

Information, Records and Administration Policy

2.1 Admissions

It is our intention to make our setting accessible to children and families from all sections of the local community. We aim to ensure that all sections of our community have access to the setting through open, fair and clearly communicated procedures.

Procedures

- We ensure that the existence of our setting is widely advertised in places accessible to all sections of the community.
- We ensure that information about our setting is accessible, using simple plain English, in written and spoken form and, where appropriate, provided in different community languages and in other formats on request.
- Our setting and its practices are welcoming and make it clear that fathers, mothers, other relations and carers are all welcome.
- Our setting and its practices operate in a way that encourages positive regard for and understanding of difference and ability - whether gender, family structure, class, background, religion, ethnicity or competence in spoken English.
- We support children and/or parents with disabilities to take full part in all activities within our setting.
- We monitor the needs and background of children joining our setting on the Registration Form, to ensure that no accidental or unintentional discrimination is taking place.
- We share and widely promote our Equal Opportunities Policy.
- We are flexible about attendance patterns to accommodate the needs of individual children and families, providing these do not disrupt the pattern of continuity in the setting that provides stability for all the children.
- Failure to comply with the terms and conditions may ultimately result in the provision of a place being withdrawn.

2.2 Waiting List

Steps Pre-School are keen to welcome new children into the setting throughout the academic year. The way in which children are admitted, is carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out below.

Guidelines

1. A child can be added to the waiting list at any time and registration forms filled in ASAP with a £25 registration fee paid if relevant
2. The Manager will contact the parent / carer between four and six weeks before the preferred start date to arrange a visit if required, and to organise completion of the Child Profile and Child Details Forms.
3. Once the Child Profile and Child Details Forms have been received, the child will be added to the register, and allocated sessions and start date will be confirmed.

Payment of Registration Fee

1. Where a child is eligible for funding under the Free for 2 scheme, and consequently will not be receiving any invoices for pre-school sessions or lunch club sessions, the Registration Fee will not be applied.
2. Where a child is only going to attend pre-school for up to 15 hours of Free Early Education sessions each week and no lunch club sessions, the registration fee will be waived.

3. The Registration Fee will be levied for any other child i.e. where the parent or carer is being invoiced for either pre-school sessions or lunch club sessions.
4. The Registration Fee is not refundable if a place is not taken up by a child subsequent to making the payment, except in the circumstance where no suitable sessions can be offered.
5. The Registration Fee, where paid, will be credited against the first invoice.

2.3 Registration Procedure

As part of the children's learning and development they take part in self-registration at the beginning of each session and this is supported by one practitioner appointed by the lead practitioner for the session.

- Children's names against their photo are displayed on a table
- Children choose their own name from the table with the help of an adult if needed.
- Children place their name on the board

The Pre-School manager or deputy will take the official register and count the number of children present, recording it in the register. The count is double checked by another member of staff then the figure written on the whiteboard. This procedure is carried out without disturbing the play of the children.

Children arriving **late** to a session are marked in the register and added to the number on the notice board.

Children leaving a session **early** are marked out of the session by their leaving time and subtracted from the number on the notice board.

2.4 Parental Involvement

We believe that children benefit most from early year's education and care when parents and settings work together in partnership. Our aim is to support parents as their children's first and most important educators by involving them in their children's education and in the full life of the setting.

Some parents are less well represented in early year's settings; these include fathers, parents who live apart from their children, but who still play a part in their lives, as well as working parents. In carrying out the following procedures we will ensure that all parents are included.

When we refer to 'parents', we mean both mothers and fathers; these include both natural or birth parents, as well as step-parents and parents who do not live with their children, but have contact with them and play a part in their lives. 'Parents' also includes same sex parents, as well as foster parents.

The Children Act (1989) defines parental responsibility as 'all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property'.

Procedures

- Parents are made to feel welcome in our setting and they are greeted appropriately,
- We have a means to ensure all parents are included – that may mean that we have different strategies for involving fathers, or parents who work or live apart from their children.
- We make every effort to accommodate parents who have a disability or impairment.
- We consult with all parents to find out what works best for them.
- We ensure ongoing dialogue with parents to improve our knowledge of the needs of their children and to support their families
- We inform all parents about how the setting is run and its policies through access to written information including our Child Protection and Safeguarding, and through regular informal communication. We check to ensure parents understand the information that is given to them

- Information about a child and his or her family is kept confidential within our setting as per our Privacy Notice. The exception to this is where there is cause to believe that a child may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, or where there are concerns regarding child's development that need to be shared with another agency. We will seek parental permission unless there are reasons not to in order to protect the safety of the child. Reference is made to our Information, Records and Administration Policy on seeking consent for disclosure.
- We encourage and support parents to play an active part in the governance and management of the setting and therefore value their contribution however large or small, ranging from those who become parent representatives, to those who prefer to support us by attending our fundraising events.
- We provide sufficient opportunity for parents to share necessary information with us and this is recorded and stored to protect confidentiality, as reflected in our Privacy Notice
- Staff are available, when possible, to discuss with parents their child's progress and to share concerns if they arise. Where applicable the child's key person will work with parent to carry out an agreed plan to support special education needs or carry out any agreed tasks where a Protection Plan is in place for a child.
- We involve parents in the shared record keeping about their children-either formally or informally-and we ensure parents have access to their children's written developmental records
- We provide opportunities for parents to contribute their own skills, knowledge and interests to the activities of the setting
- We support families to be involved in activities that promote their own learning and wellbeing; informing parents about relevant conferences, workshops and training.
- We consult with parents about the times of meetings to avoid excluding anyone
- We hold meetings in venues that are accessible and appropriate for all.
- We inform all parents of the systems for registering queries, complaints or suggestions and check to ensure these are understood. All parents have access to our written complaints procedure.
- We provide opportunities for parents to learn about the curriculum offered in the setting and about young children's learning, in the setting and at home

2.5 Children's Records

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 Data Protection Act and the Human Rights Act.

If a child attends another setting, we establish a regular two-way flow of appropriate information with parents and other providers. Where appropriate we will incorporate comments from other providers, as well as parents and/or carers into the child's records.

Procedures

We keep two kinds of records on children attending our setting:

Developmental records

- These include observations of children in the setting, photographs, and samples of their work and summary developmental reports.
- These are kept in a locked cupboard in the pre-school room, when they are not being used/updated and can only be accessed via staff, and contributed to, by staff, the child and the child's parents.

Personal records

- Please see our Privacy Notice, which can be found on the Steps Pre-school website and this, is also displayed in the Preschool hallway noticeboard. A copy is also given out in the Parent Registration pack.

Other records

- Please see our Privacy Notice, which can be found on the Steps Preschool website and this, is also displayed in the Preschool hallway noticeboard. A copy is also given out in the Parent Registration pack.

2.6 Recording and Reporting of Accidents, Incidents and Serious Incidents

Definitions

- An accident, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as an accident causing injury experienced by one or more person.
- An incident, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as an incident between two or more children resulting in injury / or a pre-existing injury to a child which is reported to the pre-school by the parent / carer
- A serious incident, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as an incident or accident of any nature which necessitates a review of a policy or procedure to ensure that the prescribed standards are being met. This is an incident which is not covered under the Child Protection Policy.

Our accident records:

- are completed during the session in which the accident takes place
- are kept in a safe and secure place
- are accessible to staff and volunteers, who all know how to complete them
- are signed by parent / carer at the end of the session
- are reviewed at least half termly to identify any potential or actual hazards
- are summarised and submitted to the PCC annually for review

Our incident records:

- are completed during the session in which the incident takes place
- are kept in a safe and secure place
- are accessible to staff who all know how to complete them
- are signed by parent / carer at the time of notification / end of the session
- are reviewed at least half termly to identify any potential or actual hazards

Our serious incident reports

- are completed within 24 hours of the serious incident taking place
- are kept in a safe and secure place
- contain a detailed investigation report, along with any necessary amendments to practice, procedure or policy
- are completed by the Manager or Deputy, in conjunction with any staff involved in the serious incident
- are copied to Rev Mark barker for his review within 7 days
- are copied to child / staff files as appropriate

2.7 Confidentiality

'Confidential information is information that is not normally in the public domain or readily available from another source, it should have a degree of sensitivity and value and be subject to a duty of confidence. A duty of confidence arises when one person provides information to another in circumstances where it is reasonable to expect that the information will be held in confidence.'

Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners and Managers (DCSF 2008)

At Steps, staff and managers can be said to have a 'confidential relationship' with families. It is our intention to 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 requirement; the means we use to store and share that information takes place within the framework of the Data Protection Act (2018) and the Human Rights Act (1998).

Procedures

- We always check whether parents regard the information they share with us to be confidential or not.
- Some parents may share information about themselves with other parents as well as staff; the setting cannot be held responsible if information is shared beyond those parents who the person has 'confided' in.
- Information shared between parents in a discussion or training group is usually bound by a shared agreement that the information is confidential to the group and not discussed outside of it.
- We inform parents when we need to record confidential information beyond the general personal information we keep (see our Privacy Notice) – 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.

