Attendance Policy

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Intention

Regular attendance at nursery creates a positive pattern of routine for children and enables them to take part in the varied learning and social opportunities that the nursery environment provides. As such, we aim to work in partnership with parents to promote a mutually understanding approach to attendance, offering additional supports where appropriate to ensure that every child can gain fully from their nursery experience.

Monitoring, reviewing and following up on children's attendance within the nursery is also a critical safeguarding principle which enables the nursery to flag any potential attendance concerns at the earliest opportunity and further promote the safety and welfare of the children and families who attend. Considering this, the purpose of this policy is to outline the nursery expectations for attendance, how this is recorded and reviewed and the steps that may be taken in the event that a child is absent from the nursery.

Acronyms

- CCF: Child Concern Form
- DSL: Designated Safeguarding Lead
- DDSL: Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

Legislative context

Legal guidelines and frameworks

- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, 2025 (EYFS)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2025
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025 (KCSiE)
- Data Protection Act, 2018

Legal duties

As stipulated within the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework, nursery providers must hold a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises and their hours of attendance. Nurseries must also record, monitor and review children's attendance and follow up on absences within a timely manner; addressing any potential concerns which arise in accordance with the nurseries Safeguarding and Attendance policies.

Guiding principles

Regular attendance is essential to ensure each child benefits fully from our learning environment, routines, and relationships. We aim to foster a positive partnership with families by encouraging consistent attendance while recognising that young children may occasionally need time at home due to illness or personal circumstances. Our approach is rooted in communication, safeguarding, and the wellbeing of every child. We work collaboratively with parents and carers to promote punctuality, identify any barriers to attendance early, and provide supportive solutions. Above all, we are committed to creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive setting where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Parents/carers	• Ensure their child attends the nursery regularly • Inform the nursery as soon as possible if their child will be absent or late • Provide a reason for any absence or lateness • Provide relevant information that may affect attendance, such as illness, medical appointments, or changes in family circumstances • Engage in discussions with practitioners if concerns about attendance arise • Work in partnership with the nursery to support regular attendance • Inform the nursery of any planned absences in advance, where possible • Support agreed strategies or plans to improve attendance and consistency for their child
All staff	• Record children's attendance accurately and consistently • Build positive relationships with children and families to encourage regular attendance • Raise any concerns regarding attendance appropriately with management and the DSL • Implement supportive strategies to help children settle and engage when attendance is inconsistent
Designated Safeguarding Lead	• Review attendance data monthly to identify patterns, concerns, or emerging issues which require further safeguarding investigation • Monitor children with absence concerns and pursue these in line with the settings Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures • Investigate unexplained daily absences which give rise to concerns • Take lead in reporting specific child absences to the Local Children's Social Services team when required • Ensure attendance concerns are considered alongside safeguarding, inclusion, and wellbeing responsibilities
Managers	• Ensure clear systems are in place for recording, monitoring, and reviewing attendance • Communicate sensitively and professionally with parents/carers regarding attendance concerns • Contact parent/carers to confirm reasons for absence if not previously provided • Review attendance data monthly to identify patterns, concerns, or emerging issues

Role	Responsibilities
	• Lead on discussions with parents/carers where attendance concerns persist, ensuring a supportive and non-punitive approach • Provide guidance and support to staff in managing attendance-related issues • Ensure the Attendance Policy is implemented consistently and readily available to parents/carers and staff

Updates to this policy

This policy may be unilaterally updated at any time with immediate effect to ensure clarity, reflect the nursery's current operational practices, and maintain compliance with the latest government legislation and guidance. Please refer to the 'More Information' section on the website.

Promoting a culture of understanding regarding attendance

The nursery works with both staff and families to promote an understanding surrounding the importance of regular attendance and the role this plays on a child's overall experience within the setting. The systems and procedures in place to promote children's attendance and punctuality are shared with both parents, carers and staff at a universal level through online updates and policy refreshers. Further guidance and support is also available through open discussions and organised meetings where appropriate.

Information for parents/carers on the expectations for attendance

While it is recognised that attendance at nursery is not mandatory under statutory law, regular attendance is actively promoted in the setting due to its positive link to child's overall wellbeing and learning outcomes. Considering this, the nursery expects that children attend their scheduled sessions regularly and punctually. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child's attendance and informing the setting as soon as possible if their child is unable to attend a scheduled session.

