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Why good attendance is important?

The Statutory Framework for the Early Year Foundation Stage (EYFS) expects Early Years practitioners to promote good attendance within their settings.

The 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 in 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.

Settings are required to keep full registration details for every child, as specified in the EYFS 3.77 (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 ;)

Why is good attendance important?

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. So it is important that all staff understand why good attendance by children and good attendance practice among staff both need to be maintained. Benefits include the following:

Good habits
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- 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
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- Young children find it easier to build and sustain a range of social relationships when they regularly attend their childcare setting. Regular times arranged with parents help to develop a secure attachment 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.

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<u>Self-esteem</u>

- 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 pre-school setting or school. Some children may need some flexibility when they first start attending to settle in but there should be a clear, time-bound plan in place to ensure the attendance patterns are normalised as soon as possible.

<u>Learning and Development</u>.

- 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 following sessions.
- Children learn in many 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 first class in school ("Reception") or even their pre-school setting.

<u>Safeguarding</u>

Good attendance is important for every child, but especially those for whom specific factors 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 make it more likely that they will experience some difficulty.

It is particularly important to pay close attention to the patterns of attendance for potentially vulnerable groups of children, including, for example:
- Children facing difficult family circumstances e.g., housing problems, bereavement, separation/ divorce.
- Children from families experiencing some degree of financial hardship, e.g., in receipt of benefits or claiming Free School Meals (FSM).
- Children with additional needs, learning difficulties or disabilities.
- Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) or from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) families; or disabilities.
- Children about whom other agencies have raised concerns, including those supported through Early Help.

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

Knowing when children have attended school or pre-school 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 or school attendance legislation.
- Keep accurate information about parents, carers and others who may accompany the child to and from school or pre-school.
- Make clear and accurate entries, whether you are using manual or electronic registers.
- Consistently and thoroughly investigate all absences for individual children and their siblings and keep good records of the family's explanations.
- Put in place some routine monitoring of attendance by governors, committees or the owner.
- Put in place systematic and rigorous monitoring of the registers by senior leaders who are personally involved in ensuring accurate recording, identifying and addressing attendance issues and engaging parents.
- Being rigorous in monitoring attendance and in identifying and analysing patterns of absence and the number of sessions missed.
- Being rigorous and persistent in seeking and recording explanations for absence, however sensitively this is done.
- Develop good relationships with the family making sure that appropriate means of communication to meet family needs are always used.

Making sure (through induction and regular reminders) all staff must 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.

Early Help

The Locality Community Support Service (LCSS) offers advice and support to partners in the community to deliver Early help as per Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. Early help can make the biggest difference. When needs are identified in a timely way, children and families can be supported before problems escalate. Working with a child and their family to address their needs early can reduce risk factors (needs) and increase protective factors (strengths).

To support the ambitions of the Early help strategy, LCSS can advise and support professionals and families regarding Early help, including the use of the Strengths & Needs (a tool to explore family life) and Team Around the Family meetings.

LCSS has moved to **named** conversations with your linked locality worker to your setting/ local area. This change is to ensure transparent discussions that involve family information and children's needs and to also ensure that there is no unintended delay to a child receiving a required safeguarding response, or a conversation with them on the benefits of early help.

For more information visit [Early Help and the Locality Community Support Service (LCSS) - Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (oscb.org.uk)](https://www.oscb.org.uk)

Recording and monitoring attendance

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. (3.76 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.
- Make clear and accurate entries, whether you are using manual or electronic registers.
- Consistently and thoroughly investigate all absences for individual children and their siblings and keep good records of the family's explanations.
- Put in place 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 acting on concerns

All settings will have their own policy and procedure for dealing with attendance issues. It is important that staff at all levels, including managers/committees, know how to respond to different

problems. This is for the attendance of all children but will be especially important for children receiving 2r old funding or pupil premium or if concerns about a child or family are assessed under the CAF process.

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 preferences 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 being withdrawn from registered childcare altogether, staff should consider any implications. 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 being moved to.
- Keep dated notes of any events or discussions with the families.

If there have been other concerns about the child or limited information from the family about this move, the setting should contact the MASH for further advice and support. (Contact details are provided at the end of this document).

Self - Evaluation

- All settings will complete some form of self-evaluation to record their views about their strengths and weaknesses and to help identify their priorities for the future.
- Settings will also be keen to present their evaluation of this work to external agencies such as Ofsted.
- Having clear policies and procedures for promoting, supporting, recording and monitoring the attendance of children in the EYFS will provide useful evidence for your work. Your evidence might also include short case studies showing how individual children have benefited.

Draft attendance/absent child policy

Objectives

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.

- Regular or frequent lateness at the start and end of each session is unacceptable.
- 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 celebrate 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

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

The main factors affecting attendance of children at the Pre-school are:
• Illness of the child.
• Illness of siblings or parents.
• Health Services Appointments.
• Religious observance.
• Holidays.
Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities to keep children and families protected from radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour (Prevent Duty) and Female genital Mutilation by being alert to patterns of absence.

Daily Registration

• 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

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

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

Concerns about a child's non-attendance will result in contact with the MASH for further advice and support.
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub: **0845 050 7666**
Emergency Duty Team (outside office hours): **0800 833 408**

The designated lead for safeguarding will liaise with the senior locality social worker if there are **already professionals** involved in the safeguarding of the child.

- Oxford City - **01865 328563**
- North Oxfordshire - **01865 323039**
- South Oxfordshire - **01865 323041**
- Emergency Duty Team - **0800 833 408**

Agreed on: Signed by:
Review date: