

## 14-Lost child Procedure

**Aim:** This procedure is to ensure all are aware of what we would do in the event of a child going missing whilst at preschool.

The care of your child is paramount, and we will ensure that they remain with us and are kept safe.

### At preschool

- Throughout the preschool day, the manager checks the numbers of children regularly
- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the manager is alerted.
- The children are counted to make sure no other child has also gone astray and that the numbers correlate with the register.
- We will ensure all the other children remain safe with at least 2 adults.
- We will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could get out.
- If the child is not found, our manager calls the police and reports the child as missing.
- The parent(s) are informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The manager talks to staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager contacts Jackie, the owner and reports the incident. Jackie comes to the provision immediately, if not already there.
- Following the incident, we will write an incident report, parents will need to sign this.
- Ofsted is informed of what happened and how we dealt with it.

### Child going missing on an outing.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members 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.
- Inform the shop/area manager so they are supporting us in searching for the child.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- Our owner/manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- Our owner/manager contacts the parent(s).
- Our staff take the remaining children back to the setting if possible/ parents or carers collect.
- Depending on the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or our manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Throughout our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- We will give each child a business card with our mobile number on in their coat/trouser pocket) and take a photo of the children on the trip day so that we can show people an up to date picture of child with the clothes he/she is wearing.

### The investigation

- Ofsted are kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The owner carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager and owner speak with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:

1. The date and time of the incident.
2. Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
3. Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
4. When the staff member last saw the child, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
5. What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
6. The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
7. Parents see the report and sign it.

## Conclusion

A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

If the incident warrants a police investigation, all our staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents.

Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

Ofsted and our Local Authority will be advised of the incident and what we did to manage it and prevent it from happening again.

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.

Our 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.

They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our manager ensures that any staff under investigation are not unfairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame our staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our owner/manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is our manager and the other should be our owner. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff are not tolerated, and the police will be called.

The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. Our 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 with age appropriate honesty, but also reassure them.

In accordance with the severity of the outcome, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press.

This policy was adopted on	25 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
Policy reviewed	1/1/22
Date for review	Jan 23