

Community Pre-Schools Non-Attendance Policy

Regular attendance for your children at Community Pre-schools is crucial for their social, emotional, and cognitive development and fosters positive attitudes toward education from an early age. However, there are times when children are absent from pre-school, either due to illness or other circumstances. A clear and consistent approach to non-attendance supports every child's right to a high-quality early education. By working in partnership with families, monitoring attendance closely, and providing timely support, Community Pre-schools can help ensure children thrive and reach their full potential. This policy is a living document, responsive to the needs of the community, and committed to safeguarding and nurturing every child enrolled.

Purpose of the Policy

The primary purpose of the non-attendance policy is to:

- Promote regular attendance and punctuality.
- Support families in understanding the importance of attendance.
- Identify patterns of non-attendance early to provide support and intervention as needed.
- Ensure the welfare and safety of each child.
- Fulfil statutory and regulatory requirements regarding attendance records.

This policy applies to all children enrolled in the pre-school, their families or guardians, and all managers and staff members responsible for children's attendance and well-being.

Attendance Expectations

- Children are expected to attend pre-school on all designated days according to their enrolment agreement.
- Families are encouraged to adhere to the scheduled start and finish times to promote routine and a sense of belonging for their child.
- Frequent or prolonged absences can adversely affect a child's development, as well as their ability to form relationships and adjust to group learning environments.

Acceptable Reasons for Non-Attendance

While regular attendance is highly encouraged, the following are considered valid reasons for absence:

- **Illness or Medical Appointments:** Children who are unwell should remain at home. This prevents the spread of contagious diseases and allows the child to recover fully. Medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside pre-school hours are also accepted reasons.
- **Family Emergencies:** Absences due to family emergencies such as bereavement, urgent family responsibilities, or unforeseen circumstances.
- **Religious or Cultural Observances:** Participation in significant cultural or religious events.
- **Other Exceptional Circumstances:** At the discretion of the pre-school director, other absences may be authorised

Notification of Absence

- Families must inform the pre-school as early as possible if their child will be absent, preferably before the start of the scheduled session.
- Notification should include the reason for absence and the anticipated duration.
- Absences can be reported by phone, email, or in person to the designated staff member or attendance officer.

Recording and Monitoring Attendance

- All absences are recorded daily in the pre-school's attendance register.
- The reason for each absence is noted to distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences.
- Attendance records are regularly reviewed by the pre-school administration to monitor patterns and identify any concerns.
- Non – attendance log sheets are used to look for a pattern of non-attendance

Authorised vs. Unauthorised Absence

- Authorised Absence: Absence for which a valid reason has been provided and accepted by the pre-school (e.g., illness, medical appointments, religious observance).
- Unauthorised Absence: Absence without a valid reason or insufficient communication from the family. Examples include vacations taken during term time without prior approval or unexplained absences.

Follow-Up Procedures

- If a child is absent without notification, the pre-school will contact the family by phone or email on the day of absence to ensure the child's safety and confirm the reason for non-attendance.
- For persistent or prolonged absences, the pre-school may arrange a meeting with the family to discuss the circumstances and offer support or guidance.
- In cases of ongoing unauthorised absence or safeguarding concerns, the Community Pre-school may refer the matter to appropriate external agencies, such as child welfare services, in accordance with local policies and regulations.
- If a child is absent for prolonged amount of time, Local authorities have guidelines on how much funding may be withdrawn. This may also result in notice to refund the Government Funding (FEEE) allowance.

Supporting Families

Pre-schools have a duty to work collaboratively with families to address barriers to attendance. This may include:

- Providing information and resources about the importance of early childhood education and regular attendance.
- Offering flexible arrangements where possible (e.g., staggered start times, transition support for new children).
- Signposting families to community services or support networks if needed.
- Ensuring staff are approachable and culturally sensitive in their communication with families from diverse backgrounds.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All information regarding children's attendance and reasons for absence is handled with strict confidentiality.
- Attendance records are stored securely and only accessed by authorised staff members.
- Personal data is processed in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

Attendance and Safeguarding

Maintaining accurate attendance records is a vital part of the pre-school's safeguarding responsibilities.

- Any unexplained or suspicious absence is immediately investigated to ensure the child's welfare.
- Staff are trained to recognise signs that may indicate neglect, abuse, or issues at home that could affect attendance.
- Concerns are escalated according to Community Pre-school's safeguarding policy and local guidelines.

Children with Chronic Illness or Additional Needs

Some children may experience ongoing medical conditions or additional needs that impact their attendance. The pre-school will:

- Develop individual attendance plans in consultation with families and relevant professionals.
- Offer reasonable adjustments and additional support where possible to facilitate regular attendance.
- Work with healthcare providers, therapists, or external support agencies as appropriate.

Review and Evaluation of the Policy

- Review annually to ensure it remains current and effective.
- Feedback from families and staff is welcomed and considered in each review cycle.
- Any updates to statutory guidance or best practice are incorporated promptly.

