

**Attendance Policy**

# **Attendance Policy (2025–2026)**

# Attendance Policy

## Paradise Early Years Nurseries

### 1. Purpose

At Paradise Early Years Nurseries, we recognise that regular attendance is a vital part of children's early learning, development, emotional security and safeguarding. For babies, toddlers and young children aged 0–5, attendance is about much more than being physically present. It is about belonging, building trusting relationships with familiar adults, developing confidence in routines, accessing consistent care and learning, and benefiting fully from the nursery's curriculum and wider provision.

This policy sets out how Paradise Early Years Nurseries promotes good attendance, monitors absence, works in partnership with families and responds to emerging concerns in a supportive, proportionate and child-centred way. Our approach reflects the understanding that attendance in the early years is closely connected to children's wellbeing, family circumstances and safeguarding. We therefore see attendance as everybody's responsibility and as an important part of our wider duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Our aim is to establish a strong culture of attendance across the nursery, where families understand the value of regular attendance, staff identify concerns early, and barriers are addressed through support, communication and, where needed, multi-agency working.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all children attending Paradise Early Years Nurseries from birth to the end of the Reception year, where relevant, and to all staff involved in admission, registration, care, safeguarding, family support and leadership. It also applies to parents and carers, agency staff, students and volunteers, who all play a role in promoting regular attendance and identifying children whose absence may indicate unmet need or risk.

The policy should be read alongside the nursery's

- safeguarding and child protection policy
- admissions policy
- SEND policy
- health and illness procedures, medicine policy
- procedures for managing late collection, emergency contacts and information sharing

### 3. Principles

Our attendance practice is grounded in a number of key principles. First, it is child-centred: we consider attendance in the context of the individual child's age, developmental stage, family circumstances and wider lived experience. Secondly, it is relational: good attendance

# Attendance Policy

is encouraged through positive partnerships with families, not through blame. Thirdly, it is preventative: concerns are identified and explored early so that children and families receive help before problems become more entrenched. Finally, it is safeguarding-led: repeated or unexplained absence is never ignored, because we recognise that poor attendance can be linked to neglect, domestic abuse, parental mental ill health, family instability, housing difficulties, transport issues or other welfare concerns.

In the early years, routines and consistency matter. Babies and young children thrive when they can predict what will happen, know who is caring for them and experience regular opportunities to socialise, communicate, play and learn. Attendance is therefore promoted as part of high-quality early years practice and as an important factor in school readiness, emotional regulation and child development.

## 4. Why attendance matters in the early years

Regular attendance enables children to form secure attachments with their key person and other familiar adults, settle into daily routines, and engage meaningfully with the nursery environment. Children who attend consistently are better placed to develop communication and language, personal, social and emotional skills, physical development and early learning behaviours such as confidence, independence, concentration and resilience.

Inconsistent attendance can disrupt children's sense of security and continuity. For very young children, long or repeated absences may make separation more difficult, interrupt developmental progress, reduce opportunities for assessment and early intervention, and make transition into new rooms or school more challenging. For children with SEND, speech and language needs, social communication differences, developmental delay or additional vulnerabilities, regular attendance can be especially important in ensuring continuity of support and consistent implementation of agreed strategies.

Attendance also matters for parents and carers. Families benefit when children access their entitlement consistently, receive stable support from familiar practitioners and experience positive routines. The nursery therefore promotes attendance not simply as a requirement, but as a shared commitment to each child's wellbeing and development.

## 5. Expectations for attendance

Paradise Early Years Nurseries expects children to attend regularly in line with their agreed sessions unless they are unwell, there is an unavoidable exceptional circumstance, or another arrangement has been agreed with the nursery. We expect parents and carers to notify the nursery as early as possible, and preferably before the start of the session, if their child will be absent. Parents and carers should explain the reason for absence, indicate the likely length of absence where possible, and keep the nursery updated if circumstances change.

# Attendance Policy

We expect parents and carers to ensure that emergency contact details remain accurate and up to date at all times. We also expect them to work in partnership with the nursery where attendance becomes a concern, including attending meetings, discussing barriers openly and engaging with support where appropriate.

Where children attend on funded places, paid sessions, part-time placements or flexible patterns, the same principle applies: regular attendance is important in order for the child to benefit fully from their place.

## 6. Recording attendance

Attendance is recorded accurately for every child at the beginning of each session in line with nursery procedures. Registers are completed promptly and consistently, and any child expected but not present is marked absent. Where a reason for absence is known, this is recorded. Where no reason has been received, the absence is treated as unexplained until contact has been made with the family.

Registers form part of our safeguarding and welfare systems. They support daily child safety, emergency procedures and ongoing monitoring. Staff responsible for attendance records must ensure that entries are factual, timely and clear. Where additional information is received later in the day, the record is updated accordingly.

In addition to daily registers, the nursery may monitor attendance patterns over time, including late arrival, persistent short-notice absence, regular absence on particular days, repeated illness or non-attendance following holidays, family events or transitions.

