

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

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 the following procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key worker/staff alerts the setting leader.
- The setting leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area.
- 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.
- The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The setting leader contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.
- OFSTED will be informed. Risk assessments will be reviewed.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting leader and/or other staff back in the setting. If the setting leader 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 child has gone astray. One member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The setting leader is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The setting leader contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting outing venue as agreed with the setting leader. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- The setting leader contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.
- The designated staff member 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 setting leader together with the chairperson or representative speaks with the parent(s).
- The chairperson and management committee carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report 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.

- 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.
- Risk assessment is reviewed.

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.
- 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 parent 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 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.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with anyone outside of the setting without taking advice.

	June 2018
This policy was adopted on: _____	
	June 2019
Date to be reviewed: _____	
	<i>Karen Richardson (Treasurer)</i>
Signed on behalf of the Committee: _____	

Changes Made: Y/N