

# Why good attendance is important?

[The Statutory Framework for the Early Year Foundation Stage \(2021\)](#) defines what providers must do, working in partnership with parents and/or carers, to promote the learning and development of all children in their care, and to ensure they are ready for school.

As stated in [Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings](#) Ofsted expects Early Years practitioners to promote good attendance within their settings. In line with statutory guidance, inspectors will gather evidence as to whether staff in all settings are sensitive to signs of possible safeguarding concerns. These include poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education.

Reasons for children to attend regularly at their Early Years setting are to support their learning and development, to make sure that children are kept safe, their wellbeing is promoted, and they do not miss out on their entitlements and opportunities.

*Good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance practice may also lead to the earlier identification of more serious concerns for a child or family and may have a vital part to play in keeping a child or other family members safe from harm.*

You should have good policies and procedures for promoting, supporting, recording, and monitoring the attendance of children in the EYFS; this includes keeping accurate records of the daily times of arrival and departure for each child. It is in the best interests of children and families that all settings are aware of effective practice.

The guidance in this document is aimed at Registered Early Years settings and Childminders, Maintained Nursery Schools and Nursery classes in schools. However, staff working in Reception classes in schools may find it useful whilst ensuring they are following guidance for children of statutory school age. [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## Why is good attendance important?

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There are positive benefits to be gained from regular attendance; this includes not only coming to every booked session, but also being there on time. It is important that all staff understand why good attendance by children and good attendance practice among staff need to be maintained.

Benefits include the following:

### Good habits

- It builds in young children the idea that getting up and going to a setting is simply what you do.
- Children who attend every booked session develop a feel for the rhythm of the week and gain a sense of security from some regular elements, even when the actual pattern or focus of their learning or activity may vary widely from week to week.

### Secure relationships

- Young children find it easier to build and sustain a range of social relationships when they regularly attend their childcare setting. Regular attendance helps to develop secure attachments within the setting.
- For some families, particularly at times of stress, the child's regular attendance at a setting allows parents to get other things done and helps them enjoy spending time with the child when he or she is at home.

### Self-esteem

- Children who rarely miss sessions at an early years setting and come on time are more likely to feel good about themselves. This is because they know what goes on and what to expect, feel more confident with the adults and the other children and have more opportunities to be valued and praised for their own special contribution.
- Children who regularly miss sessions or are generally late, can frequently experience a sense of having to try a little bit harder just to understand what is going on and what other children are talking about or doing.
- Regular attendance, on time, helps many young children to separate from their parents or carers at the start of the day and settle more readily into daily life in their setting.

### Learning and Development.

- Staff carefully plan every session for each child in their care and want to take every opportunity to help them thrive. Experiences gained in one session are often developed further in the next session, whether or not these are consecutive days.

- Children learn in many different ways through play with others and through being in the company of staff who actively support their learning and development.
- Underachievement is often linked to lower attendance. For some older students this is linked to a steadily deteriorating trend in attendance which is traceable right back to their Early Years setting.

### Safeguarding

Good attendance is important for every child, but especially those for whom specific factors may make them more vulnerable to disengagement or underachievement. Most children are well supported by their families and continue to thrive, whatever their background or circumstances. However, there are some factors in children's lives which may make them more vulnerable. It is important that you exercise 'professional curiosity'.

It is particularly important to pay close attention to the patterns of attendance for potentially vulnerable groups of children, including, for example:

- children who are known to social care
- children whose families are known to the criminal justice system
- if there are immigration issues
- children who may be subject to a forced marriage, honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation
- children facing difficult family circumstances e.g. housing problems, bereavement, separation/ divorce
- Children who are Young Carers
- children from families experiencing some degree of financial hardship, e.g. in receipt of 2yr old funding, Early Years Pupil Premium funding (EYPP) or claiming Free School Meals (FSM)
- children with additional needs, learning difficulties or disabilities
- children with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

- children about whom other agencies have raised concerns, including those supported through the Early Help Assessment (EHA)/Team Around the Family (TAF).

If any child's attendance starts to cause concern in your setting, it is helpful for the Key Person to discuss this with the staff who work with any of the child's siblings who come to the same setting. This helps establish whether there are issues only for an individual child or if the family as a whole may be going through a difficult time.

