Child Absence and Attendance Policy

Effective from: 1 September 2026

Policy review date: September 2027

Applies to: All children attending St.Nicholas NurseryNursery

Relevant framework: Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers – effective 1 September 2026

Purpose

At St.Nicholas Nursery, the safety, welfare and well-being of every child is our highest priority.

This policy sets out how St.Nicholas Nursery manages children's attendance and absence. It provides clear expectations for parents and carers and clear procedures for staff.

- is absent with prior notification;
- is absent without notification;
- is absent for a prolonged period;
- has a pattern of absence that may cause concern; or
- cannot be accounted for or their whereabouts cannot be confirmed.

The policy supports our safeguarding responsibilities under the **EYFS 2026**, particularly the requirement for providers to follow up absences in a timely manner and to consider whether an absence may indicate a safeguarding or welfare concern.

EYFS 2026 Requirements

The EYFS 2026 statutory framework states that providers must:

- follow up children's absences in a timely manner;
- make attempts to contact parents/carers and alternative emergency contacts where a child is absent without notification or for a prolonged period;

- consider patterns and trends in a child's absence;
- consider the child's personal circumstances, vulnerability, the vulnerability of parents/carers and the child's home life;
- use professional judgement when determining whether an absence is prolonged;
- refer safeguarding concerns to local children's social care services and/or request a police welfare check where appropriate; and
- have an attendance policy which is shared with parents/carers and explains how absences should be reported and what action the nursery will take when a child is absent without notification or for a prolonged period.

These requirements are set out in paragraphs **3.11 and 3.12 of the EYFS 2026 framework**.

Why Attendance and Absence Matter

Regular attendance and timely communication are important because an unexplained absence may sometimes indicate that a child or family requires support.

An absence may be caused by something routine, such as illness, a medical appointment or a family commitment. However, an unexplained or repeated absence may also be associated with:

- illness or a change in a child's health;
- family difficulties or crisis;
- domestic circumstances;
- neglect;
- a child protection concern;
- parental or family vulnerability;
- changes in the child's home circumstances; or
- a child or family becoming difficult to contact.

Staff must therefore remain professionally curious and consider the individual circumstances rather than treating absence simply as an attendance or administrative matter.

Parents and Carers – Reporting an Absence

Parents and carers are expected to notify St.Nicholas Nurseryas soon as they know that their child will not be attending.

How to Report an Absence

Parents/carers should use the **St.Nicholas Nurseryfamily App** and record the absence before the child's expected arrival/session.

Where possible, parents should provide notification **at least one hour before the expected arrival time**.

Where this is not possible, parents/carers should contact the nursery by telephone at the earliest opportunity.

Information to Provide

Parents/carers should provide:

- child's name;
- date of absence;
- reason for absence;
- relevant information about illness or symptoms, where applicable;
- whether the child is expected to return on their next booked day; and
- any other information that may be relevant to the child's welfare.

Parents do not need to provide unnecessary personal information. Information shared with the nursery will be handled confidentially and in accordance with data protection requirements.

If a Child Does Not Arrive and No Absence Has Been Reported

If a child is expected to attend and does not arrive, and no absence has been reported, the nursery will take timely action.

Step 1 – Check Attendance Records

The child's attendance record will be checked to confirm:

- the child's expected attendance;
- booked days/hours;
- whether an absence notification has been received; and
- whether there has been any communication from the family.

Step 2 – Contact the Parent/Carer

The nursery will attempt to contact the child's parent/carer using the contact details held on the child's record.

Staff will seek to establish:

- whether the child is safe;
- the reason for the absence;
- where appropriate, whether the child is expected to return; and
- whether there are any immediate welfare concerns.

Step 3 – Contact Emergency Contacts

If the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the nursery will attempt to contact the alternative emergency contacts held on the child's record.

Attempts to make contact will be recorded, including:

- date and time;
- person contacted;
- method of contact;
- outcome; and
- any further action required.

Step 4 – Safeguarding Consideration

If the child's whereabouts remain unknown, or there are concerns about the child's safety or welfare, the matter will be escalated to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or Deputy DSL.

The DSL will consider the circumstances and take appropriate action in accordance with the nursery's safeguarding procedures and local safeguarding arrangements.

Where necessary, this may include contacting:

- Children's Social Care;
- the police;
- another relevant safeguarding professional; or
- requesting a police welfare check.

The EYFS 2026 specifically requires concerns arising from absence to be referred to local children's social care services and/or for a police welfare check to be requested where appropriate.

