Westfield Nursery School Attendance and Absence Policy

Date policy last reviewed: May 2026

Signed by:

_____	Headteacher	Date: _____
_____	Chair of governors	Date: _____

Changes 2026
-Updated dates of legal framework documents
-Under roles and responsibilities, moved from Head teacher to Office staff ‘Maintaining up to date documentation of children’s names, home addresses and parents’ telephone numbers’ & ‘Following up unexplained absences with parents/ carers’
-Under managing unexplained absences added ‘Note- children attending Nursery are not yet of statutory school age’
-Updated new review date

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Vision
At Westfield Nursery we aim to deliver against our vision ‘Inspired beginnings, outstanding futures.’

Statement of Intent
Westfield Nursery School is committed to ensuring children attend regularly and are able to fully benefit from the opportunities provided. The nursery understands that regular attendance is important for children’s development, wellbeing and social skills. This policy outlines how the nursery will support parents/ carers to ensure their child is in regular attendance and how unexplained absences will be monitored to safeguard the welfare and development of every child.

Why Attendance Matters
Good attendance
-improves attainment
-reduces disadvantage

The objectives of this policy are as follows:

- To encourage consistent attendance for all children
- To establish clear procedures for reporting absences
- To identify and address patterns of poor attendance or unreported absences
- To ensure compliance with safeguarding and welfare requirements as outlined in the EYFS framework

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Childcare Act 2006
- Childcare Act 2016
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- DfE (2025) 'Early years foundation stage statutory framework'
- DfE (2021) 'School Admissions Code'
- DfE (2026) 'Early education and childcare'
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Admissions Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

2. Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board will be responsible for:

- The oversight of the implementation of this policy
- Supporting the Head teacher in promoting regular attendance
- Reviewing absence and attendance rates each term
- Ensuring the nursery is maintaining up to date and accurate documentation on attendance and absence
- Ensuring the early years census checks are completed

The Head teacher who is the named attendance champion will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy
- Communicating this policy to nursery staff and parents/ carers
- Ensuring accurate records of children being cared for at the nursery, their hours of attendance and the names of each child's key person are maintained
- Ensuring the correct staff to child ratios are in place to enable safe attendance
- Promoting the importance of attendance to parents/ carers e.g. via newsletters
- Monitoring late arrival and early collection

Classroom staff will be responsible for:

- Maintaining accurate daily attendance records and informing office staff to absences that require immediate follow up
- Monitoring attendance patterns and following up on unexplained absences
- Reporting prolonged or concerning absences to the DSL where necessary
- Supporting families in addressing attendance issues as appropriate
- Taking attendance registers at the relevant times during each session
- Alerting the Designated Safeguarding Lead of absences involving children who are at risk

Office staff will be responsible for:

- Monitoring absences notified via the telephone/ answerphone system
- Monitoring absences notified via Studybugs
- Updating classroom staff about reasons for absences
- Maintaining up to date documentation of children's names, home addresses and parents' telephone numbers
- Following up unexplained absences with parents/ carers
- Monitor Studybugs and those parents/ carers contacted with letters

Parents/ carers will be responsible for:

- Ensuring their child attends nursery regularly and on time
- Notifying the nursery of any absence, including the reason, before each session begins

- Informing the nursery of any planned absences in advance e.g. via a leave of absence form
- Providing the nursery with up-to-date contact details
- Promoting good attendance with their children
- Engaging with attendance support offered by the nursery

3. Attendance Expectations

At Westfield Nursery School there is a commitment to maximising attendance for all pupils to enable them to benefit from the education we provide. We do acknowledge, because our pupils can be very young, that attendance patterns may need to be flexible and individualised; even so, regular attendance is vital for effective learning, maximum progress and the development of relationships. There is recognition of the importance of establishing good home-school links and communications that can be used if ever there is a problem over attendance. Good attendance ensures that children form good habits for future learning.

The following is a guide for parents/ carers regarding attendance:

	Above 97%. Less than 6 days absence a year: Excellent attendance! Pupils with this attendance should achieve the best attainment they can, leading to the best possible start to their education.
	95% Less than 10 days absence in a year: Pupils with this attendance are likely to achieve their targets and will be well prepared for starting their educational journey.
	90%. 19 days absence over the year: Pupils with this attendance are missing a month of school per year and may fall behind in Maths and Literacy; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.
	85% 29 days absence in a year: These pupils are missing 6 weeks of school a year; it will be very difficult for them to keep up and achieve their best.
	80%. Pupils with this attendance are missing a day for every week of school. It will be almost impossible to keep up with work.

The nursery will communicate its attendance expectations to parents/ carers and ensure parents are fully informed of why it is important for their child to regularly attend nursery.

Parents/ carers will be encouraged to bring their child to the nursery on a daily basis to ensure their child has a maintained and consistent routine.

Parents will be required to drop their child off at the nursery no later than 8.55am for morning sessions or 12.40pm for afternoon sessions. The Headteacher will clearly communicate to every parent/ carer when their child should be dropped off and picked up and clarify the importance of punctuality in preparation for the next phase of their education in school.

The nursery recognises that children with SEND may face greater barriers to attendance and will incorporate the necessary procedures to support children for whom regular attendance may be more difficult.

The nursery will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents/ carers to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be expected between nursery staff and parents/ carers and the nursery will ensure parents/ carers are regularly updated about their child's early education and development.

