

09 Early Years Practice Procedures

09.02 Absence

Our Aim

We want every child to be safe, supported, and able to access their full learning entitlement. Good attendance helps children thrive and can also highlight early concerns where a child or family may need support.

Reporting an Absence

- Parents/carers should contact the nursery within 1 hour of the child's expected arrival time.
- For appointments or holidays, please give advance notice.
- The attendance and absence policy is shared with all parents.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) follows local safeguarding partner procedures when a child is absent or missing.

Parents/carers can mark off children on Family by logging either a holiday, sick day, or as just not attending. We do ask that there is always a reason written in the box too.

When a Child Fails to Arrive

If a child who normally attends does not arrive and no contact has been made:

Immediate Action

- The DSL or key worker will attempt to contact parents/carers straight away to check the child is safe and well. We will attempt a message on Family first and then if no response we will call.
- If no response, the nursery will:
 - Continue trying all contacts throughout the first day of absence
 - Contact named emergency contacts on the child's registration form/Family account

Recording

- If no explanation can be verified, the absence is recorded as Unexplained Absence.
- The manager will continue following up each day until contact is made.

If Concerns Arise

- If there is any concern about the child's welfare, Children's Services will be contacted for advice or referral.
- The nursery may also contact other relevant agencies following local safeguarding procedures.

How Absence Is Monitored

- All absences are recorded with:
 - Reason
 - Expected duration
 - Follow-up actions and timescales
- The nursery monitors attendance patterns to identify:
 - Prolonged absences
 - Repeated absences
 - Possible safeguarding concerns
- Understanding each family's circumstances helps determine what counts as a "prolonged absence."
- Absence records are kept for at least three years, or until after the next Ofsted inspection.

Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

If any new information causes concern, the nursery immediately follows procedure 06.1 Responding to safeguarding or child protection concerns.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Children

If a child is already known to other professionals (e.g., social worker):

Contact with Parents

- The DSL/key person tries to contact parents to establish the reason for absence.
- All information is recorded.

Contact with Professionals

- Any professionals involved with the child are informed (e.g., social worker, family support worker).
- If the DSL is worried the child is at risk, relevant professionals are contacted immediately.

If No Contact Can Be Made

- The DSL notifies the child's social worker the same day.
- Safeguarding procedures are followed straight away.

Safeguarding Triggers

- If a child misses three consecutive sessions and parents cannot be reached, Social Care is contacted and a referral may be made.
- If the child has a child protection plan or previous safeguarding concerns:
 - Parents are contacted immediately
 - If no response, the absence is recorded on 06.1b Safeguarding incident reporting form
 - Social Care is contacted without delay

Poor or Irregular Attendance

Attendance in early years isn't compulsory, but persistent low attendance can signal underlying concerns.

Step 1: Speak with Parents

The manager discusses the child's attendance with parents to understand:

- Transport issues
- Work patterns

- Family challenges

Support is offered wherever possible.

Step 2: If Attendance Doesn't Improve

If poor attendance continues:

- The manager reviews the situation
- A referral to a multi-agency support team may be considered

Step 3: If Safeguarding Concerns Already Exist

- Poor/irregular attendance is reported to the child's Social Care worker immediately
- No delay is permitted

Local Authority Funding Rules

- For funded children, local authorities may reclaim funding for recurring or prolonged absences.
- The manager follows local authority policies on refund reclamation.