## 7. Reporting absence

Parents and carers must contact the nursery on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day unless another arrangement has been agreed. Contact may be made by telephone, in person, or via the nursery's agreed communication system. Messages should be clear and include the child's name, room or class where relevant, reason for absence and expected return date if known.

If a child is absent and the nursery has not been informed, staff will make reasonable efforts to contact the parent or carer on the same day. If contact cannot be made and the absence is unusual, unexplained or causes concern, the matter will be escalated in line with the safeguarding policy.

The nursery recognises that children aged 0–5 may be absent for genuine illness more frequently than older children. However, staff will remain professionally curious where there are repeated absences, patterns that do not fit the explanation provided, or other indicators of unmet need or risk.

# Attendance Policy

## 8. Authorised and unauthorised absence

In the nursery context, authorised absence includes genuine illness, medical appointments, exceptional family circumstances agreed with the nursery, and other unavoidable reasons accepted by the manager. Whenever possible, appointments should be made outside nursery hours, but we recognise that this is not always achievable for young children.

Absence may be considered unauthorised where no reason is provided, the explanation is not accepted, or sessions are missed without appropriate communication. The nursery's response to unauthorised absence is supportive and proportionate. The focus is on understanding what is happening for the child and family, making expectations clear and putting support in place where needed.

Because Paradise Early Years Nurseries serves children from birth to five, our approach does not mirror school-based sanction systems. Instead, we seek to address concerns through communication, pastoral support, safeguarding processes and review of the child's place or agreed pattern if necessary.

## 9. Medical needs, illness and infection control

We understand that young children will at times be absent due to illness, medical procedures or recovery. The nursery will always prioritise the health and safety of children and staff and expects families to follow our illness and exclusion procedures. Children who are not well enough to participate comfortably in daily nursery life should remain at home until they are fit to return, and exclusion periods for infectious illness must be observed.

Where a child has ongoing medical needs or a pattern of medical absence, the nursery will work with parents and carers to understand the child's needs and support continuity wherever possible. This may include updated health care information, medicine arrangements, agreed communication about appointments or phased support following surgery, treatment or prolonged illness.

Staff will avoid making assumptions about repeated illness and will respond sensitively. At the same time, repeated illness-related absence may be explored further where it affects the child's development, where there are safeguarding concerns, or where additional support may be beneficial.

## 10. Lateness and collection

Punctuality is part of good attendance. Arriving on time helps children settle calmly, join routines successfully and access the full learning experience. Repeated lateness can be unsettling for young children, particularly when they miss welcome routines, mealtimes, group time or key transitions.

# Attendance Policy

The nursery will speak with parents and carers where late arrival becomes a pattern in order to understand the cause and agree practical solutions. Similarly, repeated late collection may indicate wider difficulties and may be addressed through support, discussion and, where necessary, safeguarding or welfare procedures.

We recognise that for some families punctuality can be affected by transport, caring responsibilities, employment or temporary instability. Our response will therefore combine clear expectations with empathy and practical support.

## 11. Attendance, safeguarding and welfare

Attendance is a safeguarding matter. While a single absence will often have a straightforward explanation, repeated, unexplained or unusual absence can be a sign that a child or family needs help. Staff must always consider attendance within the wider context of the child's wellbeing, presentation, family circumstances and any known vulnerabilities.

Examples of concern may include prolonged unexplained absence, repeated failure to attend funded sessions, a sudden change in attendance pattern, inability to make contact with parents, repeated absence linked to injuries or concerning presentation, or absences that coincide with known family stress, domestic abuse, substance misuse, homelessness, parental mental ill health or social care involvement.

In line with the nursery's safeguarding policy, staff must not ignore these signs or treat them as purely administrative issues. Concerns should be recorded and shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL. The DSL will determine whether the concern can be addressed through discussion and support, whether further monitoring is needed, or whether the threshold for early help or referral to children's services may be met.

## 12. First-day response and escalation

When a child is absent without explanation, the nursery will undertake a first-day response. This will usually involve checking whether prior notification has been received, contacting the parent or carer, and attempting other emergency contacts where appropriate and necessary. The urgency of this response will depend on the age of the child, known vulnerabilities and whether the absence is unusual.

If there is no response and the nursery has safeguarding concerns, staff will escalate the matter promptly to the DSL. Depending on the circumstances, this may involve further calls, a welfare check request, consultation with other professionals, or referral to children's social care or the police.

The nursery will always act proportionately, but it will not delay where a child may be at risk. The absence of a very young child from nursery may sometimes be the first visible sign that something is wrong, and staff should remain alert to this.

# Attendance Policy

## 13. Monitoring patterns and identifying emerging concerns

Leaders monitor attendance not only as a percentage or register outcome, but as part of the whole picture of a child's experience. This includes looking for patterns such as recurring absences on specific days, poor attendance following contact arrangements, repeated short-notice cancellations, extended non-attendance after holidays, or reductions in attendance following a move, birth of a sibling, parental separation or other change in circumstances.

