

MISSING CHILD POLICY

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outing's 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.

Procedures

1. Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the senior leader.
- A senior member of staff calls the police and reports the child missing and then calls the parent.
- A senior member of staff 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.
- The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Management then carries out an investigation.
- Parents/carers should be aware of exit areas all times in order to maintain safety.
- Parents/carers attending any groups, sessions or drop-ins within the organisation are responsible for their own children at all times.

2. Child going missing on an outing

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

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting 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, staff 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.
- The setting leader or manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The setting leader contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the setting leader. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.

- Staff members take the remaining children back to the setting.
- In an indoor venue, the staff members contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- Management carries out an investigation.
- The setting leader, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

3. The investigation

- Staff members keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- Management are to speak with the parent(s).
- Management are to carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the area or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
 - a) The date and time of the report.
 - b) What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff
 - c) designated responsible for the missing child.
 - d) When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
 - e) What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went
 - f) missing.
 - g) 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 incident is reported under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences) 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.

4. 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 children may also be 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.
- Parents should be informed of any incident involving a missing child by a member of the Management team.
- Staff may feel vulnerable during this process and will need support. There should always be two members of staff present who are members of management when handling the situation with parents.
- 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. Management will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

- Members of staff, volunteers and Trustees must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without permission from the Owners who will have taken appropriate advice before appointing a spokesperson for the organisation.