.

How are they registered?

Pre-school playgroups that run sessions lasting longer than two hours must be registered with OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education). They inspect the playgroup to check that the standards relating to health and safety, equipment, care, learning and play are met.

Following registration, OFSTED will inspect the playgroup every three years. Playgroup inspection reports are available to parents on the OFSTED website www.ofsted.gov.uk

How are they staffed?

Any person in charge of children under the age of eight must have a minimum of a level 3 qualification and two years' experience relevant to the post. A Deputy must hold a level 3 qualification in Childcare and Education. At least half of the remaining staff must hold a level 2 qualification.

The table below shows the ratio of staff to children stipulated by OFSTED.

Age of child	Number of children	Number of staff
0-2 years	3	1
2-3 years	4	1
3-8 years	8	1

What are the usual opening hours?

Most playgroups offer sessions from two and a half hours to four hours during term time, either every day or several days a week.

How much does it cost?

Most playgroups will charge per session as they are only open for up to four hours at a time. It is best to contact the playgroup for their up to date costs. Remember to check what is included in the overall cost and agree this before signing a contract.

What if my child has an accident or falls ill?

If your child has an accident whilst at the playgroup, you must ask to sign their accident/incident book. All playgroups must have a policy about the exclusion of children who are ill or infectious, which is discussed with parents.

How do I choose a pre-school playgroup?

Choosing the right place for you and your child is a big decision and it is important that you visit first in order to make the right decision. The following notes are designed to help you to do this. It is a good idea to ask to see the group's registration certificate as specific conditions of registration imposed on individual playgroups may vary. OFSTED state that this certificate should be displayed at all times.

Questions to ask on a visit:

- What hours is the playgroup open?
- What does the playgroup charge and what is included in the price?
- What are the procedures around sickness and holidays, including charges?
- How many members of staff are there and are they suitably qualified and experienced?
- How does the playgroup encourage positive behaviour?
- How will you be kept informed of your child's progress?
- Is there a settling in period available for your child?

Things to look for:

- Are you and your child made to feel welcome?
- Are the other children happy, confident and having fun?
- Is the environment clean, comfortable and child friendly?
- Do the staff appear to have a good, positive relationship with the children?
- Are the staff observant and quick to respond to the children's needs?
- Are there plenty of books, toys, activities and play equipment available?
- Is there plenty of space to move about, both inside and outside?

Remember, you know what is best for your child. Ask questions and find out as much as you can on a visit and then follow your feelings!

Would you like to know what's happening in Solihull for children and families? Then join our Parent's Network for regular information at www.solihull.gov.uk/parentsnetwork

Solihull Family Information Service

Call: 0800 389 8667

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