The nursery will also consider how attendance relates to developmental progress, behaviour, presentation, emotional wellbeing and family engagement. A child whose attendance is declining may need additional support even if no formal safeguarding threshold is met.

Where concerns emerge, the nursery may begin a period of enhanced monitoring, maintain a chronology, and agree review points with staff and parents. This helps ensure that patterns are not missed and that decisions are based on evidence and professional analysis.

## 14. Support for families and early help

Paradise Early Years Nurseries is committed to working alongside families in a respectful and supportive way. We recognise that barriers to attendance may include illness, housing instability, financial hardship, transport difficulties, parental anxiety, family breakdown, sleep difficulties, children's separation anxiety, caring responsibilities, immigration issues or lack of understanding about the importance of regular attendance.

Where barriers are identified, staff will work with families to reduce them. Support may include practical problem-solving, flexible settling support, signposting, pastoral support, review of session times where appropriate, liaison with health professionals, support from the SENDCo, or referral into early help services.

Where attendance concerns are part of a wider picture of need, the nursery may initiate or contribute to an Early Help Assessment, Team Around the Family process or other multi-agency support. The purpose of this is to provide timely help before difficulties escalate and to ensure that the child's needs remain central.

## 15. Children with SEND and additional needs

The nursery recognises that children with SEND, developmental delay, medical needs or disabilities may face additional barriers to attendance. For some children, changes in routine, transport difficulties, anxiety, sensory needs, fatigue, appointments or health treatments may affect regular attendance.

# Attendance Policy

Our approach is inclusive and individualised. We will work with parents and relevant professionals to understand the reasons behind absence and to support the child's return and participation. This may include transition planning, reasonable adjustments, visual supports, altered drop-off routines, a phased return, healthcare planning or closer liaison between home and nursery.

At the same time, we remain alert to the fact that children with SEND can be more vulnerable to safeguarding concerns, and we do not assume that absence or distress is solely attributable to a child's needs without appropriate professional curiosity.

## 16. Settling-in, transitions and emotional-based non-attendance

For children aged 0–5, attendance can be affected by developmental stages and transitions. Starting nursery, moving rooms, changing key persons, changes at home, or preparing for school can all influence a child's ability to separate from parents and attend consistently.

The nursery will respond sensitively to emotional-based attendance difficulties. We will work with families to build confidence, maintain routines, plan transitions carefully and avoid abrupt or punitive responses. Settling strategies may include graduated attendance, visual routines, key person reassurance, comfort objects where appropriate, and close communication with home.

However, where emotional-based absence persists, the nursery will continue to explore the wider context, including whether anxiety reflects other unmet needs, family stress or safeguarding concerns.

## 17. Roles and responsibilities

The Nursery Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently, that attendance is monitored effectively and that attendance concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately. The manager will ensure that staff understand procedures, that records are maintained and that attendance is discussed as part of safeguarding and quality assurance.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for considering attendance concerns within the safeguarding framework, advising staff, reviewing patterns of concern and leading any escalation to early help or children's social care where required.

Room leaders, key persons and practitioners are responsible for taking registers accurately, following up concerns in line with agreed procedures, building relationships with families, noticing changes and sharing relevant information with leaders. They play a crucial role because they know the children well and are often best placed to identify subtle changes over time.



# Attendance Policy

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends regularly, notifying the nursery of absence, providing accurate contact details and engaging constructively with the nursery when concerns are raised.

## 18. Recording, confidentiality and information sharing

All attendance-related information will be recorded clearly, accurately and in a timely way. This includes daily registers, reasons for absence, records of telephone calls or messages, meetings with families, actions agreed, support offered and any safeguarding decisions or referrals arising from attendance concerns.

Attendance records are part of the child's wider nursery record and, where relevant, their safeguarding chronology. Information will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements and shared only on a need-to-know basis, unless there is a safeguarding reason requiring wider information sharing.

The nursery recognises that timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding. Where absence raises concerns about a child's welfare, relevant information may be shared with other professionals or agencies in line with the law and the nursery's safeguarding procedures.

## 19. Review of places and sustained non-attendance

Where a child is not attending regularly over a sustained period and support has not improved the situation, the nursery may need to review the practical arrangements of the child's place. This could include discussion about whether the agreed sessions still meet the family's needs, whether a temporary pause has been agreed, or whether a place can continue to be held where there is little or no engagement.

Any such decision will be made fairly, sensitively and with regard to the child's best interests, any funded entitlement requirements, and any safeguarding or vulnerability factors. The nursery will always seek to communicate clearly with families before decisions are made and will document the rationale for its actions.

## 20. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if there are changes in statutory guidance, local procedures or nursery practice. Leaders will also review the effectiveness of attendance procedures through ongoing monitoring, safeguarding oversight and feedback from staff and families.

## **Attendance Policy**

The nursery is committed to continually improving its attendance practice so that it remains supportive, inclusive, developmentally appropriate and strongly aligned with safeguarding responsibilities for children aged 0-5.

# Attendance Policy

## Appendix:

### Attendance Concern Flowchart