Additional information relating to drop off and collections, including late collections, can be found in our Pickup and Collection Policy.

Absence reasons which are considered typical

There are several situations in which it is understood a child may not be able to attend the setting. Such situations are recognised as typical absences and include:

- General illness (e.g. cold, fever, sickness, diarrhoea)
- Infectious or contagious disease (e.g. chickenpox, measles, hand, foot & mouth)
- Medical appointment or admission
- Recovery following illness or immunisation, where advised by a doctor or in line with the nursery exclusion poster
- Family emergency or crisis (e.g., accident, serious illness of family member)
- Parental illness preventing safe drop-off or collection

- Temporary change in family circumstances (e.g. housing issue, emergency relocation, no transport arrangements)
- Religious festivals or observances (e.g., Eid, Diwali, Passover, Christmas)
- Family holiday
- Family day or event (e.g., days spent at home during holidays, wedding, birth of a new sibling)
- Safeguarding arrangements (e.g., parental visitation, supervised contact, court orders)

Absence reasons which are considered unexplained

Unexplained absences relate to instances where a child has not attended the nursery during a scheduled session without reason or sufficient reason for this (e.g., differing explanations from parents/carers regarding an absence).

Unexplained absences often give cause for concern and may result in a safeguarding response being taken by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Management Team.

Requirements for parents/carers to report absences

If a child is unable to attend nursery on their scheduled day, parents/carers must notify the nursery on the first day of absence and continue to inform the nursery daily for the duration of the absence provided this does not have a planned end date e.g., at the end of a booked holiday. Where possible, parents/carers are asked to inform the nursery of an absence prior to the start of their child's session.

Absences can be reported via:

- Telephone
- Famly App
- Email
- In person during drop off or collection if the absence is planned

Nursery response to non-reported absences

If a child is absent from nursery on their scheduled session without explanation this must be followed up by a member of the management team by no later than 10:00am on the day of absence. For children who attend afternoon sessions, unexplained absences must be followed up one hour after their scheduled arrival time. To do this the member of management will follow the below procedure:

1. If a child is not present within the setting by 10:00am (or within an hour of their scheduled booking time if they attend an afternoon session) and no explanation has previously been provided, parents/carers are contacted via telephone to establish the reason for the absence
2. If no contact is made, the setting will attempt to call the parents/carers work or training provider and a follow up Famly message may be sent to further highlight the reason for contacting
3. If contact still is not made after 1 hour of the initial call being made then the child's emergency contacts will be called to see if they can verify the child's location or contact parents/carers

4. Additional calls may also be made to other known providers associated with the child e.g., siblings' schools, nurseries or childminders to establish if they can confirm the child's whereabouts
5. If following these steps, there is cause for concern that the child's whereabouts remain unknown, the DSL and management team will commence a safeguarding response whereby Children's Social Services will be contacted to ascertain if family support is required. In more urgent cases, the Police may be contacted to carry out a 'safe and well' check.

Please note that this procedure is subject to the specific circumstances of each case and child. The manager retains the discretion to escalate concerns sooner if they deem it necessary; particularly in cases involving vulnerable children/families or situations that raise significant concerns for the child's safety and well-being.

Nursery response to absences which raise safeguarding concerns

Where a child's absence gives cause for concern, the settings DSL, alongside the management team, will pursue this further using the settings safeguarding response procedures.

Responses may include:

- External multi-agency safeguarding referrals to the local Children's Social Care Services
- Emergency police 'safe and well' home checks
- The completion of a Child Concern Form
- Arranging a parent/carer meeting to discuss concerns, any barriers to regular attendance and further support measures where appropriate

Personal circumstances and previous attendance history all inform the settings professional judgment as to whether absences should be considered concerning.

Please see the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for more details.

<u>Documenting safeguarding concerns regarding attendance and response taken</u>

To ensure concerns are accurately recorded and appropriately responded to, the following steps should be taken:

Please note, in all instances the DSL should remain aware of these developments and review all records to ensure these are accurate and detailed.

Concern History	Actions to be taken to log the concern
A child who is under external safeguarding investigations and is required to have absences reported to their Designated Support Officer or Local Children's Social Services team	The DSL or DDSL must report the child's absence to specified agency on the day this occurs via telephone[1]. A record of this report and the child's absence will then be added to the child's safeguarding file using a new or edited CCF

[1] Specific procedural and contact details will be noted on the child's individual safeguarding logs.

