



Reviewed and updated: November 2023

Next Date to be reviewed and updated: November 2024

First Steps Attendance Policy

Here at First Steps, we recognise the importance that attendance has on our children's learning and development. At the very least, good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance may also lead to early identification of more serious concerns for a child or family.

We have put together an attendance policy to ensure our children get the best they can out of attending our setting by achieving the best attendance they possibly can:

- Daily monitoring
- Keeping parents informed
- Offering support to our families
- Reporting long absences to Cornwall Council re: funding, Police re: safeguarding concerns or other professionals working with the family
- Utilising other agencies i.e., early help hub

First Steps recognises that:

- Safeguarding for all children is our priority
- Parents have a responsibility to uptake the funding that they request, any funding not used on a regular basis will be reported to the funding department. We are governed by the funding departments Nursery Education Funding and Reclaim Policy, a copy of this can be obtained from the office.
- Regular attendance to nursery is crucial in ensuring every child can meet their full potential.
- Early years practitioners will help to encourage attendance by making the children's time at nursery stimulating, fun and safe.

Absences:

There are several reasons why a child may be absent from a setting. In most cases it is reasonable to expect that parents/carers alert the setting as soon as possible, or in the case of appointments and holidays give adequate notice. Parents are advised that they should contact the setting within one hour of the time the child would have been expected to advise of their absence. Designated persons must also adhere to Local Safeguarding Partners (LSP) requirements, procedures and contact protocols for children who are absent or missing from the provision.

- If a child who normally attends fails to arrive and no contact has been received from their parents, the designated person, takes immediate action to contact them to seek an explanation for the absence and be assured that the child is safe and well.
- Attempts to contact the child's parents or other named carers continue throughout the day on the first day of absence.
- If no contact is made with the parents and there is no means to verify the reason for the child's absence i.e. through a named contact on the child's registration form, this is recorded as an unexplained absence on the child's personal file and is followed up by the manager each day until contact is made.
- If contact has not been made within two working days, children's services will be contacted for advice about making a referral. Other relevant services maybe contacted as per LSP procedures.

Procedure when no contact has been made with the parent and child not returned to the setting after two sessions:

- Contact anyone on the emergency contact list provided by the parent
- Contacting other Settings/school if the child has a known sibling
- Contact any professionals that maybe working with the family
- Visit home address
- Contact MARU for advice and help
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- All absences are recorded on the child's personal file with the reason given for the absence, the expected duration and any follow up action taken or required with timescales.
- Absence records are retained for at least three years, or until the next Ofsted inspection following a cohort of children moving on to school.

If at any time further information comes to light that gives cause for concern, procedures for responding to safeguarding or child protection concerns is immediately followed.

All absences are to be reported to First Steps on the morning your child is to be absent, please do this by:

- Verbal communication via telephone.
- Written communication via email.
- Contact via Family

All absences are logged on to the Family system. We do require a reason for all absences.

These records and any other written communication will be kept by the setting.

The attendance officer has a responsibility to monitor attendance this will be done daily, with a safeguarding focus.

This will include:

- Liaising with classroom staff for a list of absentees
- Checking emails and answer phone for absentees and recording reasons
- Calling parents of children who are not in nursery and no reason given
- Communication with parents in a consistent manner, providing information why regular attendance is important.
- Recording of holidays on to the connect system

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Safeguarding vulnerable children

- The designated person or key person attempts to contact the parents to establish why the child is absent. If contact is made and a valid reason given, the information is recorded in the child's file.
- Any relevant professionals involved with the child are informed, e.g. social worker/family support worker.
- If contact is made and the designated person is concerned that the child is at risk, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately. The events, conversation and follow-up actions are recorded. If contact cannot be made, the designated person contacts the relevant professionals and informs them of the situation.
- If the child has current involvement with social care, the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.
- If at any time information comes to light that gives cause for concern, 06 Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults procedures are followed immediately.

Safeguarding

- If a child misses two consecutive sessions and it has not been possible to make contact, the designated person calls Social Care and makes a referral if advised.
- If there is any cause for concern i.e. the child has a child protection plan in place or there have been previous safeguarding and welfare concerns, the designated person attempts to contact the child's parent/carer immediately. If no contact is made, the child's absence is logged on Family Safeguarding incident reporting form, and Social Care are contacted immediately, and safeguarding procedures are followed.

Poor/irregular attendance

Whilst attendance at an early years setting is not mandatory, regular poor attendance may be indicative of safeguarding and welfare concerns that should be followed up.

- In the first instance the setting manager should discuss a child's attendance with their parents to ascertain any potential barriers i.e. transport, working patterns etc and should work with the parent/s to offer support where possible.

- If poor attendance continues and strategies to support are not having an impact, the setting manager must review the situation and decide if a referral to a multi-agency team is appropriate.
- Where there are already safeguarding and welfare concerns about a child or a child protection plan is in place, poor/irregular attendance at the setting is reported to the Social Care worker without delay.

In the case of funded children the local authority may use their discretion, where absence is recurring or for extended periods, taking into account the reason for the absence and impact on the setting. The setting manager is aware of the local authority policy on reclaiming refunds when a child is absent from a setting.

All this information required is meeting the needs of the afore mentioned Funding Policy.

Should attendance in individual cases not improve we will be required to provide the following: -

- Be aware of any safeguarding issues or concerns that maybe apparent if a child has an unexplained absence and ensure the appropriate procedures are followed if necessary.
- Monitor whether the child attends the hours being claimed.
- Contact parents/carers to ascertain the reason for the absence and agree a return date.
- If there are no improvements to attendance, follow up with a letter to parent/carer detailing any conversations with the dates and inform them that if their place is not use by the agreed return date, it will no longer be available.
- If the child returns in the following week no further action is required.
- If the child does not return or continues to miss hours than the provider must keep a record of attempted contact. If necessary, contact the nursery funding team on (01208) 265688 to seek further assistance.
- Adjust the amount claimed by reducing or stopping the child's hours on the appropriate task.

Personal Information:

All personal information is kept secure and complies with the Data protection act and our Data policy.

Through our termly management meetings we will review the success of this policy.

The success criteria will be:

- Reduced absences
- Children are happy to attend nursery
- Improved attainment

Agreed by Julie and Elaine