Cambridgeshire County Council

early years childcare and school readiness service

Child attendance & absence Policy
Under Fives Roundabout

September 2026

1. Purpose of policy

The purpose of this guidance is to support further improvements in the wellbeing of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), especially in keeping them safe and supporting their learning and development. Whilst there is no national guidance for children of non-statutory school age, this guidance has been developed in line with the statutory guidance with the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage), DfE (Department for Education) and the Ofsted Early Years Inspection Toolkit

Early Years Attendance Guidance

By following this guidance, you contribute to safeguarding children and ensuring they receive an education. Many schools and settings have good practices and procedures in promoting, supporting, recording and monitoring the attendance of children in EYFS. This includes keeping accurate records of the daily times or arrival and departure of each child. It is clearly in the best interests of children and families that all schools and settings are aware of effective practice.

Staff Awareness and Compliance

All staff within your early years setting should be familiar with this guidance or your provision's attendance policy. If you choose to implement your own attendance policy, ensure it includes all relevant safeguarding and compliance measures. Staff must clearly understand the importance of good attendance and the necessity of maintaining best practices.

Children's Rights and Early Years Framework

Children of non-statutory school age have the right to health and early years services that support their full potential. The EYFS statutory framework outlines providers' responsibilities in partnership with parents/carers to promote learning, development, and school readiness. Practitioners must actively promote good attendance in line with EYFS requirements. Inspectors will assess whether staff are vigilant to potential safeguarding concerns, including:

- Poor or irregular attendance
- Persistent lateness
- Children missing from education
- Prolonged Absence (PA) Monitoring

From September 2025, (EYFS 2026, sec.3.11 & 12) under new EYFS guidance, all early year's settings must monitor and track prolonged absences (PA) as part of safeguarding.

Conversations with Parents Regarding Poor Attendance
Discussing attendance concerns with parents of non-statutory school-age children can be challenging, as parents may assert that their child is not legally required to be in education. While this is correct, it is essential to remind parents of the benefits of regular attendance, as outlined above. Good attendance establishes positive habits, prepares children for school, fosters secure relationships, and builds self-esteem.

Additionally, if a parent is claiming funding for a child who is not attending or has prolonged absences, this must be addressed. Parents should be informed that both Local Authorities (LAs) and early years settings have a safeguarding duty to follow up on poor attendance and confirm the child's whereabouts.

This guidance specifically aims to help settings to use good attendance practice to:
• Ensure Safeguarding for children
• Raising outcomes for all children and supporting behaviours and attitudes to education.
• Ensure that children and families are supported effectively and undertake Early Help assessment and/or Children's Social Care referrals as required.

Why good attendance is important
Even for very young children, there are positive benefits to be gained from regular attendance, whatever the weekly pattern of childcare. This includes not only coming to every planned session but also being there on time. It is important that all staff understand the principles of good attendance practice and the importance of good attendance by children.

Benefits include the following:
Good habits
• It builds in young children the idea that getting up and going to school or pre-school is simply what you do.
• Children who attend every planned session develop a feel for the rhythm of the week and gain a sense of security from some regular elements, even when the actual pattern or focus of their learning or activity may vary widely from week to week.
Secure relationships
• Young children find it easier to build and sustain a range of social relationships when they regularly attend their childcare setting, according to the pattern agreed with the family.
• For some families, particularly at times of stress, the child's regular attendance at the setting allows parents to get other things done and helps them enjoy spending time with the child when he or she is at home.
Self - esteem
• Children who rarely miss sessions at the setting and come on time are more likely to feel good about themselves. This is because they know what goes on and what to expect, feel more confident with adults and other children and have more opportunities to be valued and praised for their own special contribution.

• Children who regularly miss sessions or are generally late, can frequently experience a sense of having to try a little bit harder just to understand what is going on and what other children are talking about or doing.
• Regular attendance on time helps many young children to separate from their parents or carers at the start of the day and settle more readily into daily life in their setting.

Some children may need some flexibility when they first start attending to settle in but there should be a clear, time-bound plan in place to ensure the attendance patterns are normalised as soon as possible.

Learning and development
• Staff carefully plan every session for each child in their care and want to take every opportunity to help them thrive; experiences gained in one session are often developed further following the sessions.
• Children learn in many different ways; through playing with others and through being in the company of staff who actively support their learning and development.
• Underachievement is often linked to lower attendance. Good attendance and coming to the setting on time is important for every child, but especially those for whom specific factors make them more vulnerable to disengagement or underachievement.

Most children are well supported by their families and continue to thrive, whatever their background or circumstances, however, there may be factors in children's lives which make it more likely that they could experience some difficulties. So, it is particularly important to pay close attention to the patterns of attendance for potentially vulnerable groups of children, including, for example:
• Children facing difficult family circumstances e.g., housing problems, bereavement, separation/ divorce.
• Children from families experiencing some degree of financial hardship, e.g., in receipt of benefits.
• Children with additional needs, learning difficulties or disabilities.
• Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL)
• Children about whom other agencies have raised concerns, including those supported. through Early Help.

If any child's attendance starts to cause concern, it should be discussed with any other staff who work with any of the child's siblings who attend other settings and with the manager/DSL. This helps establish whether there are issues only for an individual child or if the family may be going through a challenging time.

In our setting, we will:
Promote, record, and monitor attendance
Monitoring attendance is important for all children, but especially for those who are most vulnerable. When a child starts at the setting parents/carers should be informed of the importance of regular attendance and explain how the setting will monitor and steps they will take if there are any attendance concerns.
• Knowing when children have attended the setting provides vital information to keep children safe from harm and help tackle underachievement.

• Have clear accessible attendance records helps identify children at risk and helps multi agency teams to understand, assess and support the widest possible range of needs for a child and his or her whole family.
• Ensure that attendance records support the work of safeguarding young children and promote their learning and development, it is important for senior managers and staff at all levels to pay attention to the following:
• Keep full registration details for every child, as specified in the EYFS.
• Keep accurate information about parents, carers and others who may accompany the child to and from the setting, with at least two emergency contacts for each child, where possible.
• Make clear and accurate entries, whether using manual or electronic registers.
• Consistently and thoroughly investigate all absences for individual children and their siblings and keep good records of the family's explanations.
• Put in place some routine monitoring of attendance by committee, or the owner.
• Put in place systematic and rigorous monitoring of the registers by senior leaders who are personally involved in ensuring accurate recording, identifying, and addressing attendance issues and engaging parents.
• Being rigorous in monitoring attendance and in identifying and analysing patterns of absence and the number of sessions missed.
• Where extended absences occur for medical reasons, appropriate support should be given to the family depending on their needs. Keeping a place open may smooth the way for a phased return, and the best approach should be agreed upon with the parent/carer and any professional who may be working with the family.

- **If a child has been absent for four weeks within the same funding period, the Provider must contact the Early Years Funding Team.**

• Being rigorous and persistent in seeking and recording explanations for absence, however sensitively this is done.
• Develop good relationships with the family making sure that appropriate means of communication to meet family needs is used at all times.
• Making sure (through induction and regular reminders) that all staff know what to do, and who to tell, if:
• a child is absent/late; - a child has a changeable or deteriorating pattern of absence or lateness; or
• a child goes missing.
• Making sure that the setting knows where to turn to for advice or support or whom to alert if concerns arise.

Adoption and annual review of policy

	Under Fives Roundabout
held on:	*08/09/2026*
Signed on behalf of the Management Committee / Proprietor:	*Samantha Capes*
	(insert role of signatory)

This policy was reviewed on:	*(insert date)*	*(insert signature)*