

LITTLE ACORNS MONTESSORI

Ascot | Bracknell | Crowthorne, Berkshire

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Compliant with the EYFS Statutory Framework 2025 (effective 1 September 2025)

1. Document Control

Policy Title	Attendance Policy		
Version	1.0	Status	Final
Date Adopted	June 2026	Review Date	June 2027
Author	Jonathan Duffy	Role	Owner/Director
Setting	Little Acorns Montessori — Ascot, Bracknell and Crowthorne		
Age Range	0–5 years	Next Review	Annually or following legislative change

2. Related Policies and Documents

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Key Person Policy
- SEND Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy
- Complaints Policy

Legislative Note: This policy must be read alongside the nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Unexplained absences carry a safeguarding dimension and must be treated accordingly.

3. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Montessori is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and consistent early years environment for all children aged 0–5. Regular and punctual attendance is essential to each child's learning, development, and wellbeing.

This policy sets out the nursery's approach to monitoring attendance, managing absences, and fulfilling its statutory safeguarding obligations in respect of child attendance.

We recognise that attendance is not solely a developmental matter. Unexplained, prolonged, or irregular absences may indicate safeguarding concerns. Little Acorns Montessori will always act in the best interests of the child.

This policy applies to all children registered at Little Acorns Montessori, all nursery staff, and all parents and carers. It is shared with families at the point of enrolment and is available on request at any time.

4. Statutory Framework and Legal Basis

This policy has been written to fulfil the requirements of the following statutory framework and associated legislation:

4.1 EYFS Statutory Framework 2025 (DfE)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for group and school-based providers (effective 1 September 2025) is the primary regulatory document governing this policy.

- **Section 3.11** — Providers must follow up on child absences in a timely manner. Where a child is absent for a prolonged period of time, or absent without notification from a parent or carer, the provider must attempt to contact the child's parents and/or carers and alternative emergency contacts. Providers must consider patterns and trends in a child's absence and their personal circumstances, using professional judgement to determine whether an absence should be considered prolonged. Consideration must be given to the child's vulnerability, and the vulnerability of the parent or carer and their home circumstances. Any concerns must be referred to local children's social care services and/or a police welfare check requested.
- **Section 3.12** — Providers must have an attendance policy that they share with parents and/or carers. The policy must include: (a) expectations for reporting child absences; and (b) the actions the provider will take if a child is absent without notification or for a prolonged period of time.
- **Section 3.4** — Every early years setting must assign a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL is responsible for liaison with local statutory children's services agencies and with the Local Safeguarding Partners.
- **Section 3.75** — Providers must maintain a daily record of the names of children being cared for, their hours of attendance, and the details of each child's key person.

4.2 Related Statutory Guidance and Legislation

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026)** — The revised statutory multi-agency guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* was updated in March 2026, replacing the 2023 edition. This policy is written in accordance with the 2026 edition. Education and childcare providers are required to contribute attendance data to multi-agency safeguarding processes. Key provisions relevant to this policy include: early years settings are positioned as key safeguarding partners expected to actively contribute to multi-agency plans and decisions; the 2026 guidance introduces the Family Help model, which brings together targeted early help and Child in Need (Section 17) support into a single coordinated pathway; and there is an enhanced focus on babies and pre-verbal children, recognising their specific vulnerability and inability to self-report concerns.
- **Children Act 1989** — Places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. Section 47 investigations apply where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.
- **Children Act 2004** — Section 11 requires organisations and individuals to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018** — Attendance and absence records are personal data and must be handled in accordance with data protection law.
- **Childcare Act 2006** — Establishes Ofsted's remit to inspect early years provision and requires registered providers to meet the welfare requirements set out in the EYFS.

5. Key Contacts

Role	Name	Contact
Designated Officer / Nominated Individual	Jonathan Duffy	All Campuses
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Rachel Terry	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	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
Bracknell Forest MASH (Children's Safeguarding)	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	01344 352005 / Out of Hours: 01344 351999 mash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Police (welfare check / emergency)	Thames Valley Police	999 (emergency) / 101 (non-emergency)

Multi-site note: Each Little Acorns Montessori site must have access to a DSL at all times. Where the DSL covers more than one site, a Deputy DSL must be present and available at any site the DSL is not physically on. All staff must know who to contact at their site.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The Nursery Manager

- Must ensure this policy is implemented consistently across all rooms and age groups.
- Must ensure all staff receive induction training on attendance procedures.
- Must review this policy at least annually, or following any change in legislation.
- Must ensure attendance records are maintained, accurate, and stored securely.
- Must authorise a senior member of staff to carry out follow-up procedures in their absence.
- Must notify Ofsted of any significant safeguarding concerns arising from attendance patterns, as required.

