Why good attendance is important?

The Statutory Framework for the Early Year Foundation Stage (2017) and The Common Inspection Framework 2015 expect Early Years practitioners to promote good attendance within their settings.

The reasons for children to attend regularly at their Early Years setting are to support their learning and development, to make sure that children are kept safe, their wellbeing is promoted and they do not miss out on their entitlements and opportunities.

Good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance practice may also lead to the earlier identification of more serious concerns for a child or family and may have a vital part to play in keeping a child or other family members safe from harm.

The Early Years Inspection Handbook states *'Although attendance at the setting is not mandatory, providers should be alert to patterns of absence that may indicate wider safeguarding concerns,. Inspectors will explore how well providers work with parents to promote children's good attendance, especially the attendance of children for whom the provider receives the early years pupil premium' (Page 41, point 160)*

You should have good policies and procedures in promoting, supporting, recording and monitoring the attendance of children in the EYFS; this includes keeping accurate records of the daily times of arrival and departure for each child. It is in the best interests of children and families that all settings are aware of effective practice.

Settings are required to keep full registration details for every child, as specified in the EYFS (3.76 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;)

Why is good attendance important?

There are positive benefits to be gained from regular attendance; this includes not only coming to every booked session, but also being there on time. So it is important that all staff understand why good attendance by children and good attendance practice among staff both need to be maintained. Benefits include the following:

Good habits

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- It builds in young children the idea that getting up and going to a setting is simply what you do.
- Children who attend every booked 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

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- Young children find it easier to build and sustain a range of social relationships when they regularly attend their childcare setting. Regular times arranged with parents help to develop a secure attachment within the setting.

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- For some families, particularly at times of stress, the child's regular attendance at a 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 an early years 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 the adults and the 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

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 in the next session, whether or not these are consecutive days.

- Children learn in many different ways through play with others and through being in the company of staff who actively support their learning and development.

- Underachievement is often linked to lower attendance. For some older students this is linked to a steadily deteriorating trend in attendance which is traceable right back to their Early Years setting.

Safeguarding

Good attendance 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 are some factors in children's lives which make it more likely that they will experience some difficulty.

It is particularly important to pay close attention to the patterns of attendance for potentially vulnerable groups of children, including, for example:

- children who are known to social care or criminal justice system

- there are immigration issues

- children who may be subject to a forced marriage, honour based violence, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation 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 2yr old funding, Early Years Pupil Premium funding (EYPP) or claiming Free School Meals (FSM)

- children with additional needs, learning difficulties or disabilities

- children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) or from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) families

- children about whom other agencies have raised concerns, including those supported through the Early Help Assessment (EHA)/Team Around the Family (TAF).

If any child's attendance starts to cause concern in your setting, it is helpful for the Key Person to discuss this with the staff 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 may be going through a difficult time.

Promoting and supporting good attendance in settings, a wide range of elements combine to support and encourage good attendance. These include:

- having a positive and welcoming atmosphere;
- praise for good attendance & for arriving on time;
- being sensitive to and supportive of families from a range of cultures and backgrounds;
- building good relationships between children, families, staff and senior leaders;
- being rigorous in monitoring attendance and in identifying and analysing patterns of absence (often called 'broken weeks') and the number of sessions missed;
- being rigorous and persistent in seeking and recording explanations for absence, however sensitively you approach the conversation ;
- being aware of additional factors in the setting's relationship with the family (e.g., EAL, learning difficulties) & making sure that appropriate means of communication are 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;
  - a child goes missing.

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- making sure that the setting knows where to turn for advice or support or whom to alert if concerns arise.

Early Help Assessment (EHA) & Team Around the Family (TAF)

It is a Think Family approach in Oxfordshire which means there is now a whole family assessment & plan. The EHA can be initiated by any professional who identifies concerns for a child/family and is completed at the earliest opportunity. It involves all relevant agencies to assess and support the whole family and the EHA has integrated the Outcome star to measure progress.
An action plan is needed and can be reviewed and adapted through regular multi-agency TAF meetings.

The Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) has been created as part of Oxfordshire County Council's, Children's Services Integration Programme; there is one team split between North, Central and South. LCSS will provide advice & guidance to community partners and professionals and it will provide No name consultations to support for professionals when consent from the family has not been gained. The service offers advice and guidance to professionals when concerns are identified and throughout EHA/TAF process (non-immediate safeguarding concerns) and there is a link named workers for communities and Support professionals with EHA/TAF through attending meetings. (Childminders have access to the area locality telephone number for support and guidance.

Early help training is bookable through OSCB and support for professionals is via the Locality Community Support Service.

http://www.oscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCSS-Communication-for-Partners-1.pdf http://www.oscb.org.uk/themes-tools/

Recording and monitoring attendance

Keeping accurate attendance records is not just bureaucracy. Monitoring attendance is important for all children, but especially for those in vulnerable groups.

- Knowing when children have attended a session provides vital information to keep children safe from harm and help tackle underachievement.

- Having 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.

To 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. (*3.76 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;)*

- Keep accurate information about parents, carers and others who may accompany the child to and from the setting. It is vital to have up-to-date 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. *(3.72. Providers must record the following information for each child in their care: full name; date of birth; name and address of every parent and/or carer who is known to the provider (and information about any other person who has parental responsibility for the child); which parent(s) and/or carer(s) the child normally lives with; and emergency contact details for parents and/or carers.*

- Make clear and accurate entries, whether you are using manual or electronic registers.

- Make consistent use of the appropriate attendance codes. This applies to all relevant staff, including temporary staff employed for cover.

- 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 managers, committees or the owner.

- Put in place systematic and rigorous monitoring of the registers by the designated lead who is responsible for ensuring accurate recording, identifying and addressing attendance issues and engaging parents.

Raising concerns and taking action

All settings will have their own policy and procedure for dealing with attendance issues. It is important that staff at all levels, including managers/committees, know how to respond to different problems. This is for the attendance of all children but will be especially important for children receiving 2r old funding or pupil premium or if concerns about a child or family are assessed under the CAF process.

Even though it is not compulsory for a child to attend an Early Years setting, staff should discuss any instance when a family decides to withdraw a child from the setting.

There are many reasons why children are moved from one setting to another. These include simple preference for another setting, greater convenience of an alternative setting, house move, increased availability of parents/family members to provide free home-based childcare etc.

However, if it is known (or becomes apparent) that the child is actually being withdrawn from registered childcare altogether, staff should consider any implications. In particular, staff should discuss whether there have been (or now are) any concerns about the child which might mean that the parents' decision to withdraw from registered childcare could be a cause for concern. This might include deteriorating attendance, poorer emotional wellbeing, worsening relationship between setting and parent(s), poorer health or physical condition/ welfare of the child, radicalisation.

Following this discussion, actions should include the following:

- Try to find out which setting the child is being moved to.
- Keep dated notes of any events or discussions with the families.
- If there have been other concerns about the child or limited information from the family about this move, the setting should contact the MASH for further advice and support. (Contact details are provided at the end of this document).

Self - Evaluation

- All settings will complete some form of self-evaluation to record their views about their strengths and weaknesses and to help identify their priorities for the future.
- Settings will also be keen to present their evaluation of this work to external agencies such as Ofsted.
- Having clear policies and procedures for promoting, supporting, recording and monitoring the attendance of children in the EYFS will provide useful evidence for your work. Your evidence might also include short case studies showing how individual children have benefited.

Inspectors will make judgements on :

- **The effectiveness of leadership and management** - Safeguarding is effective, noting and exploring attendance issues may well have led to the identification of family circumstances in which children were potentially at risk.
- **Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment -** Taking positive action to encourage parents to make sure that their children enjoy good attendance and come to their school or setting on time may have led to improved attendance and given children a better chance of benefiting from the opportunities to learn and develop.

- **Is personal development behaviour and welfare met? -** Noting and exploring attendance issues may well have led to the identification of concerns in other areas of wellbeing (sleep, nutrition, cleanliness, emotional development).
- **Outcomes for children and other learners -** The progress of different groups of children from their starting points are recorded. Gaps in attendance can effect children meeting or exceeding the level of development typical for their age so that they can move on to the next stage of their education

We would like to acknowledge South Gloucestershire Council, whose documents were referred to during the preparation of this guidance. August 2017

Draft attendance/absent child policy

Objectives

To promote good attendance this is vital to children's educational achievement, well-being and keeping them safe.

To convey clearly to parents and children that:

- Regular attendance is essential.
- Regular or frequent lateness at the start and end of each session is unacceptable.
- Unjustifiable absence will be investigated and may be recorded as unauthorised absence.

To keep records of attendance which:

- Clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Provide accurate information on actual attendance to enable monitoring and evaluation of attendance rates.
- Show lateness so that patterns may be addressed.

To build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by:

- Responding rapidly to children's absence.
- Recognising and celebrate children who maintain 'excellent', 'good' and 'improving' attendance.
- Sharing attendance figures with parents and carers.
- To target attendance where it has been an issue and to set in place strategies to support improvement.
- To target persistent lateness where it has been an issue and to set in place techniques to ensure improvement.

Sharing information

The setting will make its policy on attendance clear to parents and children through:

- Sharing information and expectations prior to admission.
- The use of standardised letters to parents addressing specific aspects of attendance or punctuality that require parental response.
- Clear systems and procedures to address all pupil absence and lateness.

Factors affecting attendance

The main factors affecting attendance of children at the Pre-school are:
• Illness of the child.
• Illness of siblings or parents.
• Health Services Appointments.
• Religious observance.
• Holidays.
Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities to keep children and families protected from radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour (Prevent Duty) and Female genital Mutilation by being alert to patterns of absence.

Daily Registration

• Registration will be completed at the start of each session within 10 minutes of the start time.
• Registers of attendance will be kept accurately, indicating clearly when a child is present or absent.
• Lateness will be recorded.

Systems to monitor attendance and punctuality

Any absence with no prior explanation will prompt a first day contact.

Systems to monitor attendance will include:
• A telephone call to establish the reason for non-attendance.
• Further follow-up telephone calls if unexplained absences continue.
• A letter when contact cannot be made by telephone call.
• A Home Visit when attendance is inconsistent.

Systems to monitor punctuality will include:
• Discussion with the parent or carer to establish the cause for poor punctuality.
• Letters to parents and carers as appropriate.

Monitoring and evaluation of attendance data

Children's attendance patterns will be regularly scanned and any particular concern discussed with the parent or carer.

Attendance figures will be published each half term and will be shared with parents, staff and the Governing Body/Committee or the owner

Reporting concerns

Concerns about a child's non-attendance will result in contact with the MASH for further advice and support.
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub: **0845 050 7666**
Emergency Duty Team (outside office hours): **0800 833 408**

The designated lead for safeguarding will liaise with the senior locality social worker if there are **already professionals** involved in the safeguarding of the child.

- Oxford City – **01865 328563**
- North Oxfordshire **01865 323039**
- South Oxfordshire : **01865 323041**
- Emergency Duty Team: **0800 833 408**

Agreed on: Signed by: Review date: