



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Through ensuring that children are supervised at all times, and by carrying out our *Supervision of Children on Outings and Visits procedure* and careful exit/entrance procedures (also see our *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*), every attempt is made to ensure the security of children is always maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, the following procedures are to be followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person / staff member alerts the Manager (or Deputy in their absence).
- The Manager/Deputy carries out a thorough search of the building and outdoor space surrounding it.
- The Manager/Deputy calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent/carer or emergency contact (as necessary).
- 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 Manager/Deputy talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Manager/Deputy contacts the Chair and reports the incident. The Chair comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with other members of the management committee if possible.

Child going missing on an outing (to be read in conjunction with our *Supervision of Children on Outings and Visits policy*)

This describes a child going missing when a group or all of the children have been taken on an outing. If the Manager is not going on the outing, they should appoint a lead member of staff for the outing who should follow the procedures below. *Where parent helpers are accompanying the group, and may be considered responsible for their own children, this should be made clear before setting out on the outing.*

- 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 astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- In an indoor venue, the Manager or Lead member of staff on the outing immediately contacts the venue's security to handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Manager /Staff lead contacts the police and reports the child as missing. The Manager/ Staff lead follows guidance from the police, remaining at the site if appropriate.
- The Manager (if not on the outing) is contacted as soon as possible and records the incident.

- The Manager/ Staff lead contacts the child's parent/carer(s) and advises them to make their way to the site or to the Pre-school as appropriate, respecting the family's wishes as far as is possible.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting observing correct ratios of staff to children. Manager / Staff lead (where possible) remains at the site to liaise with police and/or family.
- The Manager / Staff lead contacts the Chair and reports the incident. The Chair comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with other members of the management committee if possible.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Manager together with the Chair, consult/involve the parent/carer(s) sensitively as appropriate to the outcome of the search for their child.
- The Chair and management committee carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff who were at the setting /on the outing.
- The most appropriate staff member / child's key person writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report
 - What 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 has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
 - The time 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 staff co-operate 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 Manager (as Designated Safeguarding Lead) reports the incident as appropriate under the RIDDOR arrangements for reporting Accidents and Incidents (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.
- The Manager/ Designated Safeguarding Lead must report the incident to Ofsted.
- The Manager/ Designated Safeguarding Lead must inform the Delegated Officer for Allegations at Wiltshire Council that a serious incident has occurred (see Safeguarding Children's Board Allegations flowchart for current phone number).
- The Manager/ Designated Safeguarding Lead must inform the Public Liability Insurer.
- The above investigation and reporting steps are taken if any child goes missing for any length of time (i.e. even if the child is found shortly after going missing).
- The Manager, in conjunction with committee (working in line with guidance from other agencies who have been informed) ensure that any identified ongoing risks in the environment of the setting or proposed outings are identified and mitigated as far as possible through a thorough risk assessment process.

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, who may blame themselves.

November 2016

- Staff may be the understandable target of anger and they may be afraid. The Manager and Chair should try to ensure that staff under investigation are fairly treated and supported throughout.
- When dealing with a distraught and angry parent/carer, there should always be two members of staff, wherever possible the Manager and the Chair. No matter how understandable the anger may be, aggression or threats against staff should not be tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children may become worried. The staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and avoid discussing the incident in front of them, except to reassure and comfort 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 Chair will use their discretion and take appropriate guidance to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was approved at a staff meeting held on

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the Pre School Management Committee
held on

1st November 2016

Date to be reviewed

November 2017

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of signatory

Leann Atkinson

Role of signatory

Chair