6.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Must take lead responsibility for any attendance concern that has a safeguarding dimension.
- Must make referrals to Bracknell Forest MASH where attendance triggers a safeguarding threshold.
- Must liaise with the Local Safeguarding Partners and children's social care as required.
- Must maintain a confidential record of all safeguarding-related attendance concerns.
- Should attend local safeguarding board training relevant to attendance and early years practice.
- Must actively contribute to multi-agency plans and decisions — the nursery's role is as a key safeguarding partner, not merely a referrer. This includes participating in child protection conferences, early help assessments, and Family Help planning where relevant.
- Should consider, where attendance concerns fall below the MASH referral threshold, whether a Family Help referral to the local authority is appropriate as an early intervention.

6.3 The Deputy DSL

- Must carry out the functions of the DSL in their absence.
- Must be familiar with all attendance-related safeguarding procedures.

6.4 All Nursery Staff

- Must take and record attendance at the start of every session.
- Must notify the room leader or manager promptly if a child is absent without notification.
- Must not attempt to contact parents in relation to safeguarding concerns independently; all such concerns must be directed to the DSL.
- Should maintain awareness of individual children's attendance patterns and share any concerns with the key person or manager.
- Must treat all attendance information as confidential.
- Must be particularly alert to unexplained absences of babies and pre-verbal children, who cannot self-report concerns. A lower threshold for escalation applies to these children.

6.5 Key Persons

- Should monitor attendance patterns for their key children as part of their ongoing assessment and welfare responsibilities.
- Should raise any concerns about attendance to the room leader or manager at the earliest opportunity.
- Should maintain regular, open communication with parents about the importance of consistent attendance.

6.6 Parents and Carers

- Must inform the nursery before the start of the session if their child will be absent. This may be done by telephone, the nursery's designated communication app, or email.
- Must provide a reason for the absence.
- Must notify the nursery of any planned holidays or extended absences in advance.
- Must ensure the nursery holds accurate, current contact details, including at least two emergency contacts.
- Should notify the nursery if their child is likely to be late.

7. Attendance Expectations

7.1 Contracted and Funded Hours

Children are expected to attend their contracted hours as agreed in their registration documentation and, where applicable, as specified in their Early Education Funding (EEF) agreement.

Consistent attendance directly supports the child's development across the seven areas of learning as set out in the EYFS framework. Little Acorns Montessori strongly encourages families to prioritise regular attendance.

7.2 Arrival and Departure

- Children should arrive at the agreed session start time.
- Staff must record the time of arrival for each child.
- Children must only be collected by adults who are named as authorised on the child's registration form.
- Any change to the usual collection arrangement must be communicated to the nursery in advance and in writing where possible.
- The nursery must be notified if a child will be collected earlier than their contracted end time.

7.3 Lateness

- Persistent late arrivals will be noted on the child's attendance record.
- The key person should have a sensitive, supportive conversation with parents if lateness is a recurring pattern.
- Where lateness is a safeguarding concern, the DSL must be informed.

8. Reporting Absences — Procedures for Parents and Carers

8.1 Reporting an Unplanned Absence

Parents and carers must notify the nursery on the first day of an unplanned absence. Notification must be made before the start of the child's session, by:

- Telephoning the nursery directly on the main nursery number; or
- Sending a message via Family; or
- Emailing the nursery manager.

The reason for absence must be provided. Where no reason is given, the nursery will contact the parent or carer directly to obtain one.

8.2 Reporting a Planned Absence

- Parents should inform the nursery of any planned absence, including holidays, as soon as reasonably practicable and in writing where possible.
- The nursery manager should be made aware of any absence anticipated to last three or more consecutive sessions.
- Funded places: parents should be aware that term-time absences may affect funded hours entitlement. The manager can advise on the applicable funding rules.

8.3 Absence Due to Illness

- Parents must notify the nursery if a child is ill and unable to attend.

- The nursery follows Public Health England guidance on exclusion periods for infectious illnesses.
- The nursery will advise parents of current exclusion guidelines upon request.

