



Missing Child Policy

Statement of intent

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through the implementation of our outings procedure and our 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

-) As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the child's key person/the relevant member of staff alerts our setting manager.
-) The register is checked to confirm the child came to pre-school and no other child has gone astray
-) Our manager will carry out a thorough search of all rooms, cupboards and all areas including the outside area.
-) Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out
-) While the initial search is made, the setting Manager will make enquiries of all practitioners at the pre-school to establish the last sighting and time, clothes that the child was wearing, and the mental state of the child (happy, upset etc.), this will be recorded
-) If the child is not found our Manager calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this
-) A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police
-) The parent(s) are then called and informed. The manager will ask the parent to come to the pre-school, by using the normal route that the child would take and preferably by walking. The manager will then send a different member of staff to make a search of the area, and continue the search until instructed otherwise.
-) When the parent arrives at the pre-school, and the child is still lost, we will ask the parent to return home and wait, in case the child has managed to make their way home.
-) Telephone lines should remain as free as possible so that messages are not delayed.
-) The manager contacts the director and reports the incident. The director then comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management team.
-) The pre-school activities for the remaining children will continue as normal and staff not involved in the search will give the children proper attention.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our manager and/or other staff back in our setting premises. If our manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be 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, the staff members 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.
-) Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
-) The manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded
-) The Manager contacts the parent(s)
-) The staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible
-) According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or the manager where applicable, 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
-) The manager contacts the chair and reports the incident. The director comes to the premises immediately to carry out an investigation with the management team

The Investigation

-) Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation
-) The director carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who are present
-) The manager, together with the director speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation
-) The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with Ofsted
-) Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident
 - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue
 - What staff/children were in the premises/or the outing and the name of the staff member designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing
 - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
 - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added
-) A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened
-) If the incident warrants a police investigation, all our staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. 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 , 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 child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.

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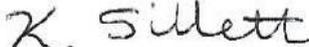
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-) The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
-) They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our manager ensures that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
-) The parent 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 manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Director/Manager and the other the Deputy Manager. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police will 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 Director will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
-) Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted by: Kate Sillett

Date: 10th December 2020

Date to be reviewed: 10th December 2021

Signed on behalf of the Provider: 

Name of Signatory: Kate Sillett

Role of Signatory: Director

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