

SECTION 2: Health and Safety

Lost child Procedure and Policy

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 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 leader.
- The leader will deploy staff to carry out a thorough search of the buildings and garden whilst ensuring that some staff remain with the other children so they remain supervised, calm and supported throughout.
- 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.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police and police guidance will be followed.
- The leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The leader together with the manager speaks to the parents.
- The leader/manager carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report as soon as practicably possible detailing:

- the date and time of the report
 - what staff/children were in the group and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - when the child was last seen in the group.
 - what has taken place in the group since the child went missing.
 - the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - what the child was wearing
- 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 (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.
 - Post incident risk assessments will be conducted following any incident of this nature to enable the chance of this recurring being reduced.

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. 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 leader needs 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 leader/manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the leader/manager present. 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 leader/manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

