



# Prospectus

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## **Introducing Country Mice**

Country Mice is a village playgroup with charity status that was founded in 1975. We originally operated from the Village Hall in Cowfold, but by November 1992, parents and friends had raised sufficient funds to enable us to move all the sessions, except Baby and Toddler Club, into our very own purpose-built premises adjacent to St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School. We feel extremely privileged to possess our own classroom and garden that undoubtedly enhance the service that we offer.

Country Mice is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance (P.L.A.), a national organisation that provides the playgroup with its constitution and other guidance and support. We also receive support from the Early Year's Development and Childcare Partnership (E.Y.D.C.P.). We are run by a voluntary committee of parents and staffed by a team of qualified and experienced childcare practitioners.

We run morning and afternoon sessions for children from two years old to school age and are open at lunchtimes for those who wish to bring in a packed lunch. We also run a Baby and Toddler Club every Wednesday morning for all under fives. Further information on the sessions can be found on page 3.

### **Our Aim**

Our aim at Country Mice is to enhance the development and education of preschool children in a setting that encourages parental involvement. To achieve this we:

1. Provide a safe, happy, caring and stimulating environment in which the children can enjoy themselves and develop their skills.
2. Encourage the children to interact and co-operate with other children and adults.
3. Help the children develop respect for others and their surrounding environment.
4. Develop the confidence and independence of the children.
5. Work within a framework that ensures equality of opportunity for all children and families.
6. Help the children with their transition to primary school.

### **We Offer:**

1. A setting where each child is treated as an individual, without prejudice or discrimination, and where they can develop a sense of achievement through the activities offered.
2. Individual care and attention made possible by a high ratio of adults to children (one adult to five or less children).
3. The Early Years Foundation Stage framework for child care and education.
4. Plenty of space allowing the children to undertake a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities.
5. Fun and friendship with other children and adults, as well as opportunities for you and your family to be directly involved in the activities of the playgroup and in your child's progress.

## The sessions

We offer a variety of sessions arranged to cater for the needs of the age group concerned. The times of the sessions are set out on page 5. For Baby and Toddler Club, children must be accompanied by a parent or carer, and they can just turn up on the day.

Country Mice is open term time only for 38 weeks of the year, in line with West Sussex County Council School Year Dates. The current term dates can be found on the Parent Notice Board.

To register your child for the playgroup sessions, which they attend unaccompanied, you need to complete the registration form at the end of this prospectus and send it to the Manager at Country Mice together with your registration fee.

### Mini Mice Baby and Toddler Club

Mini Mice takes place every Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon in Cowfold Village Hall. It is a great place for mums, dads and carers to meet whilst the children enjoy themselves in a safe and stimulating environment. There is a wide range of equipment including soft play shapes, ride-on toys, sandpit, cars, building blocks, the Happy Street collection, puzzles, books, dolls and baby toys. In addition, an arts and crafts table provides an outlet for creative talent. Mini Mice is open to any child from birth to five years. There is a small fee per family, payable on arrival, to cover the hire of the hall, insurance and new equipment costs as well as refreshments for both parents/carers and children.

### Playgroup

Children develop in individual ways and at varying rates. The Early Years Foundation Stage emphasises individual personalised child-centred learning and therefore we do not operate separate afternoon sessions for older children but support all children's learning at a rate that is challenging yet achievable for them.

Playgroup sessions take place Monday to Friday mornings from 9 am - 12pm. There is an optional lunch club from 12pm to 1pm (packed lunch to be provided). Afternoon sessions take place on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 12pm to 2.30pm and incorporate lunch (packed lunch to be provided). The sessions are open to children aged two years to school age and run as follows:

Monday	09.00 - 13.00
Tuesday	09.00 - 14.30
Wednesday	09.00 - 13.00
Thursday	09.00 - 14.30
Friday	09.00 - 14.30

Our activities are very diverse and are all geared to encourage pre-writing, reading and numeracy skills at a level appropriate for each child. These include painting, drawing, stories, gluing, clay, dough, dancing, drama, singing, music, gardening, sand and water play, construction, outdoor physical exercise, imaginative and role play, cookery, games, and plenty of time for free play. If it is fun and safe, we do it!

We also endeavour to get out and about to investigate our local area and invite people into the playgroup to share their skills and talents with the children or to talk to them about different subjects.

Our sessions are structured in such a way that we have time for group discussions, refreshments and to work in small groups with the children. The children are actively encouraged to help each other and enjoy each other's company.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) defines principles to support quality practice within a setting (see page 6). The principles emphasise learning through play. Active hands-on play enables children to learn through exploration, discovery, trying out new experiences, copying, experimenting, predicting, practising skills and language, to name a few! At Country Mice we offer activities to provide a safe and stimulating learning environment for children to choose what they would like to participate in. We also have a balance of adult-guided activities to help children achieve the early learning goals of the Early Years Foundation Stage, in a fun and relaxed way.

## **Lunchtimes**

All children are welcome to stay for lunch. Lunchtime sessions are available Monday to Friday at a charge of £4.20. They begin at 12 noon and end at 1.00 pm.

We ask that you supply a healthy packed lunch and drink in a box labelled with their name. We have a policy for nut allergy sufferers and do ask all parents to observe this.

## **Transition to School**

To make the transition to school a happy and relaxed experience, we visit St Peter's Primary School on a regular basis where the children join in activities with the Reception class. We are also able to use St Peter's field and playground, and are invited to performances and assemblies the school put on. We also have close relationships with schools in the local vicinity and a number of Reception teachers and Head Teachers have visited us and the children. In this way, school becomes a familiar and friendly place to ensure the children are confident upon entry to Reception class.

## **The curriculum**

At Country Mice the curriculum we offer two to five year olds follows the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) introduced by the Department for Education and Employment in September 2008. This is the learning framework for birth to the five year olds and covers the years a child spends in pre-school through to the end of Reception Class in Primary School. All our staff receive special training to deliver this curriculum which comprises six Areas of Learning.

**Personal, social and emotional development.** Your child will continue to be interested, excited and motivated to learn. They will gain confidence and independence when trying new activities, initiating ideas and speaking in a familiar group. They will develop their ability to maintain attention, concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate. They will learn to recognise what their own and others' views, feelings and needs are and be sensitive to these. They will develop respect for different cultures and beliefs. They will learn to take turns and share and to tell the difference between right and wrong. They will develop their ability to dress and undress and to manage their own personal hygiene.

**Communication, language and literacy.** Your child will learn to talk confidently and clearly, enjoying stories, songs and poems, hearing and saying sounds and linking them to the alphabet. They will show an understanding of the elements of stories and be able to re-tell narratives in the correct sequence. They will read and write some familiar words, including their own name, and learn to use a pencil.

**Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy.** Your child will develop an understanding of maths through stories, songs, games and imaginative play. They will become comfortable with numbers, counting reliably up to ten and recognising the numerals 1 to 9, and with ideas such as 'heavier than' or 'bigger than'. They will be aware of shapes, patterns and space.

**Knowledge and understanding of the world.** Your child will explore the world around them and find out about it by asking questions. They will build with different materials, know about everyday technology and learn what it is used for. They will find out about past events in their life and their relatives' lives and become aware of different cultures and beliefs.

**Physical development.** Your child will learn to move confidently, controlling and co-ordination their body, showing an awareness of space for themselves and others. They will learn to recognise the importance of why and how to keep healthy, and changes that happen to their body when they are active. They will use a range of small and large equipment, practising around, under, over, through and balance movements. They will learn to handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control.

**Creative development.** Your child will explore colour and texture and two and three-dimensional shapes. They will try out dance, make things, tell stories and make music using their imagination and role play.

## **The staff**

The pre-school Manager reports directly to the Management Committee and manages the overall running of the pre-school. Either the Manager or Supervisor leads each playgroup session at Country Mice. Child Care Practitioners support the Manager and Supervisor.

Young children need plenty of individual adult attention, so at Country Mice we have a high adult to child ratio in line with Ofsted's requirement of 1:8 for children aged three and four, and 1:4 for children under three. We have a maximum of 22 children in any one session and there are always at least two members of staff in any session, regardless of the number of children present. Each child is allocated a designated member of staff known as their Key Person.

Working with children of this age requires special skills. All staff are trained to a very high standard and regularly attend external training courses for their professional development.

Our Manager holds a Foundation Degree in Early Years Care and Education and is currently studying for a BA in Professional Studies in Learning and Development as well as Early Years Professional Status. Early Years Professional Status is a new Status the Government has introduced to recognise the importance of high-quality early years provision and to raise standards in the Early Years. It is the Government's aim to have an Early Years Professional in every setting by 2015.

Our Supervisor is Level 3 qualified, and we have one Practitioner currently training to gain her Level 3, and one Practitioner trained to Level 2.

All staff hold Social Services Child Protection and Paediatric First Aid certificates, and are police checked. We have a trained Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (INCO) who liaises with speech therapists and other professionals if required.

