

Childcare vouchers

Childcare vouchers can only be used:

1. *To pay for qualifying **childcare** for children up to the age of 15 (or 16 if they are disabled);*
and

Childcare means any form of care or supervised activity that is not provided in the course of the child's compulsory education.

2. *For childcare which is **registered with or approved by relevant authorities***

In England, registered with or approved by relevant authorities includes:

- A person registered under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. This will include persons on the following registers operated by Ofsted
 - The Early Years Register
 - The General Childcare Register – compulsory part
 - The General Childcare Register – voluntary part
- Schools – care provided by the governing body of a school is approved if it takes place
 - outside normal school hours (this means the normal hours of compulsory education adopted by the school as appropriate for the age of the child)
 - on school premises; or
 - on premises that are covered by the inspection of the whole school activity by Ofsted or the equivalent inspection body for certain independent schools

This means that childcare vouchers can be used to pay for school fees in an independent school for those aged under 5 (to the end of the first term following 5th birthday).

Once a child is of compulsory school age (and up until the child's 15th (or 16th birthday if disabled)), the vouchers can only be used to pay for (i) any activities or clubs that take place on school premises outside of school hours e.g. breakfast clubs, afterschool clubs, homework and holiday clubs; and (ii) the boarding element of boarding school fees provided those elements are invoiced separately.

Tax-Free Childcare Scheme

This scheme also allows parents to claim support for children in independent schools – but like childcare vouchers, can only be used toward nursery school fees and, once a child is of compulsory school age, for care that is outside school hours. So once a child is in reception they would be deemed as being in school and the scheme cannot be used to help pay for school fees. (See <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs>)