

Staffing

Our Pre-school is committed to placing the best interests of children's welfare, care and development at the centre of all staffing matters.

- All staff are required to submit to a vetting procedure – this will include providing references which will be verified.
- The Leader will arrange regular staff meetings where all staff are able to discuss and contribute in a positive manner. The Leader should encourage staff to contribute to the development and quality of the programme of activities provided. Each member of staff will have a half termly or termly supervision with the leader or deputy leader and an annual appraisal.
- Members of staff are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a professional, courteous, helpful, warm and consistent manner.
- Members of staff are expected to display both knowledge and understanding of multi-cultural issues and a commitment to treating all children as individuals and with equal concern and respect.
- Members of staff will have regard for maintaining appropriate dress and personal appearance for working with children and with awareness of health and safety issues (see Dress Code paragraph below).
- Personal mobiles must be kept in the office during working hours. They may be used during break times, but never in the room with the children. If staff do need to receive an emergency call, the person calling them should use the Cygnets main number.
- The Leader will ensure that space is made during the working day for staff to take regular breaks, ensuring that no member of staff exceeds the legal limit of six hours consecutive hours of work without a break.

Terms and Conditions

Cygnets is committed to promoting family friendly employment practices to help staff balance work and family commitments. We will make every effort to be flexible with staff and to promote harmonious working relations.

The management committee will work with staff and their representatives to ensure that all employment legislation and regulations – including Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay, Parental Leave, Statutory Sick Pay and Working Time Regulations – are abided by.

In return, the committee expects honesty, loyalty and diligence from its staff.

The written detail of employment contracts, including rates and levels of pay and other terms and conditions, are the responsibility of the management committee.

Qualifications, Experience and Safety Checks

The manager and all staff (including students and volunteers) will be suitably qualified, have relevant experience and have undergone an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check (DBS).

Cygnets will not employ staff or volunteers that have been convicted of an offence or have been the subject of an order that disqualifies them from registration under regulations made under Section 76 of the Children's Act 2006. Enhanced DBS checks will be updated every three years (unless subscribed to the update service).

Anyone who has not received an enhanced DBS check, but who is on the premises (such as a member of staff awaiting registration clearance) will not be left alone with a child.

Staff suitability is based on evidence from: references; full employment history; qualifications; interviews; identity checks; and other checks where applicable, for example, medical suitability.

At least half of all staff will hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification (as defined by the Children's Workforce and Development Council – CWDC). All staff included in the adult: child ratio will be aged 17 years and over.

The manager will have at least an NVQ level three qualification appropriate to the post, along with at least two years' experience of working in a day care setting.

Standards of Behaviour

Under no circumstances should any arguments or disagreements between members of staff occur in the presence of children or parents/carers.

No smoking, alcohol or drug use is allowed on the pre-school premises.

No bullying, swearing, harassment or victimisation will be tolerated on the premises.

Offensive behavior such as sexist or racist language or harassment will not be tolerated.

All staff are expected to treat everyone respectfully at all times and inappropriate behaviour may lead to disciplinary action.

Staff to Children Ratios

The preschool is conscious of the importance of maintaining adequate staff to child ratios, ensuring that children are cared for safely and given adequate attention and support. In all cases the minimum staffing ratio for children under two is at least one member of staff for every three children (1:3); aged 2 will be 1:4; aged 3-7 will be 1:8. This ratio includes any children of staff and volunteers.

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The manager will ensure that there are always at least two members of staff on duty at the premises at any given time.

Each child will be assigned a key person, who has special responsibilities to help the child become familiar with the setting, feel confident, safe, and cared for. The key person will also build relationships with the parents/carers to ensure that the needs of the child are being met. Each child will also have a second key person who will stand in for the main key person when they are not there.

The manager will further ensure that suitable and sufficient contingency plans are in place to cover emergencies, unexpected staff absences, staff breaks, holidays and sickness.

Confidentiality

Staff have a right to privacy, as do children and their parents/carers. Personal details should not be discussed except in exceptional circumstances. Staff will not talk about individual incidents or the behaviour of children in front of other parents/carers and children.

Under no circumstances should staff provide any information about children to any branch of the media. All media enquiries should be passed in the first instance to the manager.

(Further details of the pre-school's confidentiality procedures are set out in the Documentation and Information policy).

Absence

Staff should negotiate any necessary leave with the manager, in all cases giving as much notice as possible.

If staff are unable to attend work due to illness or other medical condition, they must contact the Leader prior to the start of the working day.

Staff should indicate why they are unable to attend work and when they expect to return.

On returning to work, staff should complete a self-certification form for any sickness absence.

For absences of longer than seven days, a doctor's certificate must be submitted.

The Leader will keep records of all sick-leave, other absences and lateness.

Staff Recruitment and Selection

Our pre-school will evaluate and review every vacancy and is committed to equality of opportunity and non-discrimination in its recruitment and employment practices. We aim to ensure that employment and progression within its organization are determined solely by application of objective criteria and personal merit.

We actively promote equality of opportunity for all, with the right mix of talent, skills and potential. We welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, who will be asked to attend for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.

No job applicant, trainee applicant, employee or trainee will be treated less favorably than another.

If appropriate checks reveal that a person has a previous conviction, Preschool will comply with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Code of Practice when receiving such information. We will consider all the circumstances before making a recruitment decision, including our duties under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

Advertising

In the interest of Equal Opportunities, the pre-school will ensure that all job vacancies are advertised in a wide variety of places, that is advertising widely using appropriate websites on line and even using the local newspaper.

Wording of the advert will communicate clearly the pre-school's specific requirements. It will not use discriminatory language, unnecessary jargon or superfluous details.

Interviewing

The pre-school will shortlist candidates against the job specification and invite them to attend for interview. It will do all in its power to provide any special facilities at the interview requested by a candidate, prior to that date, to prevent any discrimination. The pre-school will avoid making biased judgments and select the best candidate for the job.

Employing Staff

The pre-school will ensure to investigate checks and references, and prepare an induction package.

Reviewing Staff

Recruitment, selection and employment procedures and practices will be reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are recruited, selected, trained and promoted on the bases of the appropriate criteria and personal merit.

Procedure for Safe Recruitment

Advertising, application form, employment history checked, reference request, interview, further checks including DBS, appointment, probation period.

Staff Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures

Our preschool will maintain a well-motivated, highly skilled and professional staff team. However, occasionally action will need to be taken to encourage improvement in an individual's behavior and performance. We will provide a fair, transparent, effective and consistent method of dealing with grievances and disciplinary incidents. Our aim is always to support and encourage staff, while promoting good employment relations.

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Grievance Procedure

The grievance procedure is separate from the disciplinary procedure. The grievance procedure is designed to assist in resolving concerns, problems or complaints staff may have relating to their work, working conditions or relationship with colleagues. We aim to resolve most grievances informally as there is an open policy for communication and discussion. This enables problems and concerns to be raised and settled with line managers during the course of everyday activities.

In some cases, careful and thorough investigation is necessary if concerns are to be satisfactorily resolved. Such investigations may reveal matters requiring action under the disciplinary procedure, or that the grievance is not confined to one individual and it is one which other employees wish to pursue as a collective grievance under this procedure. In such cases, it is still necessary to ensure that grievances are resolved.

For this procedure to operate in practice it is important that all staff read the procedure thoroughly and understand its implications before using it effectively and fairly.

Procedure

The procedure for dealing with grievances is similar to that of disciplinary matters.

Each stage will be dealt with within ten working days of receipt of the written grievance. A written reply will be given at each stage. For stages 2 and 3 staff may be accompanied by a fellow employee, or other representative.

