

DCYA Childcare Funding Programmes Optional Extras Guide

In general, the DCYA does not recommend charges for optional extras for children attending any of the DCYA Childcare Funding Programmes and most participating service providers do not seek them. However, it is recognised that some services have additional and genuinely optional activities, and that in many cases it may not be reasonable to prevent participating services from charging for these. For example, trips to the zoo are not key parts of a curriculum, and therefore a reasonable charge may be made for such an outing, provided there is an alternative set of programme based activities for children who do not participate in the trip.

However, charging extra for items which would be expected to be part of a pre-school service (e.g. arts and craft materials) is not permitted under the programme. Activities which would be included in the fee for children not participating in one of DCYA Childcare Funding Programmes will not, generally, be seen as optional for children who are participating in a programme. Similarly, it is **not** permitted for services to make payment of 'optional' charges a criterion for admission to the service. Nor is it permitted for services to combine a list of additional services into just one optional list. Any extra services **must be individually optional**, and this requires an individualised charge for each optional extra. (It is permitted that they also be available as a combined list, provided they are also available individually).

Where an optional extra is genuinely optional but happens during class time, children not attending the optional activity **must** have a full content-based session, and both groups of children must be, under the required levels of staff supervision required by the programme. It is not sufficient to claim, for example that two adults can supervise 16 children involved in an optional activity, and a further 4 who are involved in another activity, as the 16 children will require the supervision of 2 adults, and the 4 other children will also require additional adult supervision.

No additional activity should be held in such a way as would leave non-participating children feeling excluded (e.g. colouring, while other children in sight of them have dancing lessons), and **if a service is unsure as to whether this would happen, the additional optional events should happen outside the normal times/days of the session.**

If a family is no longer in a position to continue to afford an optional extra they agreed to, they should be allowed to withdraw from it. While notice may be required for such withdrawal, it may not exceed one month.

The general principle is that an optional extra must be genuinely optional in practice as well as theory, and cannot be 'tagged on' to another optional extra.

Potential optional extras (NB: Many of these will be provided by services free of charge – this list simply states certain optional extras not excluded by the programme)

Food over and above that which the service is required to offer children by the Pre-School Regulations, for the type of place provided. Children must also have the option of bringing their own snack instead.

Swimming classes and other classes which involve instruction not normally part of a pre-school programme

Transport

School trips which incur a cost (e.g. admission fees etc.)

Birthday parties (NB these should be free if simply a cake and a card etc., but it is recognised that in some cases, parents may wish to pay extra for an expensive event, e.g. a trip to have a party at a commercial play centre, and this is not prohibited. If a charge is made, it must not be charged to the other families)

Santa, Halloween parties, Easter egg hunts etc. (NB If there is a charge for such an event – and it is not recommended that there would be - it must be held on a non-ECCE day)

Additional hours/weeks

'**Gymboree**' type events, where outside providers deliver an educational and/or entertainment based activity

Nappies / pull-ups (where applicable)

Class photo / yearbook

Merchandise, such as T-shirts etc.

Aprons/smocks etc. (option to wear one's own must also be allowed)

Graduation gowns (NB the option not to wear a hired gown at any graduation-type event must be allowed)

Gardening (where there is an education component, e.g. a plant cared for by the child during the year)

Baking (where this is a regular part of the programme)

Pedagogical documentation e.g. memory books / learning stories showing the development of the child in chronological order as shown through photos and artwork

Drama / school play productions (held once or twice a year) which incur a specific expense hiring a hall etc.

Cannot be an extra charge

Booking Fees (NB; a refundable booking deposit may be taken, but it must not exceed four weeks capitation, and must be refunded by the end of October where the child has attended the service and DCYA has confirmed the child's eligibility for the programme)

Arts & Crafts materials

Worksheets

School trips which incur no cost (e.g. walking to a nearby park)

Report cards

Graduation diploma

Insurance

Claims to have higher quality, or to have lower staff ratios than other participating services

Different curricula

Unspecified "flexibility" in drop-off and collection times

Dancing (as opposed to programme-based dance instruction)

School plays/concerts

Anything which, in practice, is required for effective participation in the class