Little Acorns Montessori

Ascot | Bracknell | Crowthorne

LATE COLLECTION POLICY

1. Document Control

Document Title	Version	Date Adopted	Review Date	Author / Role
Late Collection Policy	1.0	June 2026	June 2027	Jonathan Duffy
Policy Owner: Jonathan Duffy				
Distribution: All Staff, Parents/Carers (via Welcome Pack and Setting Website), Ofsted upon request				
| Legislation Last Verified | June 2026 — EYFS (Sep 2025 ed.); Working Together (March 2026 ed.); Consumer Rights Act 2015; Children Act 1989 & 2004; DPA 2018 / UK GDPR |				

2. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Montessori is committed to the safety, welfare, and emotional wellbeing of every child in our care. The timely collection of children at the end of each session is a fundamental component of that commitment.

We recognise that delays in collection can sometimes be unavoidable. However, late collection places a child in a position of uncertainty and potential distress, creates additional pressures on our staff, and — in the most serious cases — may indicate an underlying safeguarding concern.

This policy sets out our expectations of parents and carers, the step-by-step procedures that staff must follow when a child has not been collected by their agreed session end time, and the circumstances in which a late collection will be escalated to a safeguarding referral. It also sets out the financial charge that applies when collection is late, which is contractually agreed with parents upon registration.

This policy applies to all children aged 2–5 years attending Little Acorns Montessori at our Ascot, Bracknell, and Crowthorne provision. It applies to all staff, volunteers, and students on placement. It should be read in conjunction with the setting's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Attendance Policy, and parental contract.

3. Statutory Framework and Legislation

This policy is required by, and implemented in accordance with, the following legislation and statutory guidance:

3.1 Primary Statutory Duties

- **DfE Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (September 2025 edition, effective 1 September 2025), Section 3 — Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements:** Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. This includes ensuring that children are only released to authorised persons and that procedures are in place for when a child is not collected at the agreed time.
- **EYFS 2025, paragraphs 3.11 and 3.12 (Attendance and Absence):** Providers must follow up on unexplained or prolonged absences promptly. Providers must have an Attendance Policy that is shared with parents and carers. This must include expectations for reporting child absences and the actions the provider will take if a child is absent without notification or for a prolonged period of time.
- **EYFS 2025 — Emergency Contacts:** Providers must hold at least two emergency contact details for each child and must ensure these are kept up to date. Where possible, settings should aim to hold additional contacts to support late collection and uncollected child scenarios.
- **EYFS 2025, Section 3 — Safeguarding Policies and Procedures:** The safeguarding policy must include procedures to be followed when a child is not collected at the appointed time. The setting must act on any advice given by local child protection agencies.

3.2 Supporting Legislation

- **Children Act 1989:** Establishes the overarching statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Persistent or serious late collection may constitute neglect under this Act.
- **Children Act 2004:** Requires agencies to work together to safeguard children and promotes multi-agency cooperation, including between nurseries and Bracknell Forest MASH.
- **EYFS Statutory Framework (2025) —** Emergency Contacts and Absent Children: The 2025 framework strengthens requirements around emergency contacts, with providers now expected to hold additional emergency contact details to support late collection and uncollected child scenarios. New requirements for providers to follow up if a child is absent for a prolonged period of time, and amendments to ensure providers hold additional emergency contact details, are introduced by the 2025 framework
- **EYFS Statutory Framework (2025), Annex C —** Safeguarding Training Criteria: The 2025 framework introduces a mandatory Safeguarding Training Criteria Annex. Safeguarding policies must detail how training is delivered and how staff are supported to apply it in practice. Designated Safeguarding Leads are required to have updated, mandatory training every two years, with annual refreshers recommended. This requirement is reflected in Section 8 of this policy.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) (DfE, March 2026):** The current edition, which replaces the 2023 version, defines neglect as including the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs. Repeated or serious late collection may constitute a form of neglect under this definition. This guidance informs the escalation procedures in Section 5.3 of this policy.
- **Consumer Rights Act 2015:** Governs the fairness of contractual terms, including late collection fees. Any late collection charge must represent a reasonable pre-estimate of the actual loss incurred by the setting and must be clearly set out in the parental contract before it is applied.
- **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR):** Govern the handling and storage of records relating to late collection incidents.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

