

PROCEDURE FOR WHEN A CHILD LEAVES THE GROUP UNACCOMPANIED

STATEMENT OF INTENT

In the event a child becoming lost whilst in the care of the pre-school, we will use following procedures. These ensure that a systematic approach to find the child is taken.

AIM

In the event that a child is lost, we will ensure a search is made immediately, parents and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage and a high level of care is maintained to other children at the pre-school whilst procedures are followed.

The following systems are in place for the protection of the children.

- All exits from the building will be secured, to ensure that a child may not leave the premises unobserved/unattended, whilst allowing rapid exit for the whole group in case of emergencies.
- An accurate and up-to-date register will be kept of both adults and children, and visitors will be signed in and out.
- Staff should take special care to ensure that both children and parents know where they may and may not go.
- Staff should also seek advice from new parents so that they are forewarned about particularly adventurous children.
- All the children in the group should know the rules and the reasons for them.
- Parents and staff should work together for the safety of all the children in the group; parents should alert a member of staff if they notice a child whose behaviour suggests they may be thinking of trying to leave.

The following procedure will take place if a child goes missing:

1. Find out quickly.

Know how many children should be present and make someone responsible for regular counted checks.

2. Search Systematically.

Gather remaining children together, with at least two adults, whilst the rest search. Without alarming the children, ask whether they have seen the child who is missing. Check that all adults know the problem, try and establish who last saw the child. Check every room and the outside area.

The pre-school activities for the remaining children will continue as normal and staff not involved in the search will give the children proper attention.

3. Police

If the child is not located, the police will be called after a ten minute search.

Inform Ofsted that the police have been contacted. Contact the Chair and insurance company.

4. Parents.

Call the child's parents to warn them that the child may be attempting to get home. If the parents are at work, there should be an alternative number to call in emergencies.

If the child lives within walking distance, one adult should make the journey on foot (in the direction of their home) in order to catch up with or intercept the child if possible.

Telephone lines should remain as free as possible so that messages are not delayed.

5. The Accident & Incident book

Record the event as soon as possible. Include last sighting of the child and anything unusual about the behaviour of the child or any other children.

6. Informing other parents

Other parents will be informed as soon as possible. Call a short meeting when parents/carers come to collect their children, or when they arrive the next day.

7. When the child is found

The child may be completely unaware of having done anything wrong so offer comfort, as they may be afraid.

Use the opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises and why.

Lost Child on Outings Procedure

We attempt to minimise the opportunity of lost children by ensuring they are properly supervised by a parent, carer or member of staff. Each child without a parent or carer on the outing will have a member of staff allotted to mind them and the member of staff will be allocated a maximum of two children.

THE PROCEDURES ARE:

- If coach travel is part of the outing, number of people will be counted and double-checked on the coach prior to leaving.
- If the child is lost on the outing's venue, the supervisors will insist that all adults and children return to a meeting point and will despatch staff to search for adults & parents.

- A count will be made to confirm all who are present. Adults will be asked when they last saw the child, and what clothes he/she was wearing. All adults will be asked to look for the child as they proceed with the outing, and a member of staff will stay at the meeting point so that if the child is found, this can be reported to the Pre-school Manager or Deputy
- The Pre-school Manager or one deputy will alert officials at the venue that there is a missing child and take their advice.
- The police should be telephoned to report the situation and staff will follow their advice.
- Where possible, at the end of the outing a member of staff will remain at the venue to assist in the search, and if successful to bring the child back. If the parents are not on the outing, the Pre-school Manager or one deputy will telephone the parents and advise them of the situation.

The Investigation

Staff should keep calm and support the other children to ensure that they do not become anxious or worried. The Pre-school Manager together with the chairperson or representative from the management committee will speak with the parent/s. The chairperson and management committee will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.

The person in charge will write an incident report detailing:

- The date and time of the report.
- What 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 will be expected to co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

The incident will be reported to Ofsted and the Local Authority Health and Safety Officer, either of whom may wish to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.

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 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.

Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Pre-school Manager will 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 Pre-school Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Pre-school Manager 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.

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 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