SHOOTING STARS

Pre-School Nursery

Attendance and Child Absence Policy

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1.0 Policy Statement

Shooting Stars Pre-School Nursery is committed to promoting regular attendance and punctuality so that every child can benefit fully from the car, learning, experiences and relationships provided within the setting. Consistent attendance supports children's wellbeing, development, and sense of security by helping them establish familiar routines, form string attachments and participate meaningfully in the nursery curriculum.

Although children below compulsory school age is not legally required to attend nursery, the nursery has a statutory safeguarding responsibility to monitor attendance, follow up on unexplained absences, and respond appropriately where a child's absence may indicate a concern about their safety or welfare. A child's absence will never be considered in isolation; staff will take account of patterns of attendance, the child's individual circumstances and vulnerabilities, and any other concerns relating to their parents, carers, or homelife.

Parents and carers are expected to inform the nursery whenever their child will be absent and provide the reason as to why the child is absent. Where notification has not been received, the nursery will make timely attempts to contact the parents/carers and, where necessary, alternative emergency contacts. Any concerns arising from a child's absence will be managed according to the settings Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and relevant local safeguarding procedures.

Our approach to attendance is supportive, proportionate, and non-punitive. We will work in partnership with families to understand and help address barriers to regular attendance, including illness, disability, special educational needs, family circumstances and other difficulties. However, the child's safety and welfare will remain the nursery's overriding priority, and concerns will be referred to the appropriate services where necessary.

2.0 Our Legal Obligations

Shooting Stars Pre-school Nursery will comply with all relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and local safeguarding arrangements relating to children's attendance, absence, and welfare.
This policy has been developed in reference to:

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (DfE 2026): Requirement to follow-up children's absences promptly, to maintain an attendance policy and share this with parents/carers and keep and accurate daily record of children's hours of attendance and absences.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE 2026): Responsibility for the provider of childcare to identify any concerns, share information appropriately and work with other agencies to safeguard and promote children's welfare.

Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004: stablish the nursery's duties to safeguard children, promote their welfare and respond where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

Childcare Act 2006: which provides the legal basis for the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements and the provision of early education and childcare;

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation: which govern how attendance information, contact records and safeguarding information must be recorded, stored, shared and retained;

Equality Act 2010, which requires the nursery to avoid discrimination and make reasonable adjustments when a child's attendance is affected by disability, medical needs or other protected characteristics;

3.0 Procedures

Shooting Stars Pre-School Nursery maintains clear and consistent procedures for recording, monitoring and responding to children's attendance and absence. These procedures apply to all children, whether their place is privately paid, funded in full or funded in part, and across both nursery settings.

Attendance will be monitored as part of the nursery's wider safeguarding responsibilities. An absence will never automatically be treated as a safeguarding concern; however, staff will remain professionally curious and consider whether an unexplained absence, prolonged absence or emerging pattern may indicate that a child or family requires support or protection.

The nursery's response will be proportionate to the individual circumstances. Decisions will consider the child's age, vulnerability, medical or SEND needs, usual attendance pattern, the vulnerability of their parents or carers, known family circumstances and any involvement from other professionals. A fixed number of missed sessions will not prevent earlier action where there are concerns about a child's welfare.

Parents and carers will be informed of the nursery's attendance expectations when their child starts and will have continuing access to this policy. All absences, contact attempts, explanations and actions taken will be recorded accurately and handled in accordance with the nursery's Data Protection and Safeguarding Policies.

3.01 Expected Attendance

Children are expected to attend the sessions agreed in their registration process and funding declaration. Regular attendance supports continuity of care, secure relationships, consistent routines, and children's learning and development.

The nursery recognises that most children attending early years provision are not of compulsory school age and that families may occasionally need to keep their child at home. Attendance will therefore be managed supportively and will not involve school-style sanctions. However, parents and carers are expected to inform the nursery whenever their child will not attend and to provide a reason for the absence.

Parents and carers should ensure that the attendance pattern booked for their child remains suitable and should discuss any permanent or significant change with the

Nursery Manager. Changes to funded attendance arrangements may be subject to the relevant local authority's funding conditions, notice periods and the availability of alternative sessions.

Where a child's attendance becomes irregular or differs significantly from their agreed pattern, the nursery will contact the family to understand the circumstances, identify any barriers and consider whether further support or safeguarding action is required.

3.02 Reporting an Absence
Parents and carers must notify the nursery as soon as possible when their child will not attend an agreed session. Wherever possible, this should be done before the child's expected arrival time through Famly, by telephone or by email
.
The notification should include:
the child's name;
the reason for the absence;
the anticipated length of the absence; and
any relevant information concerning the child's health or welfare.

Where absence is due to illness, parents and carers should provide sufficient information about the child's symptoms or diagnosis so that the nursery can apply its Infection Control Policy, advise on any required exclusion period and consider whether other children or staff may have been exposed to an infectious illness. Known absences, including holidays, appointments and significant family circumstances, should be reported in advance wherever reasonably possible. If the expected length of an absence changes, parents and carers must provide the nursery with an update.

The member of staff receiving the notification will ensure that the reason for absence and any relevant information is recorded on Famly. Information suggesting a safeguarding, medical or welfare concern must be shared promptly with the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Informing the nursery of an absence does not prevent further contact where staff require clarification, need to check on the child's welfare or have safeguarding concerns.

3.03 Daily Attendance Records
The nursery will maintain an accurate daily record of every child being cared for on the premises. This will include the child's name, their actual time of arrival and departure, and the name of their assigned key person, as required by the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Children will be signed in on Famly when they arrive and signed out when they leave. Actual attendance times must be recorded rather than the child's booked

session times. Staff must complete entries promptly so that the register provides an accurate real-time record of who is on the premises.

The register will be used to support:
safeguarding and supervision;
staff-to-child ratio monitoring;
emergency evacuation and accountability;
attendance and absence monitoring; and
early education funding records and audits.

Room staff must regularly check that the children physically present correspond with the children recorded on Famly, particularly following arrivals, collections, room transitions, outdoor play and outings. Any discrepancy must be investigated and corrected immediately.

If Famly or the nursery's electronic systems are temporarily unavailable, staff will use a paper register to record arrival and departure times. This information will be transferred to Famly once access is restored, and the original record will be retained where required.

Attendance records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the nursery's Data Protection Policy, record-retention arrangements and applicable local authority funding requirements.

3.04 Unexplained Non-Arrival
Where a child does not attend an agreed session and the nursery has not received an explanation, staff will check Famly, emails, telephone messages and the attendance register to confirm that no notification has been received.

The nursery will make a reasonable attempt to contact the child's parent or carer during the first missed session. Contact may be made sooner where the child is particularly vulnerable, is subject to a safeguarding or multi-agency plan, or where there is another reason to be concerned.

If the parent or carer cannot be reached, the nursery will make further contact attempts using the available contact details. Alternative emergency contacts may also be contacted where the absence remains unexplained or where there is concern for the child or family. All contact attempts and outcomes will be recorded.

Where an absence remains unexplained for three consecutive days, the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead will review the circumstances and determine what further action is required. This review will consider the child's vulnerability, their usual attendance pattern, the vulnerability of their parents or carers, their home circumstances and any known involvement from other professionals.

The nursery will not routinely treat absence as a safeguarding concern solely because a child has not attended. However, it will not wait three days where

information suggests that the child or family may be at risk. In such circumstances, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow the nursery's safeguarding procedures, contact the relevant professional or children's social care service, and request a police welfare check where appropriate.

3.05 Prolonged and Repeated Absence

The nursery will monitor children's attendance to identify prolonged absences and emerging patterns of non-attendance. There is no single period that will automatically be treated as a prolonged absence. The Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead will use professional judgement and consider:

- the number and frequency of sessions the child is expected to attend;
- the length of the absence and whether an expected return date has been provided;
- whether the absence has been explained;
- the child's age, needs and vulnerability;
- the vulnerability of the child's parents or carers and their home circumstances;
- the child's previous attendance pattern;
- repeated absence on particular days or following weekends, holidays or periods of closure;
- whether the child has returned when expected following illness, a holiday or another planned absence; and
- any known involvement from children's social care, Early Help, health services or other professionals.

A notified or authorised absence will not automatically prevent further enquiries where its length, frequency or circumstances raise concern.

Where prolonged or repeated absence is identified, the nursery will contact the parents or carers to understand the circumstances, confirm the child's welfare and expected return date, and identify whether the family requires support. A meeting may be arranged and an agreed attendance or support plan recorded where this would benefit the child.

The nursery will respond sensitively where attendance is affected by illness, disability, SEND, family difficulty or another significant circumstance. Reasonable adjustments and appropriate support will be considered in partnership with the family and relevant professionals.

Where attendance continues to cause concern, the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide whether advice, information-sharing or a referral to another service is required. Any safeguarding concern will be addressed under the nursery's Safeguarding Policy without waiting for the absence to reach a particular length or frequency.

3.06 Assessing Vulnerability and Safeguarding Risk

Absence alone does not necessarily indicate that a child is at risk of harm. However, unexplained, prolonged or repeated absence may form part of a wider safeguarding picture and must be considered alongside all other information known about the child and family.

Where an attendance concern is referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, they will make a proportionate assessment which may consider:

- the child's age, development, medical needs, disability or SEND;
- whether the absence is unusual for the child;
- whether parents or carers can be contacted and whether the explanation provided is consistent and credible;
- the length, frequency and pattern of absence;
- the child's presentation, behaviour or comments before or following an absence;
- any previous safeguarding concerns, injuries, disclosures or changes in family circumstances;
- the vulnerability of the child's parents or carers;
- relevant features of the child's home life;
- whether the child or family is receiving support from Early Help, children's social care, health services or another agency;
- whether the child is subject to a Child in Need Plan, Child Protection Plan or another multi-agency arrangement; and
- any other information suggesting that the child may be experiencing neglect, abuse, exploitation or unmet need.

The assessment and rationale for any decision will be recorded on the nursery's safeguarding system. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will not rely solely on attendance percentages, a fixed number of missed sessions or whether the parent or carer has described the absence as authorised.

Depending on the level of concern, action may include speaking with the parents or carers, consulting an existing professional, seeking advice from the relevant local authority children's social care service, making a safeguarding referral or requesting a police welfare check.

Where there is reason to believe that a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, the nursery will contact the police on **999** and follow its Safeguarding Policy. Staff will not delay necessary safeguarding action while attempting to investigate the circumstances themselves.

3.07 Escalation and Welfare Checks

Where an attendance concern cannot be resolved through contact with the family, or information suggests that a child may be unsafe, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will determine the appropriate level of escalation. Decisions will be based on the child's individual circumstances and the risk assessment completed under this policy.

Action may include:
contacting a child's social worker, Early Help worker, health visitor or another professional already involved with the family;

seeking safeguarding advice from the relevant local authority children's social care service;
making a referral to children's social care where there is concern that the child may be experiencing abuse, neglect or another form of harm;
requesting a police welfare check where the nursery cannot establish that the child is safe and the circumstances justify police involvement; or
contacting the police on **999** where there is reason to believe that the child is at immediate risk of significant harm or urgent assistance is required.

A police welfare check will not be requested automatically because a child has missed a particular number of sessions. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider the attempts already made to contact the family, the information known about the child, any identified vulnerabilities and the nature and urgency of the concern.

Parents and carers will normally be informed before information is shared or a referral is made. However, information may be shared without consent where this is necessary to protect a child. Parents or carers will not be informed where doing so could increase the risk to the child or another person, interfere with an investigation or cause an unreasonable delay in protecting the child.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will record:

- the concern and information considered;
- all contact attempts;
- advice received from other agencies;
- the decision made and the reasons for it;
- any information shared or referral made; and
- the outcome and any required follow-up action.

