



Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings procedure and our 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 staff alerts our setting manager.
- The children will be gathered into one group where a head count and register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray, without causing alarm the group of the group will be asked if they have seen the missing child.
- A designated member of staff will carry out an immediate and thorough search of the premises (the child may be hiding in a cupboard or large play equipment).
- If the child is thought to be outside or is not located inside, a search of the front, rear, sides and surrounding area of the building and park will be made.
- Doors and barriers are checked to see if there has been a breach of security where by a child could wander out.
- Once the child has been found, they will be reassured, giving caring support and returned to tiddlywinks
- The parents/people with legal responsibility for the child will be notified of the event and given the option to collect their child, who may be upset by the experience.
- The incident and actions taken will be recorded and the parent will be asked to sign it.
- If the child is not found, the manager calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- In the event that the child is not located a more extensive search of streets, park, shop, and church will be made and discreetly questioning passers-by, and remaining in contact via mobile phones and as soon as the child is found all necessary parties will be informed ie central duty team.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our manager talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Our manager contacts our owner and reports the incident. Our owner comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team where appropriate.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our manager and/or other staff back in our setting premises. If our 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 usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- 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 the venue's security is informed to conduct a search and can inform the police.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- Our manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- Our manager contacts the parent(s) who are advised to make 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 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.
- Our manager contacts our owner and reports the incident. Our owner comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team (where appropriate).
- 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 kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- Our owner carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager, together with our owner speaks 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:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
 - 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.
 - When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
 - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
- 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.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are 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.
- 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 only fairly 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 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 honestly, but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final 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 without taking advice.

This policy was adopted by

Tiddlywinks preschool

On

10/03/2014

Date to be reviewed

09/03/2015

Signed on behalf of the provider

Name of signatory

Mrs Nicola Merry-Taylor

Role of signatory

owner