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 Steps Manager.
- The Steps Manager informs the PCC and sends a written acknowledgement.
- The setting commits to providing access within 28 days
- The Steps Manager, with the Chair of the PCC if deemed appropriate, 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 children's social care, the health authority etc. It is usual for agencies to refuse consent to disclose, preferring the individual 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 Steps Manager and, with the Chair of the PCC if deemed appropriate, go through the file and remove any information which a third party has refused consent to disclose. A thick black marker is used 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 Pre-School Manager, 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 policies on Child Protection.

2.8 Complaints/Concerns/Incidents Procedure

Steps Pre-School 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

All complaints, concerns and incidents are recorded in the 'Summary Complaints Record'. 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 Manager or Deputy Manager.
- 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 puts their concerns or complaint in writing to the Steps Manager and the Chair of the PCC.
- For parents who are not comfortable with making written complaints, there is a template form for recording complaints available which may be completed with the person in charge and signed by the parent.
- The setting stores written complaints from parents in the child's personal file. However, if the complaint involves a detailed investigation, the Steps Manager 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 Steps 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 Summary Complaints Record.

Stage 3

- If the parent is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, he or she requests a meeting with the Steps Manager and the Chair of the PCC. The parent should have a friend or partner present if required and the Manager should have the support of the Chairperson of the PCC.
- 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 Summary Complaints 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.
- The mediator keeps all discussions confidential. S/he can hold separate meetings with the setting personnel (Steps Manager and Chair of the PCC) 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 Steps Manager and the Chair of the PCC 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, Children's Services and Skills (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: 0300 123 4666
- 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 Steps Manager works with Ofsted or the Local Safeguarding Children Board to ensure a proper investigation of the complaint, followed by appropriate action. The Chair of the PCC is also informed.

Records

- A record of complaints against our setting and/or the children and/or the adults working in our setting is kept, including the date, the circumstances of the complaint and how the complaint was managed.
- The outcome of all complaints is recorded in the Summary Complaints Record which is available for parents and Ofsted inspectors on request.

2.9 Payment of Fees

As a non-profit making organization Steps runs on a very tight budget. It is, therefore, important that the appropriate fees are collected in a timely fashion and that parents and carers are aware of the processes in place to ensure this. To this end the following procedures have been agreed.

Rate of Fees

All children are entitled to 15 hours of Free Early Education through the local authority from the term after their third birthday. Any sessions booked beyond this entitlement are invoiced termly.

1. Session and Lunch Club Fees for Pre-School are due at the start of each term and are non-refundable for illness and holidays.
2. Payment is due by the end of the second full week of term. For clarity, the due date will be stated on every invoice.
3. If invoice payments are not paid by this date, a note will be sent to parents reminding them that an administration fee will be added to any outstanding balances which are not received by the end of the third full week. This administration fee and the date after which it will be charged will be stated on every invoice.
4. The Manager will address any parent who has not paid their invoice by the beginning of the fourth week, to discuss why payment has not been made.
5. Where payment has still not been received by the end of the fifth week of term, the matter will be referred to the Chair of the PCC, for a decision as to whether we can continue to accept the child at Steps.
6. Where a parent or carer has fallen behind with payment, their child will not be able to attend unfunded or lunch club sessions until such time as their account is brought up to date.
7. Where a parent or carer approaches Steps to make an alternative arrangement prior to the beginning of the fourth week regarding the payment of fees, the administration fee can be waived. If at any point the parent or carer fails to adhere to the arrangement made, the administration fee will be levied immediately and without further notice. The full invoice amount will become immediately due.
8. If an arrangement is made which involves part fees being paid either weekly or monthly, it is essential that fees are paid in advance.
9. In cases where real hardship makes payment difficult, parents and carers can speak to the Manager about alternative arrangements. Agreement to such arrangements would be at the Manager's discretion, in liaison with the Chair of the PCC, and potentially subject to reversal if not adhered to.
10. The administration fee levied will be 10% of the full invoice amount, but will be capped at £20. This will be applied against the full invoice amount regardless of any payment plan that has been put in place.

Late Collection Charge

Steps reserves the right to charge an extra £5 per 15 minutes when a parent or carer is regularly late in collecting a child. A verbal warning would always be given before this charge was made.

Approved on behalf of the PCC, at the SRG meeting on 10 th Feb 2020		(date)
Signed on behalf of the PCC		
Name of Signatory	Rev Mark Barker	
Role of Signatory	Chair	
Date to be reviewed:	February 2023	