## The committee

All members of the committee are parents and they work together with the staff to provide a safe and happy environment in which children can develop and learn through play. We are very keen for new parents to feel as much a part of Country Mice as their children, so we are always delighted when parents become involved. One of the best ways to do this is to join the committee.

The committee meets in the evening once every half term and is responsible for all aspects of the management of the playgroup. Even if you cannot make such a regular commitment, we always need assistance at our fund-raising events and with individual projects. If you would like to help out and are able to spare some time, please speak to a member of staff who will put you in contact with the Chairperson.

Current elected Committee members for 2009/2010 school year:

Rachel Detnon	Chairperson
Suzanne Redford	Treasurer
Claire Ward-Dutton	Secretary and PR & Communications
Kay Blackwell	Committee Member
Melissa Jacob	Committee Member
Annie Pearce	Fundraising
Natalie Bouckaert	Fundraising

## Admissions and bookings

We welcome all applications for places for children aged between two years and school age. To make the allocation of places fair, we operate an *Admissions and Bookings policy*. To apply for a place for your child, just complete the Registration Form in the centre of this prospectus and return it to Country Mice, together with the Registration Fee of £15. Cheques should be made payable to 'Cowfold Pre-school Playgroup'. Please note that this fee is to cover administrative costs and a Country Mice tee shirt, and is non-refundable.

### Admissions and bookings policy

1. There are a limited number of places for two year olds. Once these have been filled, a child may start playgroup when they have reached their third birthday.
2. If there is a waiting list for places, three year olds take priority over two year olds.
3. We have changing facilities for children that are still in nappies. We ask that parents supply spare clothes, nappies and wipes in a clearly named bag.
4. All children will be admitted for a settling-in period of one half term.
5. Two year olds may only attend two sessions per week during their settling-in period. Additional sessions may be requested following this period. These will be offered at the discretion of the Manager, subject to the availability of a space.
6. Children living within the Parish of Cowfold take priority over children from outside the parish when places are allocated.
7. If a child has a medical condition that involves the staff administering medication, the Manager must be aware of this situation before the child joins Country Mice.

## Fees

As a charity, our aim is to keep our fees to a minimum. The income from fees and Government Funding is used to pay staff, over-heads and basic running costs of the playgroup. The money for all new equipment, whether educational toys and books, outdoor ride-on toys and games, kitchen, computer or office equipment comes from fund-raising and special grants.

## Fees policy

To ensure that fees are collected in a fair and orderly manner we have a *fees policy*. This is set out below.

1. We bill fees at the start of each half-term and they are payable within ten days of receipt of the bill. If we do not receive payment within this time, we send a reminder letter. If the fees remain unpaid, in the absence of any exceptional circumstances, the committee may, at its discretion, withdraw the child's place for the following half-term.
2. If you wish to cancel a session, you must give half a term's notice or pay half a term's fees in lieu of notice.
3. We cannot reimburse fees for sessions that your child does not attend due to holiday, sickness, etc. Your child's place at Country Mice is kept available for them and so fees continue to be payable in full.
4. If you experience problems with the payment of fees, you should contact the Treasurer at the earliest opportunity. Each case will be dealt with individually and in confidence.
5. The Committee will give half a term's notice in writing to parents to advise of any changes to fees.
6. The current fees for each session are listed on the notice board in the lobby of the Country Mice building.

## Government funding

For those children who are eligible, the "Free Entitlement" funds up to five 2½ hour sessions per week, for 38 weeks of the year. Currently, all children receive this funding the term after they turn three. We shall inform you of your child's entitlement before he or she becomes eligible. Government funding is fixed periodically. You can find the current funding arrangements on the notice board in the lobby, or speak to a member of staff for more information.

## Lunchtime sessions

Lunchtime sessions should be booked a half-term in advance, at the same time as playgroup sessions, to ensure that we have arranged the correct level of staffing for the number of children attending. However, on occasion we understand that there may be circumstances where you need to extend your child's sessions, and we will do our best to accommodate you.

## **What should you do next?**

### **Visit us**

You and your child are extremely welcome to come along and have a look at the premises and a session in progress. If you would like to do this, please ring Natalie Smith on 01403 864011 to arrange a time.

### **Apply for a place**

If you wish to apply for a place for your child, please complete the Registration Form and return it to the Playgroup, together with your Registration Fee of £15.00. We ask that you read the *Admissions and bookings policy* and *Fees policy* carefully to ensure that you are clear on the points within them. Please do not hesitate to ask if you have any queries.

### **Keep in touch**

You should receive a receipt for your Registration Fee from the Treasurer within two weeks. Nearer the time for your child to start, you will receive notification from the Playgroup Manager of the sessions available for your child. You will need to confirm which sessions you wish to take up. If your child is eligible for Government Funding, you will also receive information on this.

We look forward to welcoming you and your child to Country Mice.

# Registration Form

Country Mice  
Cowfold Pre-school Playgroup  
Charity Reg. No. 1000764

Child's Name:

Date of birth:

Name of parents/carers: .....

Name of person/s with parental responsibility: .....  
(if different from above).

Occupation of parents: .....  
(this is optional and used purely to aid the settling in periods and visits to the setting, etc.

Names of brothers/sisters: ..... Date of birth: .....  
.....  
.....

Address: .....  
.....  
.....

Telephone numbers: ..... Home  
..... Work  
..... Mobile

Name, address and telephone number of at least one other person who can be contacted in case of illness (your home number will always be contacted first):

.....  
.....

Has your child attended any other playgroup? .....

Is your child on the waiting list for any other playgroup? .....

When will your child start school? .....

Which school will your child attend? .....

Has your child been immunised against the following?

Diphtheria .....	Tetanus .....	Poliomyelitis .....	HIB .....	Whooping Cough .....
Measles .....	Rubella .....	Mumps .....	Meningitis C .....	

Name, address and telephone number of doctor: .....  
.....  
.....

Is your child suffering from any serious illness or do they require special care?

.....

Are there any medical problems we should be aware of (asthma, eczema, diabetes, epilepsy, hearing, speech or sight difficulties, hyper-activity, allergies etc.)?  
.....

Is it likely that treatment will need to be administered during a session?  
.....

Are there any foods, drinks or substances that could aggravate any problems?  
.....

(A full medical history is required by law. We cannot be held responsible if any information is withheld.)

Does your child have a pet name? .....

Does your child have a cuddly toy or blanket that soothes them if upset?  
.....

Which session(s) would you like your child to attend when they first start? Please check the session information on pages 3 - 5 and then circle your choice(s).

Mon am	Tues am	Wed am	Thurs am	Fri am
Mon lunch	Tues lunch	Wed lunch	Thurs lunch	Fri lunch
Tues pm	Thurs pm	Fri pm		

Commencing from: .....

Parent's/guardian's signature: .....

Date: .....

Please note over any other information which would help us to get to know your child.

Country Mice (Cowfold Pre-school Playgroup) cannot accept any responsibility if information given by parents/carers is incorrect at the time of the registered child commencing playgroup. We ask, therefore, if at any time there are any amendments to be made to your child's records, be it a change of contact or health issue etc., that you inform the Manager in writing of the change, so that we may update our records.

All information on this form is treated as confidential.

Please return the form together with your £15 Registration Fee (cheques should be made payable to 'Cowfold Pre-school Playgroup') to:

Mrs N Smith  
Manager  
Country Mice Cowfold Pre-school Playgroup  
Rear of St. Peter's School  
Station Road  
Cowfold  
West Sussex, RH13 8DA

Tel. No.: 01403 864011

## Fees

### Current Fees

From the term after your child turns three they will be eligible for five 2½ hour funded sessions per week for 38 weeks of the year. You can use this entitlement for either the morning or afternoon sessions, or a combination of both. As our playgroup sessions are 3 hours long, there is a charge of £2.10 to cover the final ½ hour of each session. However, you are entitled to collect your child after 2½ hours should you wish to do so, thus avoiding the top up fee.

### Child under three years old or costs of sessions once funded entitlement has been used:

9am - 12pm	AM Playgroup	2½ hour non-funded plus ½ hour top up	£12.60
12pm - 1pm	Lunch Club	One hour session to include lunch	£4.20
9am - 1pm	AM Playgroup Plus Lunch Club	2½ hour non-funded plus ½ hour top up plus 1 hour lunch club	£16.80
12pm - 2.30pm	PM Playgroup	2½ hour non-funded afternoon session	£10.50
9am - 2.30pm	AM and PM Playgroup	5½ hour non-funded	£23.10

### Costs of sessions to include funded entitlement:

9am - 12pm	AM Playgroup	2½ hour funded plus ½ hour top up	£2.10
12pm - 1pm	Lunch Club	One hour session to include lunch	£4.20
9am - 1pm	AM Playgroup Plus Lunch Club	2½ hour funded plus ½ hour top up plus 1 hour lunch club	£6.30
12pm - 2.30pm	PM Playgroup £0.00	2½ hour funded afternoon session	
9am - 2.30pm	AM and PM Playgroup £2.10	5 hour funded plus ½ hour top up	

