

LITTLE FACES DAY NURSERY AT MANCHESTER AIRPORT – EXISTING AND FUTURE DEMAND FOR PLACES

Little Faces Nursery is located at **Thorley Lane, Ringway, next to Manchester Airport**, and close to Wythenshawe hospital, as well as conveniently close to junctions 5 and 6 of the M56 motorway.

Catchment Area for Little Faces Nursery

The nursery serves families from a range of nearby areas, including:

- Hale Barns
- Altrincham
- Wilmslow
- Wythenshawe
- Heald Green
- Hale

Little Faces nursery accommodates children from a diverse catchment area that includes both local families from Wythenshawe and commuter families working at Manchester Airport.

- We serve families from across Wythenshawe, including some of the most deprived neighbourhoods.
- A significant proportion of these families access 15 hours of funded childcare for disadvantaged 2-year-olds.
- Many of these parents rely on flexible session times to balance shift work and transport limitations.

Commuter Families – Airport Workforce (Cheshire, Stockport, Trafford)

- We also support families commuting from Cheshire, Trafford, and Stockport, who work in various roles across the Manchester Airport site, such as:
 - Cabin crew
 - Aero-engineering
 - Airport security staff
 - Duty-free retail staff
 - Hotel and hospitality workers
- Many of these roles, although based at or around the airport, are not directly employed by Manchester Airports Group (MAG).

Nursery Capacity & Enrolment Overview (Sept 2025)

Registered Capacity	60 children
Children on Roll (Registered)	61 children
Expected FTE (Full-Time Equivalent)	33 (subject to final booking patterns)
Children via MAG salary sacrifice	4 children (from September, this number is expected to grow within the next 12 months due to children leaving for school.)

Existing and Future Demand for Little Faces Nursery and the Market around Manchester Airport

High Demand, Limited Availability

- The area continues to experience strong demand for early years places
- And is, particularly for:
 - Flexible hours for shift-working families
 - Funded places for eligible low-income families
- Waiting lists are common, especially in settings with extended hours or near the airport.
- Some nurseries report being at or near capacity, relying on part-time attendance patterns to manage headcount vs. FTE.

Supply Pressures & Closures

- Wythenshawe and the wider Manchester area have seen several nursery closures due to:
 - Unsustainable funding for government places
 - Difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff
 - Rising operational costs
- As of mid-2025, some settings are scaling back funded hours or choosing not to offer full entitlements due to cost constraints.

Workforce Challenges

- Staff recruitment is a persistent challenge across Greater Manchester, especially for Level 3 qualified practitioners.
- Burnout, low pay, and limited career progression are driving high turnover.

Trends & Future Outlook

Trend	Implication
Growing population (especially under 5s in Manchester)	Continued pressure on nursery places, especially for 2–4-year-olds
Shift-based airport economy	Demand for extended hours and flexible sessions
Policy-driven expansion (e.g. 30 free hours for under 3s)	Will increase registrations, but may stretch already thin staffing and capacity
New housing developments in South Manchester	Likely to drive additional childcare demand in next 3–5 years
Planned employment development in the surrounding area as part of the MIX-Manchester site	The nursery on Thorley Lane is well placed to provide places for the children of people working at MIX-Manchester
Greater scrutiny of early years quality & safeguarding	Local settings must maintain high standards amid growing pressures

Planning Justification Statement – Longstanding Community Use, Employment, and Shared Public Ownership

The premises currently occupied by the Airport Nursery have operated continuously as a day nursery for over 20 years, originally under a planning consent intended to serve the children of Manchester Airport staff. The airport nursery was relocated to its present site to provide a bespoke facility and with a greater capacity. However, over time, the nursery has evolved into a vital piece of community infrastructure, now providing high-quality, flexible childcare to a much broader population—including families from Wythenshawe, Stockport, Trafford, Cheshire, and other neighbouring areas. This evolution to serving a wider need has enhanced the business sustainability and resilience of the nursery to changes in the market and the demand for places.

This reflects the nursery's ability to respond to actual community need – particularly for flexible childcare arrangements to support parents working shift patterns in and around Manchester Airport (e.g. cabin crew, engineers, hospitality, and security staff).

The building itself is owned by Manchester Airport. This provides an assurance of tenure. The ownership of the nursery and its retention as an airport, community and an asset serving other businesses in the area demonstrates a wider use, rather than a purely private or internal workplace facility. The airport also has a well-established education, employability and community programme that includes the airport Aerozone and Airport Academy. The availability of nursery places in the local area is a valuable element of this extensive and locally regarded education programme.

In addition to its service to families, the nursery is also a local employer, generating sustainable jobs for qualified early years staff and support workers over two decades. It continues to support employment and upskilling in a sector that is facing national recruitment challenges.

In light of its:

- Proven track record of community service
- Long-term employment generation
- Strategic location
- Use of publicly owned premises
- Absence of adverse impacts on the local area

... it is both reasonable and necessary to formally regularise the current use through planning, recognising the nursery's evolution from a workplace-only facility to an inclusive, community-serving early years provider.