



Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the entrance and exit 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.

EYFS key themes and commitments

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships	Enabling Environments	Learning and Development
1.3 Keeping safe 1.4 Health and well-being	2.2 Parents as partners	3.4 The wider context	

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the Nursery Manager or Deputy Manager's in the event of the Nursery Manager's absence.
- The Nursery Manager/Deputy Manager 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 Nursery Manager/Deputy Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Nursery Manager/Deputy Manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- The Nursery Manager contacts the Chair person of the Management Committee and reports the incident. The Chair person comes to the Nursery immediately to carry out an investigation, with the Management Committee where applicable.

Child going missing on an outing

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

What to do when a child goes missing on an outing may be a little different, particularly if parents attend.

- 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 is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.

- The Nursery Manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Nursery Manager contacts the parent (if not on the outing), who makes their way to the Nursery. Where the missing child's parent is present on the outing then the Nursery Manager or most senior member of staff will cooperate with the parent. The Nursery Manager will still follow the usual reporting and recording procedures where a parent is present.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the Nursery.
- 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 Nursery Manager contacts the Chair person and reports the incident. The Chair person comes to the Nursery immediately to carry out an investigation, with the Management Committee where applicable.
- The Nursery Manager, or a member of staff 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 Nursery Manager together with the Chair person or representative from the Management Committee speaks with the parent(s).
- The Chair person and Management Committee, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report using the incident record book or the outings and visits record where children are off premises:
 - 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 incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements and an incident number is issued (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy);
- OFSTED will be contacted at the time of the incident for support and advice. An incident report will be completed and submitted in all cases.
- 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.
- 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 parental anger and they may be afraid. The Nursery Manager and Deputy Manager's need to ensure that staff 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 member over others; they may direct their anger 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 Nursery Manager and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative. No matter how understandable the parent's 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 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 chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take. OFSTED must be informed of all incidents but especially where there is a fatality on or off the premises.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted on:

14 August 2011

Date to be reviewed by:

31 August 2012

Signed on behalf of the Management Committee:

Signatory Name:

Lisa Kennedy