Concern History	Actions to be taken to log the concern
	form, along with any follow up actions recommended.
A child who has an active Child Concern Form in place relating to their attendance	The original CCF relating to the child's attendance should be updated to include details of the new absence, the reasons provided, any relevant contextual information that informs the concern, and any additional actions taken. If the original Concern Form relates to the child's attendance but further investigation identifies additional issues (for example, parental mental health difficulties impacting their ability to bring the child to nursery), a new CCF should be completed to document this new concern. Any further information obtained at a later stage should then be recorded either as an update to the original attendance-related concern or within the new concern, depending on which is most appropriate.
A child who does not have a safeguarding history regarding their attendance, but their absence raises a new concern	A CCF form should be created detailing the concern, reasons for this and any other relevant contextual information. An account of any additional actions taken e.g., phone call to Early Help should also be noted for future reflection and monitoring.

Guidance for staff on how to log daily absences

All absences, along with the reasons given for these, are recorded on the settings Fire registers and online Famly registers. Records must be completed as soon as information is provided, and always before the end of the day in which the absence occurred, to ensure these are accurate in the event of an emergency.

How to log a daily absence	
Logging absences on online Famly Registers	Both parents and staff are able to log a child as absent on Famly and leave an additional note explaining the reasoning for this. Famly has three categories[2] in which absences can be logged:

[2] Please see absence categories for a breakdown of how absences are categorised using these options.

How to log a daily absence	
	• Sickness • Absent • Holiday All reasons for absence should be reviewed by the management team on the same day that the absence occurs and any concerns passed onto the DSL or addressed as per the settings Safeguarding Procedures. Follow up calls to parents/carers may also be undertaken where the clarity is required regarding the reason for absence.
Logging absences on the Fire Register	If a child's been marked as absent through the Famly app, the reason for absence (being sickness, holiday or absent) can then be added onto the settings weekly fire register. If no reason has been given for the absence, then staff should wait until a member of the management team has called parents/carers and confirmed why the child is not in nursery. Once the reason for absence has been confirmed by a member of management, they will then update the reason for absence on the child's Famly profile and inform the team who in turn can update the fire register accordingly.

Absence categories

The nursery uses three categories to log absences onto Famly or the Fire Registers. The table below outlines common examples of nursery attendance and how these are categorised to ensure consistent monitoring and record-keeping.

Category	Description	Example of absence types
Absence	The child does not attend due to unforeseen circumstances which do not relate to a holiday or sickness.	• Parent/carer reports being unable to bring the child in on the day • Transport, weather, or practical difficulties • Family commitments preventing attendance

		• Staying at home for the day
Holiday	The child does not attend due to a planned trip or visit.	• Family holiday (domestic or overseas) • Cultural or religious events or visits • Travel linked to visa or immigration arrangements • Family visits or days out
Sickness	The child does not attend due to illness, sickness exclusion period or medical commitment.	• Common childhood illnesses (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhoea) • Medical appointments or hospital visits • Recovery following illness or medical procedure • Ongoing health conditions with agreed care plans • Short-term illness preventing attendance

Nursery procedures for reviewing attendance records

Child attendance records are reviewed monthly by the nursery's DSL to ensure that any potential problems, patterns or concerns are investigated accordingly and within a timely manner.

Contextual factors and previously stated reasonings behind absences are also considered when reviewing attendance to confirm that any patterns or concerns raised are justifiable; whilst ensuring that children and their families are not penalised during the review process for absences that resulted from typical or unavoidable factors which do not raise concerns.

<u>Attendance patterns which raise concerns and require further safeguarding monitoring</u>

In addition to unexplained absences, the nursery monitors absences for patterns of potential concern. The following examples highlight potentially concerning absence trends which would require further investigation or safeguarding action if appropriate:

Absence trend	Potential concerns raised
Frequent, unexplained absences (including poor and inconsistent communication from parents)	May indicate a lack of parental engagement, potential neglect, or attempts to avoid professional oversight, limiting the setting's ability to monitor the child's welfare.

