

WILDGARDEN CHILDCARE

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

“Give a child the freedom to be, and they’ll show you the garden hidden in their soul.”

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Policy review	October 2026

This is WildGarden Childcare’s master policy document. It is written so that parents, assistants and visitors can understand how the setting works in practice. It should be read alongside each child’s contract, permissions, funding agreement and any individual medical, SEND or safeguarding plans.

DOCUMENT CONTROL AND HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

The registered childminder is responsible for ensuring that these policies are implemented in practice and that assistants understand the procedures relevant to their role. Policies are reviewed at least annually, and earlier where legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or the needs of the setting change.

This October 2026 edition brings together the policies previously used by WildGarden Childcare and the Coventry safeguarding model policy supplied to the setting. It has been reorganised into clearer sections and updated to reflect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for childminders in force from 1 September 2026.

Where an individual child has a specific health plan, allergy plan, SEND plan, risk assessment or safeguarding plan, that individual plan works alongside these general policies.

Key external guidance used for this review

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for childminders, effective 1 September 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership and Coventry Early Years safeguarding procedures.
- Current Ofsted guidance on significant events and allegations of harm.
- Current safer sleep, food safety, medicines, online safety and Prevent guidance where relevant.

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1. Admissions, Places, Ratios and Settling In

Purpose: to explain how places are offered, how staffing and ratios are managed, and what families can expect before a child starts.

Opening and attendance

WildGarden Childcare normally operates Monday to Friday, 8:00-18:00, during school terms. Half-term or holiday opening may be offered where there is sufficient demand and staffing. Individual contracted hours are agreed in writing.

How places are offered

When deciding whether we can offer a place, we consider the child's age and needs, available space, staffing, legal ratios, the requested attendance pattern and whether the home-based environment can safely meet the child's needs.

- Availability of a suitable place and staffing.
- Children with siblings already attending, where appropriate.
- Length of time on the waiting list.
- The setting's ability to meet welfare, developmental, medical and SEND needs.
- The requested attendance pattern and continuity of care.
- Looked-after children and children who may benefit from additional support.

Ratios

WildGarden follows the current EYFS ratio requirements for childminders. When working alone, the childminder normally cares for no more than six children under eight years old, of whom no more than three are young children and normally no more than one is under one year old. Where suitable assistants work with the childminder, ratios are calculated per suitable adult and are also limited by space, registration conditions and the individual needs of the children.

The usual ratio may be exceeded only where the EYFS permits an exception, for example when caring for siblings, the childminder's own child or to maintain continuity of care. Any exception is considered individually. The safety, wellbeing and individual needs of every child must continue to be met, and the total number of children under eight must not exceed six per suitable person.

School collections

Regular school collections are currently organised around Good Shepherd Primary, Little Heath Primary and Courthouse Green Primary. Collection from another school cannot be assumed and must be agreed before a place is offered.

SEND and additional needs at admission

WildGarden welcomes children with SEND and considers each child's needs individually. Before offering a place, we discuss the child's needs with parents and consider whether appropriate care, supervision and reasonable adjustments can be provided safely in our home-based setting. Where additional resources, funding, staffing or adaptations may be required, we work with parents and relevant professionals to explore available support.

Settling in

A settling-in arrangement is agreed according to the child's age, temperament, previous experience and family circumstances. Parents are encouraged to share routines, comfort needs, medical information, favourite activities, communication methods and anything likely to help the child feel secure.

2. Funded Childcare, Fees and Additional Costs

Purpose: to make funded hours and any parent-paid costs transparent and easy to understand.

WildGarden offers funded early education places where eligibility, availability and local authority funding conditions allow. Funded places are subject to Coventry City Council requirements and current government eligibility rules.

Funded hours

- Funded hours are normally delivered during agreed term-time sessions.
- The exact pattern of funded hours is agreed in the Parent Funding Agreement and depends on availability and staffing.
- Parents provide valid eligibility codes where required and reconfirm them when prompted by HMRC.
- Parents should tell us promptly about any changes that may affect eligibility or attendance.
- A funded place is not conditional on purchasing extra hours, food, consumables or activities.

Additional hours and costs

Any hours outside the funded allocation are private childcare and are charged at the current rate stated in the childcare contract or current fees schedule. This avoids the policy becoming inaccurate when fees change.

Government funding is intended to cover funded early education and childcare. It does not necessarily cover meals, consumables, trips or optional additional services. Parents will always be told in advance where a voluntary additional cost applies and will be offered a reasonable alternative where required by funding rules.

Meals, snacks and consumables

- WildGarden provides water, milk and the setting's normal snack provision without a separate snack charge unless otherwise agreed in writing.
- Children normally bring a packed lunch from home. If an emergency meal is provided because no lunch has been brought, any charge will be explained to the parent.
- Parents normally provide personal consumables such as nappies and wipes unless another arrangement has been agreed.

Headcount, changes and leaving

Funding claims are submitted in line with Coventry City Council headcount and amendment procedures. The effect of leaving a setting or moving funded hours depends on the timing, the local authority funding rules and the contractual notice period. Parents should speak to WildGarden before changing provider or funded hours so that the position can be confirmed.

EYPP and Disability Access Funding

Where a child may qualify for Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Disability Access Funding (DAF) or other early years support, WildGarden will discuss this with parents and, with the necessary information and consent, make or support appropriate applications. Any additional funding received is used to support the child's inclusion, learning and development.

3. Safeguarding and Child Protection

Purpose: to set out WildGarden's safeguarding responsibilities, the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and the setting's commitment to keeping every child safe.

Our safeguarding commitment

Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare is everyone's responsibility. WildGarden maintains an attitude of "it could happen here". We provide a safe environment, remain alert to signs of harm, act on concerns promptly, and work with parents and other agencies when support or protection is needed.

- All children have the right to be protected from harm.
- Children should feel safe, listened to and respected.
- Concerns are taken seriously even when the signs are small or uncertain.
- The child's welfare and best interests guide our decisions.
- We work with local safeguarding partners, health, police, children's social care and other professionals when necessary.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Agnieszka Opolska, registered childminder. The DSL takes overall lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including online safety, staff/assistant awareness, referrals, record keeping and liaison with safeguarding agencies.

DSL responsibilities

- Keep safeguarding knowledge and training up to date.
- Ensure assistants know and follow safeguarding procedures.
- Receive and assess concerns about children.
- Identify when a child or family may benefit from early help.
- Make referrals to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), police, Prevent/Channel or other agencies when required.
- Maintain secure, accurate and timely safeguarding records.
- Transfer relevant safeguarding information safely when a child moves setting.
- Promote appropriate information sharing where it is necessary to keep a child safe.
- Respond appropriately to concerns or allegations about adults in the setting.
- Ensure safeguarding is reflected in recruitment, supervision, training, online safety and daily practice.

Role of assistants

All assistants have a duty to safeguard children. They are expected to recognise possible indicators of abuse, report concerns without delay, understand how to respond to a disclosure, follow the setting's whistleblowing process, and make a direct referral if necessary where they believe a child is at risk and the DSL has not acted appropriately.

Main categories of abuse

- Physical abuse.
- Emotional abuse.
- Sexual abuse.
- Neglect.

Abuse can be caused by adults or children, can happen in person or online, and can occur within families, communities or institutions. Harm may also arise from domestic abuse, exploitation, coercion, trafficking, radicalisation, harmful sexual behaviour or other circumstances.

4. Safeguarding Concerns, Disclosures and Referrals

Purpose: to explain exactly what happens when we are worried about a child or a child tells us something concerning.

When we may become concerned

- An injury that does not appear consistent with normal play or the explanation given.
- A significant change in mood, behaviour, language, presentation or development.
- Unusual or concerning drawings, stories or sexualised behaviour.
- Persistent or unexplained absence or changes in attendance.
- A disclosure or allegation made by a child.
- Information about an adult or situation that may place a child at risk.
- A pattern of smaller concerns which together indicate possible harm.

If a child makes a disclosure

- Listen carefully and take the child seriously.
- Do not promise secrecy or confidentiality. Explain that information may need to be shared to keep them safe.
- Do not investigate or ask leading questions. Ask only enough to clarify what the child is saying.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking.
- Record the child's words as accurately as possible, including date, time, context and any visible injuries or relevant behaviour.
- Report the concern to the DSL immediately or, if this is not possible, as soon as possible the same day.

Deciding what happens next

The DSL considers the nature and seriousness of the concern and records the rationale for the action taken.

Possible actions include supporting the family within the setting, seeking safeguarding advice, initiating Early Help, making a MASH referral, contacting the police or making another appropriate referral.

Parents are normally involved unless doing so may place the child at greater risk, compromise an investigation or otherwise conflict with safeguarding advice.

Immediate danger

If a child is in immediate danger, has suffered serious harm or a crime may be in progress, we contact emergency services without delay. Any practitioner can make a safeguarding referral; a child's safety is not delayed while waiting for another person to act.

Escalation

If we remain concerned after making a referral, or believe the response does not adequately address the risk, we follow local safeguarding escalation procedures and seek further advice or re-refer as necessary.

5. Specific Safeguarding Risks and Vulnerabilities

Purpose: to make clear that safeguarding includes a wide range of risks, not only the four main categories of abuse.

Children who may be more vulnerable

Any child can experience harm. We are particularly alert where a child has SEND or a medical condition, is looked after or previously looked after, has a social worker, is a young carer, is affected by domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, has a family member in prison, experiences homelessness, has persistent absence, or faces communication or language barriers.

Child-on-child abuse

Harmful behaviour between children is taken seriously. It is never dismissed as “banter”, “part of growing up” or ordinary behaviour where there is evidence of harm. Depending on age and context, this can include physical aggression, bullying, discriminatory behaviour, harmful sexual behaviour, coercion, online abuse or sharing inappropriate images.

Domestic abuse

Children can be victims of domestic abuse by seeing, hearing or experiencing its effects. Concerns about domestic abuse are treated as safeguarding concerns and may require support or referral.

Child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation

We recognise that children who appear to participate in criminal or sexual activity may be victims of exploitation. This includes grooming, trafficking, county lines, coercion and exploitation through technology. Concerns are referred through safeguarding procedures.

FGM and honour-based abuse

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage and other forms of so-called honour-based abuse are safeguarding matters. Where the mandatory reporting duty applies, the required report is made to the police without delay, and safeguarding referrals are made where a child may be at risk.

Prevent and radicalisation

WildGarden has regard to the Prevent duty and treats concerns about radicalisation as safeguarding concerns. Advice or referral is sought through the appropriate local safeguarding/Prevent route where necessary.

Private fostering

Where we become aware of a private fostering arrangement that meets the statutory definition, we notify the local authority so that the required checks and support can be provided.

Mental health and wellbeing

Changes in mental health or emotional wellbeing may sometimes indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation or other difficulties. We do not diagnose mental health conditions, but we observe, listen, discuss concerns with parents where appropriate and seek specialist or safeguarding support when needed.

Online harm and inappropriate images

Children are supported to use technology safely and in an age-appropriate way. Any concern involving sexual images, online grooming, coercion, harmful contact or inappropriate content is treated as a safeguarding concern. Staff do not unnecessarily view, copy or share illegal or sexual imagery.

6. Child Absence and Attendance

Purpose: to explain how attendance is monitored and when non-attendance may become a safeguarding concern.

An isolated absence is not automatically a safeguarding concern. However, regular attendance is an important safeguard and unexplained or changing patterns of attendance can sometimes indicate vulnerability or risk.

- Parents should tell the setting when a child will be absent and give the reason where appropriate.
- Where a child does not arrive as expected and we have received no information, we may contact parents/carers to establish the reason.
- If parents cannot be reached and we are concerned, we may use emergency contacts and continue attempts to establish that the child and family are safe.
- All significant attempts to make contact and decisions made are recorded.
- Persistent or concerning non-attendance is discussed with parents and, where appropriate, with other professionals.
- Where there is an existing safeguarding concern or child protection plan, unexplained absence is reported through the agreed safeguarding route.
- If a child leaves the setting unexpectedly, the DSL considers whether follow-up, information transfer or safeguarding referral is required.

7. Safer Recruitment, Suitability and Working with Assistants

Purpose: to ensure that adults working with children are suitable, properly checked, trained, supervised and clear about their responsibilities.

Suitability before work begins

Assistants must not begin working with children until all required suitability processes have been completed and Ofsted has confirmed suitability where required. WildGarden follows current DBS, identity, reference and suitability requirements and keeps appropriate records of checks.

People aged 16 or over living or working on the premises

The registered childminder follows Ofsted notification and suitability requirements for relevant people aged 16 or over who live or work on the premises. Changes are reported where required.

Induction

Before taking responsibility for children, assistants receive induction covering their role and boundaries, safeguarding, whistleblowing, emergency evacuation, health and safety, behaviour support, confidentiality, mobile devices, medicines where relevant, missing child procedures and any child-specific information they need to know.

Training

- Safeguarding training is completed and refreshed in line with current EYFS requirements and setting expectations.
- Assistants receive regular safeguarding updates, including online safety.
- Anyone responsible for children alone must meet paediatric first-aid requirements applicable to their role.
- Child-specific medical training is completed where technical or specialist procedures are required.

Supervision and responsibilities

Assistants are supervised according to their experience, responsibilities and the needs of the children. They must follow WildGarden policies, act within ratios, maintain professional boundaries and report any concern about a child or adult immediately.

Being left alone with children

An assistant may be left in sole charge only where this is permitted by the EYFS and registration conditions, the assistant is suitable and appropriately qualified/trained for the circumstances, parents have given any consent required, and the arrangement is safe for the particular children. The registered childminder remains responsible for ensuring that the arrangements comply with the EYFS.

Staff medication, alcohol and substances

No person may care for children while their judgement, alertness or ability to respond safely is impaired by alcohol, drugs, medication or any other substance. Staff must inform the registered childminder if prescribed or non-prescribed medication may affect their ability to care safely for children.

8. Allegations Against Adults and Whistleblowing

Purpose: to provide a clear route when there is an allegation or concern about the conduct of the childminder, an assistant, household member, volunteer, visitor or another adult connected with the setting.

