



Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

06.12 Early Years Attendance, Punctuality and Absence Policy

Even when you're very small, good attendance makes a BIG difference ...

Aim

Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school aims to promote good attendance and punctuality in partnership with parents and carers in early years, ensuring that good habits are formed early so that children are school ready.

Rationale

Regular early years attendance is important for all children as it is only through regular, consistent routines that children build up the secure attachments they need for healthy development. Research shows that regular part-time attendance from the age of two in a good quality early years setting has a lasting impact on children's social development and intellectual attainment throughout school. (Research Brief RBF15-03 The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Project: Findings from the Preschool Period. Sylva et al, IOE, 2003). Regular attendance has a positive impact on all aspects of a young child's learning and development. A regular routine supports young children to feel settled and secure. Unsettled children have higher stress levels which, in turn, prevent them from being able to benefit fully from the learning opportunities available.

We take steps to ensure that children are kept safe, that their wellbeing is promoted, and they do not miss out on their entitlements and opportunities. At the very least, good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance may also lead to early identification of more serious concerns for a child or family. There are several reasons why a child may be absent from a setting. In most cases it is reasonable to expect that parents/carers alert the setting as soon as possible, or in the case of appointments and holidays give adequate notice. Parents are advised that they should contact the setting by 9:30am on the day of absence to advise of their absence, this can be done via email (acornwelwyn@gmail.com) or telephone (01438 840132). Designated persons must also adhere to Local Safeguarding Partners (LSP) requirements, procedures and contact protocols for children who are absent or missing from childcare.

Procedures

We promote good attendance and punctuality by:

- Ensuring children attend for the expected hours, arriving and leaving at the stated session times
- Recording arrival and departure times using an online Tapestry register.
- Recording late arrivals or early collections on our online Tapestry register, including the reason.
- Termly monitoring of late arrivals, early collections and absences.
- Requiring parents to call or email the setting if they are going to be late or absent
- Requiring parents to report sickness by 9.30am, which is then recorded on our online Tapestry register

- Requiring parents to notify us within a reasonable timescale if they are planning a holiday or pre-planned absence during term time so this can be recorded accurately in our registers

There will be no fee reductions or reimbursements for any emergency or pre-planned child absenteeism.

Supporting families

We recognise that sometimes families may need extra support with attendance and punctuality, therefore good communication is essential between us. We will work with parents/carers to support a child's good attendance and punctuality. Where children's attendance is poor and not improving, we will discuss available support from their local children's centre.

Changes to sessions attended

If you wish to reduce the number of your child's sessions, or are leaving Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school, we require written notification at least six weeks before the end of any given term. Failure to give sufficient notice will result in pre-school losing vital funding for which the parent may have to pay.

Poor/irregular attendance

Whilst attendance at an early years setting is not mandatory, regular poor attendance may be indicative of safeguarding and welfare concerns that should be followed up.

- In the first instance the leadership team should discuss a child's attendance with their parents to ascertain any potential barriers i.e. transport, working patterns etc and should work with the parent/s to offer support where possible.
- If poor attendance continues and strategies to support are not having an impact, the designated person must review the situation and decide if a referral to Children's Resource Services is appropriate.
- Where there are already safeguarding and welfare concerns about a child or a child protection plan is in place, poor/irregular attendance at the setting is reported to the Social Care worker without delay.
- In the case of funded children, the local authority may use their discretion to reclaim funding, where absence is recurring or for extended periods, taking into account the reason for the absence and impact on the setting.

If at any time further information comes to light that gives cause for concern, procedure '06.01 Responding to safeguarding or child protection concerns' is immediately followed.

Missed hours and absence for funded hours

Hertfordshire County Council Funding Team is keen to ensure that families are correctly using all the entitlement they are claiming and are requesting that we monitor unattended sessions whether holiday, sickness or unexplained. We are required to advise Hertfordshire County council where a child is absent for more than two weeks, regardless of whether the absence has been notified to us.

Withdrawing a placement

Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school will make every effort to support good attendance and punctuality, as suggested above. However, if there are no other indicators of concern or vulnerability and your child has failed to attend for four consecutive weeks or more without a justifiable reason, we may withdraw your child's place. The process for formally withdrawing a child's place is as follows:

- We will attempt to contact the family twice weekly to seek a justifiable explanation (by telephone, email or home visit and followed up by email), including, of course, first day calling
- We will send a recorded delivery letter during the third week to invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the situation and warning them of the action that will be taken after the fourth week
- We will continue to attempt twice weekly contact by phone and email
- We will send a recorded delivery letter in the final week, explaining that the place will be withdrawn on a specific date

Transition to a new setting mid academic year

If you decide to move your child to another setting, please inform within the timescales noted above so that we can remove them from our register, offer the place to a child on our waiting list and send the records to the new setting to ensure a smooth transition.

This policy will be adopted by Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school on 01 September 2025