



# Missing Child Policy and Procedure

Date reviewed: 11.09.2023

## Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through carrying out the outing's procedure and the exit/entrance procedure, to ensure the security of children is always maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

### Prevention:

- All exits from the building are locked /guarded in a way that makes it impossible for a child to leave unobserved/unaccompanied while allowing rapid exit for the whole group in the case of an emergency.
- An accurate record is kept of both adults and children, including visitors, who will be signed in and out when they enter and leave the premises.
- Staff should be aware of all people entering the building and should challenge anyone they do not recognise.
- Identification will be sought from any outside agency entering the premises and any such person will always be accompanied by a staff member.
- All children in the group should know the rules and the reasons for them.
- Prominent notices alert any visitors to the need to keep doors closed and to the reason for this.
- A risk assessment will be conducted at least termly to include a review of access to the premises so that all adults in the group are aware of any potential dangers and can work together to avoid them.

The chances of finding a missing child are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. Key Persons should be able to account for the whereabouts of the children in their group throughout the session. A formal headcount will be conducted at the start and end of the session.

## Procedures

### A child going missing from the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the Key Person/member of staff alerts the Practice Manager and the procedure on the next page will be followed.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- All remaining children are brought to the carpet area and the register is taken to make sure no other child has gone astray.
- The Practice Manager/Deputy Practice Manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and play area.
- If the child is not found, our Practice Manager/Deputy Practice Manager calls the police immediately and reports the child missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parents are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The Practice Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Practice Manager contacts the Chairperson and reports the incident. The Chairperson comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the Management Committee where appropriate.

### A child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Practice Manager and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Practice Manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different, as parents may 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 Practice Manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.

- The Practice Manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing, if the Practice Manager is not on the outing, the senior member of staff on the outing will contact the police and reports the child missing.
- The Practice Manager/Deputy Practice Manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- Our staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a member of staff, or our Practice Manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contacts the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Practice Manager contacts the Chairperson and reports the incident. The Chairperson comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the Management Committee (where appropriate).
- The Practice Manager or member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

### **The investigation**

- 'Ofsted' are informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days) and kept up to date with the investigation.
- The Practice Manager together with a representative of the Management Committee speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The Chairperson and Management Committee carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff/helpers at the setting or who were on the outing.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the Incident.
  - Where the child went missing from e.g., the setting or an outing venue.
  - What staff/helpers/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. Including the time, it is estimated, that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place in the group/outing since the child went missing.
- The report is counter-signed by the Practice Manager/Chairperson and a date and time are added.
- 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.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is advised.
- 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 keyworker or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child during 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. The Practice Manager and the Management Committee 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 Practice Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one being the Practice Manager and the other should be the Chairperson or representative of the Management Committee. 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 outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found or is injured, or worse, this will be an exceedingly difficult time. The Chairperson 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 by Hanslope Pre-school on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Date to be reviewed 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Signed on behalf of Hanslope Pre-school

B. Mudaliar

