

Attendance Policy

Introduction

While nursery education is non-statutory, the Federation recognises that regular attendance is vital to a child's educational development and overall wellbeing. Attendance in the early years lays the foundations for lifelong learning; helping children develop secure routines, build resilience, and form relationships that support emotional security and confidence. Consistent attendance enables children to fully engage in learning, social experiences, and the structured environment that underpins readiness for school.

This policy outlines how we manage attendance and absence, ensuring consistency, transparency, and early intervention.

Cambridge Nursery Federation recognises that unexplainable or persistent absences, and prolonged periods away from education, can be both a cause and a consequence of wider difficulties.

We are mindful of the potential impact of parents' mental health on their child's attendance, and the strong link between poor attendance, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), risk of exploitation, and barriers to progress. Staff will work with families to identify underlying issues, provide signposting support, and liaise with external agencies where appropriate. Attendance concerns will always be considered within a safeguarding context, ensuring that the welfare and wellbeing of the child remain central to our response.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality.
- Act promptly on any unexplained absence.
- Safeguard children by ensuring their whereabouts are known.
- Maintain clear and supportive communication with parents/carers.
- Follow clear procedures for managing absence and non-attendance.

Parent Information: Why Regular Attendance Matters in Nursery

Coming to nursery regularly helps your child get the absolute best start in their education. It gives them a chance to settle into routines, build friendships, and feel secure in the structure of the nursery day. Research, including findings from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study, demonstrates that the duration and consistency of early years attendance are intricately linked to improved language, cognitive, and social outcomes.

Good attendance also helps your child develop positive habits — such as punctuality, resilience, and confidence — which will support them throughout their school life and beyond. By working together, we can make sure your child has every opportunity to thrive.

Promoting good attendance

Attendance is recognised as an integral part of children's emotional and physical wellbeing.

The Federation takes a preventative stance by identifying and responding early to any factors affecting attendance, such as emotional needs, transitions, or family challenges. Our approach includes gradual settling in sessions for children who may need more time to settle. Staff also conduct Home Visits before children start nursery to build early connections with families, supporting trust and understanding. Where separation anxiety or other emotional needs affect attendance, staff and parents work together to create a personalised transition.

All conversations about attendance are grounded in empathy, curiosity, and support rather than blame or judgement, ensuring every family feels respected and heard.

The Federation values each child as a unique individual and is committed to inclusive, affirming practice. Attendance support acknowledges diversity and differing family circumstances. Each nursery fosters belonging through nurturing relationships and flexible support. Where children or families face barriers to attendance, staff ensure communication is accessible and culturally sensitive. Families are encouraged to share their experiences and challenges so that attendance is co-created and tailored to their needs. Staff maintain regular communication with parents through informal conversations, phone calls, texts, and written updates. Staff seek to understand each family's story, removing barriers collaboratively and focusing on wellbeing before enforcement.

Through these partnerships, parents are empowered to support their child's attendance, helping children feel safe, valued, and ready to learn each day.

Attendance is a shared responsibility between the nursery, families, and wider partners. The Federation believes that families and staff achieve the best outcomes for children when they work together with openness and mutual respect.

Governors monitor policy implementation and overall attendance patterns to ensure fairness and consistency.

Absences

The nursery follows clear, supportive procedures for responding to absence. **First session** contact is made for any unexplained absence to check the child's welfare and offer support. Staff use regular monitoring to identify emerging patterns and take prompt action.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) oversees concerns where absence may indicate safeguarding risks. In all cases, the nursery works collaboratively with families.

Where absence persists, staff may initiate a meeting to address ongoing barriers. Parents are encouraged to communicate openly about any issues affecting attendance so that solutions can be developed together before concerns escalate.

The Federation recognises that attendance challenges often stem from wider contextual factors such as housing, health, finance, or wellbeing. Support is therefore holistic, considering the needs of the whole family.

Attendance is viewed as an element of safeguarding and wellbeing. The Federation's approach also supports families with advice, signposting, and practical help, promoting consistency between home and school. This collaborative, relational approach ensures children have the stability and opportunity they need to thrive.

