CHILD ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE & UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE POLICY

Applies to all children attending Dots & Tots Day Nursery and should be read alongside the Safeguarding Policy.

Policy Statement

Dots & Tots Day Nursery recognises that regular attendance supports children's wellbeing, relationships, learning and development. Attendance is also an important part of safeguarding. An unexplained absence, a prolonged absence or a concerning pattern of absence may indicate that a child or family requires additional support or that there is a safeguarding concern.

We will maintain accurate attendance records via our Ovivio app, respond to unexplained or prolonged absences in a timely manner, consider patterns and trends, and take proportionate safeguarding action where concerns arise.

EYFS Requirements

In line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Dots & Tots will follow up with 5child absences in a timely manner. Where a child is absent without notification, or is absent for a prolonged period, attempts will be made to contact the child's parent/carer and alternative emergency contacts. Staff will consider the child's circumstances, including any known vulnerability, the vulnerability of parents/carers and relevant aspects of home life, when deciding what action is required.

There is no single fixed number of days that automatically defines a prolonged absence for every child. The Nursery Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will use professional judgement, taking account of the child's usual attendance pattern and individual circumstances.

Attendance Records

The nursery will maintain an accurate daily record of children's attendance via our Ovivio app. Children will be signed in and out in accordance with nursery procedures and their actual attendance will be recorded.

- Staff will ensure children are accounted for throughout the day and registers remain accurate.
- Late arrival or early collection will be reflected in the attendance record where appropriate.
- Known absences and the reason given by the parent/carer will be recorded. Parents can also forward log any known absences such as holidays
- Attendance information will be reviewed where patterns, repeated absence or safeguarding concerns emerge.

Parent and Carer Responsibilities

Parents and carers are expected to tell the nursery when their child will not attend a booked session and, wherever possible, provide the reason for the absence before the child's normal expected arrival time.

- Parents/carers should contact the nursery as soon as reasonably possible if an absence is unexpected.
- Parents/carers should keep all telephone numbers, addresses and emergency contact details up to date.
- Where an absence is planned, such as a holiday or appointment, families should notify the nursery in advance where possible and add these dates to their online Ovivio profile.
- Where a child is absent because of illness, parents/carers should follow the nursery's Sickness, Illness, Infection Prevention & Exclusion Policy.

Expected Child Does Not Arrive and No Notification Has Been Received

If a child is expected to attend and does not arrive, and the nursery has received no explanation, staff will check the register, nursery messages and any information already provided by the family before beginning follow-up.

- The nursery will attempt to contact the child's parent/carer promptly using the contact details held on the day of absence.
- If the parent/carer still cannot be reached, further reasonable attempts will be made, and alternative emergency contacts will be contacted.
- The absence and attempts to make contact will be recorded.
- The urgency and extent of follow-up will reflect the child's individual circumstances and any known safeguarding or welfare concerns.
- Staff must not assume that an unexplained absence is harmless simply because the child is not of compulsory school age.

Prolonged or Repeated Absence

Where an absence continues, or a pattern of absence develops, the Nursery Manager/DSL will review the circumstances rather than treating each absence in isolation. Consideration will include the child's usual attendance, the explanations provided, previous unexplained absences, the child's vulnerability, the parent/carer's vulnerability, known family circumstances and any existing involvement from other professionals.

Where appropriate, the nursery may contact the family again, arrange a conversation about attendance and wellbeing, liaise with professionals already involved with the child where lawful and appropriate, or seek safeguarding advice.

Safeguarding Escalation

If the nursery cannot establish that the child is safe and well, or information about the absence creates safeguarding concern, the DSL will follow the nursery's Safeguarding Policy. Concerns will be referred to local children's social care services and/or a police welfare check requested where appropriate.

The nursery will not wait for a predetermined number of missed sessions where the circumstances indicate that earlier safeguarding action is required. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger, emergency services will be contacted.

Children Known to Be Vulnerable

Where a child is known to be vulnerable, has a social worker, is subject to child protection or child in need plan, or there are other significant safeguarding concerns, absence will be considered in the context of the child's existing plan and professional involvement.

The DSL will follow any agreed multi-agency arrangements and will contact the relevant professional promptly where this is required or necessary to safeguard the child.

Patterns and Trends

Attendance will be considered over time so that repeated short absences, frequent unexplained absences, unusual changes in attendance or other concerning patterns can be identified. A pattern may be significant even where each individual absence has been explained.

Where a pattern gives rise to concern, the nursery will discuss this with parents/carers where appropriate and consider whether safeguarding, early help or other support is required.

Funded and Private Places

This safeguarding procedure applies to all children regardless of whether their place is privately paid, funded or a combination of both. Attendance requirements associated with funded childcare will be managed in accordance

with the applicable local authority funding arrangements, but funding administration will never replace or delay safeguarding action.

Fees and Absence

Notification of absence does not alter the nursery's fee arrangements. Fees and charges for booked sessions are governed by the nursery's Terms and Conditions and Fees & Funding information. This policy concerns attendance and safeguarding rather than entitlement to fee reductions.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information about attendance and absence will be handled confidentially and in accordance with the nursery's Records, Confidentiality & Data Protection arrangements. Where there is a safeguarding concern, relevant information may be shared without consent where this is necessary and lawful to protect a child.

Staff will record information, contact attempts, decisions and actions clearly. Records will distinguish between information provided by the family and professional decisions made by the nursery.

Responsibilities

- Registered Provider/Nominated Individual: overall oversight of compliance and safeguarding arrangements and liaison with other professionals.
- Nursery Manager/DSL: oversight of attendance concerns, decisions about escalation, referrals and liaison with other professionals.
- Room Leaders and practitioners: maintain accurate attendance information, notice changes or patterns and report concerns promptly.
- Parents/carers: notify the nursery of absence and maintain accurate contact and emergency contact information.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be shared with parents and carers and made available to staff. It will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where the EYFS, safeguarding guidance, local procedures or nursery arrangements change, or where learning from an incident indicates that revision is required.

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Signed

Christie Patton

Company Owner