



FLEXIBLE ATTENDANCE, ARRIVALS, COLLECTIONS AND HANDOVER POLICY

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BACKGROUND

At Holly Trees, we recognise that family life does not always fit neatly into fixed arrival and collection times. Our full day sessions provide families with flexibility to use the nursery between 7:30a.m. and 6:00p.m., according to their individual needs.

We want to preserve that flexibility.

At the same time, a nursery day is carefully planned around the needs, wellbeing and experiences of all of our children. Meals, snacks, sleep, group experiences, transitions and preparation times all form important parts of the rhythm of the day.

We therefore ask families to use this flexibility considerately, taking into account their own child's routine, the experiences of other children, and the needs of the nursery community.

At the heart of this policy is a simple principle:

Flexibility works when it is supported by communication and mutual respect.

Our guidelines are as follows:

1. OUR GUIDELINES

OUR OPERATING HOURS

Holly Trees is open from 7:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

The nursery closes at 6:00 p.m.

This means that children and families should have left the nursery by 6:00 p.m. It does not mean that collection should begin at 6:00 p.m.

Families collecting close to the end of the day should allow sufficient time to collect their child's belongings, receive any necessary information and leave the building before closing.

Where a child has not been collected by 6:00 p.m., our separate Late Collection Policy will apply.

FLEXIBLE ARRIVAL AND COLLECTION

Families may ordinarily arrive and collect at any point during their booked session.

However, having flexibility does not mean that every point in the nursery day is equally suitable for an arrival or collection.

Wherever reasonably possible, we ask families to plan arrivals and collections around important parts of the children's daily routine.

There may be periods during the day when an arrival or collection can be particularly disruptive, including:

- During morning or afternoon snack
- During lunch
- During children's sleep or rest periods
- During planned group experiences
- During important transitions between parts of the nursery day

Arriving or collecting at certain points in the day can be particularly disruptive for children.

For example, bringing an awake, energetic child into a room where other children are sleeping can disturb their rest and affect the calm environment they need. Equally, we know that families would not want their own child's sleep to be unnecessarily interrupted by another child's arrival or collection.

The same principle applies when collecting a child during a sleep or rest period. We recognise that there will be occasions when this is necessary and a parent or carer will always be able to collect their child. Our educators will manage the departure as sensitively as possible, but families should be mindful that entering, preparing a child to leave and departing from a sleeping environment can disturb both their own child and other children who are resting.

The same principle applies to meals, snacks, group experiences and important transitions throughout the day.

We therefore ask families to consider not only what is convenient for them, but also the impact that their chosen arrival or collection time may have on their own child and on the other children in the nursery.

Our educators will be happy to advise families about the most appropriate arrival and collection windows for their child's room and routine.

We appreciate that appointments, work commitments, emergencies and other circumstances sometimes make an arrival or collection during these periods unavoidable. We will always work with families reasonably and sensitively in these circumstances.

ARRIVALS AFTER 10:00 A.M.

Families continue to have the flexibility to choose their child's arrival time within their booked session.

There is no restriction on arriving after 10:00 a.m., provided that the nursery knows that the child is still expected to attend.

Notification must be made using one of the nursery's recognised communication channels and must be received by the nursery by 10:00 a.m. on the day.

Families will be advised of the communication channels currently accepted by the nursery.

Where a child will not be arriving by 10:00 a.m., families must let the nursery know by 10:00 a.m. that their child will be attending later that day.

A simple message or telephone call through an accepted communication channel is sufficient.

Families do not need to provide a detailed explanation for their child's later arrival.

WHAT WE MEAN BY A NOTIFIED LATE ARRIVAL

A notified late arrival does not need to be arranged in advance.

Families do not need to tell us the day before, provide several days' notice or seek permission from the nursery to arrive later.

The nursery opens at 7:30 a.m. and families can contact us at any point between 7:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on the day to let us know that their child will be arriving after 10:00 a.m.

For example, if you contact us at 9:30 a.m. to tell us that your child will be arriving at approximately 11:30 a.m., this is a notified late arrival and we will continue to expect and plan for your child's attendance.

Families do not need to provide a reason for arriving later.

You do not need our permission to arrive late. We simply need to know that your child is coming.

Where a family has correctly contacted the nursery through one of our recognised communication channels by 10:00 a.m., but that communication has not been seen, recorded or passed on internally, the arrival will still be treated as a notified late arrival.

Families will not be disadvantaged because of an internal communication error where they have fulfilled their responsibility to notify us appropriately.

WHAT WE MEAN BY AN UNNOTIFIED LATE ARRIVAL

An unnotified late arrival is where a child has not arrived by 10:00 a.m. and the nursery has received no communication from their family to tell us that the child will still be attending.

If we have not heard from you by 10:00 a.m., we will reasonably assume that your child will not be attending that day and will record them as absent.

From that point, the nursery may make operational decisions based upon the children we know will be attending.

WHY THIS COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Our staffing and organisation throughout the day are based upon the children we know will be attending.

This is important because our educators work hard and work long days. Where attendance is lower than expected, we want to use that opportunity responsibly.

This may include adjusting educator deployment, providing additional time away from the room, supporting planning and preparation, or enabling educators who are undertaking relevant professional qualifications to dedicate time to their learning and development.

We believe that respecting our educators' wellbeing, development and working time is an important part of creating a happy, sustainable and high quality nursery environment for our children.

Knowing which children will be attending also enables us to plan appropriately for meals, experiences, routines, breaks and the deployment of educators across the nursery.

MEALS AND OUR KITCHEN TEAM

Our on site chef prepares fresh, healthy and nutritious food each day based upon the children who are scheduled to attend the nursery.

Our menus and meals are carefully planned to support children's health, wellbeing and development. This includes carefully planning and preparing meals for children with individual allergies, dietary requirements and other food related needs.

When we know that a child will be arriving later in the day, we can communicate this to our kitchen team so that they know which meals and snacks that child will require.

For example, a child arriving after morning snack may still require lunch and afternoon tea. Knowing that the child is coming allows our chef to plan and prepare appropriately.

Equally, when a child is not going to attend, letting us know helps us avoid preparing food unnecessarily. This reduces avoidable food waste and respects the time, preparation and resources involved in providing fresh, healthy and nutritious meals for our children each day.

This is another reason why a simple communication from families can make a meaningful difference to the smooth running of the nursery.

For these reasons, once the 10:00 a.m. communication point has passed, we need to be able to make reasonable operational decisions based upon the attendance information available to us.

ARRIVING AFTER BEING RECORDED AS ABSENT

If a child has been recorded as absent because we have received no communication by 10:00 a.m. and the family subsequently arrives at the nursery without prior notification, we cannot guarantee that the child will be able to attend that day.

The nursery leadership team will consider whether the child can be safely accommodated within the staffing arrangements in place at that time.

Where the child can be accommodated safely and appropriately, we will always try to do so.

Where accommodating an unnotified arrival would compromise appropriate staffing arrangements, ratios or the safe operation of the nursery, we may be unable to admit the child that day.

The issue is not that your child has arrived late. The issue is whether we knew to expect them.

SESSION CHARGES

A child being recorded as absent does not cancel their booked session.

The session remains chargeable in accordance with our usual fees and terms, including where a child does not attend or where they arrive after being recorded as absent and we are unable to safely accommodate their unnotified arrival.

The child's place was reserved and available for them during their booked session. The 10:00 a.m. notification requirement enables the nursery to make responsible operational decisions when a child has not attended as expected. It does not constitute a cancellation of the family's booked session.

Families therefore remain responsible for the applicable session fees regardless of whether their child attends for all, part or none of their booked session.

The issue is not that your child has arrived late. The issue is whether you notified us so we knew to expect them.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND REPEATED UNNOTIFIED ARRIVALS

We recognise that exceptional circumstances can arise in which a family may genuinely have been unable to contact us before 10:00 a.m.

Routine delays, changes of plan, personal errands, minor transport delays or other ordinary inconveniences would not normally be considered exceptional circumstances.

The nursery leadership team may exercise reasonable discretion in these circumstances, taking into account the individual situation and whether the child can be safely and appropriately accommodated.

Our intention is not to penalise families when something genuinely unexpected has happened. We simply ask families to communicate with us whenever they reasonably can.

Where unnotified late arrivals become a repeated occurrence, a member of the nursery leadership team may speak with the family to understand whether there are any difficulties affecting communication and to remind them of the requirements of this policy.

Where a pattern of unnotified late arrivals continues, the nursery may address the matter in accordance with its Terms and Conditions.

FLEXIBILITY THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Our full day sessions are intentionally designed to give families genuine flexibility.

You do not need our permission to bring your child into nursery later in the day. You do not need to plan a late arrival days or weeks in advance.

You simply need to let us know by 10:00 a.m. on the day that your child will still be attending.

This small act of communication enables us to preserve flexibility for families while planning responsibly for our children, educators and wider nursery team.

END OF DAY COLLECTIONS

Families may collect their child at any point within their booked session.

However, families should remember that Holly Trees closes at 6:00 p.m.

Children and families therefore need to have completed their collection and left the nursery by 6:00 p.m.

The period approaching 6:00 p.m. is an important part of the nursery day. Educators continue to care for and supervise the children who remain while also beginning the processes required to safely close the nursery and prepare for the following day.

We therefore ask families collecting towards the end of the day to arrive with sufficient time to complete their child's collection before the nursery closes.

Where a child remains at the nursery beyond 6:00 p.m., the nursery's separate Late Collection Policy will apply.

END OF DAY HANDOVERS

We value our conversations with families and recognise how important it is for parents and carers to know about their child's day.

We will always communicate significant information that a parent or carer needs to know.

However, families should be aware that a comprehensive verbal handover cannot be guaranteed for collections after 5:45 p.m.

If you would like time for a more detailed conversation about your child's day, we encourage you to arrive before 5:45 p.m. wherever possible.

The earlier a family arrives before closing, the more opportunity there is for an educator to provide a comprehensive handover without compromising the care and supervision of the children who remain.

For collections between 5:45 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., educators will prioritise essential information and ensuring that your child's departure is safe, warm and positive.

This does not mean that important information will be withheld because it is after 5:45 p.m. Essential information about your child's care, wellbeing or safety will always be communicated.

It simply means that a longer or more detailed conversation may need to take place at another appropriate time.

The 5:45 p.m. position relates only to the amount of time available for a routine or comprehensive handover. It will never prevent essential or significant information from being communicated to a parent or carer.

Information relating to safeguarding, accidents or injuries, medication, health, safety, significant changes in wellbeing or any other matter that we believe a parent or carer needs to know will always be communicated, regardless of the time of collection.

Where that information requires a longer discussion than can reasonably take place before the nursery closes, we will ensure that the essential information is communicated and arrange an appropriate opportunity for a more detailed conversation.

WHY WE NEED AN END OF DAY CLOSING PERIOD

Closing the nursery at 6:00 p.m. involves considerably more than locking the front door.

Towards the end of each day, our team needs to ensure that:

- Children remaining in the nursery continue to be safely supervised
- Rooms and resources are left safe and organised
- Important information and records are completed
- Children's activities and interests are considered when planning for the following day
- Resources and environments are prepared where appropriate
- Necessary safety and security checks are completed
- The building can be closed safely and securely

Our educators work hard throughout the day, and many have significant journeys to and from Holly Trees.

We want to respect their working time and wellbeing in the same way that we seek to respect the time and commitments of our families.

Regular lengthy handovers immediately before 6:00 p.m. make it difficult for educators to complete their closing responsibilities properly and can result in members of our team being required to remain at work beyond their expected finishing time.

We do not believe that this is a reasonable or sustainable expectation of our educators.

IF YOU NEED A LONGER CONVERSATION

There will naturally be occasions when a parent or carer would like to discuss something in greater depth.

The end of the nursery day is not always the best environment for an important or detailed conversation, particularly while educators remain responsible for supervising other children.

If something requires more time than is reasonably available at collection, we will be happy to arrange an appropriate opportunity for you to speak with your child's educator or a member of the leadership team.

This ensures that your questions or concerns receive the time and attention they deserve.

WORKING TOGETHER

The purpose of this policy is not to remove flexibility.

It is to make flexibility work successfully for everyone.

Our full day sessions give families considerable freedom to choose arrival and collection times within their booked hours. In return, we ask families to communicate with us and to consider the effect that arrival and collection times can have on their child, other children, our educators, our kitchen team and the wider operation of the nursery.

We therefore ask families to:

- Consider their child's daily routine when choosing arrival and collection times
- Avoid arrivals and collections during meals, snacks, sleep, rest and key group experiences wherever reasonably possible
- Let us know by 10:00 a.m. if their child will be arriving after 10:00 a.m.
- Use one of the nursery's recognised communication channels when notifying us
- Understand that if we have received no communication by 10:00 a.m., their child will be recorded as absent and subsequent attendance cannot be guaranteed
- Understand that a booked session remains chargeable when a child is absent or where an unnotified late arrival cannot safely be accommodated
- Arrive before 5:45 p.m. wherever possible when they would like a comprehensive verbal handover
- Allow sufficient collection time so that they and their child have left the nursery by 6:00 p.m.
- Arrange a separate conversation when something requires more time than is reasonably available at collection

We believe that flexibility and structure can exist alongside one another.

Through good communication, consideration and mutual respect, we can continue to offer families the flexibility they value while protecting the routines and experiences of our children, supporting the thoughtful preparation of their meals, and respecting the wellbeing, development and working time of the educators and wider team who care for them.

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