

Little Acorns Montessori

Ascot | Bracknell | Crowthorne

DEATH OF A CHILD ON SITE POLICY

1. Document Control

Document Title	Version	Date Adopted	Review Date	Author / Role
Death of a Child on Site Policy	1.0	June 2026	June 2027	Jonathan Duffy - Director
Policy Owner: Jonathan Duffy				
Distribution: All Staff, Website, Parents/Carers (on request and upon relevant event), Ofsted upon request				

2. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Montessori recognises that the death of a child whilst in our care is among the most devastating and complex events that a nursery setting can face. Though rare, it is a foreseeable circumstance for which every setting must be comprehensively prepared.

Our response to such an event must be swift, compassionate, legally compliant, and operationally sound. We are committed to acting with the utmost care for the deceased child, their family, the other children in our care, our staff, and the wider community.

This policy sets out our statutory obligations and the step-by-step procedures that all staff must follow. It covers immediate emergency response, notification to statutory agencies, support for bereaved families and staff, record-keeping requirements, and the process for learning from the incident.

This policy applies to all children aged 2–5 years attending Little Acorns Montessori across our Ascot, Bracknell, and Crowthorne provision. It applies to all staff, volunteers, students on placement, and contractors present on site.

Nothing in this policy is intended to guide staff away from acting on their immediate human instincts of compassion and care. However, staff must also understand that certain actions — including moving the child's body, disturbing the scene, or speaking to media — may prejudice subsequent statutory investigations and must not be undertaken without the direction of emergency services.

3. Statutory Framework and Legislation

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

3.1 Primary Statutory Duty

- **DfE Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (September 2025 edition, effective 1 September 2025), Section 3 — Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements, paragraph 3.52:** Registered providers must notify Ofsted of any serious accident, illness or injury to, or death of, any child while in their care, and of the action taken. Notification must be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident occurring. A registered provider who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with this requirement commits an offence.
- **EYFS 2025, paragraph 3.52 (continued):** Providers must notify local child protection agencies of any serious accident or injury to, or the death of, any child while in their care, and must act on any advice given by those agencies.

3.2 Primary Legislation

- **Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004:** Establish the overarching statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:** Imposes a duty on the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all persons present in the setting.
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:** Require the setting to carry out suitable risk assessments and establish emergency procedures.
- **Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR):** Require the employer to report to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) any death arising from a work-related accident, immediately by telephone (0345 300 9923). A RIDDOR report is required only where the death is work-related — i.e. where it arose out of, or in connection with, the activities, premises, or supervision of the setting.
- **Coroners and Justice Act 2009:** Sets out the coroner's duty to investigate deaths where the cause is unknown or sudden. Staff must cooperate fully with any coroner's investigation.
- **Children and Social Work Act 2017:** Established the legal framework for Child Death Review Partners and the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) process.
- **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR):** Govern the handling, sharing, and retention of all records relating to the incident and the deceased child.

3.3 Statutory Guidance

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026):** Provides the multi-agency framework for responding to the death of a child, including rapid reviews and the Child Safeguarding Practice Review process.
- **Child Death Review: Statutory and Operational Guidance (England) (DHSC, 2018):** Sets out the full process that must be followed following the death of any child, including the role of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).
- **Ofsted: Early Years Inspection Handbook (current edition):** Inspectors will consider the adequacy of the setting's policies, records, and actions taken in the event of a child's death.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The following people carry specific responsibilities under this policy:

Role / Person	Responsibilities
Nursery Manager	Holds overall leadership responsibility during a fatal incident. Coordinates the immediate response, manages communication with external agencies, provides pastoral support to staff and families, leads the critical incident debrief, and ensures all statutory notifications are made within prescribed timeframes.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Takes lead responsibility for all safeguarding actions during and after a child's death. Contacts Bracknell Forest MASH, liaises with police, acts as the setting's primary point of contact for the coroner and Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB). Maintains all confidential records and supports the Child Death Review process.
Deputy DSL	Assumes all DSL responsibilities in the DSL's absence or where the DSL is too distressed to act. Must be contactable at all times while the setting is operational.
Room Leaders / Senior Practitioners	Support the removal of other children from the immediate area. Maintain calm and age-appropriate supervision of children present. Record observations and actions in their room log. Support the Manager in communicating with parents collecting other children.
All Practitioners	Follow immediate response procedures. Do not attempt to move the child unless directed by an emergency responder. Do not speak to media. Document what they personally witnessed as soon as practicable. Seek welfare support when offered.
Parents and Carers	Will be notified by the Nursery Manager or DSL, personally and sensitively, as soon as is practicable. Parents of the deceased child's family will be informed before any wider communication. Parents of other children in the setting will receive a brief, factual communication once the immediate response is underway and the family have been informed.

5. Immediate Response Procedures

The following procedures must be followed in strict sequence. Deviating from this order may compromise child welfare, distress other children, or prejudice statutory investigations.

5.1 Discovery of an Unresponsive or Apparently Deceased Child

- **Step 1 — Call 999 immediately.** Do not delay. Request an ambulance and state that a child is unresponsive or has been found in a medical emergency. State the setting's full address and remain on the line.
- **Step 2 — Commence CPR if appropriate.** A qualified first aider must commence cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) unless there are obvious signs that death has already occurred and the child's appearance makes resuscitation clearly futile (e.g. rigor mortis, livor mortis). In all other cases, CPR must be commenced and continued until emergency services arrive and take over.

- **Step 3 — Do not move or disturb the child.** Unless doing so is necessary to administer CPR or to move the child away from immediate physical danger, the child's position and the immediate area must not be disturbed. This is essential for any subsequent police or coroner's investigation.
- **Step 4 — Clear and safeguard other children.** A second member of staff must immediately, calmly, and without alarming the children, move all other children away from the area and into an adjacent room or outdoor space. This must be done in a way that minimises distress to the children.
- **Step 5 — Alert the Nursery Manager.** The staff member who has not commenced CPR must alert the Nursery Manager [INSERT NAME] without delay. If the Nursery Manager is the first responder, they must alert their deputy or Room Leader.
- **Step 6 — Do not contact parents yet.** The Nursery Manager or DSL must manage all contact with parents. Practitioners must not contact the deceased child's family, or their own families, before the Nursery Manager has been notified and authorised further communication.
- **Step 7 — Secure the scene.** Once CPR is underway and other children are safe, no further persons should enter the immediate area. The room or area where the child was found should be treated as a potential investigation scene and must be preserved as closely as possible.

5.2 On Arrival of Emergency Services

- **Step 8 — Hand over to emergency services.** When paramedics or police arrive, the first aider must step back and brief them clearly: who found the child, when, in what state, and what actions have been taken.
- **Step 9 — Follow directions from emergency services.** All staff must follow any instructions given by paramedics or police, including instructions to leave the area, preserve evidence, or close the setting.
- **Step 10 — Record the names of attending officers.** The Nursery Manager must record the names, badge numbers, and contact details of all emergency responders attending the scene, and note the time of their arrival and departure.

5.3 Notification of Parents and Carers

- **Step 11 — Notify the deceased child's family.** This is the most sensitive task. If police are present, notification of the family should, where possible, be coordinated with them. The Nursery Manager must make, or support, this communication in person or by telephone. The communication must be direct, honest, compassionate, and brief. Staff must not speculate about cause of death.
- **Step 12 — Notify parents of other children.** Once the deceased child's family has been notified, the Nursery Manager must arrange for all other parents to be contacted. This communication must be factual: 'There has been a serious incident at the nursery. [Your child's name] is safe and well. We will contact you shortly with further information and to arrange collection.' The cause or nature of the incident must not be disclosed in this initial communication.
- **Step 13 — Arrange collection of other children.** Where the setting is required to close (e.g. at the direction of police), the Nursery Manager must arrange for all other children to be collected by an authorised adult as soon as possible. Staff must follow standard collection and handover procedures and must not leave children unattended.

5.4 Statutory Notifications

The Nursery Manager and DSL must make all statutory notifications as set out in the table below. Failure to notify Ofsted within 14 days is a criminal offence under the EYFS Statutory Framework.

Person / Agency to Notify	Timescale
Emergency services (999)	Immediately — within seconds of the child being found unresponsive or suspected deceased
Nursery Manager (if not present)	Immediately
Parents / carers of the deceased child	As soon as possible — in person or by direct phone call, before any wider communication
Bracknell Forest MASH (01344 352005)	As soon as possible — same day. Out of hours: 01344 786543
Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB)	Same day — BFSB@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Ofsted — via online notification form (GOV.UK)	As soon as reasonably practicable and in any event within 14 days (EYFS 2025, para 3.52). Failure to notify is a criminal offence.
RIDDOR — HSE online form (if work-related death)	Immediately by telephone (0345 300 9923) if work-related accident caused or contributed to the death
Child Death Review Partners (Bracknell Forest Council / Integrated Care Board)	Notification will be coordinated by Bracknell Forest MASH / BFSB. The DSL must be aware that a Serious Incident Notification (SIN) is the trigger for the statutory rapid review process, and that under Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) the rapid review must be submitted within 15 working days of the SIN. The Child Death Review process itself is governed by the Child Death Review Statutory and Operational Guidance (England, 2018), which remains current.
Setting's employers' liability / public liability insurer	Same day or next working day
Owner / Proprietor / Governing Body	Same day

Key Emergency Contact Numbers

Emergency Services: 999

Bracknell Forest MASH (daytime): 01344 352005 | mash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Bracknell Forest Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service: 01344 786543

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

HSE Incident Contact Centre (RIDDOR fatalities): 0345 300 9923

Ofsted notifications: www.gov.uk (search 'report serious accident childcare')

5.5 Media and Communications

- **Staff must not speak to media or journalists.** Any media enquiries must be directed immediately to the Nursery Manager.

- **Staff must not post on social media.** Any posting about the incident on any social media platform — including personal accounts — is strictly prohibited. This applies to all staff indefinitely.
- The Nursery Manager must prepare a brief holding statement with the assistance of the setting's owner or legal adviser, if appropriate, before any statement is made publicly.
- All communication with media must be approved by the Nursery Manager and, where relevant, by the police or coroner's office.

6. Supporting the Bereaved Family

Little Acorns Montessori has a duty of care and a profound moral obligation to support the deceased child's family throughout the immediate aftermath and beyond.

- The Nursery Manager must designate a single named point of contact for the family. This person must be sensitive, experienced, and consistent. They should not be changed unless unavoidable.
- The family must be given clear, accurate information about what happened at the setting, as far as is lawfully possible to share given any police or coronial investigation.
- The family must be informed of all statutory processes that will follow, including the Child Death Review process, and must be supported to understand their rights within those processes.
- The family must be offered any personal items belonging to the child that are not required as evidence, at the appropriate time and in consultation with the police.
- The Nursery Manager must provide the family with information about bereavement support services, including the Child Bereavement UK helpline (0800 02 888 40) and NHS bereavement services.
- All subsequent contact with the family must be recorded in writing and retained on the child's file.
- The setting must not share any information about the death, the investigation, or the family's circumstances with other parents or third parties unless required to do so by law.

7. Supporting Staff and Other Children

7.1 Staff Welfare

A child's death is a deeply traumatic event for all staff. The Nursery Manager must take active steps to provide immediate and ongoing support.

- Staff must be offered a welfare debrief on the same day as the incident, in a private setting, led by the Nursery Manager or an appropriate external facilitator.
- Staff who were directly involved in first aid or the discovery of the child must be offered an immediate opportunity to step back from child-facing duties, with welfare cover provided for their room.
- The Nursery Manager must provide information about Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP), NHS mental health services, and voluntary sector support (e.g. Samaritans: 116 123) to all affected staff.

- Attendance at a formal critical incident debrief (see Section 9) is mandatory for all staff present on the day of the incident.
- Staff must be reminded that they are not expected to answer questions from parents, media, or other agencies, and that all enquiries should be directed to the Nursery Manager or DSL.
- Any member of staff who feels unable to return to work following the incident must be supported through the setting's sickness and absence procedures and offered referral to occupational health.

7.2 Supporting Other Children

Children who witnessed or were present during the incident may be affected and must be supported appropriately.

- Staff must be age-appropriately honest with children if asked about the absent child. Advice from a qualified child psychologist or the local authority early years advisory service should be sought before communicating with children in a group context.
- The setting must consult with parents of other children before addressing the incident in the setting. Parents must be given the opportunity to have these conversations with their own children at home first.
- Any child displaying signs of distress — regression, withdrawal, nightmares, changes in behaviour — must be monitored and their parents informed promptly.
- Staff must not tell children that the deceased child has 'gone to sleep', 'gone away', or similar euphemisms, which can cause confusion and distress. Honest, simple, and age-appropriate language should be used under the guidance of the Nursery Manager and, where available, a specialist.

8. Reporting and Recording

8.1 Contemporaneous Records

Accurate and timely record-keeping is essential for all subsequent statutory investigations. The following records must be created and maintained:

- **Incident Record:** The Nursery Manager must complete a formal Incident Record as soon as is practicable. This must include: the date, time and location of the incident; the name, date of birth and key contact details of the deceased child; a chronological account of events; the names of all staff and children present; the actions taken; and the times and names of all statutory notifications made.
- **Witness Statements:** Each member of staff present at the time of the incident must complete a personal witness statement in their own words as soon as possible after the immediate response phase, and before leaving the setting. Statements must be factual and objective. Staff must not compare or discuss their accounts with colleagues before writing them.
- **First Aid Record:** The first aider must complete a detailed record of the first aid administered, including: the time CPR was commenced; the techniques used; the response of the child; the time emergency services arrived and took over.
- **Notification Log:** A chronological log of every notification made must be maintained, recording: the name of the agency or person notified; the method of contact; the time of

notification; the name of the person spoken to; and any reference numbers or advice given.

- **Police Evidence Log:** Any directions given by police, including instructions not to disturb the scene, must be recorded along with the name and badge number of the officer giving the instruction.

8.2 Where Records are Stored

- All incident-related records must be stored securely in the Nursery Manager's office, in a locked filing cabinet designated for critical incident documents.
- Digital records must be stored in a password-protected folder on the setting's secure management system, accessible only to the Nursery Manager and DSL.
- Records must not be stored on personal devices or personal email accounts.
- All records relating to the incident must be retained until the date on which the deceased child would have reached the age of 25 years, in accordance with the guidance in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) and the setting's Record Retention Policy. This duty applies even if the setting changes ownership or closes.
- Any records requested by the police, coroner, Ofsted, or the Child Death Review Panel must be provided promptly and in accordance with any legal authorisation or production order.

8.3 Ofsted Notification

- **Ofsted must be notified via the GOV.UK online notification form:** www.gov.uk/report-serious-accident-childcare-setting
- The notification must be made as soon as reasonably practicable and in all circumstances within 14 days of the death.
- The notification must include: the setting's Ofsted registration reference number; the full address of the setting; the date and nature of the incident; the child's name and date of birth; and the actions taken by the setting.
- A copy of the Ofsted notification must be retained on file.
- **Failure to notify Ofsted within 14 days without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence** under the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025). The Nursery Manager must be aware of this and must prioritise this notification.

9. Critical Incident Debrief and Policy Review

9.1 Immediate Debrief

- A critical incident debrief meeting must be held within five working days of the incident, once the immediate emergency phase has concluded and pending any restriction placed upon this by the police or coroner. The DSL must note that the statutory Rapid Review submission deadline under Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) is 15 working days from the Serious Incident Notification. The debrief should therefore be timed to inform the setting's contribution to that process.
- The debrief must be facilitated by the Nursery Manager and should include the DSL, all staff present on the day, and, where possible, an external facilitator such as an early years consultant or local authority advisor.

- The purpose of the debrief is to: support staff welfare; identify any gaps in the setting's procedures; agree on any immediate actions required; and begin to document learning for future practice improvement.
- The debrief must not be used to apportion blame. It is a forward-looking exercise in learning and professional development.
- A written record of the debrief — including identified actions, responsible persons, and timescales — must be maintained on file.

9.2 Policy Review

This policy must be reviewed:

- Annually, as part of the setting's scheduled policy review cycle.
- Immediately following any incident to which this policy applies.
- Following any change to the EYFS Statutory Framework, relevant legislation, or statutory guidance.
- Following any feedback from Ofsted, the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board, or the Child Death Review process.

The review must be conducted by the Nursery Manager in consultation with the DSL, the owner or proprietor, and, where appropriate, an external early years consultant.

10. Staff Training and Preparedness

- All staff must be made aware of this policy at induction and must sign to confirm they have read and understood it.
- All staff must hold a current, in-date paediatric first aid qualification appropriate for their role. From 1 September 2025, all staff, students on placement, volunteers aged 17 or over, and apprentices aged 16 or over must hold a valid paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate if they are to be counted in statutory staff-to-child ratios. The setting must ensure that at least one person with a current full paediatric first aid certificate is on the premises and available at all times when children are present, and that a PFA-qualified adult accompanies children on outings.
- Paediatric First aid training must include CPR and must be renewed every three years, or as required by the first aid qualification body.
- This policy must be revisited at the annual all-staff safeguarding training session.
- The Nursery Manager and DSL must ensure that their safeguarding training is up to date and that child death procedures are covered in that training.
- Staff must also be familiar with the setting's associated policies, particularly the Child Protection Policy, the Accidents and Emergencies Policy, and the Communications and Social Media Policy.

See our Staff Training and Qualifications Policy for more information.

11. Related Policies and Documents

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Major Accidents Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

- First Aid Policy
- Communications and Social Media Policy
- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
- Record Keeping and Retention Policy
- Staff Welfare and Well-being Policy

12. Policy Sign-Off

Role	Name	Date
Owner/Director	Jonathan Duffy	June 2026

This policy was drafted in compliance with the EYFS Statutory Framework (DfE, September 2025 edition) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, March 2026 edition), and reflects verified current UK legislation and statutory guidance as at the date of adoption. It must be reviewed at least annually and immediately following any change to primary legislation or statutory guidance.