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

Role / Person	Responsibilities
Nursery Manager	Holds overall accountability for policy implementation. Reviews the policy annually. Receives all late collection notifications from staff. Decides whether to escalate chronic late collection to the DSL as a safeguarding concern. Manages any late collection charges in line with parental contracts.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Receives escalations where late collection raises a safeguarding concern. Contacts Bracknell Forest MASH if a child remains uncollected and no authorised contact can be reached. Maintains the Safeguarding Record for all escalated late collection incidents. Ensures all Ofsted notifications are made where required.
Deputy DSL	Assumes all DSL responsibilities in the DSL's absence. Must be contactable while the setting is operational. Holds authority to make a MASH referral independently if the DSL is unreachable.
Room Leaders / Practitioners	Identify and report late collection to the Nursery Manager at the point the collection deadline passes. Remain with the child, providing calm reassurance. Attempt to contact parents and authorised persons using the child's records. Complete the Late Collection Log accurately and promptly.
All Staff	Follow this policy in full. Never release a child to any person who is not on the child's Authorised Collection List. Never leave a child unsupervised, including when operating beyond normal closing hours.

Parents and Carers	Must collect their child by the agreed session end time. Must inform the setting in advance, or as soon as possible, if they will be delayed. Must keep their Authorised Collection List and emergency contact details accurate and up to date. Must ensure all named contacts are aware they may be called upon to collect the child.

5. Procedures

5.1 Prevention: Parental Obligations and Registration Requirements

The following requirements apply to all parents and carers from the point of registration:

- Parents must agree a specific session end time in writing as part of their parental contract. This time constitutes the collection deadline.
- Parents must provide a minimum of two emergency contact details for their child at the point of registration. These contacts must be persons who are authorised and able to collect the child in an emergency. Where possible, a third contact should be provided.
- Parents must provide a completed Authorised Collection List, naming all persons who are permitted to collect their child. This list must include the full name, relationship to the child, and a contact telephone number for each named person.
- Any change to the Authorised Collection List or emergency contact details must be communicated to the setting in writing. Verbal instructions to change an Authorised Collection List will not be accepted.
- Where a parent knows in advance that they will be late, they must inform the setting by telephone as early as possible, and must confirm the name of the authorised person who will collect the child and their expected arrival time.
- Parents are made aware of this policy at registration and are asked to sign to confirm that they have read and understood it. A copy of the policy is available on the setting's website and on request from the office.

5.2 Immediate Response Procedures: Child Not Collected by Session End Time

Staff must follow the steps below in the order in which they appear. No step may be skipped.

- **Step 1 — Remain with the child.** The child's key person, Room Leader, or an available member of staff must remain with the child at all times. The child must not be left unsupervised at any point.
- **Step 2 — Provide reassurance.** The member of staff must reassure the child in a calm, age-appropriate manner. The child must not be made aware of any concern or anxiety on the part of staff.
- **Step 3 — Attempt to contact the parent or carer.** As soon as the session end time has passed without collection, staff must attempt to contact the parent or carer on all telephone numbers held in the child's registration record. Each attempt must be recorded, including the time of the attempt and the outcome (answered, voicemail, no answer).
- **Step 4 — Notify the Nursery Manager.** If the parent or carer has not been contacted within 15 minutes of the collection deadline, the Nursery Manager must be notified immediately.
- **Step 5 — Attempt to contact emergency contacts.** If the parent or carer cannot be reached, the Nursery Manager must work through the child's emergency contacts in

sequence, contacting each person using the telephone numbers held on the child's record. All attempts must be recorded.

- **Step 6 — Maintain minimum staffing.** At least two members of staff must remain with the child until they are collected. Staff must not be left alone with the child. If the setting would ordinarily be closed, arrangements must be made to ensure two qualified staff members remain.
- **Step 7 — Do not release to an unauthorised person.** Under no circumstances must the child be released to any person who is not named on the child's Authorised Collection List, regardless of the relationship they claim to have with the child. If a person not on the list presents to collect the child, the Nursery Manager must be notified and the child must remain in the setting.
- **Step 8 — Complete the Late Collection Log.** As soon as possible, the relevant member of staff must complete a Late Collection Log entry (see Section 6). This must be completed before the end of the working day or shift.

5.3 Escalation: When to Involve Statutory Agencies

The following table sets out the required actions at each stage of an unresolved late collection. These escalation thresholds are not rigid and must be applied with professional judgement. Staff must escalate sooner where they have safeguarding concerns about the child or family.

Scenario	Required Action
0–15 minutes late	Staff attempt to contact the parent/carer by telephone. Child is kept safe, calm, and supervised. Reassurance is offered. Room Leader is informed.
15–30 minutes late, no contact	Nursery Manager is informed. All emergency contacts are attempted in sequence. Late Collection Log is commenced.
30–60 minutes late, no contact	DSL is informed. Attempts to contact all emergency contacts continue. DSL considers whether a safeguarding concern exists. Bracknell Forest MASH is contacted for advice if warranted.
Over 60 minutes late, no contact reached	DSL contacts Bracknell Forest MASH (01344 352005). If safeguarding concerns are serious or immediate, police (999) may be contacted. Child remains in a safe, supervised environment with at least two members of staff present.
Chronic or repeated late collection(3 or more occasions)	Nursery Manager convenes a meeting with the parent. DSL reviews incidents as potential safeguarding or welfare concern. Formal written warning may be issued. The issue is recorded and reviewed at the next policy review.

Key Contacts — Bracknell Forest

MASH (daytime, Monday–Friday 8:30am–5pm): 01344 352005 | mash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service: 01344 786543

Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board: BFSB@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Emergency services (immediate risk of harm): 999

5.4 Procedure When No Authorised Person Can Be Reached

If all attempts to contact the parent, carer, and all emergency contacts have failed, and the child remains uncollected, the DSL must take the following steps:

- **Step 1 — Contact Bracknell Forest MASH.** The DSL must telephone Bracknell Forest MASH on 01344 352005 (daytime hours) or 01344 786543 (out of hours). The DSL must provide the child's full name, date of birth, the circumstances of the non-collection, and a record of all contact attempts made.
- **Step 2 — Act on the advice of MASH.** MASH will direct the setting as to the next steps, which may include police involvement or the arrangement of emergency foster care. The setting must follow MASH's instructions.
- **Step 3 — Do not take the child from the premises.** The setting must keep the child on site until directed otherwise by MASH or the police. Staff must not take the child to their own home or any other premises.
- **Step 4 — Record all actions.** A full contemporaneous record must be maintained of every action taken, every contact attempted, and every instruction received from statutory agencies.

5.5 Responding to a Dispute About Who is Authorised to Collect

Disputes between adults over who has the right to collect a child are distressing for all parties and can place a child at risk. The following procedures apply:

- Staff must not become involved in adult disputes. The safety and welfare of the child is paramount.
- Where there is a dispute between two persons who are both named on the Authorised Collection List, the Nursery Manager must be notified immediately. The child must remain in the setting until the situation is resolved.
- Where a person presents who is not on the Authorised Collection List, but claims parental responsibility, the child must not be released. The parent of record must be contacted. If there is an immediate concern for the child's safety, the police must be called (999).
- Where a court order exists restricting collection by a particular person (e.g. a Non-Molestation Order or Prohibited Steps Order), a copy of the order must be held on the child's file. Staff must follow the terms of the order. If a person who is subject to such an order presents to collect the child, the police must be called immediately.
- In all cases involving a collection dispute, the Nursery Manager must complete a full incident record on the day of the event.

5.6 Late Collection Charges

Late collection places an unplanned duty of care burden on the setting and requires staff to remain beyond their contracted hours. A late collection charge applies in the circumstances set out in the parental contract.

- The late collection charge is £10 per every 15 minutes late for collection, at each occurrence. Parents must be given adequate notice of any change to the charge.
- The setting has determined the late collection charge on the basis of the following cost components: the cost of at least two members of staff remaining beyond their contracted session end time, calculated at or above their applicable hourly rate including on-costs; and any additional operational costs reasonably incurred as a result of the late collection. The charge of £10 per commenced 15-minute period has been calculated to approximate

these costs and will be reviewed at least annually and whenever staff pay rates change materially. A record of the calculation underpinning the charge is held by the Nursery Owner and is available to parents on request.

- The charge is applied per commenced period of time (as specified in the contract) beyond the agreed session end time.
- The charge is designed to reflect the actual and reasonable additional costs incurred by the setting, including additional staffing time. In accordance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015, it must not be disproportionate.
- The charge is invoiced to the parent and must be paid within the timeframe specified in the contract. Non-payment is managed under the setting's fees and debt recovery procedures.
- The late collection charge is not applied where the late collection was caused by emergency circumstances beyond the parent's control, provided the parent or an authorised person communicated with the setting promptly. The Nursery Manager has discretion to waive the charge in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and any such decision must be recorded.
- The late collection charge does not override, replace, or limit the setting's safeguarding obligations under this policy or the EYFS Statutory Framework. Safeguarding procedures are always followed in full, regardless of whether a charge is also applied.
- Where a parent disputes a late collection charge, they must raise the matter in writing with the Nursery Manager within 10 working days of the invoice date. The Nursery Manager will review the Late Collection Log entry for the relevant occasion and respond within 5 working days. Where a charge has been applied in error or in circumstances that warrant waiver under the discretion provided in this policy, it will be reversed. Unresolved disputes may be referred to the setting's formal complaints procedure.
- In accordance with Section 7 of this policy, the late collection charge is specifically drawn to parents' attention at the point of registration and is set out in plain language in the parental contract. Parents are asked to confirm that they have read and understood the charge before their child's first session. Any change to the charge will be communicated in writing with a minimum of 10 working days' notice, in accordance with the Consumer Rights Act 2015.

