



## Missing Children Policy

### Policy statement

We believe that Children's safety is of the highest priority at all times both in and out of the premises. Every attempt is made to carry out the trip procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of the 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

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff must alert the Directors or a Room Leader.
- Doors and gates must be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The Directors/Room Leaders will then carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- One of the Directors will then call the police and report the child as missing. They will then call the parent.
- Meanwhile, the daily registers must be checked by the teams on Family and a headcount to make sure that no other child has also gone missing.
- The Directors must talk to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and record this.
- If the Directors are not present at the nursery then a Room Leader must call them and report the incident. The Directors will come to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management team where appropriate.
- Direction must be taken from the police.

#### Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Directors and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Director has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

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



- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone missing. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, **but does not search beyond that.**
- The Directors are contacted immediately.
- The Directors contact the police and report the child as missing.
- The Directors contact the parent, who should make their way to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- Before they leave, if in an indoor venue, the staff should contact the venue's security who will then handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Director should then contact the other Director's and report the incident. The Directors will carry out an investigation, with the team (where appropriate).
- A designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

#### The investigation

- Staff to keep calm and not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Directors to speak with the parent(s).
- The Director's carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member to write an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report.
  - Which staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
  - What had taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
  - The time that it is estimated 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 must staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care – LADO may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address. The LADO can be contacted on 01273 295643.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.

#### Managing people

- Missing children 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. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parent anger and they may be afraid. Setting leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support whilst feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the room leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Room Leader and the other should be a Director. No matter how understandable the parents anger may 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. They should answer the children's questions honestly but also reassure 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 Directors will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.