

Staffing, Student and Volunteer Policy

Statement of intent

At Playhouse Pre-School, we recognise that appropriate staffing is essential to providing high-quality care, education and supervision.

We ensure that staffing arrangements meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and take account of the ages, development, individual needs and number of children attending.

All staff, students, volunteers and trainees must be suitable to work with children and must understand and follow Playhouse's policies and procedures.

We recognise the valuable contribution made by students and volunteers and aim to provide appropriate opportunities for learning and professional development while ensuring that children's safety and wellbeing remain our priority.

Staffing ratios

Playhouse Pre-School will maintain the staff-to-child ratios required by the current EYFS Statutory Framework.

Our normal staffing ratios are:

- Children under two years: 1 adult to 3 children.
- Children aged two years: 1 adult to 5 children.
- Children aged three and four years: 1 adult to 8 children.

Where staffing requirements differ because of the qualifications of staff or other permitted EYFS arrangements, Playhouse will follow the current statutory requirements.

Staffing levels will also take account of:

- children's individual needs;
- children with SEND or additional needs;
- children's medical or care needs;
- the layout and suitability of the environment;
- activities taking place;
- staff experience and qualifications;
- staff absences; and
- any additional risks identified through risk assessment.

Staffing must always be sufficient to provide effective supervision and maintain children's safety and wellbeing.

Key person system

Playhouse operates a key person system so that every child has a named member of staff who develops a strong, positive relationship with them.

The key person works in partnership with parents and carers to support the child's wellbeing, learning and development.

Children may develop close relationships with other members of staff and the key person system does not prevent children from receiving support and care from the wider staff team.

Where a child's key person is absent, appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure continuity of care.

Staff qualifications and suitability

Staff working with children must meet the qualification and suitability requirements of the current EYFS Statutory Framework.

Playhouse will ensure that staff have the appropriate qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience for their roles.

The setting will follow current Department for Education requirements regarding early years qualifications and which qualifications allow staff to be included in statutory staff-to-child ratios.

Safer recruitment

Playhouse is committed to safer recruitment and will recruit staff in accordance with current legislation, the EYFS and our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy.

Recruitment procedures will include, as appropriate:

- a completed application;
- appropriate interviews and selection procedures;
- verification of qualifications and identity;
- references;
- criminal record and barred-list checks where required;
- consideration of employment history and gaps;
- checks of suitability to work with children;
- verification of the applicant's right to work where required; and
- any other checks required by current legislation or statutory guidance.

References will be obtained before a person is recruited. References will be appropriate to the applicant's circumstances and will not be accepted as open references such as "to whom it may concern".

Where an applicant has previously worked with children, Playhouse will seek an appropriate reference from the relevant employer where required.

No new employee will commence employment before the required criminal record check has been received, in accordance with current EYFS requirements.

Where an applicant is unsuitable to work with children, they will not be appointed.

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

Playhouse will obtain the appropriate DBS check for staff, volunteers and students where required by current legislation and statutory guidance.

The level of DBS check required will depend on the person's role, activities and eligibility.

Playhouse will ensure that DBS requirements are reviewed where a person's role or responsibilities change.

Where a person is barred from working with children, they must not be permitted to undertake regulated activity with children.

The Manager will ensure that appropriate records of required checks are maintained securely.

Staff induction

All new staff will receive an induction when they begin employment.

A staff induction checklist will be used to ensure that important areas are covered.

Induction will include, as appropriate:

- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection;
- Health and Safety;
- emergency procedures, including fire and lockdown/evacuation;
- safer sleep arrangements;
- behaviour management;
- confidentiality and data protection;
- mobile phone and photographic image procedures;
- administering medicines and allergy procedures;
- first aid arrangements;
- food and hygiene procedures;
- equality, diversity and inclusion;
- professional boundaries;
- whistleblowing;
- absence and sickness procedures;
- supervision arrangements; and
- other policies relevant to the individual's role.

New staff will be introduced to the setting's policies and procedures and will receive appropriate support during their induction.

New staff will be allocated a suitable member of staff for support and guidance where appropriate.

Staff training and professional development

Playhouse recognises that ongoing training contributes to high-quality care and education.

Staff will receive training appropriate to their role and responsibilities.

This may include:

- safeguarding;
- paediatric first aid;
- safer sleep;
- food hygiene;
- health and safety;
- SEND and inclusion;
- behaviour management;
- medication and allergy management;
- professional development relating to the EYFS; and

- other training identified through supervision, appraisal, changes to legislation or the needs of the setting.

Training needs will be discussed through supervision and appraisal.

Staff supervision and appraisal

Staff will receive appropriate supervision and support.

Supervision will provide opportunities to:

- discuss children's needs;
- discuss safeguarding and wellbeing;
- review workload and responsibilities;
- identify training needs;
- discuss professional development;
- raise concerns; and
- consider any support or reasonable adjustments required.

Staff performance will be reviewed through appropriate appraisal and management procedures.

Staff responsibilities

All staff are expected to:

- prioritise children's safety and wellbeing;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- follow Playhouse policies and procedures;
- maintain confidentiality;
- contribute to effective teamwork;
- maintain appropriate supervision of children;
- report safeguarding concerns immediately;
- maintain required training;
- attend meetings and supervision where required; and
- inform management of any change that may affect their suitability to work with children.

Staff sickness and absence

If a member of staff is unable to attend work because of sickness or injury, they must telephone the work number from 7.30am onwards on the first day of absence and speak to Claire. If Claire is unavailable, they must speak to Zoe.

They must give the reason for their absence and, where possible, an expected return date.

If they know they will be absent the following day, they must state this during the morning call or call again by 3.00pm and speak to Claire. If Claire is unavailable, they must speak to Zoe.

Staff must continue to keep the Pre-School informed of their expected return date and notify Claire or Zoe if this changes.

In exceptional circumstances where they are unable to speak to Claire or Zoe, they must make contact as soon as reasonably practicable.

For sickness absences of seven calendar days or less, staff must complete a self-certification form on their return to work.

If sickness continues for more than seven consecutive calendar days, staff must provide a fit note from an appropriate healthcare professional.

Staff may be entitled to Statutory Sick Pay in accordance with current government regulations and statutory requirements.

All sickness absence will be recorded appropriately and information will be treated confidentially.

Following sickness absence, staff will normally have a return-to-work discussion with the Manager to confirm the absence, ensure they are fit to return and identify any support or reasonable adjustments required.

Staff who have diarrhoea or vomiting must not return to work until 48 hours after the last episode, in accordance with current public health guidance.

The Manager will arrange cover where possible. If the required adult-to-child ratios cannot be maintained, Playhouse may need to alter staffing arrangements or close the affected session.

Medical appointments

Staff are encouraged to arrange routine medical, dental or other appointments outside their normal working hours wherever possible.

Where this is not possible, staff must request time off in advance from the Manager and provide reasonable confirmation of the appointment where requested.

Time off for routine medical appointments will normally be unpaid unless otherwise agreed by management.

Emergency or hospital appointments will be considered on an individual basis.

Playhouse will consider reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

Frequent or persistent absence

Playhouse recognises that occasional sickness absence is unavoidable.

Where a pattern of frequent or persistent short-term absence is identified, the Manager may arrange a meeting with the staff member to discuss:

- the reasons for absence;
- any relevant health or wellbeing concerns;
- possible support or reasonable adjustments;
- attendance expectations; and
- any further action that may be appropriate.

The Bradford Factor may be used as one management tool to identify patterns of absence. It will not be used in isolation and will not automatically result in disciplinary action.

Individual circumstances will always be considered, including disability, pregnancy, long-term health conditions and other relevant circumstances.

Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments will be considered.

Concerns about attendance may be managed through the appropriate Playhouse procedure, taking account of the circumstances of each case.

Failure to follow absence procedures

Staff are expected to follow Playhouse's absence reporting procedure.

Failure to report an absence correctly or within the required timescale, without a reasonable explanation, may result in the absence being treated as unauthorised and may lead to action under the appropriate management or disciplinary procedure.

Students

Playhouse welcomes students undertaking appropriate early years qualifications and training.

Students must:

- meet relevant suitability and safeguarding requirements;
- complete required checks before beginning their placement;
- receive an appropriate induction;
- follow Playhouse policies and procedures;
- maintain confidentiality;
- remain under appropriate supervision;
- understand their role and responsibilities; and
- work within the limits of their experience, training and competence.

Students on short-term placements will not normally be counted in statutory staff-to-child ratios.

Where the EYFS permits a suitable student to contribute towards ratios, Playhouse must be satisfied that the student is competent and responsible and all relevant statutory requirements must be met. Students must not be left with sole responsibility for children.

Students who undertake child studies, observations or other activities involving identifiable information must follow Playhouse confidentiality, data protection and safeguarding requirements.

Where required, appropriate parental permission will be obtained.

Student induction

Students will receive an induction appropriate to their placement.

This will include:

- how Playhouse is organised;
- the structure of sessions;
- safeguarding;
- confidentiality;
- health and safety;
- emergency procedures;
- behaviour expectations;
- professional boundaries;
- relevant policies and procedures; and

- their role and responsibilities.

Playhouse will work with students' tutors, training providers or educational settings where appropriate to support their placement.

Volunteers

Playhouse may accept volunteers where this is beneficial to the children and the setting.

The suitability of each volunteer will be considered before they begin volunteering.

The appropriate DBS and safeguarding checks will be completed in accordance with current requirements and the nature of the volunteer's role.

Playhouse will not assume that a volunteer does not require a DBS check simply because they will be supervised.

Volunteers must:

- receive an appropriate induction;
- follow Playhouse policies and procedures;
- maintain confidentiality;
- remain within the responsibilities agreed for their role;
- never be left alone with children;
- not undertake intimate care unless specifically authorised and appropriately trained;
- not be used as a substitute for required qualified staff; and
- work under appropriate supervision.

The needs and safety of the children will always be the priority when deciding whether to accept a volunteer.

Parents and carers as volunteers

Parents and carers may be invited to volunteer where appropriate.

The same suitability, safeguarding, confidentiality and supervision requirements will apply.

Parents volunteering at Playhouse must maintain professional boundaries and must not use their role as a volunteer to access confidential information about other children or families.

Trainees and apprentices

Trainees and apprentices employed by Playhouse will be supported to develop their knowledge and skills.

They may only contribute to statutory staffing ratios where permitted by the current EYFS requirements and where Playhouse is satisfied that they are competent and responsible.

Their responsibilities will reflect their level of training, experience and competence.

Staff records

Playhouse will maintain appropriate staff, student and volunteer records securely.

Records may include:

- application and recruitment information;
- references;
- identity and eligibility checks;
- DBS information;
- qualifications;
- training;
- induction;
- supervision and appraisal records;
- absence information;
- relevant employment records; and
- other information required by law or statutory guidance.

Information will be handled confidentially and in accordance with the Playhouse Confidentiality Policy and applicable data protection requirements.

Insurance

Playhouse maintains appropriate insurance cover for its staff, trainees, students and volunteers in accordance with its insurance arrangements and legal requirements.

This policy was agreed by the staff of Playhouse Pre-school Broadwater.

Adopted on 29th March 2016 and will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed on 25th September 2026 by Z. Munford