



MISSING CHILDREN POLICY

This policy relates to children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Policy statement

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 in the Nursery, 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

- The Head Teacher, the Nursery Manager, the Head of Prep-Prep and the Nursery and the Deputy Managers in the Nursery must be alerted as soon as it is noticed that a child is missing.
- The Head teacher calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parents. A thorough search of the building and outdoor area is undertaken by all available staff.
- 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 Nursery Manager / Class teacher talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Head teacher comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management team where appropriate.
- The Head Teacher contacts the Principal.

Child going missing on an outing

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

- 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.
- The Nursery Manager/Head of Pre-Prep and Nursery as well as the Head teacher are contacted immediately.
- The Head teacher contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Head teacher contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- In an indoor venue, the staff will contact the venue's security who will then handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Head teacher contacts the Principal and reports the incident. The Principal comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee, (where appropriate).
- The Head teacher may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Head teacher, together with the Principal speaks with the parent(s).
- The Head teacher, with the Principal, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff involved or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes 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

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- 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 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 incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements. The local authority Health and Safety Officer may 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 Head of the Pre-prep and Nursery or at the Nursery Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Head teacher and the other should be the Principal. 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 Principal will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

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