

Little Acorns Montessori

Ascot, Bracknell & Crowthorne

Closure at Short Notice Policy

Emergency Procedures, Notifications & Reopening Protocols

Nursery Policy | Version 1.1

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Document Control

Field	Detail
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Written By	Jonathan Duffy
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Ofsted	Report: www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-childcare-incident Enquiries: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk Tel: 0300 123 1231

Section 1 — Policy Statement

Little Acorns Montessori is committed to providing consistent, high-quality childcare across our Ascot, Bracknell, and Crowthorne settings. We recognise, however, that exceptional circumstances may arise that require the nursery to close at short notice in order to protect the safety and welfare of children and staff.

This policy sets out the circumstances in which Little Acorns Montessori may close at short notice, the procedures that will be followed when a closure decision is made, and the responsibilities of all parties involved. It applies to partial closures (for example, the closure of one room or outdoor area) as well as full closure of a setting.

Our guiding principle is that no child will ever remain on nursery premises where safety cannot be assured. The welfare of children is paramount in every closure decision.

Our Commitments

- We will communicate with parents and carers promptly, clearly, and with as much notice as the circumstances allow.
- We will maintain the safety of all children until they are safely in the care of an authorised adult.
- We will comply with all statutory notification duties to Ofsted and other agencies.
- We will keep accurate records of every closure event and its circumstances.
- We will make every reasonable effort to reopen as quickly as it is safe to do so.
- We will review this policy following any closure event to identify learning and improvement.

Note: This policy covers unplanned or emergency closures at short notice. Planned closures (for example, bank holidays, staff training days, and annual holiday periods) are communicated in advance via the nursery's standard calendar and are not covered by this policy.

Section 2 — Scope

This policy applies to all three settings of Little Acorns Montessori:

- Little Acorns Montessori, Ascot
- Little Acorns Montessori, Bracknell
- Little Acorns Montessori, Crowthorne

It applies to:

- All staff, including permanent, part-time, bank, agency, and student placement staff.
- All children registered at the setting on the day of closure.
- All parents and carers of registered children.

It covers:

- Full closure of a setting, where the entire nursery ceases to operate.
- Partial closure, where one or more rooms, outdoor areas, or age groups must cease operating whilst the remainder of the setting continues.
- Closures arising mid-session, after children have already arrived.
- Closures determined before the session begins, where children have not yet arrived.

Section 3 — Statutory & Regulatory Framework

This policy has been developed in compliance with the following verified legislation, statutory frameworks, and guidance, current as at the date of adoption.

Primary Legislation

- **Childcare Act 2006** — the primary legislation governing registered childcare provision in England. Under this Act, all registered providers have a duty to operate in accordance with the EYFS statutory framework. A provider who is unable to meet EYFS requirements — including staffing ratios, premises safety, and safeguarding duties — must not continue to operate until those requirements can be met.
- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974** — places a duty on employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of employees and all persons affected by the employer's activities, including children in the nursery's care. Where premises or circumstances present a risk that cannot be adequately controlled, the employer has a duty to cease operations until the risk is removed.
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999** — require employers to conduct suitable and sufficient risk assessments and to implement emergency procedures. Where a risk assessment identifies that the setting cannot be safely operated, closure may be the required control measure.
- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005** — designates the responsible person (employer) with a duty to ensure the safety of all persons in the premises in relation to fire risk. A fire, or a failure of fire safety systems, may necessitate immediate evacuation and closure.
- **Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004** — establish the paramountcy of the welfare of the child. Any decision to close must prioritise the safety and welfare of children at all times, including during the process of closure and collection.