9. Staff Procedures — Monitoring and Follow-Up

9.1 Daily Attendance Register

- The designated room staff member must complete the attendance register at the start of every session, recording each child's name, time of arrival, and time of departure.
- The register must be completed even if a child is absent; the absence must be noted with the reason where known.
- The register is a statutory record and must be retained for a minimum of three years.
- Registers must be stored securely, whether in paper or electronic format, in line with the nursery's Data Protection Policy.

9.2 Absent Without Notification — Immediate Action (Same Day)

Where a child fails to arrive at their expected session time and no notification has been received from a parent or carer, the following steps must be taken:

- Step 1: The room staff member must immediately notify the nursery manager or senior person on duty.
- Step 2: The manager or senior staff member must attempt to contact the child's primary parent or carer by telephone.
- Step 3: If the primary contact cannot be reached within a reasonable timeframe (typically within 30 minutes of session start, using professional judgement), the manager must attempt to contact all secondary emergency contacts held on file.
- Step 4: All contact attempts must be logged, including the time of each attempt, the method used, and the outcome.
- Step 5: If contact cannot be established with any parent, carer, or emergency contact, the DSL must be notified immediately.
- Step 6: The DSL will use professional judgement to determine whether a welfare check by Thames Valley Police should be requested (dial 101 for non-emergency; 999 if immediate risk is suspected).
- Step 7: The DSL must document all actions taken and the rationale for any decision made.

Important: The threshold for escalation is not fixed. Staff and the DSL must use professional judgement in light of the child's known circumstances, vulnerability, and any prior safeguarding concerns. Babies and pre-verbal children must always be treated as high priority in the absence of notification — these children cannot self-report and are inherently more vulnerable, and a lower threshold for escalation applies. When in doubt, escalate promptly.

9.3 Prolonged Absence — Follow-Up Procedure

A prolonged absence is one where a child has been absent for a period that, in the professional judgement of the nursery, is unusual or concerning given the child's individual circumstances. There is no single fixed threshold; staff must consider the child's age, vulnerability, prior concerns, and normal patterns of attendance.

Where a child has been absent for a prolonged period:

- The key person or manager should attempt to make contact with the family to ascertain the reason for absence and the expected return date.
- If contact cannot be established, or if the reason given is unsatisfactory or inconsistent with known information, the DSL must be informed.
- The DSL must consider whether the absence raises safeguarding concerns, having regard to:
 - The child's vulnerability and any prior child protection or welfare concerns;
 - Patterns and trends in the child's attendance history;
 - The vulnerability of the parent or carer and their known home circumstances;
 - Whether the child's whereabouts are unknown.
- Where the DSL determines that safeguarding concerns exist, a referral must be made to Bracknell Forest MASH (Tel: 01344 352005 | Email: mash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk).
- All actions and decisions must be recorded in the child's confidential safeguarding file.
- Where the DSL determines that the threshold for a formal MASH referral is not yet met but concerns exist, consideration should be given to whether a referral to the Family Help pathway via Bracknell Forest Children's Services is appropriate. The Family Help model brings together targeted early help and Child in Need (Section 17) support into a coordinated plan and may be the right early intervention response. The DSL should also consider whether information should be shared with other professionals already involved with the child, such as a health visitor or social worker.

9.4 Patterns and Trends in Attendance

- The nursery manager must review attendance records regularly to identify patterns or trends that may indicate concern.
- Concerning patterns include but are not limited to: frequent absences on particular days, a sudden change in attendance behaviour, absences coinciding with known safeguarding concerns, or a gradual withdrawal from the setting.
- Any identified patterns must be discussed with the DSL and noted in the child's file.
- Where appropriate, patterns should be shared with other professionals involved with the child, for example the child's health visitor or social worker, in accordance with the nursery's information-sharing protocols.
- Patterns must be reviewed without assumptions based on protected characteristics. All families must be treated with equal professional rigour in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice requirements of *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026*.

10. Recording and Documentation

10.1 What Must Be Recorded

- Date and time of each child's arrival and departure at every session.
- All absences, with the reason provided and the date notification was received.
- All contact attempts made in response to unexplained absence, including: the date and time of each attempt, the method used (telephone, app, email), the name of the person contacted (or failed to be contacted), and the outcome.
- All decisions and actions taken by the DSL in relation to attendance-related safeguarding concerns.
- All referrals made to external agencies (MASH, police), including the date, the name of the person spoken to, and any reference numbers provided.

