



MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE

Policy Statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the "Outings Policy" and the "Entry & Exit Procedure" to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing, the following procedures are followed:

Children going Missing on the Premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff will alert the Pre-School Supervisor or Deputy.
- The Pre-School Supervisor or Deputy 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.
- If the child is not found, the Pre-School Supervisor calls the police and reports the child as missing immediately. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are also informed of this.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The parents are then called and informed.
- The Pre-School Supervisor or Deputy talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Pre-School Supervisor or Deputy Supervisor contacts the Chair of the Committee and reports the incident. The Chair of the Committee, together with the Trustees, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

Children going Missing on an Outing

This procedure describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Pre-School Supervisor and other children and staff back in the setting. If the Pre-School Supervisor has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.



MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE (continued)

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand still with the adults and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other children are missing.
- One staff member will search the immediate vicinity but will not search beyond that.
- The Pre-School Supervisor is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is reported.
- The Pre-School Supervisor contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Staff take the remaining children back to pre-school.
- The Pre-School Supervisor contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the Pre-School Supervisor. (The setting is advised as the best place to come to as by the time the parent has arrived at the venue, the child may have been returned to pre-school).
- In an indoor venue, staff contacts the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Pre-School Supervisor contacts the Chair of the Committee and reports the incident. The Chair of the Committee, along with the Trustees, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.
- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

The Investigation (applies to child going missing on premises or on an outing)

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Pre-School Supervisor, together with the Chair of the Committee or other committee member, speaks with the parents and explains the process of the investigation.
- The Pre-School Supervisor and Chair of the Committee and Trustees carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all the staff and volunteers at pre-school when the incident happened or who were on the outing.



MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE (continued)

- Each staff member writes a incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - When the child was last seen in the pre-school building/on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - Which staff/ children were in the premises/ on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
 - What has taken place at pre-school or on the outing since the child went missing.
 - The time 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 staff will corporate fully. In this case the police will handle all aspects of the investigation including interviewing all staff. Children's social care may also be involved if it appears that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see our Accident & Incident Recording and Reporting policy).
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed
- The insurance provider 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, 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 parental anger and they may be afraid. The Pre-School Supervisor needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while 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 Pre-School Supervisor. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff - the Pre-School Supervisor and a committee member. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police will be called.



MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE (continued)

- 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 children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the incident and 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 Chair of the Committee will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.