Little Owls Preschool

Safeguarding Children Policies

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met… Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. EYFS 2025

Designated Safeguarding Officers: Nicola Bloomfield, Mel Ashby and Denise Rehal

We follow the statutory requirements of

- The Statutory framework of the EYFS 2025
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework—2
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

We make sure that all practitioners are familiar with and have easy access to the following

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2024)
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HMG, 2025)
- Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex (ESCB, 2021)
  https://www.escb.co.uk/working-with-children/concerns-about-the-welfare-of-a-child/early-help-and-effective-support/
- Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners (HMG, 2024)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused (HMG, 2015)
  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419604/What_to_do_if_you_re_worried_a_child_is_being_abused.pdf
- Fundamental British Values in the Early Years (Foundation Years 2015),
- Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales (HMG 2023)
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance
- The Prevent Duty: Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers (DfE 2015)
- Safeguarding Children and Protecting Professionals in Early Years Settings: Online Safety Considerations for Managers (UK Council for Internet Safety 2019)
- FGM (HMG 2023) https://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/fgm/

Our safeguarding children policies have regard to

- Children Act (1989), Children Act (2004), Children Act (2006)
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (S. 74 - Serious Crime Act 2015)

- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (HMG, 2015)
- Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty - What Do I Need to Know? A Quick Start Guide for Public Sector Organisations (Government Equalities Office 2011)
- Essex Safeguarding Children Board
- SET Procedures (we work in accordance to this)

We work with parents, staff and volunteers to build their understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of safeguarding all our children.

Safeguarding Children policies

1. Children's rights and entitlements
2. Safeguarding children and child protection (including managing allegations of abuse against a member of staff)
3. Looked after children
4. Confidentiality and client access to records
5. Information sharing
6. Attendance and Absence
7. Uncollected child
8. Missing child
9. Supervision of children on outings and visits
10. Maintaining children's safety and security on premises
11. Making a complaint
12. Phone, camera and internet: Acceptable Use Policy
13. E-Safety
14. Lock Down procedure
15. Safer Eating
16. Visitor or Intruder on the premises

- **Children's rights and entitlements**

Policy statement

We promote children's right to be *strong, resilient and listened to* *by*

- creating an environment in our setting that encourages children to develop a positive self-image, which includes their ethnic heritage, their languages spoken at home, their religious beliefs, cultural traditions and home background
- encouraging children to develop a sense of independence
- enabling children to have the self-confidence and the vocabulary to resist inappropriate approaches
- helping children to establish and sustain satisfying relationships within their families, with peers, and with other adults

- **Safeguarding children and child protection**

(Including managing allegations of abuse against a member of staff)

Policy statement

Early Years settings have a duty under Section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006 to comply with the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS. Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and should be reflected in every aspect of our work with children. It is the duty of every worker, volunteer, student and trustee to safeguard children. In Essex all professionals must work in accordance with the SET Procedures.

Our setting will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

We recognise children's personal, social and emotional development is crucial for them to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. We understand that a child's positive wellbeing is vital and poor wellbeing, can in some cases be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. We recognise where a child has suffered abuse or potentially traumatic advice childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood adolescence and into adulthood.

Prevent Duty

Children can be vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism in the same way they are vulnerable to other safeguarding issues. Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 we have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Promoting Fundamental British Values is embedded in our practice through the EYFS framework.

Procedures

We carry out the following procedures to ensure the safety of all children in our care.

Staff and volunteers

- Our designated safeguarding Leads are:
  Nicola Carrington Bloomfield and Melanie Ashby, Denise Rehal, (Deputy)

- All staff and parents are made aware of our safeguarding policies and procedures and staff are required to attend safeguarding children training as recommended by Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB).
- Staff members must not be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that will affect their ability to care for children.
- We provide adequate and appropriate staffing resources to meet the needs of children
- Regular safeguarding audits are completed
- Applicants for posts within the setting are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and candidates are informed of the need to confirm suitability with the Disclosing and Barring Service (DBS) and two references, one being from current employer or from their current further education setting before posts can be confirmed.
- New staff work with the management team through an induction process that includes suitability checks, policies, health and safety and ongoing training
- We abide by Ofsted requirements in respect of references and DBS checks for staff and volunteers, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
- Where applications are rejected because of information that has been disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- Volunteers do not work unsupervised.
- We abide by the 2006 Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act requirements in respect of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of child protection concern.
- We have procedures for recording the details of visitors to the setting.
- We take security steps to ensure that we have control over who comes into the setting.
- We take steps to ensure children are not photographed or filmed for any purpose other than to record their development or participation in preschool events.