Where a referral or request for assistance has been made, the nursery will continue to monitor the situation and follow up if an appropriate response is not received. The nursery will not assume that responsibility has transferred to another agency until this has been confirmed.

3.08 Children Known to Other Agencies

Where a child is receiving support from children's social care, Early Help, health services or another relevant agency, the nursery will ensure that attendance arrangements form part of its ongoing work with the family and professionals.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that the nursery holds up-to-date details for the child's allocated professional and understands any agreed requirements for reporting absence. This includes children who are:

- subject to a Child Protection Plan or Child in Need Plan;
- supported through Early Help;
- looked after by the local authority;
- receiving support under another safeguarding or multi-agency plan; or
- otherwise identified by a relevant professional as particularly vulnerable.

Where a plan or professional agreement requires absence to be reported immediately or within a specified timescale, the nursery will follow that arrangement. If no specific arrangement exists, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will use professional judgement to determine whether the child's absence or inability to contact the family should be shared with the allocated professional.

Relevant attendance information may be discussed during professional meetings, reviews and planning processes. The nursery will share information that is necessary, relevant and proportionate to safeguarding the child and coordinating support.

Staff who need to know about specific attendance arrangements will be informed while maintaining the child's and family's confidentiality. The child's key person will report any changes in attendance, presentation, behaviour or family circumstances to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The nursery will not assume that another agency is monitoring the child's attendance unless this has been explicitly agreed. Responsibility for following the nursery's own attendance and safeguarding procedures will continue alongside any multi-agency involvement.

3.09 Holidays and Extended Absence

As most children attending the nursery are below compulsory school age, parents and carers are not required to obtain school-style authorisation before taking their child on holiday. However, all holidays and other planned extended absences must be reported to the nursery in advance wherever reasonably possible.

Parents and carers should provide:

- the child's final expected session before the absence;
- the dates the child will be absent;
- the expected date of return;
- the general reason for the absence; and
- up-to-date contact details where these will change during the absence.

Where a child will be outside the United Kingdom for an extended period, the nursery may ask for sufficient information to maintain contact with the family and confirm the child's expected return. Requests will be proportionate and will not be used to intrude unnecessarily into family life.

Parents and carers must notify the nursery promptly if their plans change or the child will not return on the agreed date. Where a child does not return as expected and no explanation is received, the nursery will follow its unexplained absence and safeguarding procedures.

Fees during holidays or other planned absences will be charged in accordance with the nursery's Fee Policy and the family's childcare agreement. For children receiving funded early education, extended absences will be managed in accordance with the

applicable Oldham or Tameside funding requirements. The nursery may be required to discuss the absence with, or provide attendance information to, the relevant local authority.

An extended absence will not automatically be treated as a safeguarding concern. However, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider any information suggesting that the child may be at risk, including concerns about the reason for travel, the child's expected return or an inability to maintain contact with the family.

Where appropriate, the child's key person will work with the family to support the child's return and re-settling following a prolonged period away from the nursery.

3.10 Funded Early Education Places

For children accessing funded early education, the nursery will comply with the attendance, record-keeping and reporting requirements contained within the relevant local authority's provider agreement.

Parents and carers must complete all required funding declarations accurately and inform the nursery of any changes to the child's circumstances, attendance pattern or use of funded hours at another provider.

The nursery will maintain accurate records showing:

- the funded hours agreed for the child;
- the sessions the child is expected to attend;
- the child's actual dates and hours of attendance;
- reported absences and the reasons provided;
- contact with parents or carers concerning prolonged or repeated absence; and
- any changes to the child's funded provision.

A child is not legally required to attend simply because they receive a funded place. However, funded hours are intended to be used regularly in accordance with the agreed attendance pattern. Where attendance becomes prolonged, irregular or significantly different from the funded hours claimed, the nursery will contact the family and follow the relevant local authority's requirements.

The nursery will notify the relevant local authority where required, including when a child leaves the setting, permanently changes their funded hours, fails to take up their place or has a prolonged absence that may affect the nursery's funding claim. Funding will not be claimed for periods that are not permitted under the applicable provider agreement.