Statutory Framework & Guidance

- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework 2025** (Department for Education, effective 1 September 2025) — Section 3, Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements, requires providers to maintain EYFS staff-to-child ratios at all times; where ratios cannot be maintained, the setting must not operate. Providers must also notify Ofsted of certain significant events affecting the suitability of the provider or the safety and suitability of the premises (see below for which closures this applies to). Failure to notify Ofsted without a reasonable excuse is a criminal offence under the Childcare Act 2006.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026** (Department for Education, published March 2026) — relevant where a closure is necessitated by or reveals a safeguarding concern. All agencies have a duty to share relevant information and to act swiftly to protect children.
- **Ofsted — Report a Serious Childcare Incident** (GOV.UK, last updated April 2026) — current guidance confirms that providers must report significant events as soon as possible and always within 14 days. This includes events that affect the condition and safety of the premises, the quality of childcare offered, or that may lead to ongoing closures (such as fire or flooding). Routine closures — including most short-notice closures such as a single day's closure for adverse weather with no lasting effect on the setting's safety or provision — do not require notification. See Section 8 for how to apply this test.
- **Ofsted Education Inspection Framework** — Renewed Framework, effective from 10 November 2025 — safeguarding is assessed on a met / not met basis. Inspectors will examine how the nursery manages emergency situations, communicates with parents, and fulfils its statutory notification duties.

Note for Inspectors: This policy directly addresses the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025, Section 3 requirement to notify Ofsted of significant events affecting the safety and suitability of premises,

and the duty to maintain statutory ratios at all times. Closure event records are held in the nursery's incident file.

Section 4 — Circumstances Requiring Closure at Short Notice

The following circumstances may necessitate a closure at short notice. This list is illustrative and not exhaustive. The Manager must use professional judgement in any situation where the safety or welfare of children or staff cannot be assured.

Closure Trigger	Description
Severe adverse weather	Heavy snow, ice, flooding, or extreme heat rendering the premises unsafe or inaccessible.
Premises failure	Loss of heating, hot water, gas, electricity, or water supply that cannot be remedied within the session.
Structural or safety hazard	Damage to the building, roof, fencing, or equipment creating an immediate risk to safety.
Fire, flood, or chemical incident	Any emergency requiring evacuation and making the premises unusable.
Outbreak of infectious disease	A confirmed outbreak requiring closure under public health authority direction.
Staff ratio failure	Insufficient staff available to maintain EYFS statutory ratios safely, with no immediate remedy available.
Loss of utilities essential to care	Failure of heating in winter, hot water for hygiene, or sanitation facilities.
Police or authority direction	Direction from Thames Valley Police, the local authority, or HSE to close or vacate the premises.
Safeguarding emergency	Any incident creating an immediate safeguarding risk that cannot be managed whilst the setting remains open.

Staff ratio failure: The EYFS Statutory Framework 2025 requires that statutory staff-to-child ratios are maintained at all times. If ratios cannot be maintained, the nursery must not operate. The Manager must exhaust all reasonable alternatives (agency staff, redeployment of non-ratio staff, contacting parents to collect early) before taking the decision to close. If ratio failure leads to a closure, see Section 8 to assess whether Ofsted notification is required.

Section 5 — Decision-Making: Who Can Authorise Closure

5.1 Authorised Decision-Makers

The decision to close Little Acorns Montessori at short notice may only be made by the following persons, in order of priority:

1. The Manager of the affected setting.
2. The Deputy Manager or most senior member of staff on duty, in the absence of the Manager.
3. Any member of staff, in a genuine emergency where life or immediate safety is at risk and the Manager cannot be reached, pending immediate contact with the Manager.

5.2 Decision Principles

When determining whether to close, the decision-maker must consider:

- Whether the safety of children or staff is at immediate risk if the setting remains open.
- Whether EYFS statutory staff-to-child ratios can be maintained for all age groups.
- Whether the premises are safe, warm, hygienic, and suitable for the continued care of children.
- Whether a partial closure (for example, closing one room or bringing children together in a safe area) would adequately manage the risk and avoid a full closure.
- Whether the situation is likely to be resolved quickly enough to allow the session to resume.