10.2 Where Records Are Stored

- Daily attendance registers: Online through Family.
- Safeguarding-related absence records: stored within the child's confidential safeguarding file, held securely by the DSL.
- The child's confidential file must be accessible to the DSL and Deputy DSL only, except where access is required by an authorised statutory body.

10.3 Retention of Records

- Attendance registers must be retained for a minimum of three years from the date of the last entry.
- Safeguarding records must be retained until the child's 25th birthday (or 35th birthday where records relate to a looked-after child), in line with the recommendations of the Information and Records Management Society (IRMS) and local authority guidance.
- All records must be disposed of securely in accordance with the nursery's Data Protection Policy.

11. Emergency Contact Information

In accordance with EYFS Statutory Framework 2025, the nursery must hold emergency contact details for each child.

- A minimum of two emergency contacts must be held for every child.
- Where possible, the nursery should hold more than two emergency contacts.
- Emergency contact details must be reviewed and confirmed as current at least annually, and whenever a family notifies the nursery of a change.
- Emergency contacts must include at least one person other than the child's primary parent or carer.
- Contact details must be stored securely within the child's registration file and the nursery's management system.

12. Link to Safeguarding

Attendance monitoring is an integral part of the nursery's safeguarding responsibilities. Unexplained or irregular absence may be an early indicator of abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or other safeguarding concerns.

All staff are trained to recognise that a child's non-attendance may be a warning sign. No absence should be dismissed without a satisfactory explanation.

- The DSL has lead responsibility for all attendance-related safeguarding concerns.
- Staff must never delay escalating a concern to the DSL out of concern for causing offence to parents or carers.
- Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, the DSL must make an immediate referral to Bracknell Forest MASH, without waiting for proof.
- In an emergency, or where a child's whereabouts are unknown and immediate risk is suspected, staff must contact the police on 999 and notify the DSL simultaneously.

MASH Referral: Bracknell Forest Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) | Tel: 01344 352005 | Email: mash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk | Out of Hours: 01344 351999 | When in doubt, contact the MASH for advice — you do not need to be certain before making a referral.

13. Equality, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Little Acorns Montessori recognises that some families may face barriers to regular attendance. These may include financial pressures, housing instability, caring responsibilities, transport difficulties, or language and communication barriers.

- The nursery will approach all attendance concerns with sensitivity and without making assumptions.
- Where English is not a parent's or carer's first language, the nursery will take reasonable steps to communicate attendance expectations in an accessible format.
- The nursery will work in partnership with families to identify and address barriers to attendance, and will signpost to relevant support services where appropriate.
- This policy is applied consistently to all children regardless of age, disability, race, religion, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

14. Sharing This Policy with Parents and Carers

- This policy is provided to all families at the point of registration as part of the nursery's Welcome Pack.
- A copy of this policy is available on the nursery's website and is available in paper format on request.
- The nursery manager will draw parents' and carers' attention to the key requirements of this policy at the initial registration meeting.
- Any updates to this policy will be communicated to families promptly, in writing.

15. Monitoring, Review, and Compliance

- This policy must be reviewed annually by the nursery manager, or sooner in the following circumstances:
 - There is a change to the EYFS Statutory Framework or associated statutory guidance;
 - An incident or near-miss highlights a gap in the policy;
 - Ofsted or another regulatory body requires a revision following inspection.
- The nursery manager is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and adhered to by all staff.
- Compliance with this policy will be monitored through regular staff supervision, training reviews, and internal safeguarding audits.
- Any member of staff who fails to follow the procedures set out in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

14. Sign-Off

Role	Name	Date
Owner/Director	Jonathan Duffy	June 2026

Appendix A — Absence Reporting Quick Reference Card

For display in staff rooms. This card summarises the key steps for staff.

<p>CHILD ABSENT — NO NOTIFICATION RECEIVED</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Notify manager / senior on duty immediately2. Attempt to call primary parent / carer3. If no response → call all emergency contacts4. Log ALL attempts (time, method, outcome)5. If still no contact → notify DSL immediately6. DSL to decide: refer to MASH / request police welfare check	<p>KEY NUMBERS</p> <p>DSL: As above Deputy DSL: As above MASH: 01344 352005 MASH (Out of Hours): 01344 351999 Police (non-emergency): 101 Police (emergency): 999</p>
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