Where a child accesses funded hours across more than one provider, the nursery will work with the parent or carer, other provider and relevant local authority to ensure that the child's total claim does not exceed their entitlement.

Any decision to amend or end a funded place will be made in accordance with the applicable provider agreement, the nursery's terms and conditions and the child's individual circumstances. Where the child is vulnerable or safeguarding concerns are present, the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead will consult relevant professionals before the place is ended, where appropriate.

3.11 Punctuality and Late Arrival

Parents and carers are encouraged to bring their child at the agreed session time. Arriving consistently supports children to settle calmly, participate in daily routines and benefit fully from the learning and experiences provided.

Where a child is likely to arrive later than expected, parents and carers should notify the nursery through the nursery app or by telephone. This helps staff plan appropriately for staffing, meals, outings and activities.

A child will not ordinarily be refused entry solely because they have arrived late. Their actual arrival time will be recorded on the nursery app, and staff will support them to enter the room and settle with minimal disruption.

Where repeated lateness affects the child's wellbeing, participation or continuity of care, the child's key person or Nursery Manager will speak with the parents or carers to understand the circumstances and identify any support that may help. Persistent lateness will be considered alongside the child's wider attendance pattern but will not automatically be treated as a safeguarding concern.

Parents and carers must collect their child by the end of their booked session. Where a child is collected more than five minutes late, a **£10 late-collection charge** will apply in accordance with the nursery's terms and conditions.

Repeated late collection, exceptionally late collection, an inability to contact parents or emergency contacts, or circumstances suggesting that a child's needs are not being met may be treated as a safeguarding concern. The Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider the circumstances, any emerging pattern and the impact on the child before deciding whether further action is required.

3.12 Supporting Families and Removing Barriers

The nursery will take a supportive and non-punitive approach where a child's attendance or punctuality becomes a concern. Staff will seek to understand the reasons behind the difficulty and work in partnership with the family to identify appropriate support.

Barriers to attendance may include:

- the child's illness, disability, medical needs or SEND;
- difficulties with settling or separation;
- changes in family circumstances;
- transport or practical difficulties;

- parental illness, mental health needs or caring responsibilities;
- housing or financial difficulties;
- bereavement or another significant family event; or
- concerns about the child's experience within the nursery.

Depending on the circumstances, support may include adjustments to the child's arrival or settling routine, involvement from their key person or SENDCo, a temporary attendance plan, reasonable adjustments, signposting to local services or working with professionals already supporting the family.

Any agreed support will be proportionate, time-limited where appropriate and reviewed with the parents or carers. The child's views, behaviour and individual needs will be considered in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Families will not be criticised or penalised simply because their child has been absent. However, the nursery's fees, notice periods, funded-place requirements and late-collection charges will continue to apply in accordance with its terms and conditions and relevant policies.

Where barriers cannot be resolved or the information available indicates that the child may be experiencing unmet need, neglect or another form of harm, the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow the nursery's safeguarding procedures. Supportive engagement with the family will not delay necessary action to protect a child.

3.13 Record Keeping and Punctuality
The nursery will maintain clear, accurate and timely records relating to children's attendance, absence and punctuality. Records may include:

- the child's actual arrival and departure times;
- their agreed attendance pattern and assigned key person;
- absence notifications and the reasons provided;
- dates, times and methods of contact attempts;
- responses received from parents, carers and emergency contacts;
- discussions with families and any agreed support arrangements;
- patterns of absence or lateness identified;
- decisions and risk assessments completed by the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- advice received, information shared and referrals made;
- actions and outcomes involving other professionals; and
- information required for funded-place monitoring or local authority audits.

Routine attendance information will be recorded on the nurseries MIS system. Where an absence raises a safeguarding concern, relevant information will also be recorded on the nursery's designated safeguarding system or safeguarding records.

Sensitive safeguarding information will not be placed in general notes where this would make it unnecessarily accessible.

Records must distinguish clearly between fact, information provided by another person, professional opinion and action taken. Entries will be dated and attributable to the member of staff making them. Any correction must preserve an appropriate record of the original information where required.

