



Ratios

Written in accordance with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2025): Safeguarding:

Staff: child ratios

3.42 Staffing arrangements must meet the needs of all children and ensure their safety. Providers must ensure that children are adequately supervised, especially whilst eating, and decide how to use staff to ensure children's needs are met. Providers must inform parents and/or carers about how staff are organised, and, when relevant and practical, aim to involve them in these decisions.

3.43 Children must usually be within sight and hearing of staff and always within sight or hearing.

3.44 In settings on the early years register, the manager of the setting must hold an approved qualification at level 3 or above and at least half of all other staff must hold at least an approved level 2 qualification. An approved qualification is defined by the Department for Education as meeting the criteria set out in the Early Years Qualification Requirements and Standards document. Approved qualifications are published on the Early Years Qualifications List ('EYQL') on GOV.UK except, as outlined in paragraphs 1.11 and 1.16 of the Early Years Qualification Requirements and Standards document, those which are not individually listed on the EYQL but count as approved qualifications if they meet certain criteria. Managers appointed on or after 4 January 2024 must have already achieved a suitable level 2 qualification in maths or must do so within two years of starting in the position. This also applies to existing managers moving to a new managerial role. Managers are responsible for ensuring staff have the right level of maths knowledge to effectively deliver the EYFS curriculum. Managers should have at least two years' experience of working in an early year's setting, or have at least two years' other suitable experience. The provider must ensure there is a named deputy who, in their judgement, is capable and qualified to take charge in the manager's absence.

3.45 To count within the ratios at level 3, staff holding an Early Years Educator qualification, and those who have received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status, must also have achieved a suitable level 2 qualification in English.

3.46 The ratio requirements below apply to the total number of staff available to work directly with children. Exceptionally, and where the quality of care and safety and security of children is maintained, changes to the ratios may be made. For settings providing overnight care, the relevant ratios continue to apply and at least one member of staff must be awake at all times.

3.47 For children aged under two: • There must be at least one member of staff for every three children. • At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification or have received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status and be suitably experienced in working with children under two. • At least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification. • At least half of all staff must have received training that specifically addresses the care of babies. • Where there is a room for under two-year-olds, the member of staff in charge of that room must, in the judgement of the provider, have suitable experience of working with under twos.

3.48 For children aged two: • There must be at least one member of staff for every five children. • At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, or have received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status. • At least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.

3.49 For children aged three and over in registered early years provision, at any time where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status is working directly with children: • There must be at least one member of staff for every 13 children. • At least one other member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, or have received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status.

3.50 For children aged three and over in registered early years provision where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, or Early Years Teacher Status is not working directly with children: • There must be at least one member of staff for every eight children. At least one other member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, or have received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status. • At least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.

3.51 For children aged three and over in independent schools (including in nursery classes in free schools and academies) where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status, an instructor, or another suitably qualified overseas trained teacher, is working directly with children: • For classes where the majority of children will reach the age of five or older within the school year, there must be at least one member of staff for every 30 children⁴¹. • For all other classes there must be at least one other member of staff for every 13 children. • At least one other member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, or have received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status.

3.52 For children aged three and over in independent schools (including in nursery classes in free schools and academies) where there is no person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status no instructor, and no suitably qualified overseas trained teacher, working directly with children: • There must be at least one member of staff for every eight children. • At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification, or have received approval to be included in the ratios at level 3 after attaining experience-based route status. • At least half of all other staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.

3.53 For children aged three and over in maintained nursery schools and nursery classes in maintained schools:

3.56 Providers must not include anyone aged under 17 in ratios, except apprentices who may be included in ratios from the age of 16. Providers must not allow anyone aged under 17 to care for children unsupervised at any time. Providers may count students and long-term volunteers (aged 17 or over) and apprentices (aged 16 or over) in ratios at the level below their level of study but only if the provider is satisfied they are suitable (as in paragraphs 3.13 to 3.16) competent and responsible, and they hold a valid and current paediatric first aid qualification.

This policy outlines the procedures and legal requirements for maintaining appropriate staff:child ratios within the setting. Little Squirrels is committed to ensuring children are supervised appropriately at all times to safeguard their welfare, support learning and development, and promote high-quality care.

This policy applies to all staff, students, volunteers, apprentices, and agency workers working within the setting.

Staff : Child Ratios

The setting will meet the following minimum statutory staff : child ratios at all times:

| Age of Children | Required Ratio |
|--|-----------------------|
| Under 2 years | 1 adult : 3 children |
| 2 years | 1 adult : 5 children |
| 3 and 4 years | 1 adult : 8 children |
| 3 and 4 years (with a qualified teacher/EYTS/EYPS present) | 1 adult : 13 children |

These ratios are maintained indoors, outdoors, during outings, mealtimes, sleep times, and all activities undertaken by the setting.

Qualification Requirements

The setting ensures that:

- ♥ At least one member of staff holding a full and relevant Level 3 qualification is present in each room or age group.
- ♥ At least half of all other staff hold a full and relevant Level 2 qualification.
- ♥ Staff counted within ratios are suitably competent, experienced, and capable of meeting children's needs.
- ♥ Students, volunteers, and apprentices are not included in ratio calculations unless permitted under EYFS requirements and deemed competent by management.
- ♥ At least one person with current paediatric first aid training is on the premises and available at all times when children are present.

Deployment of Staff

Management will ensure staff are effectively deployed to:

- ♥ Maintain children's safety and wellbeing.
- ♥ Meet the needs of individual children.
- ♥ Supervise children appropriately at all times.
- ♥ Support children during transitions, toileting, meals, outdoor play, and sleep routines.
- ♥ Ensure continuity of care through the key person approach.

Children will usually remain within sight and hearing of staff and will always be within sight or hearing of an adult.

Absences and Contingency Arrangements

The setting will maintain safe staffing arrangements during:

- ♥ Staff sickness
- ♥ Annual leave
- ♥ Training
- ♥ Emergencies
- ♥ Staff breaks

Where necessary, the manager may:

- ♥ Rearrange staffing across rooms
- ♥ Use bank or agency staff

- ♥ Limit admissions temporarily
- ♥ Close rooms where ratios cannot be safely maintained

Children will never be left unsupervised.

Outings and Visits

Risk assessments will be completed before outings and staffing levels may be increased above statutory minimums depending on:

- ♥ Age and needs of children
- ♥ Venue and travel arrangements
- ♥ Medical or behavioural needs
- ♥ Nature of the activity

The manager will determine appropriate staffing for each outing.

Supervision and Safeguarding

The setting recognises that minimum ratios may not always reflect the level of supervision required.

Additional staff may be deployed where necessary to:

- ♥ Support children with additional needs
- ♥ Manage behaviour safely
- ♥ Support intimate care routines
- ♥ Ensure safe supervision during busy periods

Safeguarding remains paramount at all times.

Monitoring

The manager and room leaders are responsible for monitoring staffing levels daily to ensure compliance with EYFS requirements.

Registers, staffing rotas, and room ratio checks will be maintained and reviewed regularly.

Failure to meet statutory ratios may result in:

- ♥ Immediate management action
- ♥ Notification to regulatory bodies where required
- ♥ Review of staffing procedures

Policy updated by Kylie Jones and the Little Squirrels team **May 2026**.