Important Notice for Parents

Late collection charges are a contractual matter. They are secondary to, and entirely separate from, our safeguarding obligations. Where a late collection triggers a safeguarding procedure under this policy, those procedures will be followed in full. The existence of a late collection charge does not reduce or replace any statutory obligation on the setting or on parents.

6. Reporting and Recording

6.1 The Late Collection Log

A Late Collection Log entry must be completed for every instance of late collection without exception, including instances where the parent or authorised person arrives with a legitimate explanation. The entry must record:

- The child's full name and date of birth.
- The agreed session end time.
- The actual collection time.

- The name of the person who collected the child and their relationship to the child.
- A chronological account of all contact attempts made, including the time, method, and outcome of each attempt.
- Any explanation provided by the parent or carer.
- Any action taken, including escalation to the DSL or MASH.
- The name and role of the member of staff completing the log.
- The signature of the Nursery Manager confirming the record has been reviewed.

6.2 Safeguarding Records

Where a late collection is escalated to the DSL, or where a referral is made to Bracknell Forest MASH, a Safeguarding Record must be maintained separately from the Late Collection Log. This record must include:

- All information in the Late Collection Log.
- The name of the DSL or Deputy DSL who was involved.
- The time, method, and outcome of any contact with MASH or police.
- The name and designation of any statutory professional spoken to, and any reference numbers provided.
- Any instructions received from statutory agencies and the setting's response.

Safeguarding Records must be stored securely in the locked filing cabinet in the Nursery Manager's office, or in the password-protected safeguarding section of the setting's digital management system. Access is restricted to the Nursery Manager, DSL, and Deputy DSL.

6.3 Pattern Monitoring

The Nursery Manager must review the Late Collection Log at least monthly. Where a pattern of late collection is identified for any child (three or more occasions within any rolling 12-week period), the Nursery Manager must:

- Arrange a meeting with the parent to discuss the pattern and agree a plan to address it.
- Refer the pattern to the DSL, who will assess whether it constitutes a safeguarding concern under the setting's Child Protection Policy.
- Record the review and any action taken.

6.4 Record Retention

Late Collection Logs and associated Safeguarding Records must be retained in accordance with the setting's Record Keeping and Retention Policy. Records relating to a safeguarding concern must be retained until the child's 25th birthday (or 26th birthday if the child was looked after), in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026).

6.5 Ofsted Notification

Where a late collection incident meets the threshold of a serious incident (for example, where a child was at risk of harm or where a referral was made to statutory services), the Nursery Manager must assess whether Ofsted notification is required under the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025), Section 3 — Notification of Serious Incidents. Notification must be made as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 14 days. Failure to notify without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence.

7. Communicating This Policy to Parents

- This policy must be provided to all parents and carers upon registration, as part of the Welcome Pack.
- The policy must be available to parents.
- Parents must confirm that they have received and understood the policy before their child's first session.
- Any update to this policy must be communicated to all current parents in writing, with a minimum of 10 working days' notice before the updated version comes into effect.
- The late collection charge, as agreed in the parental contract, must be communicated to parents in plain language at the point of registration, and in advance of any change.

8. Staff Training

- All staff must read this policy at induction and sign to confirm they have understood it.
- This policy must be revisited as part of the setting's annual safeguarding training programme.
- The DSL must ensure that late collection procedures are covered in safeguarding supervision.
- Staff must know the current emergency contact procedures for Bracknell Forest MASH and must have access to this policy at all times while on site.

9. Policy Review

This policy must be reviewed:

- Annually, as part of the setting's scheduled policy review cycle.
- Following any late collection incident that was escalated to statutory services.
- Following any change to the EYFS Statutory Framework, relevant legislation, or statutory guidance.
- Following any feedback from Ofsted or Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board.

The review must be conducted by the Nursery Manager in consultation with the DSL and, where appropriate, the setting's owner or proprietor.

10. Related Policies and Documents

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Parental Contract and Terms and Conditions
- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
- Record Keeping and Retention Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy

11. Policy Sign-Off

Policy Author	Jonathan Duffy

Date	June 2026

This policy was drafted in compliance with the EYFS Statutory Framework (DfE, September 2025 edition) and reflects verified current UK legislation and statutory guidance as at the date of adoption. It must be reviewed at least annually.