



Child Ratio and Lone Working Policy October 2025

The nursery follows Ofsted guidance on staff to child ratios. Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety.

The staffing guidance from Ofsted is given on a whole setting (building) basis. Minimum staffing requirements and minimum qualification requirements are determined by the number of children and their ages. The nursery will always ensure that there are sufficient staff, at the appropriate level of qualifications in the nursery.

Staff ratios will normally be maintained in line with the Ofsted guidance for each respective age group:

- Under 2 years 1:3
- 2-year-olds 1:5
- 3+ years 1:8

Ofsted also require that for each respective age group at least 1 member of staff is L3 qualified and at least half of other staff are L2 qualified. Students on long-term placements and apprentices aged 16+, must hold valid PFA certificates to be counted in statutory staff-to-child ratio as L2 or L3 qualified. Students and apprentices can be counted in ratios at a level below the level they are studying.

Additionally, staff who gained Level 2 or Level 3 childcare qualifications since 30 June 2016 must obtain a PFA qualification within 3 months of starting work and renew it every 3 years to remain in ratio calculations

The nursery is a generously staffed nursery. We have a larger office/management team than most nurseries and we give room staff more time out of room for training/meetings/planning/report writing than most nurseries so there are usually extra staff in the building that can be called on for help if needed.

Staff ratios within rooms can be allowed to go below the levels shown above, as long as the staff are able to continue supervision appropriately and children's safety is maintained, and there are enough staff in the building as a whole to meet Ofsted ratio requirements that can be called upon should an issue arise, e.g. if there are 7 under 2s in the baby room and they are all content and settled, 2 practitioners in the room may be adequate. If then a baby needs a nappy change or needs to be taken for a sleep, the practitioners are likely to need support so they must be able to call/phone someone else in the building to come and help. Normally the action will be to move a staff member into the room but sometimes the action will be to move a child to a different room. These solutions are available because we plan staffing to ensure that there are always enough staff with the required qualifications in the building.

Staff leaving rooms must communicate the purpose and length of their absence from the room and get confirmation that their colleagues are comfortable that they can maintain safety standards during their absence.

In addition to guidance on staff ratios, Ofsted also provides guidance on indoor space requirements which are determined by the number of children in the nursery and their ages. The nursery will always ensure that there is always an appropriate amount of indoor space for children in the nursery.

Currently the indoor space available for childcare is 80m². This is sufficient to provide indoor space for up to 30 children.

On occasion, maximum numbers of children at each age group can be allowed to go above the level shown above, if there is spare capacity/space at other age groups to ensure that child: space ratios are maintained in line with Ofsted guidance.

Additional space, such as the staff room or outside classroom, may be utilised to accommodate children where logistics organising children on different timetables leads to a specific session/s in the week being above normal limits for a temporary period. Where this is required a risk assessment will be made to ensure that safety standards are maintained.

Outings

The staffing ratios for outings must be sufficient to maintain safety. This will normally require increased staffing where children share spaces with members of the public and/or near roads. The following ratios apply for outings – a minimum of 2 staff are required per trip:

- 0-2 years 1:2 (near roads, each child must be held by hand or in harness/buggy)
- 2-year-olds 1:3 (near roads, each child must be held by hand or holding hand of another child holding a staff member's hand or in harness/buggy).
- 3 + years 1:4 (near roads, children very closely supervised, if not held by hand)

Depending on transportation methods and associated risks, minimum staffing ratios may be adjusted to facilitate the transportation of children on outings. Reduced staffing ratios are required where groups of children are being transported by car in turn, so that for short periods of times, children can be transported in cars or dropped off in safe areas, away from roads or other hazards, with reduced staff numbers. Additional staffing is required for difficult road crossings or trips to busy attractions such as farms or zoos.

Lone Working

In general, it is good practice for staff not to work alone for the safety of both children and staff, in this way colleagues are available for support but also as natural surveillance in the event of unsatisfactory conduct of other staff. Where child numbers are small (e.g. at the end of the day when only a few children are still to be picked up), staff that are working on their own in a room will always be able to get help if needed either from adjacent rooms or from management working in the office. This also applies to staff working in the kitchen alone. Placement students and staff without DBS clearance will never be left alone with children. Staff will never be left alone in the building except for the owners who may work outside of normal hours in the absence of children. Where Big Feet children are picked up from school and transported to the nursery, the staff member must bring the children directly to the nursery, to minimise risks of being alone with children without other staff for immediate support available. Where children are left with a staff member for one-to-one time/time out to calm down, this should only be done after notifying in advance at least one other member of staff, if this is not a member of SMT, a member of SMT should be informed as soon as possible thereafter.

The culture at the nursery makes safeguarding the priority and all staff should be vigilant about colleagues working alone with children both to provide support for the colleague and to ensure that the safety of children alone with colleagues is also supported by them. Any concerns must be reported to a Designated Safety Person so they can decide if any action is necessary.