Responding to suspicions of abuse

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect.
- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or may be experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure) or through changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play.
- We also make ourselves aware that some children and young people are affected by further forms of abuse - honour based abuse, Female Genital Mutilation, forced marriage, breast flattening, risk in the community to include gang activity including radicalisation and child trafficking. While this may be less likely to affect young children in our care, we may become aware of any of these factors affecting older children and young people who we may come into contact with.
- We will be alert to the threat children may face outside their families, such as that posed as organised crime groups such as county lines groups and child sexual exploitation online use and from within peer groups and the wider community (contextual safeguarding).
- We are aware of the 'hidden harm' agenda concerning parents with drug and alcohol problems and consider other factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, radicalisation, mental or physical illness and parent's learning disability.

- We are aware female genital mutilation is illegal in the UK and is a form of child abuse, as is breast ironing.
- We understand that SEND is a risk factor for abuse of varying types. This may be because the child has speech, language or communication difficulties, impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse, be more dependent on parents/carers for supporting daily living, including intimate personal care, be vulnerable to bullying or intimidation. We need to be especially vigilant when caring for these children and be alert to changes in appearance and behaviour. We should work as part of a multi-agency team and with parents/carers. Practitioners who are close to the family (keyperson) might notice signs of abuse in much the same way as for any other child and will follow procedures for referral or for reporting as for any other child protection concern.
- We are aware that children's vulnerability is potentially increased when they are privately fostered, a Child in Need or on a Child Protection Plan and when we know that a child is being cared for under a private fostering arrangement, we inform our local authority children's social care team. We work with Social Care and ither appropriate agencies to ensure there is a joined-up approach to planning for these children.
- We are prepared to take action if a child fails to arrive at a session when expected. The designated person will take immediate action to contact the child's parent to seek an explanation for the child's absence and be assured that the child is safe and well. If no contact can be made that day, we will make efforts to contact the emergency contacts given on the child's registration form. If no contact is made with the child's parents or emergency contacts and the designated person has reason to believe that the child is at risk of significant harm, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately and LSCB procedures are followed. If the child has current involvement with social care the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.
- Where such evidence is apparent, the member of staff concerned makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the setting's designated safeguarding leads. The information is stored in the child's personal file, which is held in a locked cabinet.
- We refer concerns to the local authority children's social care department and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation. We take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children.

Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures

- Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that gives cause for concern or a member of staff observes signs or signals that gives cause for concern, that member of staff:
    - listens to the child, offers reassurance and gives assurance that she or he will take action;
    - does not question the child;
    - makes a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes:
        - the date and time of the observation or the disclosure;
        - the exact words spoken by the child as far as possible;
        - the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with date and time; and
        - the names of any other person present at the time.

- These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file, which is kept securely and confidentially. One of the designated safeguarding leads is informed.
- Any records relating to child protection are kept in the child's individual folder within a locked cabinet.
- Where a child transfers to another setting or school, their child protection file will be forwarded, marked confidential and obtain evidence that the paperwork has been received. Any copies within our setting will be destroyed.
- Where a child is attending another setting at the same time as attending ours, we may, where appropriate link with the other setting. Wherever possible we will inform parents/carers we intend to do so unless it places children at further risk.
- Pre-existing injuries out of setting are recorded as part of monitoring. If there are concerns about the circumstances or explanations given by the parent/carer or child the Designated Safeguard Lead decides course of action.
- Pre-existing injury documentation is audited half termly along with child protection files by Designated safeguard Lead. Patterns or concerns raised are appropriately actioned.

Making a referral to the local authority social care team

- All members of staff are familiar with the ESCB procedures for reporting and referral and follow these procedures. Where there is risk of immediate harm concerns will be referred by telephone to the Children and Families Hub and/or Police. Less urgent concerns or requests for support will be sent to the Children and Families Hub via Essex Effective Support.

Informing parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact.
- If a suspicion of abuse is recorded, parents are informed at the same time as the report is made, except where the guidance of the ESCB does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed in greater danger.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser. In these cases, the social workers will inform parents.

Liaison with other agencies

- We work within the ESCB guidelines and procedures for referral to the Social Care department.
- We have a copy of **'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'** for parents and staff and all staff are familiar with what to do if they have concerns.
- We notify Ofsted of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the wellbeing of children within 14 days.
- If a referral is to be made to Essex social care department, we act within the Essex Safeguarding Children Board guidance in deciding whether we must inform the child's parents at the same time.

Allegations against staff

- All staff members are made aware of the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and conduct during their staff induction process

- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- We ensure all staff know how to report concerning behaviour or conduct of staff/adults working with children. Concerns are referred to the Safeguarding Lead or in circumstances where the concern maybe regarding management to the Local Authority Designated Officer.
- We follow the guidance of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board when responding to any complaint that a member of staff, or volunteer within the setting, has abused a child.
- We respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff or volunteer within the setting, may have taken, or is taking place, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- We refer any such complaint immediately to Local Authority Designated Officer to investigate. We also report any such alleged incident to Ofsted and what measures we have taken.
- We co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by children's social care in conjunction with the police.
- Where the management committee and children's social care agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the chairperson will suspend the member of staff on full pay, or the volunteer, for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff as well as children and families throughout the process.
- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

Disciplinary action

- Where a member of staff or a volunteer is dismissed from the setting or chooses to leave the setting because of misconduct relating to a child, we notify the DBS administrators and Ofsted so that the name may be included on the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Barred List.

Whistleblowing

All members of staff and the wider setting community should raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and feel confident any concern will be taken seriously. Any concerns or allegations should be made promptly to designated safeguarding lead or deputy. If for reasons this is not possible, or any member of staff who feels unable to raise concerns internally, concerns should be made immediately to LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) number 03330 139 797 email lado@essex.gov.uk. Parents and carers or others in the wider community with concerns can contact NSPCC on the whistleblowing helpline number 0800 028 0285 or email on help@nspcc.org.uk. If immediate danger is suspected dial 999. See allegations against staff.

Physical Intervention and use of Reasonable Force

We recognise there are some children who have needs that require additional support and a more personalised approach. We always consider all behaviour and our responses to it in the context of safeguarding. Occasions when staff will have cause to have physical contact with children for a variety of reasons may include: - to comfort a child in distress, to direct a child,

to support a child during physical play or activity, in an emergency to avert danger to themselves or other. The term "reasonable force" covers a broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children and means using no more force than is needed.

Training

All adults working in the setting are required to complete the Local Safeguarding Children Board Level 1 and 2 training annually to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and wider contextual issues and that they are aware of the local authority guidelines for making referrals. Designated safeguarding leads undertake Level 3 training every two years and attend ESCB safeguard forums to ensure knowledge and information is current. In addition, all staff in our setting receive safeguarding and child protection updates as required.

Planning

- The layout of the room allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being within earshot and visible to others.

Support to families

- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers in the group.
- We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, providing information, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the local children's social care team.
- We will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
- We follow the Child Protection Plan as set by the child's social care worker in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with the Confidentiality and Client Access to Records procedure and only if appropriate under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Safeguarding children

3. Looked after children

Policy statement

We are committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff are committed to doing all they can to enable 'looked after' children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

Definition

Children and young people become 'looked after' if they have either been taken into care by the local authority, or have been accommodated by the local authority (a voluntary care arrangement). Most will be living in foster homes, but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a relative or even placed back home with their natural parent(s).

Principles

- We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after children have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken in to the care of the local authority. Whatever the reason, a child's separation from their home and family signifies a disruption in their lives that has impact on their emotional well-being.
- Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children are based on promoting secure attachments in children's lives. For young children to get the most out of educational opportunities they need to be settled enough with their carer to be able to cope with further separation, a new environment and new expectations made upon them.
- The term 'looked after child' denotes a child's current legal status; this term is never used to categorise a child as standing out from others.
- We offer places to two-year-old children who are in care. In such cases, the child should have been with the foster carer for at least two months and show signs of having formed a secure attachment to the carer and where the placement in the setting will last a minimum of three months.
- We offer places for funded three and four-year-olds who are in care to ensure they receive their entitlement to early education. We expect that a child will have been with a foster carer for a minimum of one month and has formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect that the placement in the setting will last a minimum of six weeks.
- We will always offer 'stay and play' provision for a child between two and five years old who is still settling with their foster carer, or who is only temporarily being looked after.
- Where a child who normally attends our setting is taken into care and is cared for by a local foster carer, we will continue to offer the placement for the child.

Procedures

- The designated person for looked after children is the designated safeguarding children officer.

- Every child is allocated a key person before they start and this is no different for a looked after child. The designated person ensures the key person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the looked after child's needs.
- The designated person and the key person liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and ensure appropriate information is gained and shared.
- The setting recognises the role of the local authority social care department as the child's 'corporate parent' and the key agency in determining what takes place with the child. Nothing changes, especially with regard to the birth parent's or foster carer's role in relation to the setting without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker.
- The settling-in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. It is even more important that the 'proximity' stage is followed until it is visible that the child has formed a relationship with his or her key person sufficient to act as a 'secure base' to allow the gradual separation from the foster carer. Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the foster carer.
- If the concerns are about the foster carer's treatment of the child, or if abuse is suspected, these are recorded in the child's file and reported to the child's social care worker according to the setting's safeguarding children procedure.
- Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.
- Transition to school will be handled sensitively and the designated person and or the child's key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the looked after child's birth parents.

4. Confidentiality and client access to records

Policy statement

We respect the privacy of children and their parents and carers, while ensuring that they access high quality early years care and education in our setting. We aim to ensure that all parents and carers can share their information in the confidence that it will only be used to enhance the welfare of their children. There are record keeping systems in place that meet legal requirements; means of storing and sharing that information take place within the framework of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Human Rights Act.

