

Early Childhood at Michael Hall



Saplings
Ages 2 - 3.5 years

Saplings

Saplings is our newest addition to Michael Hall Early Childhood. Located in the beautiful surroundings of East Sussex, Saplings caters to children aged 2-3.5 years old. Inspired by the understanding of child development by Emmi Pikler and the principles of Resources for Infant Educators (RIE), Saplings offers a nurturing and respectful environment for young children to learn and grow.

Respectful Care: Respectful care lies at the heart of Saplings. We understand that times of bodily care, such as changing and eating meals, are crucial moments for building trust and fostering healthy relationships. Our experienced and trained caregivers provide gentle, responsive care that respects each child's autonomy and supports their growing independence.

Self-Initiated Activity: We recognise the significance of self-initiated activity in a child's development. At Saplings, we create an environment that encourages children to explore and engage in self-directed play. Our carefully designed space is filled with natural materials and open-ended toys that inspire creativity, imagination, and curiosity. We believe that self-initiated activity promotes self-image, self-control, and many other essential skills in young children.

Parent Partnerships and Community: At Saplings, we believe in the importance of parent partnerships. We value the role of parents in their child's pre-kindergarten journey and strive to create a collaborative relationship with families. We work together to support each child's unique development, ensuring that their individual needs are met. A unique way of supporting your family's sense of community within our school is the opportunity to join the Parent Child Group on Friday afternoon. This group gives families and children a chance to celebrate the seasons together, craft, sing, and chat with the other families of Saplings.



A day in the life

Our daily rhythm also provides a balance between active times and rest times thereby nourishing each child's sense of health and well-being. Our typical day looks like this:

8:10 a.m.–9 a.m.

Creative, free play, along with practical work (cleaning, baking, laundry folding) or creative arts (gift making, painting, coloring)

9:15a.m.

Morning snack – usually consists of an organic, whole grain along with fruit, dairy or nut butter. Children clear and wash their own dishes.

9:45 or 10:00a.m.

Outdoor play, which includes time spent playing in the sandbox in our fenced play yard, working in our organic garden, or taking a nature walk through the beautiful woodland garden.

11:30a.m.

Back inside, children get ready for lunch. On cold days, this time may include a warm foot bath with lavender essential oil or a circle time with songs and stories.

12:00p.m. Home time for children in half day sessions

12:10p.m. Children attending afternoon sessions arrive

12:30p.m. Hot home-cooked lunch

Children help clean the dining area and wash their own dishes.

1:30p.m. Nap preparation begins, with warm face cloths, toothbrushing, and tucking in with a story and lullabies sung by the child's keyworker. Michael Hall's media-free environment allows for this personal connection of story and song instead of recordings.

1:30p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Rest Time

2:30p.m.

Children begin to rouse. They help to make their beds and put their sleeping cots away for another day.

3:15 - 3:30p.m.

Snack Time Children clear and wash their own dishes.

Time to go home





Settling in:

The settling-in process is a crucial period when a child begins at a new childcare provider. At Saplings we believe in a flexible approach that considers the individual needs of the child and parents. The process may take up to two weeks or longer, and your child's assigned key person plays a vital role in developing secure and trusting relationships and responding to the child's needs. Home and settling-in visits are offered to share information and create a settling-in plan for the child. Some children may find it challenging to settle, but parents can work with the practitioners to try different techniques. Effective communication with parents is essential, including daily verbal updates, regular setting emails, and parent evenings.

Staffing:

A ratio of 1:4 or 1:6, depending on the ages of the children, is maintained at all times. Two fully trained Early Years Practitioners support children through their day.

Hours:

We are excited to be holding sessions throughout the week from 8:10am to 3:30pm. Families choose 3 or more sessions (not including the Friday afternoon Parent and Child session) that they would like their child to attend. These sessions may take place consecutively or scattered throughout the week. A minimum of 6 children must attend each session to make it viable.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8am-12pm	8am-12pm	8am-12pm	8am-12pm	8am-12pm
12:10pm-3:30pm	12:10pm-3:30pm	12:10pm-3:30pm	12:10pm-3:30pm	

How to Apply:

We invite you to join us at Saplings, where your child will be nurtured in a respectful and stimulating environment that supports their holistic development.

Join us on an open morning where you can see the setting and speak with our Assistant Principal about our approach and how we can partner you in your child's early childhood journey. More information about our admissions process can be found online at www.michaelhall.co.uk

For more information about Saplings or to schedule a place on an upcoming open morning, please contact us at admissions@michaelhall.co.uk or Rachel.Ford-Blanchard@michaelhall.co.uk

Friday afternoon 'Parent and Child Sessions' for Saplings Families:

In addition to our Monday through Friday provision, an additional Parent and Child session exclusively for Saplings families has been set up on Friday afternoon. This session is designed for parents and carers to spend time connecting with other parents from our Saplings groups, forming community and having a chance to do simple crafts and songs together with their children. This session takes place on Friday from 1:30-3:00 in Applegarth Cottage. Payment for this session will be billed half termly in alignment with Saplings billing time.



The background image shows a lush green park. In the foreground, there's a paved area with a small wooden table and four yellow plastic chairs. A blue water pitcher and some papers are on the table. To the right, there's a red bucket with a green bucket inside it. In the background, a large tree with long, thin leaves hangs over the area, and a grassy field is visible beyond a low stone wall.

Next Steps:

The Kindergarten at Michael hall holds children ages 3-6 years old. From the time children are 3, Saplings will be gauging the best entry point for your child to move onto next steps in their Early Childhood Education.

Kindergarten Session Requirements: Kindergarten runs with the same available hours as Saplings however, because of it's curriculum, it requires a minimum of 3 consecutive morning sessions as a minimum upon entry and access to afternoon provision is contingent upon having attended morning sessions of that same day.

Kindergarten Staffing: Kindergarten is a multi-aged setting where the curriculum is delivered in part by the interactions of the different ages to form their own community. In Saplings, a focus on personal care and independence are at the center of the practice, in Kindergarten, social interactions through play becomes centered. As children extend into their independence so does their ability to self regulate. Practitioner ratios reflect this development and are at a 1:8 ratio.

Kindergarten Placements:

At Saplings, we value the well-being and development of all children. We prioritize placements for Saplings children in our Kindergarten program when we receive applications by the outlined cut-off dates, but please note that acceptance is not guaranteed. If a child's personal requirements exceed our capacity in Kindergarten, a discussion of options will take place between parents, the child's Key Worker, and the Early Years Assistant Principal.

The Assistant Principal carefully considers each child's needs and abilities in consultation with Saplings Practitioners and Kindergarten groups to ensure they are placed in a group where they can thrive. We understand the importance of social bonds and will take them into consideration when possible. Our goal is to provide the best possible environment for each child's growth and development.