Allegations of harm

Any allegation or concern that an adult living, working or looking after children on the premises has harmed a child, may have harmed a child, may pose a risk of harm, or may be unsuitable to work with children is taken seriously and acted on promptly.

- The concern is recorded factually, dated and kept confidential.
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is contacted for advice where the concern meets the relevant threshold.
- Ofsted is notified of allegations of harm where required, as soon as reasonably practicable and within the statutory maximum timescale.
- Where a child has suffered or may have suffered harm, MASH and/or police are also contacted as appropriate.
- We do not start our own investigation or confront the subject of the allegation in a way that could compromise the formal process before taking safeguarding/LADO advice.
- Where employment or suitability action is required, we follow LADO/Ofsted/DBS advice and make any required referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Whistleblowing

Assistants are expected to raise concerns about unsafe practice, safeguarding failures or the conduct of the DSL/registered childminder. They may raise the concern with the DSL where appropriate. If the concern is about the DSL, is not addressed, or the assistant does not feel able to raise it internally, they should contact LADO, Ofsted, MASH or another appropriate safeguarding body directly.

No assistant will be disadvantaged for raising a genuine safeguarding concern in good faith. All concerns are taken seriously and handled as confidentially as the circumstances allow.

9. Visitors and Household Members

Purpose: to keep children safe when people who are not part of the childcare team are present in the home.

- Unknown visitors are asked for identification and entry is refused where identity or purpose cannot be confirmed.
- Visitors are supervised appropriately and are not left alone with minded children unless their role, suitability and the circumstances make this lawful and safe.
- Visitors do not undertake nappy changing, toileting or intimate care of minded children.
- Maintenance work is arranged outside childcare hours wherever reasonably possible.
- A visitor record may be maintained where appropriate.
- Household members understand that childcare safeguarding requirements apply while minded children are present.
- Any person whose presence or conduct creates a safeguarding risk will not be permitted access to children.

10. Health and Safety

Purpose: to maintain a safe, hygienic and well-supervised home-based childcare environment while still allowing children to experience appropriate challenge and managed risk.

Premises and security

- The premises are kept secure to prevent children leaving unnoticed and to reduce unauthorised access.
- Entrances, exits and arrival/collection arrangements are supervised appropriately.
- Smoke alarms, fire safety equipment, stair gates and other safety equipment are checked and maintained.
- Potentially dangerous items, cleaning materials, medicines, tools and garden equipment are stored securely.
- Equipment such as highchairs, buggies, cots, toys and outdoor equipment is checked for damage and wear.

Hygiene

- Children are supported to wash hands after toileting, nappy changing, outdoor/messy play and contact with animals, and before eating or food preparation.
- Nappy changing surfaces are cleaned and sanitised after use.
- Bins are emptied and cleaned regularly.
- Rooms are ventilated appropriately.
- Toys, play mats and frequently touched surfaces are cleaned according to use and risk.
- Messy-play materials, sand and water are managed hygienically and replaced or cleaned when needed.

Eating supervision

Children are always within sight and hearing of an adult while eating. Food is served in an age-appropriate way and children are seated safely. Staff remain alert to choking risk and know how to respond in an emergency.

11. Risk Assessment, Premises and Equipment

Purpose: to identify hazards and manage risk proportionately without removing the valuable opportunities children gain from exploration and appropriate challenge.

WildGarden uses ongoing risk assessment rather than attempting to remove every possible risk. The aim is to reduce foreseeable harm while allowing children to develop confidence, judgement and physical skills.

- Indoor and outdoor areas are checked before children use them.
- Known routes, parks and regular outings are reviewed for changing hazards.
- New or unfamiliar outings are assessed before or during use as appropriate.
- Transport risks, weather, water, animals, crowds and individual medical/SEND needs are considered.
- Written risk assessments are used where they add value, particularly for significant or recurring risks.
- Risk assessments identify the hazard, who may be harmed, existing controls, further action, responsible person and review arrangements.
- Risk assessments are reviewed after significant changes, incidents or concerns.

Banned dogs

Registered childcare is not provided on premises where a banned dog breed is kept or present, in line with the EYFS requirements in force from September 2026.

12. Safe Sleep and Rest

Purpose: to provide safe, calm sleep and rest arrangements that meet individual needs and current safer-sleep requirements.

Individual routines

Parents share their child's normal sleep pattern, settling methods and comfort needs. Any medical advice that requires a different sleep position or arrangement must be discussed with the setting and supported by written professional advice where appropriate.