Confidentiality procedures

- We inform parents when we need to record confidential information beyond the general personal information we keep (see our record keeping procedures) - for example with regard to any injuries, concerns or changes in relation to the child or the family, any discussions with parents on sensitive matters, any records we are obliged to keep regarding action taken in respect of child protection and any contact and correspondence with external agencies in relation to their child.
- We keep all records securely in a lockable cabinet (see our record keeping procedures).

Client access to records procedures

- Parents may request access to any confidential records held on their child and family following the procedure below:
- Any request to see the child's personal file by a parent or person with parental responsibility must be made in writing to the setting leader or manager.
- The setting leader informs the chairperson of the management committee and sends a written acknowledgement.
- The setting commits to providing access within 14 days, although this may be extended.
- The setting's leader or manager and chairperson of the management committee prepare the file for viewing.
- All third parties are written to, stating that a request for disclosure has been received and asking for their permission to disclose to the person requesting it. Copies of these letters are retained on file.
- 'Third parties' include all family members who may be referred to in the records.
- It also includes workers from any other agency, including social services, the health authority, etc. It is usual for agencies to refuse consent to disclose, preferring the individual to go directly to them.
- When all the consents/refusals to disclose have been received these are attached to the copy of the request letter.
- A photocopy of the complete file is taken.
- The setting leader and chairperson of the management committee go through the file and remove any information which a third party has refused consent to disclose. This is best done with a thick black marker, to score through every reference to the third party and information they have added to the file.
- What remains is the information recorded by the setting, detailing the work initiated and followed by them in relation to confidential matters. This is called the 'clean copy'.
- The 'clean copy' is photocopied for the parents who are then invited in to discuss the contents. The file should never be given straight over, but should be gone through by the setting leader, so that it can be explained.
- Legal advice may be sought before sharing a file, especially where the parent has possible grounds for litigation against the setting or another (third party) agency.

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the setting, which is to the safety and well-being of the child. Please see also our policy on child protection.

5. Information sharing

Policy statement

Sharing information is a key part of safeguarding work and decisions about how much information to share with whom and when can have a profound impact on a child's life. Effective information sharing can help to ensure that a child receives the right help at the right time and can prevent a concern from becoming more serious and difficult to address.

We recognise that parents have a right to know that information they share will be regarded as confidential as well as be informed about the circumstances, and reasons, when we are obliged to share information.

Parent/carers sign their child's registration form that includes a declaration to say that they have read and understood our policy on information sharing and the circumstances in which we may have to share information without consent.

Procedures

We are obliged to share confidential information without authorisation from the person who provided it or to whom it relates if it is in the public interest. That is when:

- it is to prevent a crime from being committed or intervene where one may have been, or to prevent harm to a child or adult; or
- not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.
- The decision should never be made as an individual, but with the back-up of management committee officers. **The three critical criteria are:**
    - **Where there is *evidence* that the child is suffering, or is at risk of suffering, significant harm.**
    - **Where there *is reasonable cause to believe* that a child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm.**
    - **To *prevent* significant harm arising to children and young people or serious harm to adults, including the prevention, detection and prosecution of serious crime.**
- We will be open and honest and explain to families how, when and why information will be shared about them and with whom. We seek consent to share information, unless it puts the child at risk or undermines a criminal investigation.
- Parents have information about our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy and have information about the circumstances when information will be shared with external agencies, for example, with regard to any special needs the child may have or transition to school.
- We seek advice from children's social care when there are doubts or we are unsure about possible significant harm to a child or others.
- We share information with consent where appropriate. We respect the wishes of children and parents not to consent to share confidential information but, in the interests of the child, know when it is reasonable to override their wish.
- We consider the safety and welfare of the child when making a decision about sharing information – **if there are concerns regarding 'significant harm' the child's well-being and safety is paramount.**
- A member of staff who has concerns will record and discuss these with the setting's designated safeguarding officer.
- Information shared will be accurate and up-to-date, necessary for the purpose it is being shared for, shared only with those who need to know and shared securely.
- Reasons for decisions to share information, or not, are recorded.

Consent

Parents have a right to be informed that their consent to share information will be sought in most cases, as well as the kinds of circumstances when their consent may not be sought, or their refusal to give consent may be overridden. We do this as follows:

- Our policies and procedures set out our responsibility regarding gaining consent to share information and when it may not be sought or overridden.

- Parents are given this information and sign a form at registration to say they understand this.
- Parents are asked to give written consent to share information about any additional needs their child may have, or to pass on child development summaries, to the next provider/school.

We consider the following questions when we need to share information:

- Is there a legitimate purpose to sharing the information?
- Does the information enable the person to be identified?
- Is the information confidential?
- If the information is confidential, do we have consent to share?
- Is there a statutory duty or court order to share information?
- If consent is refused, or there are good reasons not to seek consent, is there sufficient public interest to share information?
- If the decision is to share, are we sharing the right information in the right way?
- Have we properly recorded our decision?

All the undertakings above are subject to the paramount commitment of the setting, which is to the safety and well-being of the child. Please also see our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy.

6. Attendance and Absence

We take steps to ensure that children are kept safe, that their wellbeing is promoted, and they do not miss their entitlements and opportunities. At the very least, good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance may also lead to early identification of more serious concerns for a child or family.

There are several reasons why a child may be absent from a setting:

- In most cases it is reasonable to expect that parents/carers alert the setting as soon as possible.
- In the case of appointments or holidays give adequate notice.
- The attendance and absence policy are shared with parents and carers and they are advised that they should contact the setting within one hour of the time the child would have been expected to advise of their absence.
- Designated safeguarding leads must also adhere to Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSP) requirements, procedures and contact protocols for children who are absent or missing from the provision
    - If a child who normally attends fails to arrive and no contact has been received from their parents/carers, the designated safeguarding lead, takes immediate action to contact them to seek an explanation for the absence and be assured that the child is safe and well.
    - If contact is not made on this first attempt further attempts to contact the child's parents/carers or other named carers continue throughout the day on the first day of absence.

- If no contact is made with the parents/carers and there is no means to verify the reason for the child's absence i.e. through a named contact on the child's registration form, we would contact siblings settings e.g school, any agencies involved. This is recorded as an unexplained absence on the register and is followed up by the manager each day until contact is made.
- If contact has not been made, and we have any reason for concern about a child's wellbeing and welfare, children's services will be contacted for advice about making a referral immediately. If contact has not been made and we do not have any immediate concerns about a child's wellbeing or welfare, we would contact children's services if contact still hasn't been made within 3 days.
- If there is any cause for concern i.e. the child has a child protection plan in place or there have been previous safeguarding and welfare concerns, the designated person attempts to contact the child's parent/carer immediately. If no contact is made Social Care are contacted immediately, and safeguarding procedures are followed.
- All absences are recorded in the register with the reason given for the absence and the expected duration. If any follow up action is required, this is recorded in the child's personal file.
- The register will be monitored to identify patterns and trends in children's attendance. An understanding of the child's and family's individual circumstances will inform the setting's judgement in determining what constitutes a prolonged period of absence.
- Registers containing absences are retained for at least three years, or until the next Ofsted inspection following a cohort of children moving on to school.

If at any time further information becomes known that gives cause for concern, we would immediately contact Children's Services or the Police.

Poor/irregular attendance

Whilst attendance at an early years setting is not mandatory, regular poor attendance may be indicative of safeguarding and welfare concerns that should be followed up.

- In the first instance the setting manager should discuss a child's attendance with their parents/carers to ascertain any potential barriers i.e. transport, working patterns etc and should work with the parents/carers to offer support where possible.
- If poor attendance continues and strategies to support are not having an impact, the setting manager must review the situation and decide if a referral to a multi-agency team is appropriate.
- Where there are already safeguarding and welfare concerns about a child or a child protection plan is in place, poor/irregular attendance at the setting is reported to the Social Care worker without delay.

In the case of funded children, the local authority may use their discretion, where absence is recurring or for extended periods, considering the reason for the absence and impact on the setting. The setting manager is aware of the local authority policy on reclaiming refunds when a child is absent from a setting.

7. Uncollected children

Policy statement

In the event that a child is not collected by an authorised adult at the end of a session, the setting puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the child is cared for safely by an experienced and qualified practitioner who is known to the child.

We inform parents/carers of our procedures so that, if they are unavoidably delayed, they will be reassured that their children will be properly cared for.

Procedures

- Parents of children starting at the setting are asked to provide the following specific information which is recorded on our Registration Form:
- Home address and phone number - if the parents do not have a phone, an alternative number must be given, perhaps a neighbour or close relative.
- Place of work phone number (if applicable).
- Mobile phone number (if applicable).
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting, for example a childminder or grandparent.
- Two emergency contact details
- Who has parental responsibility for the child.
- Information about any person who does not have legal access to the child.
- On occasions when parents are aware that they will not be at home or in their usual place of work, they inform us of how they can be contacted.
- On occasions when parents or the persons normally authorised to collect the child are not able to collect the child, they provide us with details of the person collecting their child, along with a password that is unique to their child. We will verify the identity of the person who is to collect their child before allowing the child to leave.
- Parents are informed that if they are not able to collect the child as planned, they must inform us so that we can begin to take back-up measures. We provide parents with our contact telephone number.
- We inform parents that we apply our child protection procedures as set out in our child protection policy in the event that their children are not collected from the setting by an authorised adult within one hour after the setting has closed and the staff can no longer supervise the child on our premises.
- If a child is not collected at the end of the session, we follow the following procedures:
- The child's file is checked for any information about changes to the normal collection routines.
- If no information is available, parents/carers are contacted at home or at work.
- If this is unsuccessful, the adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting - and whose telephone numbers are recorded on the Registration Form - are contacted.
- All reasonable attempts are made to contact the parents or nominated carers
- The child does not leave the premises with anyone other than those named on the Registration Form or arranged by parent or authorised person.

If no-one collects the child after one hour and there is no-one who can be contacted to collect the child, we apply the procedures for uncollected children.

- We contact our local authority children's social services care team.
- The child stays at setting in the care of two fully-vetted workers until the child is safely collected either by the parents or by a social care worker.
- Social care will aim to find the parent or relative and if they are unable to do so, the child will become looked after by the local authority.
- Under no circumstances do staff to go to look for the parent, nor do they take the child home with them.
- A full written report of the incident is recorded in the child's file.
- Depending on circumstances, we reserve the right to charge parents for the additional hours worked by our staff.
- Ofsted may be informed.

8. Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is of the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. **In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.**

Prevention

In order to avoid a situation of this kind:

- the door to the preschool room is locked during sessions
- the gates from the outdoor play area are bolted during sessions
- the gate from the front garden to the field is closed and latched whenever children are using the outdoor play area
- children are collected only by authorised adults
- the ratio of adults to children is very high whenever the children are taken on an outing
- children are counted before leaving on an outing and are counted at regular intervals. If the group is broken up into smaller groups, a designated adult in each group is responsible for regular counting

Procedures

In the event that a child goes missing during a session, the preschool puts into practice agreed procedures to ensure that the missing child is found as quickly as possible and that the other children are adequately cared for whilst a search is carried out.

- The manager (or deputy) will ensure that all staff are aware of the situation, and will nominate at least 2 members of staff responsible for the safety and security of the remaining children.
- The manager will make enquiries of other members of staff, as to when and where the child was last seen. The details will be recorded.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.

- If staff numbers allow, one member of staff will walk the child's route home, keeping in touch by mobile phone if possible.
- Ensuring that the 2 nominated staff remain with the remaining children, other members of staff should search the building, garden and immediate vicinity.
- If the child has not been found within 15 minutes, the parents must be informed and the missing child is reported to the police. If the parents are not able to be contacted, the emergency numbers provided by the parent must be called.
- Staff should continue the search, widening the area, keeping in touch by mobile phone if possible.

When the situation has been resolved, members of staff should review the reasons and ensure that measures are taken to prevent any similar incident.

Child going missing on an outing

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- If not on the outing, the manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing. She then contacts the parents.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.

When the situation has been resolved, members of staff should review the reasons and ensure that measures are taken to prevent any similar incident.
The incident report will contain:

- The date and time of the report.
- What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
- When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
- What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
- The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution. Ofsted is informed. The insurance provider is informed.

9. Supervision of children on outings and visits

Policy statement

Children benefit from being taken out of the setting to go on visits or trips to local parks or other suitable venues for activities which enhance their learning experiences. Staff in our setting ensure that there are procedures to keep children safe on outings; all staff and volunteers are aware of and follow the procedures below.

Procedures

- Parents sign a general consent on registration for their children to be taken out on short outings around the playing field or to the local park, which is located on the same playing field.
- There is a risk assessment for the venue, which is reviewed regularly.
- Parents are always asked to sign specific consent forms before other local outings, e.g., to the nearby primary school, or before major outings.
- A risk assessment is carried out before an outing to a new place takes place. The excursion does not go ahead if concerns are raised about its viability.
- All venue risk assessments are available for parents to see.
- Our adult to child ratio on outings is high, normally one adult to two children under 3 years of age, and one adult to four older children, depending on age, sensibility and type of venue as well as how it is to be reached.
- Named children are assigned to individual staff to ensure each child is individually supervised, to ensure no child goes astray, and that there is no unauthorised access to children.
- Outings are recorded in an outings record book kept in the setting stating:
    - The date and time of outing.
    - The venue and mode of transport.
    - Names of staff assigned to named children.
    - Time of return.

- Staff take a charged mobile phone on outings, and supplies of tissues, wipes, spare clothing, etc as well as a mini first aid pack, any prescribed medication for a child, snacks and water. The amount of equipment will vary and be consistent with the venue and the number of children as well as how long they will be out for.
- Staff take a list of children with them with contact numbers of parents/carers.
- A minimum of two staff accompany children on outings and a minimum of two remain behind with the rest of the children.
- At least one member of staff with a current first aid training certificate (relevant to infants and young children) will be present on the outing.
- Where parents or staff are transporting children other than their own in their private cars, the insurance must be fully comprehensive and documents will be checked to confirm this.

Forest School Sessions

- Has own risk assessments.
- The sessions always have a Level 3 trained Forest School Leader.

10. Maintaining children's safety and security on premises

Policy statement

We maintain the highest possible security of our premises to ensure that each child is safely cared for during their time with us.

Procedures

Children's personal safety

- We ensure all employed staff have been checked for criminal records by an enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service.
- Adults do not normally supervise children on their own.
- All children are supervised by adults at all times.
- Whenever children are on the premises at least two adults are present.
- We carry out risk assessments to ensure children are not made vulnerable within any part of our premises, nor by any activity.

Security

- Systems are in place for the safe arrival and departure of children.
- The times of the children's arrivals and departures are recorded.
- The arrival and departure times of adults - staff, volunteers and visitors - are recorded.
- Our systems prevent unauthorised access to our premises.
- Our systems prevent children from leaving our premises unnoticed.
- The personal possessions of staff and volunteers are securely stored during sessions.

11. Making a complaint

Policy statement

Our setting believes that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and prompt, careful attention to their needs and wishes. We welcome suggestions on how to improve our setting and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the setting. We anticipate that most concerns will be resolved quickly by an informal approach to the appropriate member of staff. If this does not achieve the desired result, we have a set of procedures for dealing with concerns. We aim to bring all concerns about the running of our setting to a satisfactory conclusion for all of the parties involved.

Procedures

We are required to keep a 'summary log' of all complaints that reach stage two or beyond. This is to be made available to parents as well as to Ofsted inspectors.

Making a complaint

Stage 1

- Any parent who has a concern about an aspect of the setting's provision talks over, first of all, his/her concerns with the setting leader.
- Most complaints should be resolved amicably and informally at this stage.

Stage 2

- If this does not have a satisfactory outcome, or if the problem recurs, the parent moves to this stage of the procedure by putting the concerns or complaint in writing to the setting leader and the chair of the management committee.
- The setting stores written complaints from parents in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, the setting leader may wish to store all information relating to the investigation in a separate file designated for this complaint.
- When the investigation into the complaint is completed, the chairperson or manager meets with the parent to discuss the outcome.
- Parents must be informed of the outcome of the investigation within 28 days of making the complaint.
- When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record.

Stage 3

- If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with the manager and the chair of the management committee. The parent should have a friend or partner present if required and the manager should have the support of the chairperson.
- An agreed written record of the discussion is made as well as any decision or action to take as a result. All of the parties present at the meeting sign the record and receive a copy of it.
- This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded. When the complaint is resolved at this stage, the summative points are logged in the Complaints Summary Record.

Stage 4

- If at the stage three meeting the parent and setting cannot reach agreement, an external mediator is invited to help to settle the complaint. This person should be acceptable to both parties, listen to both sides and offer advice. A mediator has no legal powers but can help to define the problem, review the action so far and suggest further ways in which it might be resolved.
- Staff or volunteers within the Early Years Alliance are appropriate persons to be invited to act as mediators.
- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with the setting personnel (manager and chair of the management committee) and the parent, if this is decided to be helpful. The mediator keeps an agreed written record of any meetings that are held and of any advice s/he gives.

Stage 5

- When the mediator has concluded her/his investigations, a final meeting between the parent, the setting leader and the owner/chair of the management committee is held. The purpose of this meeting is to reach a decision on the action to be taken to deal with the complaint. The mediator's advice is used to reach this conclusion. The mediator is present at the meeting if all parties think this will help a decision to be reached.
- A record of this meeting, including the decision on the action to be taken, is made. Everyone present at the meeting signs the record and receives a copy of it. This signed record signifies that the procedure has concluded.

The role of the Office for Standards in Education, Early Years Directorate (Ofsted) and the Local Safeguarding Children Board

- Parents may approach Ofsted directly at any stage of this complaints procedure. In addition, where there seems to be a possible breach of the setting's registration requirements, it is essential to involve Ofsted as the registering and inspection body with a duty to ensure the Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are adhered to.
- The number to call Ofsted with regard to a complaint is displayed for parents on our setting's entrance door.
- If a child appears to be at risk, our setting follows the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in our local authority.
- In these cases, both the parent and setting are informed and the manager works with Ofsted or the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action.

12. Phone, camera and internet: acceptable use policy

Policy statement

The preschool aims to ensure that children are kept safe from harm caused by inappropriate use of phones, wearable technology (such as smart watches), cameras and internet access. We recognise this as an important part of our safeguarding role.

Procedures

Mobile phones

- Personal mobile phones are not used during opening hours where children are present. Staff may use personal mobile phones in the office, kitchen or off the premises during rest breaks.
- Staff should ensure that schools and family are given the preschool phone number 01206 273226 as an emergency contact number.
- Personal phones should be stored during working hours with other personal belongings in office.
- If there is a particular reason a member of staff needs to have their phone switched on, or needs to check their phone during the session, a request is made to the manager. The phone must be left in the office for checking during working hours.
- Staff may wear smart watches or equivalent as long as any function which allows photos to be taken, either from the device itself or by remotely accessing a phone, is disabled during working hours.
    - Where trips are taken outside the setting a member of staff may be asked to take their own personal phone, fully charged and switched on. The number will be recorded on the risk assessment made for the outing.
    - Staff do not take photos of children at the preschool on personal mobile phones or cameras for any reason. All photos of children at the preschool must be taken using the preschool iPads. All staff are aware that any photos, videos taken on these iPads are taken for work purposes and are not to be shared under any circumstances. These images are for the children's Learning Journeys' only. All iPads are password protected and restrictions are placed for interest use. Tapestry is only to be

accessed via preschool iPads or laptops, staff do not use their personal mobile phones or laptops to access Tapestry.