Sudden change or drop in usual attendance	A significant change in attendance may reflect alterations in family circumstances, unmanaged illness, or emerging safeguarding concerns impacting the child's wellbeing.
Attendance rate which is significantly below the peer group	Persistently low attendance may indicate unmet needs, poor parental engagement, or barriers within the family that are affecting the child's access to early education and support.
Irregular attendance for vulnerable children (e.g., those with prior safeguarding concerns)	Inconsistent attendance for vulnerable children reduces protective factors and may indicate that safeguarding risks are escalating or that support arrangements are ineffective.
Prolonged absences (excluding those resulting from holidays, visa arrangements etc., which do not spark concerns)	Extended absences may raise concerns regarding the child's safety, care arrangements, or whether they are being kept away to avoid professional scrutiny.
Regular absences on specific days (e.g., after weekends, after time spent with one parent)	Repeated absence linked to specific times may indicate instability, safeguarding concerns, or difficulties within particular caregiving arrangements.
Possible informal or unlawful exclusion (e.g., parents refusing to bring a child to the nursery, parental mental health concerns or neglectful circumstances)	Situations where a child is not brought to the setting may reflect parental difficulties, neglect, or a failure to prioritise the child's entitlement to early education and safeguarding support.

Please see the nurseries Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for more information.

<u>Vulnerable children and families to be considered when reviewing absences</u>

While occasional absence is expected, persistent or unexplained absences may signal underlying vulnerabilities for the children or their family. Certain factors can increase a child's risk of poor attendance, making it essential for practitioners to consider the wider context of a child's circumstances when reviewing attendance patterns. Understanding these factors supports early identification of need, enables appropriate intervention, and ensures that attendance concerns are addressed in a way that prioritises the child's welfare.

Please see the table below for further guidance:

Factors to be considered	How these can influence attendance
Children with Special Educational Needs, a disability, or other health issues	These children may experience physical, emotional, or sensory challenges that make regular attendance more difficult.

Factors to be considered	How these can influence attendance
	Medical appointments, fatigue, anxiety, or unmet support needs can all contribute to increased absences.
Children with a previous safeguarding history, including those subject to low-level concerns	These children may have experienced instability, trauma, or negatively impacting life events which can affect future attendance and increase the risk of familial disengagement.
Children with an ongoing safeguarding history, including those subject to low-level concerns.	These children may be subject to ongoing challenges including unmet needs, lack of supervision, or escalating safeguarding concerns which can influence attendance.
Families experiencing recent changes in personal circumstances, such as parental separation, job loss, or ill health	These families may struggle to maintain routines and provide consistent support for nursery attendance due to emotional stress or practical difficulties.
Families living in poverty or financial hardship	These families may struggle with transport, access to resources, or meeting basic needs, impacting ability to attend regularly.
Families with migrant, refugee, and asylum seeker status	These families may experience language barriers, trauma, cultural adjustment difficulties, and uncertainty around residency or employment. These factors can create additional obstacles to regular attendance and engagement with education.

Essential knowledge for staff from this policy

Key learning	Level
Explain the difference between a typical and unexplained absence	L1
Explain how absences are logged onto Famly and the Fire Registers	L1
Explain how absences are categorised using sickness, absence or holiday	L1
Explain the procedure for following up unexplained absences	L1

Key learning	Level
Explain the procedure to gain further clarity regarding a child's absence	L1
Highlight when attendance logs should be updated (including on Famly and the Fire Registers)	L1
Highlight what absence trends may raise safeguarding concerns	L1
Highlight what factors may increase a child's vulnerability to experiencing poor attendance	L1
Explain how attendance is reviewed each month to monitor patterns of concern	L2
Highlight the potential safeguarding responses which may be taken to address attendance patterns or a single concerning absence	L2
Explain how absence concerns should be logged using the CCF	L2

Training requirements

There is no mandatory training required as part of the induction process.

Monitoring and review

Review	• Review previously logged absences to ensure these have been completed correctly and are up to date • Review previous attendance concern logs, ensuring any follow up actions have been addressed
Confirm	• Confirm that all attendance concerns have been logged onto a CCF and actioned accordingly • Confirm that support meetings have been scheduled for any families requiring early help • Confirm that all unexplained absences have been followed up by 10:00 on the day of absence
Observe	• Observe a member of staff log an absence onto the Fire Register
Ask	• Ask a member of staff what absences may raise safeguarding concerns • Ask a member of staff where absences should be logged

Further reading

Name	Summary of content	Source	Link
Recording a Child as Absent	Guidance on how to add an absence onto Famly using the ‘sick’, ‘absent’, or ‘holiday’ option	Famly	Link