Stage 1 If it is not possible to resolve a grievance informally, the member of staff should formally put the complaint in writing to the Cygnets Leader or Committee Chairperson stating the nature of the grievance.

Stage 2 The Leader or Chairperson (if appropriate) will hold a meeting with the staff involved to discuss the matter and a written reply detailing the decision will be given to him/her/them, subject to normal availability, within ten working days of the meeting. The employee will have the right to appeal against the decision.

Stage 3 If the member of staff feels that the grievance has not been resolved satisfactorily, they may appeal within ten working days of receiving their decision in writing. They should inform their manager in writing of the reason for appeal. The appeal will be dealt with impartially and, if possible, by a Committee Officer who has not previously been involved in the case. Staff will then be invited to a second meeting to discuss the appeal. The final decision will be confirmed in writing to the staff concerned to be dispatched within ten working days of the appeal meeting. This decision will be final.

Disciplinary Rules and Procedures

This procedure is designed to assist in resolving issues in relation to discipline and to clarify the rights and responsibilities of management, staff and their representatives. The disciplinary procedure will be used primarily to help and encourage staff to improve rather than imposing punishment and applies to all members of staff irrespective of their length of service or status.

This part of the procedure applies to circumstances where there has been failure to achieve the prescribed standards, such as unsatisfactory job performance, absence from work and behaviour towards other staff which is anti-social and likely to cause offence.

The pre-school has a duty to advise, counsel and train all staff for the purpose of improving conduct or performance when employees commit minor infringements of the established standards. These will be documented by the Leader or Chairperson as a record of their discussion. However, if this proves unsuccessful, formal warnings will be given.

If it is considered that a member of staff's conduct has fallen below the standards required, the Leader or Chairperson will follow the five-step process outlined below.

1. Establish the facts

The incident will be fully investigated and the facts established. Investigations will be non-discriminatory and apply equally to all staff irrespective of gender, marital status, sexual preference, race or disability. Investigations will be conducted by the Leader or the Chairperson.

2. Put in writing

If it is decided that there is a disciplinary case, the relevant staff member will be notified with a written explanation of the conduct, and other circumstances that have led to the decision about taking disciplinary action. If it is necessary, the staff may be suspended on full pay or reassigned to alternative duties.

3. Meet and discuss

The meeting will be held without delay whilst giving the staff reasonable time to prepare their case. Staff may be accompanied at the disciplinary meeting by a work colleague or other representative. The Leader/Chairperson will be accompanied by a member of their local authority extended school team or independent advisor. The Leader/Chairperson will explain the complaint against the member of staff and present evidence. The staff will also be allowed to answer all allegations and present evidence.

4. Management decision

After hearing all the evidence, the Leader/Chairperson will decide whether disciplinary or other action is required. For misconduct or unsatisfactory performance, a first written warning may be given. If the staff members first misconduct is sufficiently serious, the staff may be given a final written warning. If the Leader/Chairperson considers that the complaint is of a more serious nature, the meeting will be adjourned and the staff may be suspended on full pay or reassigned

to alternative duties, to enable further investigations. Suspensions will be as brief as possible and are not considered a disciplinary action.

5. Appeal

After the meeting the employee will be informed of the decision and if the member of staff feels that the disciplinary action taken against them is wrong, they may appeal in writing within ten working days. The appeal will be dealt with impartially and, if possible, the Leader/Chairperson, or an Officer of the Committee who was not involved in the original disciplinary action will hear the appeal and impartially adjudicate the case. The staff will then be invited to a second meeting to discuss the appeal. The member of staff has the right to be accompanied at appeal hearings. The final decision will be confirmed in writing to the staff concerned to be dispatched within ten working days of the appeal meeting.

Special cases

If a member of staff is charged or convicted with a criminal offence, that is not normally a reason for disciplinary action. The offence needs to be considered in terms of whether it affects the staff member's suitability to do the job or their relationship with colleagues and families.