5.3 Partial Closure

Where a risk affects only part of the premises, the Manager must first assess whether a partial closure is a safe and proportionate response. In a partial closure:

- Children from the affected area must be relocated to a safe and adequately supervised space within the setting.
- Ratios must be maintained across all groups following relocation.
- Parents of children in the affected area must be notified and offered the option to collect their child.
- The partial closure must be documented in the same manner as a full closure.

Section 6 — Procedures: Before Children Arrive

Where a decision to close is made before the session begins and before children have arrived:

1. The Manager must confirm the decision to close at the earliest possible opportunity.
2. The Manager must contact all parents and carers immediately, using the nursery's primary communication platform, telephone cascade, or SMS system.
3. The Manager must ensure that no child is admitted to the premises during the closure period.
4. Staff must be notified immediately and given clear instructions on whether they are required on-site, working remotely, or on paid leave during the closure.
5. The Manager must initiate the notifications set out in Section 8 of this policy.
6. The Manager must begin the closure record set out in Section 9.

The parent message in step 2 must state:

- That the nursery is closed;
- The reason for closure (in general terms, without disclosing sensitive details);
- Whether the closure is for the full day or part of the day;
- When parents can expect a further update.

Early morning check: On days of potential adverse weather or known risk, the Manager should carry out an early premises check before staff and children arrive, in order to make a closure decision with maximum notice to families.

Section 7 — Procedures: Mid-Session Closure

Where a closure becomes necessary after children have already arrived and are in the care of the nursery, the procedures below must be followed in strict order of priority. The safety of children is the overriding concern at every step.

7.1 Immediate Safety Actions

- The Manager or most senior member of staff must assess the immediate risk and determine whether evacuation of the premises is required.
- If there is an immediate physical danger (fire, gas leak, structural failure, flood), the nursery's fire evacuation or emergency evacuation procedure must be followed immediately. Children must be taken to the designated assembly point.
- A register must be taken immediately to confirm that all children and staff are accounted for.
- Children must remain under the continuous supervision of sufficient staff to maintain EYFS ratios at all times during the closure process.

7.2 Contacting Parents & Carers

The Manager must initiate contact with all parents and carers immediately once children are safe and staff are in a position to communicate. Parents must be contacted using the nursery's primary communication channel (platform notification) and, where necessary, by telephone.

The message must include:

- That the nursery is closing and the reason (in general terms);
- The time by which children must be collected;
- The location from which children will be collected (which may be the assembly point rather than the main entrance);
- The name and contact number of the person managing the closure.

Where a parent or carer cannot be reached, the nursery must contact the alternative emergency contacts held for that child. No child must be released to any person who is not named as an authorised collector on the child's registration form, except with the explicit authorisation of the parent or carer.

7.3 Managing Children Awaiting Collection

- Children awaiting collection must be kept warm, safe, supervised, and calm. Where possible, age-appropriate activities should be offered to minimise distress.
- Staff must not leave the premises until every child has been safely collected by an authorised adult and the Manager has confirmed all children are accounted for.
- Where a child cannot be collected within a reasonable time and the parent or carer cannot be reached, the DSL must assess the situation and, if necessary, follow the nursery's safeguarding procedures, which may include contacting Bracknell Forest Children's Services.
- A final register confirming the collection of every child, including the name of the collecting adult and the time of collection, must be completed before the last member of staff leaves the premises.

7.4 Securing the Premises

- Before vacating the premises, the Manager or most senior staff member must ensure that all external doors and windows are secured, where safe to do so.

- Gas, electricity, and water supplies should be isolated at the mains if a gas leak, flood, or electrical fault is the cause of closure, where it is safe to do so.
- The Manager must contact the appropriate utility provider, contractor, or emergency service as required.
- No member of staff should re-enter the premises after evacuation unless it is confirmed safe to do so by the relevant authority (fire service, HSE, structural engineer, etc.).

Section 8 — Statutory Notifications

The Manager must ensure that all required notifications are made in a timely manner. The table below sets out who must be notified, when, and by whom.