- Photos are only ever printed at the preschool. Photos used on our website or Facebook page never show identifiable children.
- Parents and visitors are asked not to use mobile phones within the preschool playroom. Where visitors, e.g. contractors, need to use a phone, they should do so in the office or outside the premises.,

Internet and social networking sites, use of camera, photos and images

- The preschool recognises that employees and Trustees are professionals who are responsible for the care and education of children and expects them to use good judgement in their use of internet and social networking sites.
- No personal devices such as cameras, mobile phones, tablets or smart watches or other technology are used to take photos.
- Professional photographers have appropriate checks and are supervised at all times when photographing the children.
- No information regarding the preschool (except statements of fact which are already available via the preschool website or Facebook page) or children at the preschool should be posted on social media. **This would be considered a breach of confidentiality and may lead to disciplinary action**. Exceptions to this may be made for the purposes of advertising an event, but this will be organised and sanctioned by the Trustees.
- Staff and Trustees must not engage in any activities on the internet which might bring Little Owls Preschool or its employees or Trustees into disrepute. Staff should be aware of their professional online reputation.
- Staff should not accept friend requests or communications from family members of children who attend or have attended the preschool. As a village preschool, we understand that there may be pre-existing social media relationships between staff and parents. The manager should be made aware of any such pre-existing relationships and give guidance and boundaries.
- Communication between staff and parents relating to the preschool or preschool children (past or present) should take place via the preschool email or phone number.
- Children are taught to use technology safely. iPad are used by staff to record progress, and are available to teach children how to access information online. Staff check apps, websites and search results before using them with children. Children are always supervised when accessing the internet. On our website there are links to advise parents on keeping their children safe whilst on line at home.
- Staff do not use work iPads for personal use.
- Parents are made aware on initial visit and subsequently by signing a Tapestry agreement, that any photos taken for observations, will not be shared on any social media site.
- Photos of children are only permitted to be taken by the work iPad and used for Tapestry observations and pictures on our own closed social media sites that do not identify any of our children.

13. Online Safety

Online safety is recognised as part of the settings safeguarding responsibilities.

- All online safety concerns should be reported by staff to designated safeguarding lead. These concerns may be of a child viewing or talking about inappropriate content from home or in setting.
- Staff may only view and use content appropriate for the children in the setting on iPads provided by the setting. The content must be suitable and age appropriate and for the purpose of teaching and learning.
- No content from settings iPads including videos or pictures of the children may be shared on any public social media sites. These may only be uploaded to the settings private social media pages, with parent permission.
- Staff are required to keep content on setting iPads confidential and only to be used appropriately for work purposes.
- Children are taught about staying safe online and parents are regularly set information on keeping children safe online at home.
- Any concerns will be reported and documented in line with all children protection procedures

14. Lock Down Procedure

If an incident happens the setting manger acts quickly to assess the likelihood of immediate danger. In most cases the assumption will be that is safer to stay put and place the setting into "lockdown" until the emergency services arrive. As soon at the emergency services arrive at the scene, staff comply with their instructions.

15. Safer Eating

We are committed to ensuring children are well supervised and foods are prepared suitably for young children. Please see our **Promoting Health and Hygiene Policy** for further information.

16. Visitor or intruder on the premises

The safety and security of the premises is maintained at all times and staff are vigilant.

Visitors with legitimate business – generally a visitor with have made a prior appointment

- On arrival, they are asked to verify their identity and confirm who they are visiting.
- Staff will them to sign in and explain the procedures for the use of mobile phones and emergency evacuation.
- Visitors are never left alone with the children at any time.
- Visitors to the setting are monitored and asked to leave immediately should their behaviour give cause for concern.

Intruder

An intruder is an individual who has not followed visitor procedures and has no legitimate business to be in the setting: he or she may or may not be a hazard to the setting.

- An individual who appears to have no business in the setting will be asked for their name and purpose for being there
- The staff member identifies any risk posed by the intruder.
- The staff member ensures the individual following the procedure for visitors.
- The setting manager is immediately informed of the incident and takes necessary action to safeguard children.
- If there are concerns for the safety of children staff evacuate them to a safe place in the building and contact police. In some circumstances this could lead to "lock-down" of the setting and will be managed by the responding emergency service (see separate procedure).
- In the case of a serious breach where there was a perceived or actual threat to the safety of the children, the manager/designated person completes a confidential safeguarding incident report. The manager/trustees ensure a robust organisational response and ensure that learning is shared.

Signed on behalf of the management committee Nicola Bloomfield	Date 10/09/2025
Name of signatory Nicola Bloomfield	Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner) Trustee and Manager