The Wendy House - Staff Handbook

Facebook		https://www.facebook.com/thewendyhouseplaygroupev?
Instagram		@thewendyhouse.mk
TikTok		the.wendy.house
Email		Evplaygroup@gmail.com
Mobile Phone		07359 777267
Landline		01908 506982
Postal / maps address		River Valley Centre, 6 White Horse Drive, Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. MK4 2AS
Website		www.thewendyhouse-mk.co.uk

Website Staff Login https://www.thewendyhouse-mk.co.uk/staff-login

Password: **3mersonbear**

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About This Handbook

Welcome to The Wendy House.
This handbook outlines the key policies, expectations, and procedures for all staff.
It should be read alongside your contract of employment and the setting's detailed policies and procedures.

1. Introduction and About Us

The Wendy House (Emerson Valley Playgroup) is a non-profit, community-based early years setting established in 1984. Wendy Cross has been the Manager since 1991.

We operate as a registered charity, managed by a parent-led committee, and provide high-quality childcare in a nurturing and inclusive environment where children learn and develop through play. We are based in a community centre shared with other local groups.

2. Aims, Ethos and Values

At The Wendy House, we aim to:

- Provide a safe, caring, and stimulating environment where every child can learn and grow through play.
- Support children's development across all areas of the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage 2025).
- Foster independence, curiosity, and confidence in every child.
- Work in partnership with parents and carers, recognising them as their child's first educators.
- Promote inclusion and equality of opportunity for all children and families.
- Encourage staff development and reflective practice to ensure continual improvement.

Our Ethos
We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life. Learning should be fun, meaningful, and led by the child's interests. Our ethos is built on:

- Learning through Play – play is at the heart of everything we do.
- Positive relationships – children thrive when they feel secure, valued, and respected.
- Inclusive practice – every child is welcomed, supported, and celebrated.
- Community spirit – as a non-profit, parent-led setting, we work together to support families and strengthen our community.

Our Values	What It Means in Practice
Respect	We treat every child, family, and colleague with kindness, fairness, and understanding.
Inclusion	We celebrate diversity and ensure equal access to opportunities for all.
Play	We believe play is how children learn best — it's joyful, creative, and essential for development.
Partnership	We work closely with parents, carers, and the wider community.
Integrity	We act with honesty, professionalism, and transparency.
Nurture	We provide warmth, care, and encouragement so every child feels safe and valued.
Growth	We are committed to continuous learning — for children, families, and staff alike.

Our Promise
Together, we create a welcoming, happy, and nurturing environment where children are free to explore, discover, and flourish — preparing them for school and for life.

3. Staff, Volunteers and committee

Staff

		Main additional responsibilities
Manager	Wendy Cross	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Administrator	Charlotte Ross	Deputy Designated safeguarding Lead
Deputy Manager Acting	Jade Bishop	EAL
Senior Pre-School Assistant	Chanelle Russell	One2One
	Hannah Goodwin	Acting SenCo
PreSchool Assistant	Rhoda	
Preschool Assistant/Auxillaries	Julie Medori	
Auxillaries	Nikki Ciciura	
	Patrica Ashfield	

See our website for full details: https://www.thewendyhouse-mk.co.uk/our-team

Agency Staff
From time to time, we may use agency staff to maintain safe staffing ratios or provide cover for absences. All agency staff working at The Wendy House:

- Will receive an induction covering key policies and procedures, including safeguarding, health and safety, and confidentiality.
- Will be supervised by permanent staff at all times and will not carry out tasks such as intimate care or toileting unless authorised by the Manager or person in charge
- Are expected to uphold the same professional standards and Code of Conduct as permanent staff.

We value the support of trusted agency partners and ensure all temporary team members share our commitment to providing a safe, caring, and inclusive environment for children

Volunteers

At The Wendy House, we are proud to partner with schools and colleges to offer student placements that nurture both personal and professional growth. These hands-on experiences give students the chance to develop practical skills in a supportive, real-world environment. We believe these placements are a two-way opportunity—students gain valuable insight into early years education, while we have the privilege of contributing to the training and inspiration of the next generation of educators and caregivers. We value the time and support offered by volunteers and parent helpers. Their involvement helps enrich our activities, strengthen community connections, and create a warm, welcoming environment for children.

All volunteers, including parent helpers and students on placement, must be carefully supervised at all times. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of every child:

- Volunteers and parent helpers must never be left unsupervised with children.
- They must not assist with nappy changing, toileting, or personal care.
- They do not have unsupervised access to children's toilets or changing areas.
- All volunteers are expected to follow staff direction, uphold confidentiality, and adhere to our Safeguarding and Code of Conduct policies.

We appreciate and value the contribution volunteers make to our setting, and we are committed to ensuring that their experience is positive, purposeful, and conducted within a safe and supportive environment.

Committee

The Wendy House (Emerson Valley Playgroup) is managed by a voluntary, parent-led committee that oversees the strategic and financial management of the setting. Committee members do not take part in day-to-day staffing or operational decisions, but they are available to support the leadership team and ensure fair and transparent governance.

The committee works closely with the Manager to ensure that the playgroup operates in line with charity and Ofsted regulations, and that we continue to provide high-quality early years education and care.

The committee's key responsibilities include:

- Supporting the Manager and staff team.
- Overseeing finances, policies, and governance.
- Ensuring compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and charitable requirements.
- Representing parents and the wider community.

Staff may wish to contact the Chair of the Committee for the following reasons:

- To raise a concern that cannot be resolved directly with the Manager.
- To discuss confidential matters relating to grievances, safeguarding, or conduct (where appropriate).

Our Chair of Committee is Sarah Clarke. Sarah can be contacted via email at sarahe.clarke@hotmail.com

Contact details are displayed on the staff noticeboard and on our website: https://www.thewendyhouse-mk.co.uk/staff-login/chairperson

All communication with the Chair or Committee should remain professional, respectful, and confidential.

4. Staff Wellbeing

At The Wendy House, we value staff wellbeing. We believe that happy, healthy staff are essential to providing the best care for children.

We are committed to:

- Providing a supportive and understanding working environment.
- Encouraging open conversations about mental health and wellbeing.
- Promoting work–life balance and mutual respect.

Our Wellbeing Offer Includes:

- A Wellbeing Day (unpaid) available for personal use, subject to approval and operational needs.
- A culture that values kindness, respect, and teamwork.

Staff are encouraged to speak openly with the Manager or Administrator about any wellbeing concerns. Support will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality.

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5. Opening Hours and Daily Routine

Preschool open Hours:
Monday to Friday, 08:45am–14:45pm, term time only.
Occasionally, you may be required to work during school holidays (plenty of notice will be given).

Children's Session Times:

- 08:45-11:45 — Morning Session
- 11:45–14:45 — Afternoon Session

The start and end of sessions can be busy. Staff must work as a team to ensure these times run smoothly and safely, keeping the children's needs at the centre of all routines.

Staff are expected to:

- Set up and clear away activities collaboratively.
- Support children's play and learning.
- Maintain a clean, safe, engaging environment.
- Encourage children's independence and self-help skills.

6. Code of Conduct

All staff must conduct themselves professionally and responsibly, both inside and outside the setting, where their actions may reflect on The Wendy House.

All staff are required to read and sign The Wendy House Code of Conduct.

7. Safeguarding and Child Protection

The safety and wellbeing of every child are our highest priority.
All staff must:

- Complete safeguarding training.
- Follow the Safeguarding Policy.
- Report any concerns immediately to:
    - **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Wendy Cross**
    - **Deputy DSL: Charlotte Cross**
- Disclose any investigations, cautions, or convictions that could affect suitability to work with children.

8. Health, Safety and Welfare

We are committed to maintaining a safe environment for children, staff, and visitors.

Staff must:

- Not open the door (even for Staff) without checking with Wendy, Jade and Charlotte.
- Follow Health & Safety procedures, including fire evacuation and risk assessments.
- Report and record all accidents or incidents immediately.
- Hot drinks must be kept out of reach of children.
- Keep hazardous materials out of children's reach.

9. Data Protection and Confidentiality

We comply with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
Personal data must be:

- Handled confidentially.
- Stored securely.
- Shared only when necessary for legitimate reasons.

Breaches of confidentiality will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

10. Absence, Leave, and Pay

If you are unable to attend work, contact the Manager (or person in charge) as soon as possible before your start time by phone or text.

- For absences up to 7 days — complete a self-certification form.
- For absences longer than 7 days — provide a medical certificate.
- Absence of 2+ consecutive working days will require a return-to-work meeting.
- Annual leave requests must be made via the staff login on our website and are subject to approval.
- Salary is paid monthly by bank transfer on the last working day of each month.

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11. Equality, Inclusion, and Behaviour

We are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
Discrimination, bullying, or harassment will not be tolerated.

Staff are expected to:

- Model positive behaviour.
- Uphold the Behaviour Management Policy.
- Support children with empathy and respect.

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12. Training and Development

We encourage and expect Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Core training includes:

- Safeguarding
- Food Hygiene
- Paediatric First Aid
- Equality and Inclusion

Staff may be asked to attend additional courses or supervision meetings to support ongoing improvement and reflective practice. Attendance at staff meetings is required (unpaid).

We value open, respectful communication. If you have concerns, speak to the Manager or a Committee Member.

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13. Whistleblowing and Grievance

We promote an open, honest, and safe workplace. If you have concerns about misconduct, poor practice, or safeguarding issues, report them to the Manager or Committee.

Alternatively, contact:

- Ofsted Whistleblowing Hotline: 0300 123 3155
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0800 028 0285

If you have a personal grievance, raise it informally with the Manager. If unresolved, submit a formal written grievance to the Committee.

Refer also to our Whistleblowing Policy, displayed on the staff board in the story room.

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14. Communication and Teamwork

Good communication and teamwork are essential to the smooth running of The Wendy House.

Staff are added to a WhatsApp group to support communication, you may also receive email updates.

You can access our Staff login section on our website Thewendyhouse-mk

https://www.thewendyhouse-mk.co.uk
Staff Login: 3mersonbear

We hold regular staff meetings to:

- Review planning and practice.
- Share updates and training information.
- Discuss new ideas and improvements.

We value openness, respect, and collaboration in all we do.

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15. Resignation Procedure

If you wish to resign, you are required to provide written notice as stated in your contract. An exit meeting may be offered to gather feedback.

All preschool property — including keys, uniform, and documents — must be returned before your final working day.

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16. Staff Acknowledgement

All employees must sign below to confirm they have read and understood this handbook and agree to comply with its contents.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____