Who to Notify	When & How	Responsible Person
Parents & carers	Immediately upon decision to close, via the nursery's communication platform, telephone cascade, or SMS. Must confirm child collection arrangements.	Manager / designated senior staff member
Ofsted	Only where the closure meets the test set out below. Where it does, report as soon as possible and always within 14 days via www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-childcare-incident .	Manager
Bracknell Forest Early Years Team	On the day of closure, or as soon as reasonably practicable, by telephone or email. (Good practice notification — not a statutory Ofsted duty, but recommended for local-authority awareness and support.)	Manager
Thames Valley Police	Immediately, where the closure is due to a criminal incident, security threat, or police direction.	Manager or DSL
Bracknell Forest Children's Services	Immediately, where the closure has a safeguarding dimension affecting the welfare of a child.	DSL
Utilities providers / contractors	As soon as possible to expedite reinstatement of services.	Manager
Insurance provider	Where the closure involves premises damage, fire, flood, or other insurable event.	Director
Staff	Immediately upon decision to close. Instructions on what to do during closure period.	Manager

8.1 Does this closure need to be reported to Ofsted?

Not every short-notice closure requires Ofsted notification. Current GOV.UK guidance is clear that providers do not need to report a closure where there is no significant effect on how childcare is provided — for example, a single day's closure for snow, with the setting reopening as normal once conditions clear. The Manager must apply the following test:

Report to Ofsted (within 14 days, as soon as possible) if the closure:

Do not report routine closures with no lasting effect — for example, a single closure day for adverse weather, a one-off short-notice closure for a utility fault that is fixed before the next session, where the setting reopens as normal and there is no ongoing impact on safety or provision.

If in doubt, the Manager should err on the side of notifying, or contact Ofsted (enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk / 0300 123 1231) to check.

This is a change in emphasis from the previous version of this policy, which treated all closures as reportable. Applying the test above keeps the nursery compliant without creating unnecessary admin burden on Managers for routine, low-impact closures (e.g. occasional snow days).

Section 9 — Reporting & Recording

9.1 Closure Record

A closure record must be completed for every short-notice closure, however brief — regardless of whether it meets the Ofsted notification test in Section 8. The Manager must complete the record on the same day as the closure, or as soon as reasonably practicable. The record must include:

- The date and time the closure decision was made.
- The name and role of the person who made the closure decision.
- The setting(s) affected (Ascot, Bracknell, or Crowthorne).
- Whether the closure was full or partial, and which areas were affected.
- The reason for closure, with a factual description of the circumstances.
- The time at which parents were first notified and the method of communication used.
- A record of all children present at the time of closure, including the time and name of the person who collected each child.
- Any children who could not be collected promptly and the actions taken.
- A log of all notifications made (Ofsted where applicable, local authority, police, etc.), including the date, time, method, and name of the officer spoken to.
- The time at which the premises were secured and by whom.
- The anticipated reopening date and any conditions for reopening.
- Any action taken during the closure to remediate the cause.
- The actual reopening date and confirmation that it was safe to reopen.
- Signature of the Manager and date.

9.2 Where Records Are Stored

- All closure records must be stored in the nursery's incident and emergency file, held securely in the Manager's office at the relevant setting.
- Electronic records must be stored in a password-protected folder accessible to the Manager and DSL.
- Records must be retained for a minimum of three years from the date of the closure event, or in accordance with the nursery's broader data retention policy, whichever is the longer period.
- Records must be made available to Ofsted, the local authority, or any other relevant authority upon request.

9.3 Post-Closure Review

Following any short-notice closure, the Manager must conduct a post-closure review within five working days of reopening. The review must consider:

- Whether the closure was handled in accordance with this policy.
- Whether communication with parents was timely, clear, and effective.
- Whether the Ofsted notification test in Section 8 was correctly applied, and any required notification made within the required timeframe.
- Whether any child experienced difficulty being collected, and whether safeguarding procedures were followed appropriately.

- Whether any aspect of the closure procedure should be revised.

