

Innsworth Preschool Supervision of Children Policy

Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Overview: This policy sets out the principles and procedures for the effective supervision of all children at Innsworth Preschool.

1.2 Objective: The primary purpose of supervision is to ensure children's safety and well-being at all times, to support their learning and development, and to prevent accidents or incidents.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

2.1 Compliance: Effective supervision is a primary safeguarding duty. This policy is underpinned by our statutory obligations and best practice guidance:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): Our primary legal duty regarding staff:child ratios, qualifications, and deployment.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Best Practice: We apply early years safeguarding best practice, including (where relevant) principles of vigilance and professional curiosity from *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*.

3. The Principles of Effective Supervision

3.1 Sight and Sound (EYFS Requirement): Children must normally be within sight and hearing of staff at all times, except when children are sleeping, when they must be checked frequently.

- **High-Risk Areas:** In high-risk areas (including mealtimes, water play, outdoor play, and toileting), strict visual supervision is mandatory. Staff must be able to see the children they are responsible for.

3.2 Risk-Assessed Deployment: Staffing levels are determined by a dynamic risk assessment, not solely by minimum statutory ratios.

- **Planning:** Daily deployment is planned and risk-assessed. Significant changes (e.g. outings, new starters, or high-risk behaviour) are recorded.
- **High-Risk Zones:** Farm School, animal areas, boundaries/gates, and tool activities are treated as high-risk zones requiring enhanced staff positioning and ratios by risk assessment.

3.3 Collective Responsibility: While the Key Person system is vital, supervision is a collective responsibility. Staff must never assume "someone else is watching." If a child moves out of a staff member's immediate view, they must proactively communicate this to a colleague.

4. Supervision Strategies in Practice

4.1 Zoning and Handover: In larger spaces (e.g. outdoors), we utilise a "Zoning" strategy.

- **Protocol:** A staff member must never leave their designated zone (e.g. for first aid or resources) without a verbal handover to a colleague.

- **Consolidation:** If cover is unavailable, remaining staff must consolidate children into a smaller, manageable area to ensure ratios and supervision are maintained. Zones must never be left unmanned while children are present.

4.2 Headcounts: Headcounts are mandatory upon arrival/departure, before/after transitions, and following any disruption.

- **Method:** Headcounts are 'name-to-face' where practicable (especially transitions, outdoors, and off-site).
- **Discrepancies:** A nominated staff member leads counts; discrepancies trigger an immediate stop-and-search protocol and escalation to the DSL/Manager.

4.3 "Hand-to-Hand" Transfer Protocol: To mitigate the risk of a child going missing, this protocol applies to all indoor/outdoor transitions, Farm School access points, and any movement through gates/doors.

- **Process:** One staff member counts children out; another counts them in. The transition stops immediately if the counts do not match.

5. Supervision in Specific High-Risk Situations

5.1 Mealtimes: While children are eating, they must be within sight and hearing of a member of staff.

- **Undistracted Supervision:** Staff must be seated, facing the children, and free from distractions such as cleaning or food preparation.
- **Protocol:** Staff must never leave eating children unattended. If a staff member needs to leave the table, they must summon cover first.

5.2 Sleep and Rest Time: Sleeping children are checked frequently in line with our safer sleep risk assessment; checks are increased for higher-risk children.

- **Checks:** Checks are primarily visual (breathing movement, colour, position). Physical contact is used only if there is a concern.
- **Records:** We record nap start/end times and periodic checks in the Sleep Log.
- **Presence:** A staff member remains within hearing of sleeping children at all times and is physically present in the sleep area where required by risk assessment.

5.3 Outdoor Play: Before use, a safety check is documented. Risk assessment is dynamic; staff must continuously reassess supervision levels if the weather changes, equipment is moved, or the group dynamic shifts.

5.4 Toileting and Intimate Care: Supervision balances privacy with safeguarding.

- **Safety:** Staff must not be isolated with a child behind a locked door.
- **Protocol:** The door remains unlocked; staff position themselves to maintain privacy while ensuring colleagues know who is in toileting/intimate care. A colleague must be informed before intimate care begins. Managers will risk-assess any layout where line-of-sight is limited.

5.5 Students and Volunteers:

- **Students:** Students/apprentices aged 17+ on long-term placements may count in ratios only when the Manager judges them competent and they are supervised.

- **Volunteers:** Volunteers do not count in ratios unless they meet the same criteria and are deployed accordingly. They must **never** be left unsupervised with children.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The Preschool Manager: Responsible for effective deployment and ensuring all deployment decisions are documented.

6.2 All Staff (Duty to Speak Up): Staff have a professional duty to challenge unsafe supervision.

- **Protection:** No staff member will suffer detriment for raising a supervision/safety concern in good faith. Malicious or knowingly false reports may be managed under disciplinary procedures.

7. Training and Monitoring

7.1 Competency: Supervision expectations are covered during Induction. Competency is monitored through regular management observations and peer review. Deficits are addressed immediately.

7.2 Review: This policy is reviewed annually or following any "supervision incident" (e.g. a child going missing, a near miss, or an accident linked to supervision).

