

Unity Stars Nurseries

Sickness and Illness Policy



Approved by:	Management Committee	Date: July 2026
Last reviewed in:	New Policy	
Next review due by:	July 2027	

Document Control

Issue No	Date	Amended by	Summary of Changes
1	October 2025	Karen Davies & Laurel Parry	New Policy for Unity Stars Nurseries (part of Unity Education and Unity Schools Partnership)
2	July 2026	Jemma Lynch	

Authorisation (Responsible Owner)

Name	Role	Approval Date
Karen Davies	Nursery Manager – Chalkstone	October 2025
Laurel Parry	Nursery Manager – Norton	October 2025

Approval (Accountable Owner)

Name	Role	Approval Date
Jemma Lynch	Trust Safeguarding Lead	July 2026

Distribution List – Once authorised (Informed)

Name	
Setting Leads	For uploading to Famly and distributing to parents and carers
Dave Gooderham	For uploading to Trust website

Review Period (at least annually or whenever statutory guidance changes)

Date Document Reviewed	By Whom
October 2025	Jemma Lynch – Trust Safeguarding Lead, in line with other policy reviews

1. Policy statement

Unity Stars Nurseries are committed to promoting the good health, wellbeing and safety of all children and staff. We recognise that young children can become unwell quickly and that infection can spread rapidly in early years settings. This policy sets out clear expectations for preventing illness, responding to children who become unwell, reducing the risk of infection, and ensuring prompt escalation where a child may need medical attention.

This policy should be read alongside the nursery's Infection Prevention and Control Policy, Medication Policy, Supporting Children with Medical Needs Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, First Aid Policy, Food Safety and Allergy Management procedures, and any individual healthcare or allergy plans.

2. Regulatory and guidance framework

This policy has been strengthened with reference to:

- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective September 2025.
- UK Health Security Agency guidance: Health protection in children and young people settings, including education, including exclusion periods and outbreak guidance.
- Ofsted guidance on reporting serious childcare incidents and significant events.
- Local Health Protection Team advice, where required.

Where there is any conflict between local practice and current public health guidance, the nursery will follow current UKHSA and/or Health Protection Team advice.

3. Aims

- Promote children's good health, including oral health, hydration, nutrition, rest and sleep.
- Prevent and reduce the spread of infection through clear hygiene, cleaning, ventilation and exclusion procedures.
- Ensure unwell children are identified, cared for sensitively and collected promptly where required.
- Ensure staff know when to seek medical advice, call 999, contact the Health Protection Team or notify Ofsted.
- Provide clear expectations for parents/carers, staff, visitors and leaders.
- Ensure concerns linked to illness, non-attendance, repeated unexplained symptoms or failure to seek medical care are considered within safeguarding procedures where appropriate.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Nursery manager / manager on duty

- Ensures this policy is implemented consistently across the setting.
- Makes final decisions regarding exclusion, readmission, refusal of admission and escalation.
- Ensures staff understand illness procedures, infection control expectations, PPE arrangements and reporting requirements.
- Contacts parents/carers, emergency contacts, the Health Protection Team, NHS 111, 999, Ofsted or the local authority as required.
- Reviews incident records, medication records, illness patterns, outbreaks and lessons learned.
- Ensures safe staffing and deployment if a child becomes unwell or requires emergency medical treatment.

4.2 Staff

- Monitor children throughout the day for signs of illness, pain, distress, dehydration, allergic reaction, fever, rash, breathing difficulty, reduced responsiveness or change in behaviour.
- Report concerns immediately to the room lead and manager on duty.
- Follow hand hygiene, PPE, cleaning, toileting, nappy changing, food hygiene and bodily fluid procedures.
- Record relevant observations, action taken, parent contact and collection times accurately.
- Do not attend work if they are unwell or if they may pose an infection risk to children or colleagues.

4.3 Parents and carers

- Keep children at home when they are unwell, infectious, or unable to participate comfortably in the nursery day.
- Inform the nursery of symptoms, diagnosis, medication, infectious illness, hospital attendance or relevant medical advice.
- Collect their child promptly when contacted by the nursery.
- Keep emergency contact details up to date and ensure someone is available to collect the child if needed.
- Follow exclusion and readmission requirements, including public health exclusion periods.
- Provide medication and consent in line with the Medication Policy and provide medical evidence or an individual healthcare plan where required.

5. Promoting good health

The nursery promotes good health by:

- providing balanced meals, snacks and drinks and encouraging healthy choices;
- promoting oral health through routines, curriculum opportunities and information for parents/carers;
- ensuring children have regular access to outdoor play and fresh air, while managing weather-related risks;
- maintaining good ventilation indoors wherever practicable;
- encouraging effective handwashing, especially before eating, after toileting or nappy changing, after outdoor play and after coughing, sneezing or wiping noses;
- sharing appropriate public health information with families, including vaccination information and vitamin D advice for young children where relevant;
- providing suitable opportunities for rest and sleep and sharing information with families about sleep routines and wellbeing.