The outcomes of the review must be recorded and, where relevant, incorporated into an updated risk assessment or revision of this policy.

Section 10 — Reopening the Nursery

10.1 Conditions for Reopening

Little Acorns Montessori must not reopen following a short-notice closure until the Manager is satisfied that all of the following conditions are met:

- The cause of the closure has been fully remediated or is no longer present.
- The premises have been confirmed as safe by the relevant authority, contractor, or competent person, where applicable.
- Sufficient qualified staff are available to meet EYFS statutory ratios for all age groups.
- All required utilities (heating, hot water, electricity, sanitation) are fully operational.
- Any required risk assessments have been reviewed and updated.
- Where the Section 8 test required Ofsted notification, this has been completed and any required follow-up addressed.

10.2 Notifying Parents of Reopening

- The Manager must notify all parents and carers of the confirmed reopening date and time as soon as it is known, using the nursery's standard communication channels.
- The notification must confirm that it is safe to return and provide any relevant information about changes to the premises or routine.
- Where a closure has extended beyond one day, the Manager should provide a brief explanation of the steps taken to resolve the issue.

10.3 First Day Back

- On the first day of reopening, the Manager must conduct or confirm a full premises check before children arrive.
- Staff must be briefed on any changes to the premises, procedures, or risk assessments.
- The Manager must confirm that the closure record is complete and that all post-closure notifications and reviews are finalised.

Section 11 — Roles & Responsibilities

Role	Name	Campus
Designated Officer / Nominated Individual	Jonathan Duffy	All Campuses
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Rachel Terry (Ascot Manager)	Ascot Campus
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Agata Payne (Bracknell Manager)	Bracknell Campus
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Emma Gray (Crowthorne Manager)	Crowthorne Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Jessica McGrath (Ascot Deputy Manager)	Ascot Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Joanne Broughton (Bracknell Deputy Manager)	Bracknell Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Martine Loveridge (Crowthorne Deputy Manager)	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

11.1 The Manager

- Has overall responsibility for the decision to close and for the management of all closure procedures.
- Must ensure all parents and carers are notified promptly.
- Must make or oversee all required notifications, including applying the Ofsted test in Section 8 and notifying within the required timeframe where it applies.
- Must complete the closure record and ensure it is accurate and complete.
- Must conduct or oversee the post-closure review.
- Must confirm that conditions for reopening are met before the setting resumes.
- Must ensure this policy is reviewed following any closure event.

11.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Must be notified of any closure that has a safeguarding dimension.
- Is responsible for ensuring the welfare of any child who cannot be promptly collected.
- Must initiate safeguarding procedures if a child remains uncollected and parents or emergency contacts cannot be reached.
- Must ensure that Bracknell Forest Children's Services is contacted if a child's welfare is at risk.

11.3 The Deputy DSL

- Assumes all DSL responsibilities in the absence of the DSL.

- Must be familiar with all procedures in this policy.

11.4 All Staff

- Must follow the instructions of the Manager or most senior member of staff during any closure.
- Must maintain supervision of children at all times until every child has been safely collected.
- Must not leave the premises until authorised to do so by the Manager.
- Must assist with parent communication as directed.
- Must report any safeguarding concern arising during a closure to the DSL immediately.
- Must be familiar with the contents of this policy and their individual responsibilities within it.

11.5 Parents & Carers

- Must ensure their child's emergency contact details are kept up to date at all times.
- Must respond promptly to nursery communications regarding a closure and collect their child as quickly as reasonably possible.
- Must ensure that any authorised collector is aware of the nursery's identity verification requirements for collection.
- Must not send another person to collect their child without notifying the nursery in advance and providing the authorised person's details.

Section 12 — Contingency Planning & Preparedness

Little Acorns Montessori will take reasonable steps to reduce the likelihood of short-notice closures and to mitigate their impact when they do occur.