We follow government guidance for managing specific infectious illnesses. Parents/ carers are asked to inform the school of any sickness or injuries.

If their child has sickness or diarrhoea, parents/carers must keep their child at home for 48 hours to reduce the risk of infection. Children who have been given Calpol are not well enough to attend as this can mask symptoms.

4. Registration

Staff must follow the registration process, including the marking of register and checking on any regular absences. Registers need to be completed accurately at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and attendance regularly monitored. Any late children are entered in the register and the total number adjusted.

Registration is a legal requirement, and registers are legal documents and must be kept for the recommended six years after the date on which they were last used.

By law registers must be 'called' twice a day. Morning session by 8.55am; Afternoon session by 12.40pm. Any children arriving after these times will be marked in the register as late but counted as present for that session.

For short term absences, parents will be expected to notify the nursery if their child will not be in attendance and provide a reason for this, e.g. illness or family emergency, prior to the commencement of their child's scheduled attendance.

For prolonged absences, i.e. absences longer than a week, parents will be expected to keep the nursery updated regularly and may be asked to provide additional information, e.g. a doctor's note for illness.

5. Managing Unexplained Absences

In circumstances where a child does not arrive to nursery and no explanation has been provided, the office staff will attempt to contact the child's parents/ carers.
If no contact has been made, the nursery may escalate the matter by either:

- Contacting other emergency contacts listed.
- Reporting concerns to the DSL if safeguarding concerns are suspected.

If an explanation of absence has not been received within 48 hours by phone or mail, the Children's Service may need to be contacted in accordance with the Children's Act 2004 and the nursery's duty to report concerns about a child's welfare. Note- children attending Nursery are not yet of statutory school age

The nursery will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken
- Identify whether the absence is expected or not
- Identify whether parents could be offered any support to help them get their child to attend

If the DSL deems that unexplained prolonged absences or patterns of absence are a safeguarding concern, they will refer the issue to local children's services or other relevant authorities.

In circumstances where a child does not attend their scheduled sessions for a prolonged period of time without good reason, the nursery may remove the child from the admissions register. Taking such action will be considered on a case-by-case basis and only carried forward when all other options have been exhausted.

6. Planned Absences

Parents will be expected to inform the nursery in advance of planned absences, e.g. holidays, by completing an absence notification form or informing the nursery office.

As children in attendance are below the compulsory school age, planned absences will not be formally authorised; however, the Head teacher will still require notification from parents if their child is not going to be attending their scheduled sessions and parents will be expected to provide a good reason for this.

If it has been deemed a parent has not provided a satisfactory reason for their child's absence, the lead practitioner will remind parents of the importance of consistent attendance for their child's development and request that their child does attend.

Parents will be informed well in advance of any planned nursery closures to ensure that alternative childcare arrangements can be made where necessary.

Where a child has been absent from the nursery for a prolonged period due to illness, the Head teacher will put in place an action plan to help ease them back into their routine and ensure that the child's development has not been adversely impacted during this period of absence.

7. Late Arrivals

Parents will be expected to adhere to drop-off and pick-up times and will be advised that late arrivals can disrupt their child's routine and group activities.
Repeated lateness will be discussed with parents to look at ways in which punctuality could be improved and to put in place the appropriate support to facilitate this.

Late pick-ups may incur an additional charge in accordance with the Late Collection Policy.

8. Monitoring and Supporting Attendance

Attendance will be monitored regularly to identify patterns of poor attendance or lateness. Where attendance falls below a certain threshold, the nursery may:

- Discuss concerns with parents to understand any barriers
- Provide support or signpost services for families facing challenges
- Involve external agencies if patterns of absence raise safeguarding concerns

If parents/ careers are having concerns about their child's welfare whilst they are in attendance at nursery, the Head teacher/ DSL will propose meeting with the child's parents to address these concerns.

9. Record Keeping

Attendance registers will be maintained accurately and will include:

- Each child's full name.
- Dates and times of attendance.
- Reasons for absence.

Records will be stored securely in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR and will only be retained for the required period. Records will only be accessible and available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

The Head teacher and leadership team will closely monitor attendance and investigate any patterns of unexpected absence and follow this up with parents to seek an explanation.

10. Absence and Government Funding

Parents of funded children will be reminded that excessive absences may impact their entitlement to free nursery hours.

The nursery will provide data on attendance to the Local Authority (LA) as part of its obligations. The LA will hold the final decision on withdrawing funding.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the governing board and Head teacher.
The scheduled review date for this policy is May 2027.

Westfield Nursery School
Registration Codes

/ : am present in school during registration
\ : pm present in school during registration
Code B: Off-site educational activity
Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school
Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment
Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made
Code G: Leave of absence not authorised by the school
Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)
Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed (within 30 minutes of register opening)
Code M: Medical or dental appointments
Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided
Code O: Absent from school
Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity
Code R: Religious observance
Code S: Study leave
Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed (Registration closes after 30 minutes)
Code V: Educational visit or trip
Code X: Not required to be in school
Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Code Z: Pupil not on admission register
Y3: Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and pupil cannot be accommodated in parts of the premises that remain in use
Y4: Whole school closed when school was due to meet for a session, but session has been cancelled
Y6: Travel to or attendance at school would be contrary/ prohibited by guidance/ law relating to incidents or transition of infection or disease
Y7: Unable to attend because of unavoidable cause (record cause)