Attendance information will only be accessed by staff who require it to carry out their role. Information may be shared with other professionals or agencies where this is necessary to safeguard the child, coordinate support, meet funding requirements or comply with a legal obligation. Any information shared will be relevant, necessary and proportionate.

Parents and carers may request access to information held about their child, subject to data-protection law, safeguarding considerations and the rights of other individuals.

All records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the nursery's Data Protection Policy, retention schedule, safeguarding requirements and applicable local authority funding arrangements. Relevant information will be transferred securely when a child moves to another setting or school where this is necessary to support their welfare or continued safeguarding.

3.14 Ending a Place Following Non-Attendance

A child's place will not be ended automatically because they have missed a fixed number of sessions. Before ending a place due to prolonged non-attendance, the Nursery Manager will ensure that reasonable attempts have been made to contact the parents or carers, establish the child's welfare and understand the family's intentions.

Where parents or carers confirm that the child is leaving, the nursery will record the child's final date of attendance and, where provided, the name of the setting or school they will attend next. Any relevant records will be transferred securely in accordance with the nursery's Data Protection, Safeguarding and Transition procedures.

Where the family cannot be contacted, the Nursery Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead will review:

- all attempts made to contact the family and emergency contacts;
- the child's attendance history and known circumstances;
- any safeguarding concerns or identified vulnerabilities;
- involvement from children's social care, Early Help or other professionals;
- whether the relevant local authority must be notified; and
- whether further safeguarding action or a welfare check is required.

A place will not be ended while an unresolved safeguarding concern means that doing so could result in the child becoming less visible to services. Where the child is

known to other professionals, the nursery will consult them before closing the place wherever appropriate.

If there are no unresolved welfare concerns and the family has failed to respond after reasonable contact attempts, the nursery may end the place by giving notice in accordance with its terms and conditions. Parents and carers will be informed in writing of the decision, the final date of the place and any outstanding fees.

For a funded place, the nursery will complete any required notification or adjustment in accordance with the relevant local authority's provider agreement. The child's removal from the nursery registers and the reason for it will be recorded clearly.

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Registered Provider and Directors: ensure that the organisation maintains an attendance policy which meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage; provide appropriate systems, staffing and oversight for attendance monitoring; ensure the policy is implemented consistently across all nursery settings; and review serious or recurring compliance concerns.

Nursery Manager: oversees the implementation of this policy within the setting; ensures attendance registers are accurate and completed promptly; makes sure unexplained and prolonged absences are followed up; monitors attendance patterns; supports families where barriers are identified; ensures funded-place requirements are met; and escalates welfare concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: assesses attendance information where there may be a safeguarding concern; considers the child's and family's vulnerabilities and circumstances; records decisions and professional reasoning; liaises with other professionals; seeks safeguarding advice; makes referrals; and requests police assistance or a welfare check where appropriate.

Deputy Manager and Room Leaders: support the Nursery Manager in checking registers, identifying unexplained absences and recognising emerging patterns of absence or lateness. They ensure that concerns raised by practitioners are acted upon and passed promptly to the Nursery Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

SENDCo: supports children whose attendance is affected by SEND, disability, medical needs or difficulties accessing the nursery environment. The SENDCo works with the child, family, key person and relevant professionals to identify reasonable adjustments and appropriate support.

Key Person: develops a secure relationship with the child and family; remains aware of the child's usual attendance pattern; records and shares information provided by parents or carers; supports the child's return following absence; and reports changes in attendance, presentation, behaviour or family circumstances.

All Staff: record children's arrival and departure times accurately; check that the children physically present correspond with the attendance register; follow absence-reporting procedures; remain professionally curious; maintain confidentiality; and report attendance or safeguarding concerns without delay.

Parents and Carers: ensure that the nursery holds accurate contact and emergency-contact information; notify the nursery when their child will be absent or late; provide the reason and expected duration; update the nursery if circumstances change; collect their child on time; complete funding declarations accurately; and work with the nursery where support or further information is required.