

Directorate of Children's Services

Early Years and Childcare Team
Reading Borough Council
Civic Centre
Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU

Planning Policy Team
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

☎ 0118 937 3003

E-mail: early_years@reading.gov.uk

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Your contact is: Rebecca.gibson@reading.gov.uk

Dear Planning Policy Team,

Subject: Emmer Green Kindergarten Expansion

I am writing to provide the Early Years and Childcare Team's position regarding Emmer Green Kindergarten's request to expand its existing provision at their current site in response to continued and rising parental demand. I understand from Rebecca the setting owner that they have now completed the purchase of both their existing site and land to the rear.

Current places (0-5 years): 80

Proposed (0-5 years): 105

The Government's Best Start in Life Strategy, alongside Reading's local priorities, aims to increase access to high-quality early education. Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that childcare provision is sufficient, sustainable, inclusive and accessible, working closely with providers to meet the needs of children and families. In line with this, the recent expansion of early years entitlements is supporting more parents to return to work and is driving increased demand for childcare places, particularly for younger children.

In Reading, take-up of the Working parent entitlements continues to grow, placing increasing pressure on provision for children aged 0-2. While there has been some expansion within the early years sector, the market remains finely balanced. Recent unexpected nursery closures have impacted overall capacity and caused disruption for families.

The local childcare market, particularly in the north of Reading, has been fragile in recent months. There has been both complete and partial closures resulting in the loss of places for children 0-5. Vacancy pressures fluctuate term-on-term across the town and continue to limit parental choice.

Emmer Green Kindergarten is an established Ofsted-registered nursery located within Emmer Green Ward, currently offering 80 full-time places. The provider reports significant and increasing demand,

this includes 62 children on their external waiting list along with a further 17 children from existing families requesting additional sessions that cannot be accommodated due to capacity constraints.

The nursery's full-time, year-round offer makes an important contribution to local childcare sufficiency, particularly in an area where supply has been reduced and demand from working families is high. Year-round provision supports families who wish to access funded entitlements flexibly and plays a key role in maintaining a diverse and resilient childcare market. Emmer Green Kindergarten makes a significant contribution to meeting demand from families eligible for Working parent entitlements.

Although the proposed expansion primarily relates to provision for children aged 3-4, the natural transition of older children through the setting will create additional capacity for younger age groups. This is particularly important given the growing demand for places for children aged 2 and under, which is identified as the area of highest need in the annual sufficiency report:

[EY-and-CC-CSA-2025-26-V1-.pdf](#)

Based on sufficiency analysis for Summer 2026, and confirmation from the provider that additional children can be accommodated within their new site the Early Years and Childcare Team supports the request to increase the nursery's registered capacity by 25 full-time places, subject to all necessary regulatory approvals.

Overall, given rising demand and increasing uptake of entitlements this expansion would make a positive contribution to childcare sufficiency in this part of Reading.

Please let me know if any further information or clarification is required.

Kind regards

B. Gibson

Becky Gibson
Early Years & Childcare Team Manager
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