

Missing Child Policy

Aim:

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times 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.

Method:

Child going missing on the premises

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the keyperson /staff member alerts the Preschool Leader.

The Leader calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parents. The Preschool Leader will do a thorough search of the building and garden.

The register is checked to make sure no other child has gone astray.

Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.

The Preschool Leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

The Preschool Leader contacts the chairman of the committee and reports the incident. The chairman is to come to the preschool immediately to carry out an investigation, with the leadership team.

Child goes missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Preschool Leader and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Preschool Leader is on the outing, then the procedure is adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing on an outing is a little different, as parents usually 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 named staff member 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 Preschool Leader is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.

The Preschool Leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.

The Preschool Leader contacts the parents who make their way to the setting.

Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.

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.

The Preschool Leader contacts the chairman and reports the incident. The chairman comes to the preschool immediately to carry out an investigation with the leadership team.

The Preschool Leader or member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

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The investigation

Staff keep calm and do not let other children become anxious or worried. The Preschool Leader together with the chairman, speaks with the parents.

The chairman and leadership team carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.

The keyperson/staff member writes an incident report detailing:

- The date and time of the report
- What staff and 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 has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing
- The time it is estimated 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 there was a child protection issue to address.

The incident is reportable under RIDDOR arrangements, the local 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 child incidents are 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 keyperson or the designated care 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 an understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Preschool Leader need to ensure that staff are 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 members over others. They may direct their anger at the leadership team. When dealing with a distraught or angry parent, there should always be 2 members of staff, one of whom is the Preschool Leader and the other should be the chairman of the committee. No matter how understandable the parents anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and the police should be called.

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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 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 chairman will use their discretion to decide what action should be taken.

Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.