

Essex Wildlife Trust

Nature Nursery: Managing Children’s Absence Policy and Procedure

A policy describes what we do and how we do it as an organisation. It is a set of agreed principles which set out a course of action adopted by our staff and volunteers. It will often include acceptable methods, behaviours, and an approved procedure. It is usually internal, although some organisational policies are expected to be publicly accessible.

Version Control

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When review is completed, please send to: businesssupport@essexwt.org.uk

Version	Date	Changes made by	Reason for change
2	15 June 2023	J Burlingham	Update to new format Remove specific references to Covid-19 Clarification on Safeguarding Team involvement

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Nature Nursery takes steps to ensure that children are kept safe, their wellbeing is promoted and they do not miss out on their entitlements and opportunities.
- 1.2 Good attendance promotes good outcomes for children.
- 1.3 In a small minority of cases, poor attendance may also lead to early identification of more serious concerns for a child or family, and can highlight where intervention may be required.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all children attending the Nature Nursery as daily registers are maintained.
- 2.2 Nature Nursery staff are responsible for maintaining the daily records during operation of the Nursery, including registers with sign in and out times.
- 2.3 Parents and carers have a responsibility to inform the setting of any planned or unplanned absence.

3. Purpose of Policy

- 3.1 As an Early Years setting, the Nature Nursery must actively encourage parents and carers to support the staff in ensuring attendance of the child.
- 3.2 Absence statistics are scrutinised by regulatory bodies and may feed into judgements or reports.
- 3.3 Parents or carers are expected to contact the setting at an early stage and to work with the Nursery staff in resolving any attendance issues together. If communication is not forthcoming or an action plan cannot be put into place, the setting may refer the child to other organisations for social care support.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 Absence is either authorised, such as in the case of illness or of religious/cultural observance, holidays or unauthorised, when there is no reason given for such absence or when it is considered that the explanation is unjustified or unreasonable by the Nursery Manager or deputy.
- 4.2 Monitoring of these records will take place regularly.
- 4.3 If absence is a persistent problem (15% or more) a meeting will be arranged at the setting with the parent/carer and Nursery Manager or deputy, including a referral to the Children Services, where necessary.
- 4.4 Occupancy and attendance data may be included in Impact reporting to the Board of Trustees.

5. Procedure

- 5.1 There are several reasons why a child may be absent from the nursery, including:
 - 5.1.1 holiday
 - 5.1.2 an appointment i.e. GP or Dentist
 - 5.1.3 travel/traffic delays
 - 5.1.4 illness or SEND; other emergencies

5.1.5 patterns of poor attendance linked to safeguarding and welfare concerns

- 5.2 In most cases it is reasonable to expect that parents/carers alert the setting as soon as possible, or in the case of appointments and holidays give adequate notice, to ensure absences are authorised.
- 5.3 Parents and carers are advised that they should contact the setting via phone call, message, email or the online portal by 10am, or within one hour of the time the child would have been expected, to advise of their absence.
- 5.4 The Nursery Manager or Deputy will also adhere to local safeguarding requirements, procedures and contact protocols for children who are absent or missing from childcare. This can involve any other member of the Safeguarding Team as required.
- 5.5 If a child who normally attends fails to arrive and no contact has been received from their parents, the Nursery Manager or Deputy takes immediate action to contact them to seek an explanation for the absence and be assured that the child is safe and well.
- 5.6 Attempts will be made to contact the child's parents or other named carers throughout the day on the first day of absence.
- 5.7 If contact is not successful with the parent/s and there are no means to verify the reason for the child's absence i.e. through an alternative named contact on the child's registration form, this is recorded as an unexplained absence and is followed up by the Nursery Manager or Deputy each day until contact is made. This will be recorded within the child's file.
- 5.8 All information concerning the child including any specific vulnerabilities, previous safeguarding or welfare concerns or protection plans will be taken into consideration.
- 5.9 If the child is considered to be vulnerable, or if there are ongoing welfare concerns, the DSL and Safeguarding Team will be contacted on the first day of absence with the intention of referring to Children's Services.
- 5.10 If contact has not been made within 3 working days for a child who routinely attends and is not considered at risk, the DSL and Safeguarding Team will be contacted with the intention of referring to Children's Services.
- 5.11 Whilst attendance at an early years setting is not mandatory, it is the responsibility of the Nursery manager or deputy to discuss any disruption to a child's attendance with the parents or carers to ascertain any potential barriers i.e. transport, working patterns etc and will work to offer support or flexibility where possible.
- 5.12 All absences are recorded within the daily registers (paper records), and any specific details are recorded within the child's file.
- 5.13 Daily registers are retained for at least three years, or until the next Ofsted inspection following a cohort of children moving on to school.

5.14 In the case of funded children, the local authority may use their discretion where absence is recurring or for extended periods taking into account the reason for the absence and impact on the nursery. It is the responsibility of the Nursery Manager to ensure the local authority is kept updated as appropriate. Funds can be reclaimed when a child is consistently absent from nursery.

6. Appendices

This policy is to be read in conjunction with wider Essex Wildlife Trust Policies and Procedures

- 6.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- 6.2 EYFS - Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (up to date version available via Government website)
- 6.3 Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults at risk policies and procedures Part 1 and 2