Prolonged Absence

There is **no single number of days that automatically define a prolonged absence**.

EYFS 2026 requires providers to use professional judgement when determining whether an absence is prolonged.

When considering prolonged absence, the nursery will take account of:

- the child's age;
- the child's individual circumstances;
- the reason given for the absence;
- whether contact has been maintained with the family;
- the child's known vulnerabilities;
- the vulnerability of the parent/carer;
- the child's home circumstances;
- previous attendance patterns;
- any existing safeguarding concerns;
- whether the family has become difficult to contact; and
- any other information known to the nursery.

This means that a prolonged absence may require action sooner for one child than another.

Patterns and Trends in Attendance

St.Nicholas Nurserywill monitor attendance and absence patterns.

Staff and managers will consider whether there are:

- repeated unexplained absences;
- frequent absences;
- repeated absences on particular days;
- changes in a child's usual attendance;
- prolonged periods away from nursery;
- repeated illness without further explanation;
- difficulties contacting parents/carers; or
- changes in attendance alongside other concerns about the child or family.

A pattern of absence does not automatically mean that there is a safeguarding concern. However, it should prompt appropriate professional curiosity and, where necessary, discussion with the family and/or DSL.

Safeguarding and Professional Curiosity

Absence must be considered alongside the wider picture of the child.

Staff should not make assumptions about the reason for absence.

Where a child is already known to have additional needs, vulnerabilities or safeguarding concerns, the nursery may consider absence more closely and seek advice from the DSL.

Information should be shared appropriately and proportionately with relevant professionals where there is a safeguarding reason to do so.

The EYFS 2026 requires every practitioner to remain alert to issues of concern in a child's life at home or elsewhere.

Emergency Contact Information

EYFS 2026 requires providers to maintain emergency contact details for parents/carers.

The framework states that, **where possible, settings should hold more than two emergency contact numbers for each child**.

St.Nicholas Nurserytherefore asks parents/carers to provide sufficient emergency contact information to enable the nursery to contact someone if the parent/carer cannot be reached.

Parents/carers should provide, where available:

- full name;
- relationship to the child;
- telephone/mobile number;
- alternative contact number where available; and
- confirmation that the person is an appropriate emergency contact.

Parents/carers must inform the nursery promptly if:

- a telephone number changes;
- an emergency contact is no longer available;
- an emergency contact should no longer be contacted; or
- new emergency contact information should be added.

Emergency contact information will be kept securely and used appropriately.

Illness and Infectious Disease

Parents/carers must inform the nursery if their child's absence is due to illness.

Where appropriate, parents should provide information about:

- symptoms;
- diagnosis, if known;
- treatment or medication;
- whether medical advice has been sought; and
- expected return date.

The nursery will follow its **Health, Illness and Medication procedures** and relevant public health guidance when determining whether a child can safely return to nursery.

Absence due to illness will not automatically be treated as a safeguarding concern. However, repeated, unexplained or unusual absence may require further discussion or consideration by the DSL.

Planned Absence

Parents/carers should notify the nursery in advance where a child will be absent for reasons such as:

- medical or dental appointments;
- family circumstances;
- holidays;
- religious or cultural events; or
- other planned reasons.

The nursery will record the absence and consider whether any additional information or action is required.

Where absence is likely to be extended, parents/carers should keep the nursery informed of the expected return date.

Communication During Prolonged Absence

Where a child is absent for a prolonged period, the nursery may contact the parent/carer to:

- check on the child's welfare;
- establish the reason for the continued absence;
- confirm the child's expected return;
- offer appropriate support;
- identify whether there have been changes in the family's circumstances; and
- consider whether any safeguarding or welfare action is required.

The nursery will maintain a supportive and non-judgemental approach while ensuring that safeguarding responsibilities are met

Recording and Record Keeping

All relevant absence and follow-up activity will be recorded accurately.

Records may include:

- date and time of absence;
- whether notification was received;
- reason given;
- attempts to contact parents/carers;
- attempts to contact emergency contacts;
- outcome of contact;
- discussions with the DSL;
- safeguarding decisions;
- referrals or advice sought; and
- agreed actions and review dates.

Records will be maintained securely and in accordance with the nursery's data protection and information-sharing procedures.

EYFS 2026 requires providers to maintain records and obtain and share relevant and accurate information so that the setting is safe, efficiently managed and the needs of children are met.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents and Carers

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- notifying the nursery of absence as soon as possible;
- providing accurate information;
- keeping contact and emergency contact details up to date;
- keeping the nursery informed during prolonged absence; and
- responding to reasonable enquiries from the nursery regarding their child's welfare.