6. When a child should not attend nursery

Children should not attend nursery if they are unwell, infectious, or unable to manage the normal nursery day. This includes, but is not limited to, children who:

- have diarrhoea and/or vomiting and have not been clear for at least 48 hours;
- have a high temperature and are unwell;
- have symptoms of a contagious illness where UKHSA guidance requires exclusion;
- have a rash with fever or appear unwell and have not been medically assessed where required;
- have an eye, skin or wound infection that cannot be safely managed through hygiene controls;
- require one-to-one medical monitoring that the nursery cannot safely provide without an agreed plan;
- are too unwell, tired, distressed or uncomfortable to participate in normal activities;
- have been advised by a health professional or public health team not to attend.

The nursery will follow current UKHSA exclusion guidance and any advice from the local Health Protection Team. Parents/carers must not administer medicine to reduce a temperature or symptoms and send a child into nursery if the child remains unwell or infectious.

7. Refusal of admission and readmission

The manager on duty has the right to refuse admission or request collection where a child is unwell or where attendance may pose a risk to the child or others. This decision is made in the best interests of children and is non-negotiable on the day.

Before readmission, the nursery may request confirmation that the child is well enough to return and that any required exclusion period has been completed. In some circumstances, the nursery may request medical advice, a care plan, updated risk assessment or further discussion with parents/carers before the child returns.

8. Procedure when a child becomes unwell at nursery

If a child becomes unwell during the nursery day, staff will:

- assess the child's presentation and seek support from the room lead, first aider and manager on duty;
- move the child to a quiet, calm and appropriately supervised area where this is safe and proportionate;
- keep the child under close observation and provide comfort, reassurance and fluids where appropriate;
- use PPE where there is a risk of contact with bodily fluids or infectious symptoms;
- contact parents/carers and ask for prompt collection where the child is unwell or may be infectious;
- contact emergency contacts if parents/carers cannot be reached;
- record symptoms, observations, temperature if taken, action taken, parent contact and collection time;
- clean and disinfect affected areas, toys, bedding, equipment and touch points in line with infection control procedures.

Children waiting to be collected will remain supervised at all times. Staff will continue to maintain ratios and appropriate deployment for the rest of the children.

9. Emergency symptoms and medical escalation

Staff must seek urgent medical help if a child appears seriously unwell. Staff must call 999 immediately if there are signs including, but not limited to:

- difficulty breathing, blue lips, severe wheezing or choking;
- reduced consciousness, confusion, floppy presentation, seizure or collapse;
- suspected meningitis, sepsis or a non-blanching rash;

- severe allergic reaction or suspected anaphylaxis;
- serious injury, significant head injury, uncontrolled bleeding or severe pain;
- signs of severe dehydration or a child becoming rapidly more unwell.

Staff will follow the 999 call handler's instructions. Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible, but emergency treatment will not be delayed while waiting for parental contact.

10. Meningitis, sepsis and serious illness

Meningitis and sepsis can develop quickly and may be life-threatening. Staff must act immediately if they are concerned. Symptoms may include fever, cold hands and feet, drowsiness, confusion, rapid breathing, vomiting, severe headache, stiff neck, sensitivity to light, limb pain, pale or mottled skin, or a rash that does not fade under pressure.

If meningitis, sepsis or another serious infectious illness is suspected, staff will call 999. If a parent/carer informs the nursery that a child has meningitis, sepsis or another serious notifiable or infectious illness, the nursery manager will contact the local Health Protection Team for advice and follow any instructions given. Ofsted and the local authority will be notified where required.

11. Infectious diseases, outbreaks and Health Protection Team advice

The nursery will follow UKHSA guidance for managing infectious diseases and exclusion periods. The nursery will contact the local Health Protection Team where there is an outbreak, unusual increase in illness, serious illness, suspected food poisoning, or where public health advice is required.

An outbreak may include two or more linked cases of the same illness, a higher than usual number of children or staff absent with similar symptoms, or any situation where the manager is concerned about transmission risk. Actions may include enhanced cleaning, temporary changes to activities, communication with parents/carers, exclusion advice, monitoring attendance, or additional infection control measures.

12. Vomiting and diarrhoea

Children and staff with diarrhoea and/or vomiting must not attend nursery until at least 48 hours after symptoms have stopped. This applies even where the child appears well before the 48-hour period has passed. If symptoms return, the 48-hour period restarts from the last episode.

Where two or more children or staff have similar symptoms, or where food poisoning is suspected, the manager will seek public health advice and consider whether Ofsted notification is required.

13. Medication, antibiotics and symptom-relieving medicines

Medication will only be administered in line with the nursery Medication Policy and with appropriate parental consent. Parents/carers must inform staff of any medication given before nursery, including paracetamol, ibuprofen, antihistamine, antibiotics or other prescribed/non-prescribed medicines.

Children who have been given medicine to reduce a temperature or mask symptoms should not attend nursery if they are still unwell or if the medication is needed because they are not fit to participate in the nursery day. Where antibiotics or new medication have been prescribed, the first dose should be given at home. The nursery may ask parents/carers to keep the child at home for a period of observation where the child is unwell, there is a risk of reaction, or the manager considers it necessary. Children receiving antibiotics for an ongoing condition or individual healthcare plan may attend if they are well enough and infection control guidance permits.

14. Vulnerable children, pregnancy and additional risk

Some infections can be more serious for babies, pregnant people, immunocompromised individuals, or children with certain health conditions. Parents/carers must inform the nursery of any known health vulnerability that may require additional precautions. Staff who are pregnant, immunocompromised or otherwise clinically vulnerable should inform the manager so that advice and risk assessment can be considered.

Where there is a confirmed or suspected case of an illness that may present additional risk, the manager will seek public health advice and share appropriate, proportionate information with affected families and staff while maintaining confidentiality.

15. Communication with parents and confidentiality

Parents/carers will be informed where there is a contagious infection or public health concern in the nursery so that they can monitor for symptoms and seek advice if required. Individual children and families will not be named unless there is a lawful and necessary reason to do so.

Communication may be shared through Famly, direct contact, letters, posters or public health information sheets. The nursery will ensure messages are clear, timely and proportionate.

16. Cleaning, hygiene and PPE

The nursery will maintain effective infection prevention and control procedures, including:

- regular handwashing and supervision of children's hand hygiene;
- safe disposal of tissues, nappies, wipes and contaminated items;
- use of appropriate PPE when dealing with bodily fluids or suspected infectious illness;
- cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, toys, bedding, sleep mats, toilets, nappy changing areas and high-touch points;
- safe management of laundry and soiled clothing;
- ensuring cups, bottles, cutlery, dummies, towels and personal items are not shared;
- enhanced cleaning during outbreaks or after a child becomes unwell.

17. Head lice

Head lice are not usually a reason for exclusion from nursery. Parents/carers are encouraged to check children's hair regularly and treat promptly where head lice are identified. Where the nursery is informed of head lice, parents/carers may be reminded to check their child's hair without identifying individual children.

18. Transporting children to hospital

If a child requires emergency medical treatment, staff must call 999 and must not attempt to transport a seriously unwell child in a private vehicle. Staff will follow the instructions of the 999 call handler.

Where hospital treatment may be required but an ambulance is not indicated, the nursery will wherever possible ask parents/carers to collect and transport the child. Transport by staff in a private vehicle should only occur in exceptional circumstances, with management approval, parental consent wherever possible, appropriate insurance, safe staffing ratios, appropriate car seat arrangements, and an additional adult escort wherever practicable. Safeguarding and the child's welfare must be prioritised throughout.

19. Notifications to Ofsted, local authority and other agencies

The nursery will notify Ofsted as soon as reasonably practicable and within the required timescale where there is a serious childcare incident, significant event, serious illness, accident requiring notification, or food poisoning affecting two or more children cared for on the premises. The nursery will also notify the local

authority, Health Protection Team, environmental health, safeguarding partners or other agencies where required.

20. Safeguarding considerations

Illness and attendance concerns may have safeguarding relevance. Staff must follow safeguarding procedures and speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if there are concerns such as:

- a child repeatedly attends nursery visibly unwell or with untreated symptoms;
- parents/carers do not seek medical advice when it appears necessary;
- medical explanations are unclear, changing or inconsistent with the child's presentation;
- there are frequent absences linked to illness without appropriate information or evidence where requested;
- a child has injuries, bruising, pain or symptoms that raise concern;
- parents/carers cannot be contacted or fail to collect an unwell child promptly;
- there are concerns about neglect, fabricated or induced illness, medication misuse, or failure to meet a child's health needs.

Safeguarding action will be recorded in line with nursery procedures. Where immediate risk is identified, the nursery will contact the appropriate safeguarding agency or emergency services.

21. Records

The nursery will keep clear records of illness-related incidents, parent/carer contact, collection requests, medication administered, advice received, emergency action, Health Protection Team guidance, Ofsted notifications and outbreak monitoring. Records will be factual, timely and stored in line with data protection and safeguarding requirements.

Appendix 1: Quick reference exclusion principles

This appendix is a quick reference only. Current UKHSA guidance and Health Protection Team advice must be followed.

Illness / situation	Usual action	Notes
Vomiting and/or diarrhoea	Exclude until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.	If symptoms restart, the 48-hour period restarts.
High temperature and unwell	Exclude until well enough to return and temperature has resolved.	Parents should seek medical advice where concerned.
Suspected serious illness, meningitis, sepsis or non-blanching rash	Call 999 / urgent medical advice.	Notify relevant agencies and follow HPT advice where required.
Rash with fever or child appears unwell	Exclude pending medical advice where appropriate.	Consider measles, chickenpox, scarlet fever or other infectious illness.
Head lice	No routine exclusion.	Parents should check and treat promptly.
Infectious disease requiring public health advice	Follow UKHSA/HPT exclusion and control measures.	Manager to oversee communication and recording.
Child not fit for the nursery day	Manager may refuse admission or request collection.	Decision based on child's welfare and safety of others.



Appendix 2: References

- Department for Education: Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2025.
- UK Health Security Agency: Health protection in children and young people settings, including education.
- UK Health Security Agency: Public health exclusion periods in children and young people settings.
- Ofsted: Report a serious childcare incident and childcare significant events guidance.
- NHS 111 and emergency 999 guidance should be followed where urgent medical advice is required.