

## Absence Policy

### Principles

We believe good attendance at our setting is essential if children are to be settled and take full advantage of the learning and development opportunities available to them. At a young age continuity and consistency are important contributors to a child's well-being and progress.

We also believe that we have a responsibility to follow up on unknown or unexpected absences to ensure that the child and family are safe and well. This forms part of our safeguarding commitment and is detailed in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

### Holiday Clubs

For children attending our holiday clubs, we are aware that we may be the only setting seeing a child whilst school is closed; this makes our role in following up absences particularly important e.g. during the six week summer holiday period, as we may be the only organisation that will know if the child and family are safe and well, or act if we have concerns. We will ensure we have the contact information for the school's that children attend, so that support from their safeguarding lead can be sought if needed.

### Reasons for Absence

We acknowledge that there are a number of reasons why children might not attend our setting when they are expected e.g. illness, holidays, religious/cultural observance. As part of our agreement with parents/carers, they have been advised that they need to inform us of any instances when a child might not be attending. We have a procedure in place and parents/carers are asked to follow this (see below and the parent/carer agreement)

### Aim

- Encouraging staff, parents/carers and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their full potential.
- Providing clear procedures for staff and parents/carers relating to our setting's attendance.

### Terms

Absence is either known to the setting, such as in the case of illness or of religious/cultural observance, holidays or unknown, such as if there is no reason given in advance.

### Record Keeping

We are required to maintain a register of attendance for our setting and these will be reviewed for patterns and to support increased attendance where needed.

All registers will be held securely in line with our Data Storage Policy and processes and will be kept in accordance with our Retention of Records Policy.

We will hold contact details for the child's parents/carers and will seek to have at least 2 other emergency contacts for any registered family. Where these cannot be provided, we will work with the parents/carers to identify who could act as an emergency contact.

All contact details will be updated on at least an annual basis through our registration forms and we request in our parent/carer agreement that we are informed of any changes to these as soon as possible.

### **Collaboration and Support**

We will delegate responsibility for monitoring absence to named Managers in our staff team – this is Hannah and Katriina. They will work to ensure our attendance policies and our absence support are in place and will work with the other managers/leader and DSL where appropriate to support families.

Monitoring of absence records will take place regularly and the manager will contact parents/carers regarding absence either in writing or in person, as appropriate.

We believe in the importance of building positive relationships with parents/carers and working together to support attendance. Part of discussions we might have may focus on whether the family might need some extra support and this may include a referral to other agencies in partnership with the parent/carer (e.g. social worker, Family Help, health visitor etc.).

As a setting we will also do all we can to support parents/carers with attendance issues as we believe that regular attendance is crucial for a child's development, including access to the curriculum, building relationships and developing positive self-esteem.

### **Procedure for Absence – Parents/Carers**

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to contact the setting either by telephone or in writing via email or Family if their child is unable to attend on a nominated day. This notification must be on the first day of absence and on any following days within an hour of the child's usual start time at the setting.

If the absence will be for a specific period of time e.g. for a holiday or religious celebration that might be more than one day, the parent/carer can inform the setting in advance and the setting will record this on the register as an absence.

If the child fails to return to the setting after the specified period, we will follow the procedure for unknown or unexpected absences.

## Procedure for Unknown/ Unexpected Absence - staff

Staff complete a register at the beginning of each session. If parents/carers have not explained the reason for absence within an hour of the child's usual start time, then staff will inform the Office manager/person responsible for following up on absences for the setting. The manager will then phone the parents/carers of the child.

If the manager is unable to get hold of the parent/carers, the manager will call the emergency contact/s for the child. The manager will then decide on the best course of action based on their knowledge of the family and child, any known vulnerabilities and any information they receive from the emergency contacts.

If there is no satisfactory explanation for the absence, the manager enters this as an unknown absence on the setting records.

If the manager is unable to contact the parents/carers within 24/48 hours and there is no satisfactory explanation for the absence from emergency contacts, the manager will contact Family Help/First Response for advice, the family's social worker (if they have one) and may also contact the police. If it is known that the family is experiencing challenges or if the child has SEND the setting may act more swiftly than the 24/48 hours detailed above.

Records will be kept of contact and attempted contact with parents/carers and/or emergency contacts and other agencies.

### Procedure

It is the parents'/ carers' responsibility to contact the setting either by telephone or in writing via email if their child is unable to attend on a nominated day. This must be on the first day of absence and any following days within an hour of the child's set start time at the setting.

Staff complete a register at the beginning of each session. If parents/carers have not explained the reason for absence within 1.5 hours of the child's set start time, then staff will inform the manager of the setting. The key worker will then call the parent/s of the child and report back to the Manager of the outcome.

If the manager is not able to get hold of the parent/carers, they will:

1. Try to phone again immediately after lunch
2. If there is no answer call the child's emergency contact/s
3. Consider whether or not to visit the family home.

The manager will decide the best course of action based on their knowledge of the family and child – for example, if it is known that the family is experiencing challenges or if the child has SEND the setting may act more swiftly than the 48 hours listed below.



If no explanation is given, the manager enters this as an unknown absence on the setting records.

If the manager is unable to contact the parents within 48 hours and there is no explanation for the absence from emergency contacts, the manager will contact Families in Focus/First Response for advice and may also contact the police.

Records will be made of contact and attempted contact with parents and/or emergency contacts and other agencies. Records will also be made of known and unknown absences. Monitoring of absence records will take place regularly and letters and/or meetings will be sent/arranged by the setting, including a referral to Families in Focus, where necessary.

If absence is a persistent problem (15% or more) a meeting will be arranged at the setting with the parent and Manager.

### **Arrival times and lateness**

At Little Foxes Forest School we believe the children can get the most out of their day if they arrive on time. Registration is between 8am – 8:45am for all children. When children arrive late this can disturb our registration and morning routine so we ask parents/ carers to be punctual to enable the children to fully access welcome time.