



# Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd

## Attendance Policy

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### 1. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd recognises that **regular attendance is essential for safeguarding, wellbeing, and effective learning**. As an outdoor learning provider and Alternative Provision, we work closely with referring schools, local authorities, and families to ensure young people attend consistently and safely.

We understand that many learners attending alternative provision may have experienced barriers to attendance in mainstream education. Our approach therefore balances **clear expectations with supportive, restorative strategies** that encourage engagement.

Attendance monitoring is also part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

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### 2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Promote **regular attendance and punctuality**.
  - Ensure **safeguarding procedures are followed if a learner fails to attend**.
  - Support learners who may struggle with attendance.
  - Provide clear procedures for **recording, monitoring and reporting attendance**.
  - Work collaboratively with **referring schools, parents/carers and local authorities**.
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### 3. Legal Context

Although Forest Schools operating as Alternative Provision are not always registered schools, attendance monitoring must align with expectations set out by the **Department for Education** regarding:

- safeguarding children
- educational engagement
- communication with commissioning schools

Responsibility for statutory attendance enforcement normally remains with the **referring school or local authority**.

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## 4. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all learners attending the Forest School provision
- staff and volunteers responsible for delivering sessions
- partner schools and referring organisations
- parents/carers where applicable

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## 5. Attendance Expectations

Learners are expected to:

- attend **all scheduled sessions**
- arrive **on time**
- engage in activities unless there is a health or safeguarding reason not to do so

Where learners attend part-time alternative provision, the **referring school retains overall responsibility for attendance monitoring**.

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## 6. Recording Attendance

Attendance is recorded for every session using our Bookwhen booking system.

Registers include:

- learner name
- date
- session time
- present / absent

Registers are completed by the **session leader** and stored securely on our Bookwhen booking system.

Attendance information is shared with the commissioning school of all alternative provision children.

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## 7. Punctuality

Punctuality is important because:

- safety briefings occur at the start of sessions
- late arrivals may disrupt group activities
- outdoor risk assessments require accurate knowledge of who is present

Where a learner arrives late:

- they must receive the **safety briefing before joining activities**
  - **If relevant the commissioning school is notified.**
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## 8. Reporting Absence

If a learner cannot attend a session:

- the parent/carer or commissioning school should inform the provision **before the session begins**
- reasons for absence should be provided where possible

Acceptable reasons may include:

- illness
  - medical appointments
  - agreed absence with the referring school
  - transport issues where unavoidable
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## 9. Unexplained Absence Procedure

If a learner expected at a session **does not arrive**:

1. The session leader records the absence.
2. The provision attempts to contact:
  - o the commissioning school
  - o parent/carer (if appropriate).
3. If the learner's whereabouts cannot be confirmed, the concern is escalated to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (Dan Halford)**.

Unexplained absence may trigger safeguarding procedures depending on circumstances.

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## 10. Persistent Absence

Persistent absence is monitored in collaboration with the commissioning school.

If attendance becomes a concern:

The provision may:

- discuss barriers with the learner
- liaise with the commissioning school
- involve parents/carers where appropriate
- review the learner's placement
- adapt support strategies

As an alternative provision, our approach focuses on **supporting re-engagement rather than punitive measures**.

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## 11. Safeguarding Considerations

Attendance is closely linked to safeguarding.

Staff must be alert to patterns such as:

- repeated unexplained absences
- sudden drop in attendance
- patterns linked to particular days or activities

Concerns must be reported to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** and recorded according to safeguarding procedures.

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## 12. Communication With Commissioning Schools

The provision will:

- provide **regular attendance reports**
- inform schools of **any safeguarding concerns**
- notify schools of **persistent absence patterns**
- maintain clear records of attendance

The referring school retains responsibility for:

- statutory attendance monitoring
  - legal enforcement where necessary
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## 13. Supporting Positive Attendance

Because many learners in alternative provision have experienced difficulties in mainstream education, the Little Acorns Forest Schools Ltd promotes attendance by:

- creating a **supportive and inclusive environment**
  - offering **engaging outdoor learning experiences**
  - building **positive relationships with staff**
  - recognising learner achievements
  - working closely with commissioning schools and families
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## 14. Severe Weather or Session Cancellation

Due to the outdoor nature of the provision:

Sessions may occasionally be cancelled due to:

- severe weather
- unsafe site conditions
- environmental hazards

If sessions are cancelled:

- commissioning schools and families will be informed as soon as possible
  - the session will be recorded as **cancelled rather than absent**
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## 15. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be:

- reviewed annually
- updated in line with safeguarding guidance
- evaluated alongside attendance data

Reviewed January 2026 – Kate Morison Lead Practitioner – no alterations made.