



## **1.5 Missing child**

### **Policy statement**

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through carrying out daily routine within the premises, 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**

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key teacher/staff alerts the headteacher.
- The headteacher calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent. The headteacher will carry out a thorough search of the building and outing 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.
- The headteacher /owner talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this and starts an investigation with the management team.

### **Child going missing on an outing**

This describes what to do when staff has 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.

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 headteacher is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The headteacher contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The headteacher contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- Staff takes the remaining children back to the setting.
- 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 headteacher/ owner reports the incident and carry out an immediate investigation, with the management committee, (where appropriate).
- The headteacher or member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

### **The investigation**

- Staff keeps calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The setting leader together with a representative of the management team, speaks with the parent(s).



- The owner carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key teacher/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report.
  - Which 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, 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.
- 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 teacher or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child on 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 headteacher. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the headteacher and the other should be a member of the management team. 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 will be reviewed annually**

**This policy was adopted by Soraia Almeida on March 2024**

**Next review on March 2025**