Little Acorns Montessori

Ascot | Bracknell | Crowthorne

Drugs and Alcohol Policy

1. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy Title	Drugs and Alcohol Policy
Version	1.0
Date Adopted	June 2026
Review Date	June 2027
Author / Owner	Jonathan Duffy - Director

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Little Acorns Montessori ('the nursery') is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment for every child in our care. The welfare of the children we serve is paramount. This policy sets out the nursery's expectations regarding alcohol, illegal drugs, and other substances that may impair the ability of any individual — whether a staff member, volunteer, or parent/carer — to act in the best interests of children on or around the premises.

This policy applies to all staff (including bank and agency staff), volunteers, students on placement, contractors, and parents/carers during their time at the nursery. It is reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, guidance, or operational circumstances change.

This policy will be applied consistently and without discrimination. The nursery is committed to inclusive, anti-discriminatory practice in all safeguarding matters, in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) and the Equality Act 2010. Staff will be mindful that cultural background, language, and individual circumstances must be considered sensitively when implementing this policy, and will actively challenge any practice that is discriminatory or inequitable. In line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026), all staff are expected to actively identify, understand, and challenge racism and discrimination where it arises in connection with safeguarding matters, and to reflect on how cultural background, language and identity may affect a child's experience of risk and protection.

3. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy fulfils the nursery's obligations under the following legislation and guidance:

Legislation / Guidance	Relevance to this Policy
EYFS Statutory Framework (DfE,	Requires that staff members must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance which may affect their ability to care for children. Staff must seek medical advice if taking medication that may affect their practice, and must only work directly

2025), Section 3, paragraph 3.27	with children if medical advice confirms the medication is unlikely to impair their ability to look after children properly. All medication on the premises must be stored securely and out of reach of children at all times.
Childcare Act 2006, section 40	Imposes a duty on registered early years providers to comply with welfare requirements set out in the EYFS Statutory Framework.
Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974	Places a general duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees and others on the premises.
The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999	Requires employers to assess and manage risks to health and safety, including risks arising from substance use.
Equality Act 2010	Requires the nursery to consider whether alcohol dependency or drug-related conditions constitute a disability, and to make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, March 2026)	Statutory guidance underpinning multi-agency safeguarding. All practitioners must be alert to signs that a child's welfare may be compromised, including by the behaviour of adults around them. The 2026 edition includes strengthened expectations for early years and childcare settings to participate actively in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and to share information to keep children safe. Early years providers are recognised as key safeguarding partners, not merely referrers, and are expected to actively contribute to multi-agency plans and decisions. Data protection legislation does not prevent information sharing where child welfare is at risk.
Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB) — All Campuses	The nursery must follow local multi-agency safeguarding procedures as published by the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB) across all three campuses (Ascot, Bracknell, and Crowthorne).

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All employees, including full-time, part-time, bank, agency, and temporary staff.
- Students and volunteers undertaking placement at the nursery.
- Contractors and visiting professionals on the premises during operating hours.
- Parents, carers, and any other adult collecting or dropping off a child.

5. DEFINITIONS

Alcohol: Any beverage containing ethanol, regardless of strength.

Illegal drugs: Any substance classified under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, including but not limited to cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and MDMA.

Prescribed medication: Any medicine prescribed by a registered medical practitioner. Where prescribed medication may impair the ability to care for children, the member of staff must notify their manager and obtain medical advice confirming fitness to work.

Other substances: Includes psychoactive substances as defined under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 (formerly referred to as "legal highs"), over-the-counter medication taken in excessive quantities, solvents, nitrous oxide, or any other substance capable of impairing cognitive or physical function.

Under the influence: Displaying signs of impaired judgement, coordination, speech, or behaviour as a result of consuming alcohol, drugs, or other substances.

6. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES (see section 10 for names associated to roles)

6.1 Fitness to Work

- Staff **must** not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance, including illegal drugs, during their contracted hours of work or at any time when caring for children. (EYFS 2025, para. 3.27)
- Staff **must** not consume alcohol on the nursery premises at any time.
- Staff **must** not arrive at work under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Where a staff member is taking prescribed or over-the-counter medication that may affect their ability to care for children, they **must** notify the Nursery Manager before commencing their shift.
- The member of staff **must** seek medical advice and must only work directly with children if a medical professional confirms the medication is unlikely to impair their ability to do so safely. (EYFS 2025, para. 3.27)
- The nursery will make reasonable adjustments where required under the Equality Act 2010, such as temporarily redeploying a staff member to a non-childcare role.
- All medication belonging to staff or children must be stored securely and out of reach of children at all times. (EYFS 2025, para. 3.27) Staff suitability in relation to substance use history is also considered at the recruitment stage in accordance with the nursery's Safer Recruitment procedures and Staffing and Employment Policy."

6.2 Procedure if a Staff Member Arrives Unfit for Work

The following steps must be taken chronologically by the manager on duty:

Step 1 – Observe and assess — The manager on duty must discreetly observe the staff member's behaviour, speech, and physical presentation. Signs to look for include: slurred speech, unsteady gait, smell of alcohol, disorientation, or erratic behaviour.

Step 2 – Remove from the childcare environment — The manager must immediately remove the staff member from direct contact with children and take them to a private space. A second member of staff should be present as a witness.

Step 3 – Consult the DSL / Deputy DSL — The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the Deputy DSL must be informed immediately. If the DSL and all Deputy DSLs are unavailable, the Nursery Manager must take the lead. The Designated Officer / Nominated Individual (Jonathan Duffy, Director) must also be notified of any serious incident at the earliest opportunity.

Step 4 – Ensure safe departure — The staff member must not be permitted to care for children. They must be asked to leave the premises and return home. The nursery must arrange, where possible, for them to travel safely (e.g. by taxi or with a responsible person). They must not drive.

Step 5 – Maintain ratios — The manager must immediately take steps to maintain statutory staff-to-child ratios in accordance with EYFS 2025, Section 3.

Step 6 – Record the incident — A written record of the incident must be made on the same day. See Section 9 for recording requirements.

Step 7 – Initiate disciplinary procedures — The nursery's formal disciplinary procedures must be invoked following the incident. The staff member will be required to

attend a disciplinary meeting before returning to work. Gross misconduct may result in dismissal.

Step 8 – Consider safeguarding — TThe DSL must consider whether any child has been harmed or is at risk of harm as a result of the incident. If there is reasonable cause for concern, the DSL must make a referral to Bracknell Forest Children's Services (01344 352005) and, if a child is in immediate danger, contact the police (999). In line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026), the nursery will engage actively with any subsequent multi-agency child protection processes and contribute to plans and decisions as a key safeguarding partner.

Step 9 – Consider referral to the DBS / Ofsted — If the incident raises concerns about the suitability of the staff member to work with children, the nursery must consider whether to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and must notify Ofsted of any incident which may affect the nursery's registration.

6.3 Support for Staff

- The nursery recognises that alcohol and drug dependency are complex health issues. Staff are encouraged to disclose difficulties to the Nursery Manager or DSL in confidence.
- The nursery should signpost staff to appropriate support services, including NHS Talking Therapies, Turning Point (Berkshire drug and alcohol services), and the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) where available.
- Disclosure of a dependency does not remove the nursery's obligation to safeguard children. The nursery **must** balance support for the individual with child safety.
- Voluntary disclosure prior to an incident will be taken into account during any subsequent disciplinary process, though it does not preclude disciplinary action. Where a staff member's substance use is connected to mental health needs, the DSL should be aware that the Mental Health Act 2025 reforms may affect how the individual is assessed and supported by external agencies, and should take this into account when signposting to appropriate services.

