



Absence Policy

Introduction

Houghton and Wyton Pre-school is committed to safeguarding the children in our care by monitoring and responding appropriately to absences. Good attendance is essential to children's development and learning. While some absences are expected, any unexplained or prolonged absence may raise safeguarding concerns and will be managed in line with Local Safeguarding Partner (LSP) guidance.

Aim

To ensure that all absences are recorded, followed up appropriately, and that safeguarding concerns are identified and acted upon in a timely and sensitive manner.

Objectives

We will:

- Encourage open communication with parents about absences
- Monitor all absences carefully and consistently
- Contact families promptly when children are absent without notification
- Act swiftly in line with safeguarding procedures where necessary

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Responsible for ensuring appropriate follow-up of unexplained or prolonged absences
- **Manager/Deputy:** Oversees attendance tracking and liaises with external professionals as needed
- **Key Persons:** Maintain close contact with families and raise absence concerns early

Procedures for Unexplained Absences

Immediate Action:

- If a child is expected but does not arrive and no contact is received, the child's key person will attempt to contact the parents/carers immediately

Ongoing Contact Attempts:

- If the family cannot be reached, further attempts are made throughout the first day using emergency contact details

Follow-Up:

- If contact is not made within three working days, the DSL will seek advice from Children's Services and, if advised, make a referral.

Recording Absences:

- All absences are recorded on the child's personal file, noting:
 - The reason for the absence.
 - The expected duration of the absence.
 - Follow-up actions taken or required (with timescales).
- Records of absences are retained for at least three years or until the next Ofsted inspection following the child's cohort leaving.



Safeguarding Vulnerable Children

Children with known safeguarding or welfare needs:

- The DSL or Key Person will contact parents/carers on the first day of any unexplained absence
- If contact is made and concerns arise, relevant professionals (e.g. social worker) are contacted immediately
- If the child has social care involvement, the social worker is notified on day one of the unexplained absence

Children with a Child Protection Plan:

- Any absence without contact is escalated immediately to Social Care, even before the three-day threshold

Persistent Absence and Irregular Attendance

- Attendance at early years settings is not mandatory, but repeated absence may indicate underlying concerns

Initial Discussion:

- The Manager will meet with parents to understand any barriers to regular attendance (e.g., transport, family circumstances)
- Support strategies are discussed and agreed

Escalation and Referral:

- If attendance remains poor despite support, the Manager may:
 - Refer to Early Help or another multi-agency service
 - Log concerns and continue to monitor closely

Where safeguarding concerns already exist, poor attendance is reported directly to the child's social worker

Funded Children and Local Authority Guidance

For funded children, the Local Authority:

- May review recurring or prolonged absences on a case-by-case basis
- May seek to reclaim funding if absence significantly impacts the setting
- The Manager is aware of the local reclaim policy and monitors attendance accordingly

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees or earlier if required due to changes in legislation or practice.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy aligns with the following:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Statutory Framework for the EYFS (2023)
- Education Act 1996
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) (*safeguarding principles*)
- Local Safeguarding Partner (LSP) Guidance on Children Missing Education



Registered Charity # 1203754

Acknowledgment

All staff, trustees, and parents/carers must acknowledge they have read and understood this policy. By doing so, they agree to follow the outlined procedures to ensure children's safety and well-being.