

Attendance and Absence Policy



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Owner / approver	Leadership and Management Team / Ofsted Nominated Individual
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Dottie Tots Nursery School follows up unexpected absence promptly because it can signal that a child or family needs help. This policy tells parents how to report absence and tells staff what to do when a child does not attend a booked session. It applies to every child attending Bentley or Kingsley.

1. Purpose and legal basis

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework effective 1 September 2026 requires timely follow-up of absences, contact attempts with parents and alternative emergency contacts where a child is absent without notice or for a prolonged period, consideration of patterns and vulnerabilities, and referral to children's social care and/or a police welfare check where concerns arise. Providers must have an attendance policy shared with parents and carers that explains reporting expectations and follow-up actions (EYFS 3.11–3.12).

2. What parents and carers need to do

- Tell the setting before the child's booked start time whenever they will be absent or late. Use the setting telephone number or the approved parent communication channel given at registration. An urgent same-day message should be confirmed by telephone where possible.
- Explain the reason, expected duration, any relevant illness or safety concern, and how to contact the family. Update the nursery if the expected return date changes. For a planned holiday or appointment, give advance notice as soon as reasonably possible.
- Keep parental and alternative emergency contact details current. Tell the nursery about any change in collection, care arrangements or circumstances that could affect the child's safety or attendance.

3. Daily register and first follow-up

The setting records each child's name, key person and actual arrival and departure times each day, and checks the expected-attendance list against the register at the start of each booked session. If a child has not arrived and no explanation has been received, the assigned practitioner alerts the Nursery Manager / DSL or Deputy Manager / DDSL and starts follow-up promptly. The first attempt should be made within one hour of the child's booked start time, sooner where the child's circumstances warrant it. Staff do not wait until 10:00am for a child booked earlier if a timely call can be made sooner.

Staff telephone the parent or carer using the verified contact details. If they cannot confirm the child's whereabouts and safety, they try the other parent or carer and the alternative emergency contacts promptly. A message on an app or voicemail alone is not confirmation of safety. Staff record each attempt, time, number or channel, response, explanation and next action. If contact is still unsuccessful, the DSL assesses the child's circumstances and decides further action without waiting for a fixed number of days.

4. Risk assessment and escalation

The DSL considers the child's age, additional needs, known vulnerabilities, family circumstances, previous attendance pattern, any recent concern or agency involvement, and the possibility that the parent or carer is vulnerable. Repeated short absences, late arrival or sudden changes can be significant even where each individual absence has an explanation. There is no automatic three-day waiting period before a concern is escalated.

Where there is a concern about the child's safety or welfare, the local authority children's social care team is notified immediately in line with local reporting procedures. In an emergency, call 999. A police welfare check may be requested where appropriate, including where a child's safety cannot be established and the circumstances justify it. Staff may contact children's social care or the police directly where necessary; an unavailable DSL or internal discussion must not delay action. Record advice, decisions, action owners and follow-up under DT-P-01.1.

If the family is known to social care or another professional, the DSL considers timely information sharing and any agreed plan. Contacting another agency does not replace the nursery's responsibility to protect the child and pursue an unresolved concern.

5. Prolonged or repeated absence

The DSL determines whether absence is prolonged by professional judgement rather than a fixed day count. Staff review the reasons, contact history, child and parent vulnerabilities and any patterns. For planned or medically explained absence, the key person maintains proportionate contact, agrees an expected return and flags any new welfare concern. If an explanation cannot be verified or concern increases, follow the safeguarding route immediately. The manager reviews ongoing cases and records when and why follow-up is closed.

6. Roles and records

- Parents and carers report absence and keep contact information up to date.
- The opening practitioner or assigned staff member checks the register, starts contact attempts, records outcomes and alerts the DSL/DDSL. The key person helps identify changes or patterns.
- The Nursery Manager / DSL assesses risk, coordinates contact, makes or confirms safeguarding referrals and reviews patterns. The Deputy Manager / DDSL acts when the DSL is unavailable or implicated. The Head of Operations reviews implementation and unresolved patterns across settings.
- Records show each child's name, key person, booked and actual attendance, reasons given, every contact attempt, the risk assessment, advice, decisions, referrals, family communication and closure. Safeguarding records are restricted and cross-referenced without copying sensitive details into a general attendance register.

7. Sharing, training and review

This policy is shared with parents and carers at enrolment and whenever it changes materially; copies are available on request. Staff receive induction on the register, parent contact channels, escalation and recording, and managers check its use in practice. This policy is reviewed annually and sooner following an incident, audit finding or change to EYFS or local safeguarding arrangements.

8. Related documents and sources

- DT-P-01.1 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; DT-PR-01.1A Managing Allegations, Low-Level Concerns and LADO Procedure; DT-P-10.4 Complaints Policy and Procedure; Admissions Policy; Data Protection and Records arrangements.
- EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2026, paragraphs 3.11–3.12, 3.100 and 3.104. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
- Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Hampshire Children's Services live referral routes.

Appendix 1 — Staff acknowledgement

I confirm that I have read and understood DT-P-01.9. I will record attendance accurately, follow up unexplained absence promptly, record contact attempts and report safeguarding concerns without delay.

[illegible]

Appendix 1 — Staff acknowledgement (continued)

I confirm that I have read and understood DT-P-01.9. I will record attendance accurately, follow up unexplained absence promptly, record contact attempts and report safeguarding concerns without delay.

Name	Role	Signature	Date