12.1 Preventive Measures

- The Manager must ensure that the premises are maintained to a standard that minimises the risk of closure due to building or equipment failure.
- Heating, electrical, and plumbing systems must be serviced in accordance with the recommended schedule and records maintained.
- A winter readiness check should be carried out annually before the onset of cold weather to assess the risk of adverse weather closure.
- Risk assessments for all areas of the premises must be reviewed at least annually and following any incident.

12.2 Staffing Resilience

- The Manager must maintain a list of approved agency or bank staff who can be contacted to cover absences at short notice, in order to prevent ratio-related closures.
- All agency staff deployed must have a valid enhanced DBS check confirmed by the agency prior to deployment, in accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025.
- The Manager should proactively monitor staffing levels and act early when absences are anticipated, particularly during peak illness periods.

12.3 Communication Readiness

- The nursery's parent communication platform must be kept up to date with current contact details for all families.
- Each child's registration file must hold a minimum of two emergency contact numbers, in accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025.
- A staff contact list must be maintained and accessible to the Manager and Deputy at all times, including out of hours.

12.4 Staff Awareness & Training

- All staff must be made aware of this policy on induction and at each annual review.
- Staff must know the location of the emergency contacts list and the closure record template.
- The Manager should brief staff at the start of any day where a closure is considered a significant possibility (for example, during severe weather).

Section 13 — Policy Review

13.1 Scheduled Review

- This policy must be reviewed by the Manager at least once every 12 months.
- Following each review, all staff must re-read and acknowledge the policy.

13.2 Triggered Review

This policy must be reviewed immediately, outside of the scheduled cycle, following:

- Any short-notice closure to which this policy applies.
- Any change in relevant legislation, statutory guidance, or Ofsted frameworks.
- Any change in the nursery's premises, location, or operational context.
- Any Ofsted inspection at which this policy or closure procedures are scrutinised and recommendations made.

13.3 Version Control

- Each revised version must be assigned a new version number and date.
- Superseded versions must be archived securely and retained for a minimum of three years.

Policy Sign-Off

Role	Name	Date
Owner/Director	Jonathan Duffy	June 2026

This policy was adopted by Little Acorns Montessori June 2026 and supersedes any previous policy on this subject.

Appendix A — Quick Reference: Closure Checklist

Before Session (closure decided before children arrive)

1. Confirm decision to close.
2. Notify all parents via communication platform and/or telephone.
3. Notify all staff — advise on-site requirements.
4. Secure premises.
5. Contact contractors / utilities if applicable.
6. Apply the Ofsted notification test (Section 8.1) and notify if required, within 14 days, as soon as possible.
7. Notify Bracknell Forest Early Years Team.
8. Complete closure record.

Mid-Session (children already present)

1. Assess immediate risk — evacuate if necessary.
2. Take register — confirm all children and staff accounted for.
3. Maintain supervision and EYFS ratios throughout.
4. Notify parents — state reason, location, and collection time.
5. Contact emergency contacts for any unreachable parent.
6. Do not release children to unauthorised persons.
7. Complete final collection register before last staff member leaves.
8. Secure premises.
9. Apply the Ofsted notification test (Section 8.1); notify Ofsted if required, and notify local authority/police/others as required.
10. Complete closure record same day.

Reopening

1. Confirm cause of closure resolved and premises safe.
2. Confirm EYFS ratios can be met.
3. Update risk assessments if required.
4. Notify Ofsted of closure if the Section 8.1 test required it and this has not already been done.
5. Notify parents of reopening date and time.
6. Conduct premises check before children arrive.
7. Brief staff on any changes.
8. Complete post-closure review within five working days.

Key Contacts

- Ofsted (report incident): www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-childcare-incident
- Ofsted (enquiries): enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk | Tel: 0300 123 1231
- Bracknell Forest Early Years Team: [INSERT CURRENT NUMBER]

- Bracknell Forest Children's Services: 01344 351500
- Thames Valley Police (non-emergency): 101 | Emergency: 999
- Gas Emergency (National Grid): 0800 111 999
- Health & Safety Executive: 0300 003 1747