

## Missing Child Procedure

Children's safety is held as the highest priority at all times – both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the Outings 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 as follows:

### Children going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff will alert the Manager or Deputy Manager
- The Manager or 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 missing
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police
- The Manager or Deputy Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this
- The Manager or Deputy Manager contacts the Director and reports the incident
- The Director, carries out an investigation and comes to the setting immediately

### Children going missing on an outing

This procedure describes what to do when staff members have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Nursery and other children and staff in the setting. If the Deputy Manager 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 person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other children are missing. One staff member will search the immediate vicinity but will not search beyond that
- The Manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported, the Manager or Deputy Manager will go straight to the scene
- The remaining Manager contacts reports the child missing to the police. They will also contact the parent, who should make their way to the setting or outing venue. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent has arrived the child may have been returned to the setting
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting
- 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 Manager contacts the Director and reports the incident
- The Director carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately

At all times during these procedures staff will be ensuring that someone is still looking for the missing child, whilst the rest of the staff maintain the care of the rest of the group.

After the event:

- Debrief and ask questions – Why did it happen?
- Review procedures and compile risk assessment to ensure it never happens again

### **The investigation**

- Staff members remain calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried
- The Manager, together with the Director speaks with the parents
- The staff members write a report detailing the date and time, what staff and children were present, name of the designated staff member responsible for the missing child, when the child was last seen, what has taken place since the child went missing and the time 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 will cooperate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation including interviewing all staff. Also, the child's social worker may also be involved if it appears that there is a child protection issue to address
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see our Accident & Incident Recording and Reporting Policy). 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**

- The Manager or Deputy Manager will manage the incident and try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The Manager will ensure that staff under investigation are not only treated fairly but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- When dealing with worried or anxious parents, there should always be two members of staff: The Manager and the Director. 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 remaining staff caring for the children 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 incident and 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 is taken.

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

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