Babies and young children

- Babies and young children are placed down to sleep on their backs unless written medical advice says otherwise.
- Babies aged 12 months and under sleep only in an appropriate cot, travel cot, carrycot or Moses basket.
- The mattress is firm, flat and waterproof.
- Cots and baby sleep spaces are kept clear of pillows, duvets, bumpers, nests, wedges, sleep positioners, soft toys and unnecessary loose items.
- If a blanket is used, the baby is positioned feet-to-foot and the blanket is tucked securely below shoulder level.
- A correctly fitted baby sleeping bag may be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- The child's head remains uncovered and clothing/bedding is adjusted to avoid overheating.

Temperature

For babies, we aim for a room temperature of approximately 16-20°C and consider clothing, bedding, the weather and the individual child. Children are checked for signs of overheating or becoming too cold.

Monitoring

- All sleeping children are frequently checked and remain within sight and hearing of a responsible adult.
- Babies under six months have an adult in the same room during sleep.
- Checks include breathing, colour, position, temperature and general wellbeing.
- A monitor may support supervision where appropriate, but it does not replace required physical checks or direct supervision.

Car seats, buggies and other equipment

Car seats, buggies and bouncy chairs are not used as routine sleep spaces. If a baby falls asleep while travelling, they are monitored during the journey and moved to an appropriate cot-type sleep space as soon as reasonably possible on return. Older children are moved to a safe, flat sleep surface where appropriate.

Records and emergencies

Sleep checks may be recorded, particularly for babies or children requiring closer monitoring. If a sleeping child is not breathing normally, changes colour, is unusually difficult to wake or otherwise causes serious concern, first aid and emergency procedures are followed immediately and emergency services are called where necessary.

13. Illness, Infection and Exclusion

Purpose: to protect the unwell child and reduce avoidable spread of infection to other children, families and staff.

Children with mild coughs or colds may usually attend if they are otherwise well enough to participate. Children who are significantly unwell, infectious, have a high temperature or need a level of one-to-one care that cannot safely be provided alongside the group may need to remain at home or be collected.

- Children with vomiting or diarrhoea should not attend until at least 48 hours after the last episode, unless current public-health guidance states otherwise.
- Parents must tell the setting about significant infectious illness, medication or changes in health.
- If a child becomes unwell during the day, they are comforted and supervised, separated from others where necessary, and parents are contacted for collection.
- Exclusion periods follow current UKHSA/NHS/public-health advice where applicable.
- Significant outbreaks are managed and reported to relevant bodies where required.

14. Medicines and Medical Needs

Purpose: to ensure medicines are given safely, with appropriate consent, records and training.

- Written parental permission is obtained before medicine is administered.
- A written record is kept of the medicine, dose, time, date and person administering it, and parents are informed.
- Medicines are stored securely, in the original container and according to the product instructions. Refrigerated medicines are stored safely away from food where required.
- Prescription medicines are administered only to the child for whom they were prescribed and in accordance with the label or professional instructions.
- Non-prescription medicines such as pain or fever relief are given only with prior written parental consent and where there is a health reason to do so.
- Aspirin is not given to a child under 16 unless prescribed by a doctor.
- Where administration requires technical or medical knowledge, the childminder/assistant receives appropriate child-specific training from a qualified health professional.
- If a dose is refused, omitted or cannot be given, this is recorded and parents are informed.
- Long-term medical needs are supported through clear information, risk assessment and an individual health plan where appropriate.

15. Food, Drink, Allergies and Choking Prevention

Purpose: to provide safe food and drink, manage allergies correctly and reduce choking risk.

Food and drink

- Fresh drinking water is available throughout the day.
- Parents provide accurate, current information about allergies, intolerances, dietary requirements and medical needs.
- Packed lunches are stored appropriately.
- Age-appropriate crockery and utensils are provided.
- Food preparation areas are kept hygienic and separate from nappy-changing and soiled-laundry activities.
- Children and adults follow good handwashing procedures.

Allergies

- Allergy information is recorded and shared with the adults who need to know.
- Ingredients and allergens in food provided by the setting are identified and communicated in line with current food-information requirements.
- Cross-contamination risks are considered during storage, preparation and serving.
- Emergency allergy medication is kept accessible to trained adults but out of children's reach.

Choking prevention

Children are always within sight and hearing while eating. Food is prepared and cut in ways appropriate to the child's age and development, children are seated safely, and staff remain attentive rather than carrying out unrelated tasks during meals and snacks.

Food poisoning

If there is an outbreak of food poisoning affecting two or more children, WildGarden follows current notification requirements, including notifying Ofsted within the required timescale and taking advice from relevant public-health or environmental-health services.

16. Accident, Emergency and First Aid

Purpose: to ensure a calm, prompt and recorded response to accidents, injuries and emergencies.

The first priority is to keep all children safe, give appropriate first aid and obtain emergency help when needed.

- The injured or unwell child is reassured and assessed while the safety of the other children is maintained.
- Minor injuries are treated using appropriate first aid. For serious illness or injury, 999 is called.
- Parents are contacted as soon as possible.
- If hospital treatment is needed, arrangements are made so the child can be accompanied while other children remain safely supervised.
- Accidents and significant incidents are recorded and shared with parents.
- Ofsted, the local authority, HSE/RIDDOR or insurers are notified where legally required.
- Emergency contact details and first-aid supplies are available on outings.

Paediatric first aid

The registered childminder maintains the paediatric first-aid qualification required by the EYFS. Assistants are required to hold appropriate paediatric first aid where their role or any period of sole charge makes this necessary.

Emergency back-up

Where an emergency makes it impossible for the childminder to continue normal care, the setting uses agreed emergency contacts/back-up arrangements and informs parents as soon as reasonably possible. Children remain supervised and are released only to authorised adults.

17. Behaviour, Emotional Wellbeing and Physical Intervention

Purpose: to support children's behaviour positively, protect dignity and safety, and respond proportionately when behaviour creates risk.

WildGarden views behaviour as communication. We aim to understand the need behind the behaviour and help children develop emotional regulation, language, empathy, problem-solving and safe ways to express strong feelings.

- We use clear, age-appropriate boundaries and predictable routines.
- We model respectful behaviour and reinforce kindness, cooperation and repair.
- We help children name feelings and understand the effect of choices on others.
- We do not use physical punishment, humiliation, threats, shaming or treatment that causes pain or distress.
- Significant or repeated incidents are recorded and discussed with parents so that consistent strategies can be agreed.
- Where behaviour may reflect SEND, communication needs, trauma or other vulnerability, we consider reasonable adjustments and professional support.

Physical intervention

Physical intervention is used only where it is necessary to prevent immediate danger of personal injury or serious damage and no safer approach is available. Any significant intervention is proportionate, ends as soon as the danger has passed, is recorded, and parents are informed on the same day or as soon as reasonably practicable.

If needs cannot be met safely

Where, despite reasonable adjustments and partnership with parents/professionals, a child's behaviour presents a continuing serious risk to themselves or others that the setting cannot safely manage, WildGarden will review the placement and safeguarding arrangements. Decisions are based on safety and the individual child's needs, not on punishment or diagnosis.

18. Equality, Inclusion and SEND

Purpose: to ensure every child is treated fairly, included and supported to participate and develop.

WildGarden values individuality. Children are not discriminated against because of disability, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sex, family structure or any other protected characteristic.

- Activities and resources are adapted to children's age, development, communication and physical needs.
- Resources aim to reflect diverse families, cultures, abilities and experiences without reinforcing stereotypes.
- Discriminatory language or behaviour is challenged appropriately.
- Parents are encouraged to share information about culture, language, faith, celebrations and family life.
- We work with parents and professionals to identify SEND needs, plan support, review progress and make reasonable adjustments where possible.
- We recognise that children with SEND or medical needs may face additional safeguarding barriers, including communication difficulties or assumptions that behaviour/injury is related to disability rather than possible harm.

19. Care, Learning, Play and Observation

Purpose: to explain WildGarden's approach to children's learning and development through relationships, play, nature and creativity.

WildGarden's approach is rooted in warm relationships, child-led play, nature, sensory exploration, creativity and curiosity. Children learn best when they feel safe, known, respected and free to explore within secure boundaries.

EYFS areas of learning

- Communication and Language.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development.
- Physical Development.
- Literacy.
- Mathematics.
- Understanding the World.
- Expressive Arts and Design.

Experiences

Children may take part in outdoor play, gardening, sensory play, books and storytelling, art and clay, construction, role play, music, movement, cooking, small-world play, problem-solving and local outings. Activities are adapted to age, interests and individual need rather than delivered as a rigid programme.

Observation and assessment

Observation is purposeful and proportionate. We notice children's interests, strengths, communication, wellbeing and development through everyday interaction. This information helps us plan suitable next experiences and identify when additional support may be helpful. Parents can discuss progress at any time.

Safeguarding through the curriculum

Age-appropriate learning helps children develop body awareness, confidence, boundaries, emotional literacy, road and outdoor safety, safe use of technology and the ability to seek help from trusted adults.

20. Working in Partnership with Parents

Purpose: to promote respectful, consistent communication between home and setting.

Parents and carers are children's first and most enduring educators. Effective partnership depends on honest, respectful communication in both directions.

- A written contract is agreed before the placement begins and reviewed when circumstances change.
- Parents provide current emergency contacts, medical information, allergies, dietary needs, authorised collectors and information about parental responsibility.
- Daily information is shared through conversation and agreed communication channels.
- Parents are encouraged to share significant changes at home that may affect wellbeing, behaviour or development.
- Meetings may take place face-to-face, by telephone or by video call where appropriate.
- Parents have access to policies and may raise questions, concerns or complaints at any time.
- Safeguarding information may be shared without consent where necessary to protect a child.

Ofsted inspections

Parents will be informed about Ofsted inspection arrangements and outcomes in accordance with current Ofsted requirements. Where an inspection report/report card must be shared or made available, WildGarden will do so within the required timescale.

21. Drop-off, Collection and Uncollected Children

Purpose: to keep transitions safe and ensure children are released only to authorised adults.

Drop-off

Parents should arrive at the contracted time or tell us in advance if a different time is needed. Because the setting may be on a school run or outing, unexpected early or late arrival cannot always be accommodated.

Collection

Children are released only to adults authorised by the parent. Where an unfamiliar person is collecting, identification and/or an agreed password may be used. Parents must tell the setting about collection changes.

If a parent is delayed, they should contact the setting as soon as possible. Late collection may be charged in accordance with the contract.

Uncollected child

- The child continues to be safely supervised and reassured.
- Parents/carers are contacted using all available numbers.
- Emergency contacts are tried if parents cannot be reached.
- If safe collection cannot be established within a reasonable period, the local authority children's services/emergency duty team is contacted and their advice followed.
- A child is never left alone or sent home with an unauthorised person.

22. Outings, Transport and Missing Children

Purpose: to make outings enriching and safe and to set out the response if a child cannot be located.

Outings

- Routine outing permission is obtained from parents, with additional permission where appropriate for unusual trips.
- Ratios and supervision are planned according to children's ages, needs, the location and the activity.
- Emergency contacts, a mobile phone and first-aid supplies are carried as appropriate.
- Children are counted regularly and clear boundaries or meeting points are used.
- Risk assessment considers roads, water, crowds, transport, toileting, weather and individual medical/SEND needs.

Transport by car

- Vehicles used for childcare are roadworthy, appropriately insured for business use and have a current MOT where required.
- Car seats are legally compliant, correctly fitted and suitable for each child's height/size.
- Children are correctly restrained and are never left unattended in a vehicle.
- The driver does not use a handheld mobile phone while driving.
- Parents are informed where unusual or longer journeys are planned.

Missing child procedure

- Immediately establish who saw the child last, where and when.
- Keep the other children safely supervised and reassure them.
- Search the immediate area quickly and systematically without leaving other children unsafe.
- Alert venue staff/security where relevant.
- Contact police promptly if the child cannot be located or circumstances indicate immediate risk.
- Inform the parents as soon as this can be done safely.
- Notify Ofsted and other agencies where the incident meets notification requirements.
- Record the incident, review risk assessment and identify any changes needed to prevent recurrence.

23. Outdoor Play and Large Garden Equipment

Purpose: to support adventurous outdoor play while managing significant risks.

Outdoor play is central to WildGarden. Children are encouraged to move, climb, dig, build, explore natural materials and learn to judge manageable risks.

- A responsible adult supervises children using large outdoor equipment.
- Equipment is checked for damage, stability, contamination and weather-related hazards.
- Children are taught safe use in a way appropriate to their age and understanding.
- Children are encouraged to take turns and respect others' space.
- Faulty equipment is removed from use until repaired or replaced.
- Children are encouraged but never forced to use equipment they do not feel ready for.
- Garden tools and hazardous gardening products are stored securely.

24. Electronic Devices, Photography, Online Safety and Screen Use

Purpose: to protect children's privacy and safeguarding while allowing proportionate, purposeful use of technology.

Personal devices

- Personal mobile phones, smartwatches and other personal devices with imaging or communication capability are stored or used in accordance with safeguarding arrangements and are not used casually around children.
- Personal devices are not used to photograph or record minded children.
- Setting-approved devices and channels are used for childcare documentation and parent communication.
- Parents and visitors do not take photographs or video of other children without explicit permission.

Photography and images

- Written parental consent is obtained for photographs/video according to the intended use.
- Consent can be withdrawn.
- Public images are not accompanied by unnecessary identifying information.
- Images and recordings are stored, transferred and deleted securely in line with data-protection requirements.
- Images of children are never used in a way that could embarrass, exploit or place them at risk.

Online safety

- Children's access to internet-connected technology is supervised and age-appropriate.
- Parental controls/filtering are used where relevant.
- Any concerning online activity is reported to the DSL.
- Adults maintain professional social-media boundaries with families and children.
- Household members must not post images or information about minded children without appropriate consent.

Screen use

WildGarden has regard to the EYFS requirement on screen use. Digital technology is used purposefully and for a clear learning, communication or practical reason. Screen use does not replace conversation, physical play, outdoor experiences, books, creative activity, sensory exploration or direct social interaction. We avoid passive or prolonged screen use for young children.

25. Confidentiality, Information Sharing and Record Keeping

Purpose: to protect privacy while ensuring information can be shared when necessary to safeguard children or meet legal duties.

Confidentiality

Personal information about children and families is treated as confidential and accessed only by people who need it for the child's care, safeguarding or administration. Parents may access records about their own child but not information relating to other children or families.

Safeguarding information sharing

Confidentiality is not absolute. Information may be shared without consent where this is necessary and proportionate to protect a child, support a safeguarding assessment, comply with a legal duty or respond to a serious emergency. Data protection law does not prevent appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

Records

- Child records, permissions, contracts, accident/incident records, medicine records and safeguarding records are stored securely.
- Safeguarding records are kept separately or clearly identifiable and access is restricted.
- Records are factual, dated and, where relevant, signed or attributable to the person making the entry.
- Important safeguarding records are transferred securely to a receiving setting when appropriate.
- Records are retained for the periods required by law, regulation, insurance or safeguarding guidance.
- Digital information is password-protected or otherwise secured against unauthorised access.

26. Complaints

Purpose: to ensure concerns and complaints are listened to, investigated fairly and responded to within the required timescale.

WildGarden aims to resolve concerns quickly and respectfully. Parents can raise a concern verbally or in writing. Where possible, concerns should first be discussed directly with Agnieszka Opolska so that the issue can be understood and addressed.

Formal written complaints relating to EYFS requirements

- The complaint is acknowledged and investigated.
- A written record is kept of the complaint, relevant EYFS requirement, action taken, findings and outcome.
- The complainant is informed of the outcome within 28 days where the EYFS complaints requirement applies.
- Complaint records are retained for the required period and made available to Ofsted on request.

When Ofsted is notified

A complaint is not automatically a notifiable event simply because it is written. Ofsted is notified where the facts amount to a significant event, safeguarding allegation, serious incident or other matter that must be reported under current Ofsted/EYFS requirements. Significant events are reported as soon as reasonably possible and within the required maximum timescale.

Parents' right to contact Ofsted

Parents may contact Ofsted directly if they have concerns about registered childcare. Ofsted contact details are available from the setting and on GOV.UK.

27. Smoking, Vaping, Alcohol/Substances, Pets and Banned Dogs

Purpose: to keep the childcare environment free from avoidable health and safeguarding risks.

- Smoking and vaping are not permitted in areas used for childcare while children are present, and children are protected from exposure to smoke or vapour.
- No adult cares for children while impaired by alcohol, drugs, medication or another substance.
- Any medication used by adults is stored securely where children cannot access it.
- Pets are managed so that children are safe, hygiene is maintained and food-preparation areas are protected.
- Children are supervised appropriately around animals and are taught gentle, respectful behaviour.
- Registered childcare is not provided on premises where a banned dog breed is kept or present, in accordance with the EYFS requirements in force from September 2026.

28. Fire Safety and Emergency Evacuation

Purpose: to ensure children and adults can leave the premises quickly and safely in an emergency.

- Smoke alarms and relevant fire-safety equipment are tested and maintained.
- Escape routes are kept clear and fire exits are known to adults working in the setting.
- Emergency evacuation procedures are practised and reviewed.
- Fire drills are recorded.
- Children are taught simple emergency routines appropriate to their age.
- In an evacuation, children are taken to a safe assembly point and counted immediately.
- Emergency services are contacted where necessary and parents are informed as soon as it is safe to do so.
- No one re-enters the premises until it is safe and authorised to do so.

29. Policy Review, Training and Key Contacts

Purpose: to keep the policy framework current and ensure everyone knows where to seek help.

Review and staff awareness

- This handbook is reviewed at least annually and sooner when statutory guidance, local procedures or setting practice changes.
- Assistants are given access to relevant policies and changes are discussed as part of induction, supervision and safeguarding updates.
- Where practice changes after an incident, complaint or risk assessment, the relevant policy is updated.
- Parents are told about material policy changes that affect their child's care or contractual arrangements.

Safeguarding contacts

Contact	Details
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Agnieszka Opolska • 07835 217761
Coventry Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	024 7678 8555 • MASH@coventry.gov.uk
Coventry Emergency Duty Team	024 7683 2222
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Use current Coventry LADO contact / online referral route
Ofsted significant event notification	Use the current GOV.UK "Report a serious childcare incident" service
Emergency services	999

Policy review record

Review date	Reviewed by	Reason / changes	Next review
October 2026	Agnieszka Opolska	Full policy consolidation and EYFS 2026 update	October 2027 or sooner if guidance changes

Key reference documents

- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for childminders, Department for Education, effective 1 September 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, Department for Education.
- Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures and Early Years safeguarding guidance.
- Ofsted guidance on significant events, allegations and registered childcare requirements.
- Current NHS/DfE safer sleep guidance and current food safety/public-health guidance.

Important: legislation and local contact details can change. Where there is any conflict between this handbook and a current statutory requirement, the current statutory requirement takes precedence and this handbook should be updated promptly.