**Attendance and non-attendance guidance for Early Years settings**

**Introduction**

Whilst the legal requirements for attendance do not apply to children under 5, there are many positive benefits for children aged 0-5 years regularly attending an Early Years setting. Benefits for children who regularly attend an early years setting include:

* positive impact on children’s learning and development.
* promoting language and communication skills.
* helping children to build and maintain positive relationships with their peers.
* helping children to build and maintain positive relationships with trusted adults.
* beginning to establish a good routine of attending an education setting which in turn helps them to be school ready.
* develop in their independence and curiosity.

For all these reasons, good attendance and arriving on time is important for every child, the importance of good attendance is included in the [Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2) , [Ofsted Early Years Inspection Handbook](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif/early-years-inspection-handbook-for-ofsted-registered-provision-for-september-2023) and [Education inspection framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework/education-inspection-framework-for-september-2023#what-inspectors-will-consider-when-making-judgements).

This guidance aims to help early years providers and their staff to have clear and effective attendance practice to ensure the safeguarding of all children in their setting, to raise the outcomes for children and to provide early help and support at the earliest opportunity. By offering information and practical suggestions about promoting, supporting, recording, and monitoring the attendance of Shropshire’s early years children. We recognise that many early years settings already have good practices and procedures in place for doing this including, keeping daily records of the names of the children being cared for on the premises and their hours of attendance in line with the EYFS.

**Children at greater risk of harm**

We are aware that non-attendance, poor attendance, inconsistency in attendance or frequent lateness may be a sign or indicator of further concerns or where early help support for the child and/or family is required, and that the early years setting may be a protective factor for the child and/or family. It is important that we recognise that there are some factors that mean a child is potentially at greater risk of harm than others and that where there are multiples of these factors the level of vulnerability is increased.

* Concerns around sleep, nutrition, cleanliness, development.
* Family dynamics changing through bereavement, separation, divorce.
* Family facing financial hardship - benefits, change in employment, housing.
* Families for whom English is an additional language.
* Children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities
* Families where early help support has been reoccurring.
* Children who are classed as a Child in Need
* Children on Child Protection Plans.

**Promoting Attendance**

Encouraging and supporting good attendance at the setting through -

* Having welcoming atmosphere, where staff are positive and please to see both children and parents.
* Acknowledging the children’s arrival.
* Have a morning routine so children know what they will be doing when they arrive.
* Building good positive relationships between children, staff, and parents/ carers.
* Being sensitive and supportive around families’ circumstances.
* Being aware of potential needs of both the children and their parents and think about what appropriate arrangements can be made to support them in attending the setting (arriving at a quieter time/ communication needs).
* Considering if there are any reasonable adjustments that can be made to support children or parents with SEND.
* Offer support/guidance to parents/ carers who struggle to get their child ready in time.

**Recording and monitoring attendance**

The EYFS requires all early years providers to record child’s attendance “Providers **must** hold the following documentation - A daily record of the names of the children being cared for on the premises, their hours of attendance and the names of each child's key person.”

Documenting when a child is at the setting will provide useful information on the day for ratios’ and if there was a need to evacuate it also will provide an accurate record to show if there are patterns in attending/ non attending. Having clear accessible attendance records helps identify children who maybe at an increased risk of harm and helps multiagency teams to understand, assess and support the widest possible range of needs for a child and their whole family.

Parents/ carers should be made aware of the importance of consistent good attendance and that you explain the reasons why and how you as a setting monitor attendance. You should also inform parents/ carers that as a setting you will be:

* Keeping full registration details for every child, as specified in the [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage for group and school providers (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65aa5e42ed27ca001327b2c7/EYFS_statutory_framework_for_group_and_school_based_providers.pdf).
* Keeping accurate information about parents, carers and others who may accompany the child to and from the Early Years setting (Including records of who does/ does not have a legal right of access to each child and to make sure that key people know the situation for each individual child.)
* Consistently and thoroughly follow up on all absences for individual children and their siblings and keep good records of the family’s explanations.
* Conducting regular audits on attendance, looking at patterns and potential increases in absence. These will be completed by seniors/ room leaders/ managers/ committee members.

**Responsibilities/ Expectations**

All early years settings will have their own procedures for dealing with attendance issues, practitioners should be aware of who to inform and the importance of informing them if any of the following occur:

* a child is absent/late.
* a child has a changeable or deteriorating pattern of absence or lateness.
* a child goes missing.

It is important that practitioners at all levels, know how to respond to different problems and where to access advice, support or whom to alert if concerns arise. If a child’s attendance starts to cause concern, the Key Person should discuss this with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and practitioners who work with any of the child’s siblings who come to the same setting. This helps establish whether there are issues only for an individual child or if the family as a whole maybe going through a difficult time.

Children’s non-attendance should be included within their records ideally in a chronology as this will help to identify any patterns or connections with other significant events that are recorded. If you are not aware of a child’s non-attendance until the day you should attempt to discuss the reason with their parent and add this information to the child’s record/ chronology.

When a child has an EHCP and there are concerns relating to their attendance it is important that you communicate this to the early years SEND team.

When a child’s place includes entitlement funding it is important that you complete an Early Years Entitlement Attendance Monitoring form.

**Points to consider**

* Do you ask parents/ carers to tell you if their child is going to have planned absence and provide a reason?
* Do you ask parents/ carers to inform you when a child has unplanned absence- if so, do you expect the parent to call or do you accept texts/ emails?
* Do you expect to be informed by a certain time?
* How long do you leave it before contacting the parent if the child does not arrive and the parent has not contacted you – do you contact them by phone, text/ emails?
* Who is responsible for contacting the parent/carer?  - Where do you record this information?
* What do you do if there is no reply when you call the parents/ carer, and the child does not arrive at your setting the next day?
* Do you keep a record of the discussions and actions you have taken when following up non-attendance?
* Do you consider what reasonable adjustments or support you can offer to support a children or parents with SEND?
* Do parents/ carers have to pay when their child is absent? Are they informed of this?
* Do you charge parents/ carers if your setting closes due to unforeseen circumstances such as a power failure, or heavy snow? This information should be included in your emergency closure policy.
* Do you charge parents/ carers if you are open during poor weather conditions, and they are unable to bring their child to your setting?
* If you run a before or after school club and a child on booked in does not show up, what do you do? Do you contact the school/class teacher and the parents?

**Flow Chart of actions**

If you have any concerns about a child’s safety or welfare, please follow your safeguarding policy. If those concerns are about a chid immediate safety contact 999/ 101.

**Attendance 90 % or below**

**Increase in Frequency of Absence**

Meeting to take place with parent/ carer

* Talk through reasons for absence
* look at what potential support can be put into place
* Are there any reasonable adjustments that can be made by setting / parents?

Is there an acceptable reason?

YES

No

YES

YES

Record your discussion / add to chronology.

Does the child have any SEND needs?

Are there any safeguarding concerns?

Does the child have an EHCP?

Contact FPOC / EHAST to discuss concerns and further actions needed.

Yes

No

No

Inform Shropshire early years team and if applicable complete Early Years Entitlement Attendance Monitoring form.

Are there any safeguarding concerns?

Contact FPOC / EHAST to discuss concerns and further actions needed.

Contact Early years SEND team and if applicable complete Early Years Entitlement Attendance Monitoring form.

Has there been any improvement in attendance?

YES

No

No

YES

Yes

Yes

No further actions needed.