



Attendance Policy

Good attendance supports children's learning, wellbeing, settling, security and sense of belonging. Although attendance at an early years setting is not compulsory, Cherish Childcare records and monitors attendance and follows up unexplained or concerning absence as part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

Purpose and principles

This policy explains how Cherish Childcare promotes, records and monitors attendance and the action we take when a child is absent. We aim to work in partnership with parents and carers, remove barriers to attendance where possible and remain professionally curious when absence may indicate a welfare or safeguarding concern.

Regular attendance and punctuality are particularly important for children attending part-time, as consistent routines help children settle, build relationships and gain the greatest benefit from their time at the setting.

Our attendance expectations

- Parents and carers should inform the nursery as soon as possible on the first day of illness or other unexpected absence and provide an expected return date, or keep us updated if the absence continues.
- Planned days off, holidays, religious observance and known appointments should be notified to the nursery in advance wherever possible.
- Unexplained absence will be followed up promptly.
- Parents and carers should keep all telephone numbers, email addresses, work or study contact details and emergency contacts up to date.
- Where possible, more than two emergency contact numbers should be provided for each child; City and Hackney guidance recommends at least three contact numbers wherever possible.

Authorised absence

Although attendance at nursery is not statutory, absence may include circumstances such as:

- illness of the child;
- illness of a sibling, parent or carer;
- bereavement;
- health appointments;
- holidays or extended family visits overseas;

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- religious observance; or
- emergency or exceptional circumstances.

Family contact details and circumstances

We need accurate family contact information so that we can contact parents and carers promptly about attendance, welfare or emergencies. Parents and carers must tell us when contact details change.

Parents and carers are also asked to tell us about relevant changes in the child's home circumstances or any known vulnerability affecting the child, parent, carer or family. This helps us respond appropriately if the child is absent. If a parent or carer is unsure what information may be relevant, they should speak with the manager.

Recording and monitoring attendance

- The register is completed at the start of each session, within 10 minutes of the expected start time.
- Attendance and reasons for notified absence are recorded accurately.
- Managers and staff review attendance so that emerging patterns, repeated absence or changes in attendance can be identified and considered.
- Staff remain alert to the possibility that non-attendance may be an indicator of abuse, neglect, family difficulty or another safeguarding concern.
- Particular attention is given to children known to be vulnerable, including children with additional needs or disabilities and children subject to a Child in Need Plan, Child Protection Plan or safeguarding referral.

Absence procedure

If a child is absent and the nursery has not received an explanation, the following process will be used. The response may be accelerated at any point where the child or family is known to be vulnerable or the circumstances cause concern.

Step 1 – First-day contact

We will telephone, text or email the parent/carers on the first day of unexplained absence. We will use the main contact details held for the family and establish the reason for absence and, where possible, the expected return date.

Step 2 – Further contacts

If the main parent/carers cannot be reached, we will contact the second parent/carers where applicable and then work through the emergency contact numbers held for the child. If there has still been no response, contact attempts will continue and will normally be repeated on the second day of absence.

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Step 3 – Consider vulnerability and safeguarding

If contact cannot be established, the manager will consider the child's circumstances, known vulnerabilities, patterns of attendance and any other information held by the setting. Where vulnerability is known, or it is unclear whether there are vulnerability factors, the response may be escalated without waiting for the normal sequence of contacts.

Step 4 – Escalation

Where appropriate, Cherish Childcare may implement safeguarding procedures. This may include seeking advice or making a referral to Children's Social Care and, in more urgent circumstances, requesting a police welfare check. A home visit may be considered where this is judged appropriate by management.

Children known to be vulnerable

Arrangements for monitoring and reporting attendance may be agreed for children who are particularly vulnerable. This can include children with additional needs or disabilities, children subject to a Child in Need Plan or Child Protection Plan, children who are the subject of a safeguarding referral, or children whose family circumstances create additional vulnerability.

Where a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or is involved in an active safeguarding referral, unexplained absence will be reported promptly to Children's Social Care in accordance with the child's plan and agreed procedures.

Working with families

Our first approach is to work constructively with parents and carers. Where attendance becomes a concern, the key person and/or manager may discuss barriers with the family and consider what support could help. This may include signposting or referral to relevant services where appropriate.

We recognise that families may sometimes need additional support. Attendance concerns will therefore be considered in the context of the child's wellbeing, family circumstances and any wider support already in place.

Leaving Cherish Childcare

If a parent or carer decides to withdraw a child from Cherish Childcare, the notice requirements in the Parent Contract and Terms and Conditions must be followed. This enables us to close the child's place appropriately and prevents unexplained non-attendance being treated as a safeguarding concern.

If a child is moving to another early years setting or school, parents and carers should provide the new setting's details so that relevant essential information can be transferred, including funding information and any information that needs to follow the child to support continuity of care and safeguarding.

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Links with safeguarding

Attendance is part of Cherish Childcare's wider safeguarding practice. Where absence, repeated lateness, changes in attendance or unsuccessful attempts to contact a family cause concern, staff must share the concern with the manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead and follow the setting's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

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