The school also implements a range of strategies to improve attendance:

- Flexible scheduling: Where separation anxiety or family circumstances create barriers, tailored start and finish times or phased entry can be agreed in consultation with parents
- Parental engagement: Families are encouraged to maintain open communication with staff. Attendance concerns are explored collaboratively, with practical advice and support offered
- Return-to-school support: Following longer absences, a supportive reintegration plan may be offered to help children settle back into routine and learning

Day-to-Day Management of Absence

Each nursery will follow a staged response to absence to ensure children's safety and maintain regular communication with parents/carers: (Appendix A)

Parents' Absence Reporting Procedure

Parents and carers are expected to notify the school promptly if their child is absent. If no notification is received, the school will contact parents by phone, text, or email to establish the reason for absence. If safeguarding involvement exists, the DSL and social worker will be informed. Where absences persist without explanation, welfare checks will be arranged, and further escalation will occur in line with safeguarding procedures.

Mid-Term Leavers

If a child leaves mid-term, the school will collect information about the new address, contact details, and receiving nursery. If no new setting is identified, the school will continue to make fortnight contact with the family. If there are safeguarding concerns, the social worker will be informed.

Safeguarding Links

Persistent or unexplained absence may be a safeguarding concern. Staff will act in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025) and local safeguarding procedures. The DSL will monitor absence patterns and make referrals where needed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed by the Headteacher / DSL and shared with governors. Patterns of attendance and absence are reviewed termly to identify trends and evaluate the impact of strategies implemented.

The Federation evaluates how effectively it supports families to overcome barriers to attendance, using feedback from parents and staff. Learning from this review informs future planning and continuous improvement. The governing body receives regular updates and ensures the policy remains aligned with the Federation's safeguarding duties.

Procedures and Appendices

The following procedures and appendices form an essential part of this policy. They outline the detailed steps for managing absence, communication with families, welfare checks, and record keeping.

Appendix A: Procedure for non-attendance

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The school's day-to-day processes for managing attendance

Statutory Guidance 26th Nov 2013 - A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter, and there may be a reasonable explanation for this. However, regular school attendance is an important safeguard, and unexplained non-attendance can be an early indicator of problems, risk, and vulnerability.

Schools should endeavour to deal with this problem in three ways:

- By preventing poor school attendance and truancy;
- By acting once absence has occurred to establish children's safety and try to get them back to school;
- By taking action to trace children whose whereabouts are not known.

KCSiE - Where children need a social worker, this should inform decisions about safeguarding (for example, responding to unauthorised absence or to a child missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare (for example, considering the provision of pastoral and/or academic support, alongside action by statutory services)

P144 All staff should be aware that children being absent from school or college, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities

The following outlines the daily action the school will take in relation to absence from a school session - **red sections** – relates to a child with a social worker

1st session of absence

1. Phone parent/carer to ask reason for absence
2. No answer – send text / email
3. Log on SiMs
4. **Does the child have a named social worker (CP, CIN)?**
5. **Inform DSL**
6. **Inform social worker via email of absence and if reason has been given or no contact with return receipt – log on chronology**
7. **No return receipt within 4 hours – phone SW – log on chronology state - 1st session of absence**

2nd session of absence

1. Phone parent / carer to ask for reason for absence
2. No answer – send text / email and phone additional contact
3. Log on SiMs
4. **Does the child have a named social worker (CP, CIN)?**
5. **Inform DSL**
6. **Inform social worker via email of absence and if reason has been given or no contact with return receipt – log on chronology**
7. **No return receipt within 4 hours – phone SW – log on chronology, state – 2nd session**

3rd session of absence

1. Phone parent / carer to ask for reason for absence
2. No answer – send text / email and phone additional contact

3. Log on SiMs
4. Does the child have a named social worker (CP, CIN)?
5. Inform DSL – log on chronology, state – 3rd session
6. Inform social worker via email of absence and if reason has been given or no contact with return receipt – log on chronology
7. DSL Phone social worker to request welfare check. Be assured the social worker will be visiting – log on chronology
8. No return receipt within 4 hours – phone SW / duty desk to inform – log on chronology
9. If all attempts of contact fail, the DSL will reach out to sibling school, health visitor, and any relevant stakeholder.

Mid-term leavers

If a child has left the school every attempt should be made to gain the following information

- New address
- Contact details
- Receiving nursery – if they do not have one, nursery will contact every two weeks requesting the receiving nursery. If a parent has decided not to attend to any nursery judgment on safeguarding, concerns need to be considered.
- If safeguarding concerns – inform social worker of children moving into the area.
- Carry out 'exit interview'
- Log on SiMs

If a parent states, at any point in this process, they do not wish their child to return to the nursery school; an 'exit' meeting will be offered. At the meeting attempts to ascertain 'why,' will be explored and the potential for additional support through referral to a service i.e., Children's Centre, health visitor