7. PARENTS AND CARERS — COLLECTION POLICY

Little Acorns Montessori has a duty to safeguard children at the point of collection. Where a parent or carer arrives to collect a child and staff have reasonable grounds to believe that person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the following procedure must be followed:

Step 1 – Maintain the child on the premises — The child must not be released to the parent/carer. The member of staff should calmly and professionally inform the parent/carer that there is a concern and that the nursery is following its safeguarding policy.

Step 2 – Involve two members of staff — Two members of staff must be present when speaking with the parent/carer to ensure the safety of all parties and to provide a witness.

Step 3 – Inform the DSL — The DSL or Deputy DSL must be notified immediately. If neither is on-site, the Nursery Manager must lead the response.

Step 4 – Contact a responsible adult — Staff must request that the parent/carer contacts a responsible adult from the child's 'Who Can Collect' authorisation list to take

responsibility for the child. The nursery must not release the child until a sober, responsible adult is present.

Step 5 – Contact emergency collection contacts — If the parent/carer is unable or unwilling to contact a responsible adult, staff must contact those named on the child's 'Who Can Collect' form directly.

Step 6 – Contact the police if necessary — If no responsible adult can be reached and the situation cannot be resolved safely, staff must contact the police (999 or 101). The child must remain at the nursery until a safe handover can be arranged.

Step 7 – Consider a safeguarding referral — The DSL must consider whether the incident indicates that the child's welfare may be at risk. If there is reasonable cause for concern, the DSL must refer to Bracknell Forest Children's Services (01344 352005) without delay. The DSL should not be deflected from making a referral by parental pressure or partial explanations. Where parental substance use is identified as a recurring concern, the DSL should additionally consider whether a referral to early help services, including the Family Help pathway, is appropriate in order to provide coordinated support to the family, in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026).

Step 8 – Record the incident — A full written record must be completed on the day of the incident. See Section 9 for recording requirements.

The nursery will manage all such incidents with sensitivity, discretion, and professionalism. The aim is always to ensure the child's safety whilst maintaining a respectful relationship with the family.

8. SAFE STORAGE OF MEDICATION

- All medication on the nursery premises — whether belonging to children, staff, or visitors — **must** be stored securely and out of reach of children at all times. (EYFS 2025, para. 3.27)
- Children's prescribed medication **must** be stored in the designated locked medication cabinet and administered only in accordance with the nursery's Medication Policy.
- Staff personal medication **must** be stored in a locked area not accessible to children. Staff must inform the Nursery Manager of any medication they are taking that may affect their fitness to work.
- Medication **must** not be left in bags, changing areas, or any other location accessible to children.
- The nursery **must** maintain a medication log in which all medicines stored on the premises are recorded, including the name of the child or adult, the medication name, dosage, and storage location.

9. RECORDING AND REPORTING

9.1 Incident Records

- A written record **must** be completed for every incident involving suspected alcohol or drug use by a staff member, parent, or carer.
- Records **must** be completed on the same day as the incident, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

- Records **must** include: date and time; names of those involved; a factual account of observed behaviour; the action taken; the names of staff present as witnesses; and any referrals made.
- Records **must** be factual and objective. Staff must not express personal opinions or make assumptions about intent.
- All incident records **must** be stored securely in the child's or staff member's confidential file, held in a locked cupboard (Ascot), or the locked Manager's office (Bracknell and Crowthorne) / the nursery's secure digital management system.
- Records relating to children **must** be retained for at least the period stipulated by the nursery's data retention policy and in compliance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

9.2 Notifying External Agencies

- If a safeguarding concern arises at any campus, the DSL must refer to Bracknell Forest Children's Services on 01344 352005 (out of hours: 01344 786543).
- If an allegation is made against a member of staff, the DSL must contact the Bracknell Forest LADO: 01344 354009.
- If a child is in immediate danger, staff must contact the police: 999.
- Ofsted must be notified of any serious incident which may affect the nursery's registration, in accordance with the EYFS 2025 framework.
- The nursery **must** keep a record of all external referrals, including the date, agency contacted, the name of the person spoken to, and any advice or action agreed.

10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Name	Campus
Designated Officer / Nominated Individual	Jonathan Duffy	All Campuses
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Elaine Eastham	Ascot Campus
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Agata Payne	Bracknell Campus
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Emma Gray	Crowthorne Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Jessica McGrath	Ascot Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Joanne Broughton/Katy Cooley	Bracknell Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Martine Loveridge	Crowthorne Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Kira King	Crowthorne Campus (in the absence of Emma and Martine)
Manager on Duty	As rostered	All Campuses

Nursery Manager

- Has overall responsibility for implementing and reviewing this policy.
- Must ensure all staff receive induction training covering this policy.
- Must lead on disciplinary procedures where a staff member is found to be under the influence of substances.
- Must notify Ofsted and other relevant agencies where required.
- Must ensure adequate staffing ratios are maintained at all times.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Must take the lead on any safeguarding element of an incident involving drugs or alcohol.
- Must decide whether a referral to Children's Services or the LADO is required.
- Must liaise with the Bracknell, Windsor & Maidenhead Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) procedures.
- Must ensure incident records are completed, stored, and retained correctly.
- Must have DSL-level safeguarding training, updated at least every two years, in line with EYFS 2025 Annex C.

Deputy DSL

- Must be available to fulfil all DSL responsibilities in the absence of the DSL.
- Must maintain DSL-equivalent safeguarding training.

All Staff

- Must not attend work or care for children whilst under the influence of alcohol or any other substance.
- Must notify the Nursery Manager immediately if they have concerns about a colleague's fitness to work.
- Must follow the procedures in this policy when managing incidents involving parents or carers.
- Must complete incident records accurately and promptly.
- Should attend training on recognising signs of alcohol and drug misuse as part of their continuing professional development.

Parents and Carers

- Are expected to arrive at the nursery sober and fit to take responsibility for their child.
- Must ensure they provide an up-to-date 'Who Can Collect' list, including at least two responsible adults who can be contacted in an emergency.
- By enrolling their child at Little Acorns Montessori, parents/carers agree to the terms of this policy.

11. TRAINING AND AWARENESS

- All staff **must** receive induction training that includes this policy before working independently with children.
- The DSL **must** hold appropriate safeguarding training covering substance misuse issues, updated at least every two years in accordance with EYFS 2025, Annex C.
- All staff should receive periodic refresher training on recognising and responding to signs of substance misuse.

- Training records must be maintained and made available to Ofsted upon inspection, including evidence of how DSL and staff training has been implemented and embedded in practice, in accordance with EYFS 2025, Annex C.
- The nursery should signpost staff to the HSE guidance 'Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work' and ACAS guidance on workplace substance misuse.

12. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information relating to incidents under this policy will be treated with the highest degree of confidentiality, consistent with the nursery's obligations under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. However, the principle of confidentiality must not override the nursery's duty to safeguard children. Where there is a conflict between confidentiality and child protection, the child's welfare must always take precedence.

13. RELATED POLICIES

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Medication Policy
- Whistle-blowing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Staffing and Employment Policy

14. EQUALITY IMPACT

This policy has been considered in light of the Equality Act 2010 and the nursery's commitment to inclusive, non-discriminatory practice. The nursery recognises that substance dependency may in some circumstances constitute a disability and that all procedures under this policy must be applied fairly, consistently, and with sensitivity to the protected characteristics of those involved. Any concerns about discriminatory application of this policy should be raised with the Director (Jonathan Duffy) via the nursery's Whistle-blowing Policy.

15. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier in the event of:

- Changes to the EYFS Statutory Framework or other relevant legislation.
- Guidance issued by Ofsted, the DfE, or the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB).
- A significant incident or near-miss at the nursery.
- Recommendations arising from an Ofsted inspection.

Responsibility for initiating the review rests with the Nursery Manager. Any updates must be communicated to all staff and, where appropriate, to parents and carers. Revised policies must be dated and version-controlled in the Document Control table.

Role	Name	Date
Owner/Director	Jonathan Duffy	June 2026