Gross Misconduct

In the case of some acts termed gross misconduct, staff will be dismissed for the first offence. In these cases, immediate suspension with pay followed by dismissal will normally result. However, a fair disciplinary process will be followed before dismissing for gross misconduct. The following are examples of serious offences, which are considered as gross misconduct:

- Theft
- Fraud or deliberate falsification of the preschool's documents
- Being an unfit person under the terms of the Care Standards Act 2000 or the Children's Act 2006
- Gross negligence that either causes or might cause injury, loss or damage to persons or property
- Child abuse (for further details refer to the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection policy)
- Indecent conduct
- Deliberately accessing internet sites containing pornographic, offensive or obscene material
- A criminal offence outside employment which renders the employee unsuitable for work and which is unacceptable to other employees

- Inability to fulfill his/her duties because of intoxication by alcohol or drugs
- Failure to attend an interview arranged under the disciplinary procedure without reasonable explanation
- Physical violence towards a colleague, user of the provision or member of the public
- Deliberate damage or misuse to preschool's property
- Serious infringement of health and safety rules (for further details refer to the Health and Safety policy)
- Persistent bullying
- Racial or sexual harassment and breaches of the Equal Opportunity and Race Relations legislation
- Any act of misconduct which is sufficiently serious to destroy the mutual trust and confidence between the pre-school and the employee concerned.

In the case of gross misconduct, the police will be notified. If the police are involved in an investigation, then the suspension deadline will be extended.

While the alleged incident of gross misconduct is being investigated, the individual concerned is likely to be suspended, during which time normal pay levels will prevail. Such suspension is not to be regarded as a form of disciplinary action and will be for as short a period as possible. Any decision to dismiss will be taken only after a full investigation.

Allegations Against Staff

All staff are advised to minimize time spent alone with children and be aware of the potential risks in doing so (for further details refer to the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection policy).

If an allegation of abuse has been made against a member of staff, the manager will follow the procedures of the Safeguarding Children/Child Protection policy

If an allegation of abuse is made against the Leader, then another designated member of staff will report the matter directly to the Chairperson, Children's Services department and Ofsted.

Timescale for review

STAGE 1 – FIRST WRITTEN WARNING to remain on file for 12 months

STAGE 2 – FINAL WRITTEN WARNING to remain on file for 2 years

If a warning is given, it will include:

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- The level of improvement required
- The date by which it is to be achieved
- What will happen if the improvement is not achieved
- How to appeal

Definitions

Harassment

It is a condition of service that employees do not harass colleagues or members of the public. Our pre-school recognises the problems of sexual and racial harassment and is committed to preventing them.

Harassment is considered to be gross misconduct and will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure. Harassment is defined as occasional or systematic expressions of discriminatory or oppressive attitudes which understandably cause offence or discomfort or which a person finds objectionable. This may occur on a person-to-person basis or as a result of the policies or attitudes of institutions or other bodies.

Sexual Harassment

Examples of sexual harassment may include unnecessary touching or unwanted physical contact, suggestive remarks or other verbal abuse, leering at a person's body, unwanted sexual advances, offering inducements for sexual favours, physical abuse or assault, or pornographic displays.

Racial Harassment

Examples of racial harassment may include offensive or unnecessary comments on colour, race, customs, dress, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religious beliefs, racial abuse or physical attack.

Because of the nature of harassment, the preschool recognises that staff may find it easier to talk to a woman rather than a man, or a person of the same cultural background or with the same religious beliefs, about the problems they are experiencing.

Grievances under this clause will be handled with all possible speed, sensitivity and confidentiality. In settling the grievance, every effort will be made to discipline the harasser and any disciplinary proceedings will be dealt with under the procedures of grievance and discipline.

