08. ATTENDANCE, PUNCTUALITY & ABSENCE

Aim

We aim to promote good attendance and punctuality in partnership with parents and carers in early years, ensuring that good habits are formed early so that children are school ready. We recognise the importance of monitoring attendance and will encourage families to participate in early education by ensuring that children take advantage of their funded entitlement of hours, if eligible.

Rationale

The Statutory Framework for the Early Year Foundation Stage (2024) defines that providers must work in partnership with parents/carers to promote the learning and development of all children in their care, and to ensure they are ready for school. As stated in Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings, Ofsted expects Early Years providers to promote good attendance within their settings.

Regular attendance has a positive impact on all aspects of a young child's learning and development:

- regular attendance and good punctuality are important for maximising achievement and obtaining the greatest benefit from education;
- good relationships with children and their families are vital in encouraging regular attendance and punctuality;
- children settle well and want to attend settings when they feel valued and have a sense of belonging; and
- good habits of attendance and punctuality are key skills for adult life.

Attendance monitoring

We promote good attendance and punctuality by:

- ensuring children attend for the expected hours, arriving and leaving at the stated session times
- recording arrival and departure times in on the paper register;
- recording late arrivals or early collections on the register and including the reason
- monitoring late arrival and early collection via the paper register;
- requiring parents/carers to call the setting if they are going to be late or absent;
- communicating with parents/carers and following up on non-notification of absences and poor punctuality as part of promoting good attendance and punctuality; and

- following up consistent poor attendance and punctuality and making a record of it as appropriate.

Absence procedures

This attendance policy should be used in line with our safeguarding policy if a child's attendance is becoming a concern.

- We will inform parents/carers about this process.
- Ensure children are signed in/recorded on the registers promptly.
- Manager will listen to absence calls and/or read absence emails.
- Bring together registers, lates, absence calls - produce the list of children absent with no explanation (we will double check in rooms before we start calling).
- We will then start first day calling for children absent without explanation; we will call everyone on the contact list until we get an answer. We will leave messages if there is a voicemail option. However, we will not leave it at that.
- We might get an overseas ring tone and consider if the family are taking a holiday, they haven't informed us about?
- We will call the contact list at least twice.
- By this stage, if we have a good contact list (4 numbers minimum) we probably have a reply.
- If we have been unsuccessful at receiving a reply, we will consider whether any children have additional agency support, such as a social worker, and we will contact them.
- We will explore any internal intelligence within the provision to find out if anyone knows the family.
- If we cannot get an answer, we will refer immediately to Hounslow Children's services Front Door/Police and request a welfare call.

Children/Families accessing free entitlement places

What should I do if a child registers for a free entitlement place and he/she does not show up on the first day?

If you have claimed the free entitlement for a child who does not attend on the first day contact the parent(s)/carer(s) to ask if the child will still be taking up the place. Find out the date they intend to start instead, if at all, and then make the appropriate adjustment via the claims process later in the term.

However, if the parent(s)/carer(s) keep giving you a start date (or you are unable to contact them) and they do not show up by the end of the second week, you must write to the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them that their free entitlement place has been withdrawn. Copies of all correspondence should be kept in the child's records (in compliance with United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation (UK-GDPR)). Ensure that you make an adjustment via the claims process.

The steps we will take for unnotified absences of children with a free entitlement place

In addition to the procedure above

1. Ask the parent(s)/carer(s) for the child's expected return date.
2. If the child still does not return on the expected date, we will follow up with another telephone call and if the family are known to services, we will inform the support worker that the child has still not returned.
3. Work with the support worker to try and re-engage the child again.
4. If the child still does not return, we will agree with the support worker what the funding end date should be. This is to give services any additional time they need to try and re-engage the family. Once the date has been agreed, we will send a letter to the family to inform them that the free entitlement place has been withdrawn.
5. If we do re-engage with the parent, we will discuss/consider a reduction in the number of sessions per week or a change in the session times if it would help with the child's attendance. We will make every effort to encourage and support improved attendance.
6. The parent(s)/carer(s) will be advised that any further absences may result in the funding being withdrawn. We will continue monitoring attendance and contact the support worker if the absence continues or the attendance remains low.
7. NB: If you are aware that the child's place was brokered via the 2 Year Old Early Learning Officer, please contact her and follow the steps above.

If funding is withdrawn - we will be paid for a 2 week notice period from when a decision has been made to withdraw the entitlement.

What is an acceptable number of weeks a child may take a holiday and still receive the entitlement?

Term time (non-stretched offer) – it is not acceptable for a child to take a holiday during term time just as it is in schools.

All year round (stretched offer) – it is acceptable for a child to take up to 6 weeks holiday over a twelve-month period.

If there is an exceptional circumstance, please contact Early Education Funding Team to discuss.

Supporting families

We recognise that sometimes families may need extra support with attendance and punctuality, therefore good communication is essential between them and their child's key person. We will work with parents/carers to support a child's good attendance and punctuality.

Safeguarding

We all have a duty to keep children safe. If we are concerned about the welfare of a child who is absent, we reserve the right to contact Children's Services.

Children's Services:

- If the child is known to Children's Services and has an allocated Social Worker:
- 020 8583 6600 (option 2 followed by option 1)
- If worried about a child, to report concerns:
- 020 8583 6600 (option 2 followed by option 3)
- Email: childrensocialcare@hounslow.gov.uk

Out of hours (after 5pm weekdays or weekends)- 020 8583 2222.

For further information please contact

Early Education Funding Team

earlyyearsandchildcare@hounslow.gov.uk

020 8583 6421

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