When promoting attendance in settings a wide range of elements combine to support and encourage good attendance. You may find the Parental Engagement resource on the [Early Years Toolkit](#) useful. It is important to explain the processes, but also the reasons underpinning good attendance. These include:

- having a positive and welcoming atmosphere;
- explaining about the importance of good attendance and your procedures for non-attendance to families before their children start with you e.g. through information on your website, prospectus, settling in meetings;
- praise for good attendance & for arriving on time;
- being sensitive to and supportive of families from a range of cultures and backgrounds;
- building good relationships between children, families, staff and senior leaders;
- being rigorous in monitoring attendance and in identifying and analysing patterns of absence (often called 'broken weeks') and the number of sessions missed;
- acting early to address patterns of non-attendance
- being rigorous and persistent in seeking and recording explanations for absence, however sensitively you approach the conversation;
- being aware of additional factors in the setting's relationship with the family (e.g. EAL, learning difficulties) & making sure that appropriate means of communication are used at all times.

It is important to make sure (through induction and regular reminders) that all staff know what to do, and who to tell, if:

- a child is absent/late;
- a child has a changeable or deteriorating pattern of absence or lateness;

- a child goes missing from education;
- where to turn for advice or support or whom to alert if concerns arise.

## The Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) & The Early Help Assessment (EHA)

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The Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) is one team split between North, Central and South. LCSS provides advice & guidance to community partners and professionals and No name consultations when consent from the family has not been gained.

The service also offers advice and guidance when concerns are identified and throughout EHA/TAF process for non-immediate safeguarding concerns. A [LCSS link worker](#) can help settings with the EHA/TAF. Childminders have access to the area locality telephone number for support and guidance.

The 'Think Family' approach in Oxfordshire means there is now a whole family assessment & plan. The EHA can be initiated by any professional who identifies concerns for a child/family and is completed at the earliest opportunity. It involves all relevant agencies to assess and support the whole family. Early Help Assessment training for Early Years Providers can be booked through [Step into Training](#).

## Recording and monitoring attendance

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Keeping accurate attendance records is not just bureaucracy. Monitoring attendance is important for all children, but especially for those in vulnerable groups. Knowing when children have attended a session provides vital information to keep children safe from harm and help tackle underachievement.

Having clear accessible attendance records helps identify children at risk and helps multi-agency teams to understand, assess and support the widest possible range of needs for a child and his or her whole family.

To ensure that attendance records support the work of safeguarding young children and promote their learning and development, it is important for senior managers and staff at all levels to pay attention to the following:

- ❖ Keep full registration details for every child, as specified in the EYFS. (*a daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises, their hours of attendance and the names of each child's key person;*)
- ❖ Keep accurate information about parents, carers and others who may accompany the child to and from the setting. It is vital to have up-to-date records of who does/ does not have a legal right of access to each child and to make sure that key people know the situation for each

individual child. ( 3.72. Providers must record the following information for each child in their care: full name; date of birth; name and address of every parent and/or carer who is known to the provider (and information about any other person who has parental responsibility for the child); which parent(s) and/or carer(s) the child normally lives with; and emergency contact details for parents and/or carers).

It is important that you:

- Make clear, consistent, and accurate entries, whether you are using manual or electronic registers.
- Consistently and thoroughly investigate all absences for individual children and their siblings (if they are also at your setting) and keep records of the family's explanations. Liaise with schools if relevant.
- Put in place some routine monitoring of attendance by managers, committees or the owner.
- Put in place systematic and rigorous monitoring of the registers by the designated lead who is responsible for ensuring accurate recording, identifying, and addressing attendance issues and engaging parents.

## Raising concerns and taking action

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All settings will have their own policy and procedure for dealing with attendance issues and it is important that staff at all levels, including managers/committees, know how to respond to different problems that may arise. Good attendance is important for all children but will be especially important for children receiving 2yr old funding or Early Years Pupil Premium Funding (EYPP) or if there are safeguarding concerns about a child or family.

Even though it is not compulsory for a child to attend an Early Years setting, staff should discuss any instance when a family decides to withdraw a child from the setting.

There are many reasons why children are moved from one setting to another. These include simple preference for another setting, greater convenience of an alternative setting, house move, increased availability of parents/family members to provide free home-based childcare etc.