Note: The following sample letters can be found on the ACAS website in the 'Discipline and Grievances at Work – The ACAS Guide' pages 62-72 - see <http://www.acas.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1043>

1. Notice of disciplinary meeting
2. Notice of written warning or final written warning
3. Notice of appeal meeting against warning
4. Notice of result of appeal against warning
5. Letter to be sent by the employer to arrange a meeting where dismissal or action short of dismissal is being considered
6. Letter to be sent by the employer after the disciplinary meeting arranged in letter 5
7. Notice of appeal meeting against dismissal
8. Notice of result of appeal against dismissal
9. Letter of enquiry regarding likely cause of absence addressed to a worker's general practitioner

Staff Dress Code

Our playgroup is committed to providing care and learning for children within a safe, professional and orderly environment. With this in mind, all staff, students and volunteers should strive to maintain a smart yet practical appearance at all times.

With health and safety paramount and easy identification of staff by children, parents/carers and visitors an important factor, the following dress code should be followed at all times:

Staff

Staff will be provided with appropriate 'uniform' tops, specifically:

1. T-shirt(s)
2. Sweatshirt/fleece

Footwear

All footwear must be comfortable yet practical and where possible should be fully enclosed to:

1. Offer adequate protection to the feet
2. Limit potential for tripping/falling
3. Allow unrestricted movement during activities eg floor, walking, running etc

Identification Badges

All staff, students, volunteers and visitors will be provided with and expected to wear an identification badge within and around the setting.

The Leader is responsible for the implementation of and guidance to staff, students and volunteers.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

Our playgroup strongly prohibits the use or possession of cigarettes, alcohol and illegal drugs on our premises at anytime. If staff, students or volunteers are found to have broken the rules in respect of this policy, it will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

All staff, students and volunteers will be made aware of the provisions of this policy during their induction, including the importance of them setting a positive example to children. Any

contravention of the provisions of this policy will be dealt with under the playgroup's Staff Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures and Behaviour Management policies.

Drugs

Staff, students, volunteers who arrive at playgroup and are found in possession of illegal drugs or clearly under the influence of illegal drugs, will be asked to leave immediately and disciplinary procedures implemented.

In cases where staff are taking prescribed drugs that may affect their ability to function effectively at work, the manager must be informed as early as possible.

If a member of staff has good reason to suspect that a parent/carer is under the influence of illegal drugs when they drop off or collect their child, they have a duty to inform both the Leader and the designated Safeguarding lead or deputy lead, according to the provisions of the Safeguarding Children policy.

In such circumstances, the Leader and the Safeguarding lead will then be responsible for deciding upon the appropriate course of action, ensuring that the safety and protection of the child remains paramount at all times.

Staff will make all possible efforts to ensure that children are not allowed to travel in a vehicle driven by someone who is clearly under the influence of illegal drugs.

Where an illegal act is suspected to have taken place, the police will be called.

Alcohol

Staff, students or volunteers who arrive at the preschool clearly under the influence of alcohol, will be asked to leave immediately and disciplinary procedures will follow. Staff are strongly advised not to bring alcohol onto the club's premises.

If a member of staff has good reason to suspect that a parent/carer is under the influence of alcohol when they drop off or collect their child, to the extent that the safety of the child is threatened, they have a duty to inform both the Leader and the designated Safeguarding lead, according to the provisions of the Safeguarding Children policy.

The Leader and the Safeguarding lead will then be responsible for deciding upon the appropriate course of action, ensuring that the safety and protection of the child remains paramount at all times.


Staff will make all possible efforts to ensure that children are not allowed to travel in a vehicle driven by someone who is clearly over the legal alcohol limit.

Where an illegal act is suspected to have taken place, the police will be called.

Smoking

Smoking or vaping is not permitted anywhere on the premises – buildings and grounds. This rule applies equally to staff, students, volunteers, children, parents/carers or any other visitors.

Staff are considered as 'role models' and as such are required not to smoke in sight of the children. This will include visits/trips etc. and include staff, students and volunteers.

Signed:  Chairperson