

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 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

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the manager.
- The 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 manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- The manager contacts the owner and reports the incident. The owner will come to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation.

A child goes missing on the premises but is found on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the manager.
- The manager and another staff member will look for the child. Whilst the rest of the staff remain calm and continue on their duties.
- The Manager then needs to find out via investigation why the incident happens.
- The manager will inform the parents and make it know they have a right to complain.
- The staff are then asked what happened? The manager will make notes and add to the Concerns diary.
- If a child goes missing due to poor supervision the staff member would be suspended with full pay.
- If the evidence is in conclusive the Manager will look at training staff on the importance of safeguarding children and ensuring supervision of the children is looked at.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do if a small group of children are taken out of the setting on an outing, leaving the manager and/or other staff back in the setting. If the manager 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 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 manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- The manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- Staff will take the remaining children back to the setting.
- In an indoor venue, the staff will contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The manager contacts the owner and reports the incident. The owner will come to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation.
- The 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 manager together with the owner, speaks with the parent(s).
- The Owner will 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 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, includes 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 (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.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- 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. Setting leaders 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 setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the owner. 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 owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was reviewed on the 20 September 2011.

It will be reviewed 20 September 2012 or if there are any problems that may arise before then. Reviewed
25 September 2013

Reviewed 25 September 2014

Reviewed 11 February 2015

Reviewed 2 March 2016

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