However, if it is known (or becomes apparent) that the child is actually being withdrawn from registered childcare altogether, staff should consider any implications. In particular, staff should discuss whether there have been (or now are) any concerns about the child which might mean that the parents' decision to withdraw from registered childcare could be a cause for concern. This might include deteriorating attendance,

poorer emotional wellbeing, worsening relationship between setting and parent(s), poorer health or physical condition/ welfare of the child, radicalisation.

Following this discussion, actions should include the following:

- Try to find out which setting the child is moving to.
- Keep dated notes of any events or discussions with the families.

It is important that professionals have 'eyes on the child'.

If you have immediate safeguarding concerns about a child, please call MASH on **0345 050 7666** during office hours (8.30am – 5pm, Monday to Thursday, 8.30am – 4pm, Friday)

Outside office hours call the Emergency Duty Team on **0800 833 408**

[Find out more about the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\) and referral process.](#)

If you have low level concerns, contact LCSS.

## Self – Evaluation of Attendance and Safeguarding

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- Having clear policies and procedures for promoting, recording, and monitoring the attendance of children in the EYFS will provide you with support systems you need to have in place.
- It is important to review and evaluate your processes and record systems on a regular basis.
- All staff should attend safeguarding training and receive regular updates
- Safeguarding should be an agenda item on all your staff and supervision meetings.

We would like to acknowledge South Gloucestershire Council, whose documents were referred to during the preparation of this guidance. August 2020

This policy is a framework and should be a starting point for development to fit your setting's individual context.

Prior to being adopted, each section should be reviewed to determine if it is appropriate for your setting. If more or less information is required, it is the responsibility of the setting to make those amendments.

## Draft attendance/absent child policy

### Objectives

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To promote good attendance this is vital to children's educational achievement, well-being and keeping them safe.

To convey clearly to parents and children that:

- Regular attendance is essential and is in the child's best interest.
- Regular or frequent lateness at the start and end of each session is unacceptable and detrimental to the child.
- Unjustifiable absence will be investigated and may be recorded as unauthorised absence.

To keep records of attendance which:

- Clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Provide accurate information on actual attendance to enable monitoring and evaluation of attendance rates.
- Show lateness so that patterns may be addressed.

To build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by:

- Responding rapidly to children's absence.
- Recognising and celebrating, with the family, children who maintain 'excellent', 'good' and 'improving' attendance.
- Sharing attendance figures with parents and carers.
- To target attendance where it has been an issue and to set in place strategies to support improvement.
- To target persistent lateness where it has been an issue and to set in place techniques to ensure improvement.

### Sharing information

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The setting will make its policy on attendance clear to parents and children through:

- Sharing information and expectations prior to admission.
- The use of standardised letters to parents addressing specific aspects of attendance or punctuality that require parental response.
- Clear systems and procedures to address all pupil absence and lateness.

### Factors affecting attendance

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The main factors affecting attendance of children at an early years setting are:

- Illness of the child.
- Illness of siblings or parents.
- Health Services Appointments
- Religious observance.



- Holidays.

Staff must understand their safeguarding responsibilities to keep children and families protected from radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour (Prevent Duty) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by being alert to patterns of absence.

## Daily Registration

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- Registration will be completed at the start of each session within 10 minutes of the start time.
- Registers of attendance will be kept accurately, indicating clearly when a child is present or absent.
- Lateness will be recorded.

## Systems to monitor attendance and punctuality

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Any absence with no prior explanation will prompt a first day contact.

Systems to monitor attendance will include:

- A telephone call to establish the reason for non-attendance.
- Further follow-up telephone calls if unexplained absences continue.
- A letter when contact cannot be made by telephone call.
- A Home Visit when attendance is inconsistent.

Systems to monitor punctuality will include:

- Discussion with the parent or carer to establish the cause for poor punctuality.
- Letters to parents and carers as appropriate.

## Monitoring and evaluation of attendance data

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Children's attendance patterns will be regularly scanned, and any particular concern discussed with the parent or carer.

Attendance figures will be published each half term and will be shared with parents, staff and the Governing Body/Committee or the owner

## Reporting concerns

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Follow your safeguarding policy, make sure it is up to date and in line with OSCB guidance

Agreed on:

Signed by:

Review date: