

Attendance Guidance

for the Early Years Foundation Stage





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Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to support further improvements in the wellbeing of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), especially in keeping them safe and supporting their learning and development.

At the very least, good attendance promotes better outcomes for children. In a small number of cases, good attendance may also lead to early identification of more serious concerns for a child or their family. Attendance may also play a vital part in keeping a child or other family members safe from harm.

In Knowsley, our settings have developed good practice and procedures in promoting, supporting, recording, and monitoring the attendance of children in their care. This includes keeping accurate records of arrival and departure times for each child. It is in the best interests of children and families that all settings are aware of effective practice and this guidance has been drawn up to help leaders and managers review their procedures, identifying any areas where their systems or day-to-day practices may be improved and clearly outline actions that need to be taken if concerns emerge.

The aim of this guidance is to help settings use attendance information to:

- Ensure children's Safeguarding and Wellbeing.
- To encourage positive attitudes and aspirations and best outcomes for all children throughout their educational life.
- Ensure that children and families are supported effectively and undertake Early Help assessments and/or MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) referrals as necessary.



“Knowsley Early Years supporting local children and families to get the most from Early Education”

Why good attendance is important

Even for very young children, there are positive benefits to be gained from regular attendance, whatever the weekly pattern of childcare. This includes not only coming to every planned session, but also being there on time. It is important that all staff understand the principles of good attendance practice and the importance of good attendance by children.

Benefits include the following:

Good habits

- It builds in young children the idea that getting up and going to EARLY EDUCATION provider is simply what you do.
- Children who attend every planned session develop a feel for the rhythm of the week and gain a sense of security from some regular elements, even when the actual pattern or focus of their learning or activity may vary widely from week to week.

Secure relationships

- Young children find it easier to build and sustain a range of social relationships when they regularly attend their childcare setting, according to the pattern agreed with the family.
- For some families, particularly at times of stress, the child's regular attendance at a setting allows parents to get other things done and helps them enjoy spending time with the child when he or she is at home.

Self – esteem

- Children who rarely miss sessions at a setting and arrive on time are more likely to feel good about themselves. This is because they know what goes on and what to expect, feel more confident with the adults and the other children and have more opportunities to be valued and praised for their own special contribution.
- Children who regularly miss sessions or are generally late, can frequently experience a sense of having to try a little bit harder just to understand what is going on and what other children are talking about or doing.
- Regular attendance, on time, helps many young children to separate from their parents or carers at the start of the day and settle more readily into daily life in their setting. Some children may need some flexibility when they first start attending to settle in but there should be a clear, time-bound plan in place to ensure the attendance patterns are normalised as soon as possible.

Learning and development

- Staff carefully plan every session for each child in their care and want to take every opportunity to help them thrive; experiences gained in one session are often developed further in following sessions.
- Children learn in many different ways; through play with others and through being in the company of staff who actively support their learning and development.
- Underachievement is often linked to lower attendance. For some older students this is linked to a steadily deteriorating trend in attendance which is traceable right back to their first attendance with an EARLY YEARS childcare setting.

For all these reasons, good attendance and coming to a setting on time is important for every child, but especially those for whom specific factors make them more vulnerable to disengagement or underachievement. Most children are well supported by their families and continue to thrive, whatever their background or circumstances, however, there may be factors in children's lives which make it more likely that they could experience some difficulties. So, it is particularly important to pay close attention to the patterns of attendance for potentially vulnerable groups of children, including, for example:

- Children facing difficult family circumstances e.g., housing problems, bereavement, separation / divorce
- Children from families experiencing some degree of financial hardship, e.g., in receipt of benefits or claiming Free School Meals (FSM)
- Children with additional needs, learning difficulties or disabilities
- Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) or from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) families; or disabilities
- Children about whom other agencies have raised concerns, including those supported through Early Help. If any child's attendance starts to cause concern, it should be discussed with any other staff who work with any of the child's siblings who attend the setting and with the manager. This helps establish whether there are issues only for an individual child or if the family as a whole may be going through a difficult time



Promoting, recording and monitoring attendance

Keeping accurate attendance records is not just bureaucracy. Monitoring attendance is important for all children, but especially for those who are most vulnerable. When a child starts at the setting parents/carers should be informed of the importance of regular attendance and explain how the setting will monitor and steps they will take if there are any attendance concerns.

- Knowing when children have attended EARLY YEARS provision provides vital information to keep children safe from harm and help tackle underachievement.
- Having clear accessible attendance records helps identify children at risk and helps multiagency teams to understand, assess and support the widest possible range of needs for a child and his or her whole family.
- To ensure that attendance records support the work of safeguarding young children and promote their learning and development, it is important for senior managers and staff at all levels to pay attention to the following:
 - Keep full registration details for every child, as specified in the EYFS or childcare provider attendance legislation.
 - Keep accurate information about parents, carers and others who may accompany the child to and from the setting.
 - Make clear and accurate entries, whether you are using manual or electronic registers.
 - Consistently and thoroughly investigate all absences for individual children and their siblings and keep good records of the family's explanations.
 - Put in place some routine monitoring of attendance by governors, committees or the owner.
 - Put in place systematic and rigorous monitoring of the registers by senior leaders who are personally involved in ensuring accurate recording, identifying and addressing attendance issues and engaging parents.
 - Being rigorous in monitoring attendance and in identifying and analysing patterns of absence (often called 'broken weeks') and the number of sessions missed
 - Being rigorous and persistent in seeking and recording explanations for absence, however sensitively this is done
 - Develop good relationships with the family making sure that appropriate means of communication to meet family needs are used at all times

- Making sure (through induction and regular reminders) that all staff know what to do, and who to tell, if:
 - a child is absent/late; - a child has a changeable or deteriorating pattern of absence or lateness; or
 - a child goes missing
- Making sure that the setting knows where to turn to for advice or support or whom to alert if concerns arise.



Taking action

All settings will have their own procedures for dealing with attendance issues. It is important that staff at all levels, including leaders and managers, know how to respond to different problems. This is true for the attendance of all children but will be especially important if concerns about a child or family are involved with Early Help or Children's Social Care.

Process for Early Years (for funded 2, 3 and 4 year olds)



