

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Staff:Child ratios

Staffing & Ratios

Policy statement

At Ready Steady Grow Pre-School we ensure that staffing arrangements meet the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective from 1 September 2026, and are sufficient to meet children's individual needs and ensure their safety.

We are committed to ensuring that:

- children receive consistent, high-quality interactions and supervision
- staff are appropriately vetted, qualified and experienced
- deployment supports children's learning, emotional security and safeguarding
- staffing arrangements are responsive to the needs, vulnerabilities and changing attendance patterns of the setting

All staff are subject to the appropriate safer-recruitment, DBS and suitability checks for their role, in line with the EYFS 2026, current Disclosure and Barring Service requirements and Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) procedures.

Procedures

1. Statutory Ratios and Qualifications

We adhere to and where possible exceed the EYFS statutory minimum ratios:

- Ratios are statutory minimums. The setting will deploy additional staff whenever necessary because of children's ages, SEND, medical or safeguarding needs, activities, environment or other identified risks.
- Staff included in ratios must meet the qualification requirements applicable to the whole staffing team. The setting checks qualifications against the current DfE early years qualification requirements and standards and qualification-checking service.

Children aged under 2 years: if the setting provides care for this age group, the statutory minimum is 1 adult : 3 children and the relevant EYFS qualification requirements must be met.

Children aged 2 years

- 1 adult : 5 children
- At least one Level 3 practitioner must be present
- At least 50% of remaining staff must hold a full and relevant Level 2

Children aged 3 years and over

- 1 adult : 8 children
- At least one Level 3 practitioner must be present
- At least 50% of remaining staff must hold a full and relevant Level 2

Ratio option for children aged 3 and over where an approved Level 6 practitioner works directly with children

Where a person with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) or Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) works directly with children aged 3 and over, the EYFS permits the following ratio:

- 1 adult : 13 children, and
- At least one other member of staff must hold an approved Level 3 qualification.

We will only operate this ratio where we are confident it supports safe, high-quality education, and does not compromise supervision, behaviour management or curriculum delivery.

- The setting manager must hold an approved Level 3 qualification or above. At least half of all other staff must hold at least an approved Level 2 qualification, subject to the detailed EYFS rules. A named deputy must be capable and qualified to take charge in the manager's absence.
- Managers appointed on or after 1 January 2024 must have an appropriate Level 2 mathematics qualification, or achieve one within two years of starting the role, in accordance with the current EYFS.
- Where the DfE experience-based route is used, the setting will retain the required evidence and approval records before counting the practitioner at Level 3.

Deployment and Supervision

We ensure that staffing is planned, risk-assessed and flexible:

- A minimum of TWO staff are present at all times.
- At least one staff member on duty is the Manager, Deputy, or suitably trained senior practitioner.
- Children must usually be within sight and hearing of staff and always within sight or hearing. From 1 September 2026, while children are eating they must be within both sight and hearing of a member of staff.
- Staff are deployed to ensure effective supervision indoors and outdoors, taking into account:
 - children's ages and needs
 - SEND requirements
 - behaviour, vulnerabilities or safeguarding needs
 - environmental risk assessments
 - toileting, personal care, small group work, and continuous provision
- Mealtimes and snacks are specifically planned so children are within sight and hearing of an adult while eating, and staffing remains sufficient to respond immediately to choking, allergy or other medical emergencies.
- Staff must never leave an area without informing colleagues and ensuring ratios and supervision remain safe.
- Staff must focus on children and avoid unnecessary social conversation or personal tasks while supervising children.

We do not allow the use of mobile phones or unauthorised devices in childcare areas.

Counting Staff Within Ratios

We only include people in ratios when:

Staff (aged 17+)

- They are employed by us
- They are competent, responsible, and fully inducted
- They meet suitability and DBS requirements
- They understand safeguarding responsibilities and behaviour expectations

Apprentices (16+)

- Apprentices aged 16 or over may be counted at the level below their level of study only where the provider is satisfied that they are suitable, competent and responsible and they hold a valid, current paediatric first aid qualification.
- Anyone aged under 17 must never care for children unsupervised. Deployment of apprentices must reflect their competence, experience and the needs of the children.

Students on Placement / Volunteers (17+)

- Students and long-term volunteers aged 17 or over may be counted at the level below their level of study only where the provider is satisfied that they are suitable, competent and responsible and they hold a valid, current paediatric first aid qualification.
- No person aged under 17 may be counted in ratios, except an apprentice aged 16 or over who meets the EYFS conditions above.

Key Person Capacity

- Allocation of children to key persons takes into account their experience, workload, confidence, and the needs/VIG of children.
- Key persons must have sufficient time to:
 - plan individually
 - meet with families
 - complete observations and monitoring
 - support transitions
- No key person will be assigned more children than they can safely and effectively support.

Staff Meetings and Planning

We hold regular staff meetings to:

- plan the curriculum
- discuss children's progress and next steps
- identify children needing additional support (SEND, safeguarding, behaviour, speech & language)
- reflect on practice and deployment
- review risk assessments and safeguarding issues

Additional briefings may be held daily to share crucial information about changes in attendance, medical needs, behaviour concerns or vulnerabilities.

Safeguarding and Suitability

- All staff, apprentices and volunteers must complete a full induction and safeguarding briefing before working with children.
- From 1 September 2026, the supervision exemption in the definition of regulated activity with children has been removed. The setting will therefore assess paid staff and volunteers against the current regulated-activity rules and obtain an Enhanced DBS check with Children's Barred List information where the role is eligible and required.
 - Staff must immediately report concerns about a child, adult or staff member in line with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and BSCP procedures.
 - Staff must immediately disclose changes that may affect their own suitability or disqualification status. Household information is considered only where relevant under current childcare disqualification law; disqualification by association does not generally apply to staff working in non-domestic early years premises.
 - Staff breaks, sickness, absence and supervision are planned to maintain safe ratios at all times.

Contingency Planning

We maintain a staffing contingency plan to ensure ratios are never compromised. This includes:

- access to bank staff
- additional qualified staff scheduled during busy periods
- reallocation of roles to ensure teaching and safeguarding remain strong

Sessions will be adjusted or closed if necessary to maintain safe ratios, safeguarding, and high-quality provision.

Further Information

- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers (effective 1 September 2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Current Ofsted early years inspection and enforcement guidance
- London Borough of Bromley / Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP) procedures
- DfE Early years qualification requirements and standards (effective 1 September 2026), including the experience-based route where applicable
- Disclosure and Barring Service: regulated activity with children changes effective 1 September 2026