

Missing Child Policy

Policy Statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

If a child goes missing from the setting

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/staff alerts the setting, leader.
- The person in charge will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The person in charge talks to staff to establish what happened and find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- If the child is not found the missing child is reported to the police the parent is contacted.
- The setting leader contacts the Chairperson to report the incident.

Child going missing on an outing

If a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not attending, there is a procedure that is followed.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The person in charge is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and makes their way to the venue to aid the search and be the point of contact for the police as well as support staff.
- The incident is recorded.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting,

- The person in charge of the setting contacts the child's parent who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the person in charge.
- The person in charge contacts the police using the mobile phone and reports the child as missing.
- The person in charge contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- The person in charge contacts the chairperson of the management committee who comes down to the setting as soon as possible.
- **In an indoor venue**, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The person in charge together with the chairperson or representative of the management team speaks with the parent(s).
- The management committee chairperson carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff present at the time, or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff writes an incident report detailing;
 1. the date and time of the report;
 2. what staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child;
 3. when the child was last seen in the group/outing;
 4. what has taken place in the group/outing since then;
 5. what has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing; and the estimated time that the child went missing.
 - A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened
 - If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff cooperate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements and is recorded in the incident book; the local authority health and safety officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for the prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, OFSTED is informed
- The playgroup's Insurance company is informed.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger. Staff leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative. No matter how understandable the parent's anger should be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take. Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

September 2019

Review Date: February 2021