Nursery Practitioners

Practitioners are responsible for:

- accurately recording attendance;
- alerting the room leader/manager when an expected child does not attend;
- following the absence procedure;
- recording contact attempts;
- sharing relevant concerns with the DSL; and
- maintaining professional curiosity.

Room Leaders/Management

Room leaders and management are responsible for:

- ensuring attendance records are accurate;
- ensuring unexplained absences are followed up promptly;
- reviewing patterns and trends;
- ensuring staff follow the policy consistently; and
- escalating concerns to the DSL.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL is responsible for:

- providing safeguarding advice;
- considering whether absence indicates a safeguarding concern;
- coordinating safeguarding action;
- liaising with Children's Social Care and other agencies where appropriate;
- ensuring safeguarding records are maintained; and
- ensuring actions are reviewed and followed through.

The EYFS 2026 identifies the DSL as having lead responsibility for safeguarding and liaison with local statutory children's services and Local Safeguarding Partners.

Absence Procedure – Quick Reference

Situation	Nursery Action

Situation	Nursery Action
Parent reports absence via App	Record absence and reason
Child does not arrive and no notification received	Check attendance records and contact parent/carer promptly
Parent/carer cannot be contacted	Contact alternative emergency contacts
Child remains unaccounted for	DSL considers safeguarding risk and appropriate escalation
Absence becomes prolonged	Follow up and consider child's/family's circumstances
Repeated or unusual absence pattern	Review patterns and discuss with parent/carer where appropriate
Existing safeguarding vulnerability	Consider absence alongside existing concerns and DSL information
Welfare concern identified	Follow safeguarding procedures and refer to Children's Social Care/police where appropriate
Police welfare check considered necessary	DSL/management liaises with police in accordance with safeguarding procedures
Child returns following prolonged/unexplained absence	Welcome back, establish relevant information and consider whether further support/follow-up is required

Family App – Reporting an Absence

Parents/carers should:

1. Open the St.Nicholas Nurseryfamily App.
2. Select **Absence**.
3. Select the relevant date.
4. Enter the reason for absence.
5. Add any relevant information.

6. Provide an expected return date where known.
7. Submit the absence notification.

If parents/carers are unable to use the App, they should contact the nursery directly.

Supporting Families

St.Nicholas Nurseryrecognises that families may experience circumstances that affect attendance.

Our approach is to be:

- supportive;
- respectful;
- non-judgemental;
- proportionate;
- child-centred; and
- safeguarding-focused.

Where appropriate, we will work in partnership with parents/carers and relevant professionals to understand barriers to attendance and identify support.

Safeguarding concerns will always take priority where a child's safety or welfare may be at risk.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information relating to a child's absence will be treated confidentially.

Information will only be shared with appropriate individuals or agencies where there is a legitimate professional or safeguarding reason to do so.

Where there is a concern about a child's safety or welfare, the nursery will follow its safeguarding procedures and relevant information-sharing requirements. Consent will not delay or prevent safeguarding action where information needs to be shared to protect a child.

Policy Monitoring and Review

The Nursery Manager and/or DSL will monitor the implementation of this policy through:

- attendance records;
- absence records;
- safeguarding reviews;
- management oversight;
- review of patterns and trends;
- staff feedback; and
- incidents or cases requiring escalation.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if there are changes to:

- the EYFS statutory framework;
- safeguarding legislation or guidance;
- Local Safeguarding Partnership procedures;
- Ofsted requirements; or
- St.Nicholas Nurseryprocedures.

Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read alongside:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Health, Illness and Medication Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Missing Child Policy
- Collection of Children Policy
- Emergency Procedures
- SEND Policy
- Information Sharing and Data Protection procedures
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Attendance monitoring procedures

Parent Statement

At St.Nicholas NurseryNursery, every child's safety matters.

If your child is not going to attend, please let us know as soon as possible using the family App.

If your child is unexpectedly absent and we have not heard from you, we will contact you and, where necessary, your emergency contacts.

If we cannot establish your child's whereabouts or have concerns about their welfare, we may need to take further safeguarding action.

This is not intended to cause concern or inconvenience to families. It is an important part of our responsibility to ensure that **every child is safe, accounted for and supported.**

This policy was adopted on	**Signed on behalf of the nursery**	**Date for review**
September 2026	Anjana Shah	*August 2027*