

Missing Child Policy

Statement of intent

The Welfare of children in our care is paramount and we operate stringent security measures to prevent children from leaving the nursery unsupervised, unless accompanied by designated adults. In the highly unlikely event that a child goes missing from the pre-school we immediately put into practice agreed procedures to ensure that the child is found as soon as possible and that the relevant people are informed.

Aim

We aim to implement a swift and effective response to the discovery that a child may be missing from the setting. This response is designed to find the child as soon as possible and secure their safety and well being.

Procedures

Systems to minimise the risk of children going missing:

- A member of staff is always in attendance at the Gate/door during drop off and pick up times.
- Doors to outside and church premises are secured before children arrive and all times Children on site.
- The Gate is closed and locked after the last child has arrived.
- The outdoor area is securely fenced and gated.
- The attendance register is taken at the start of each session and the number of children attending displayed on the information board.
- Children arriving late are accounted for in the register and the headcount number adjusted accordingly.
- Children who leave early are marked out in the register and the headcount number adjusted accordingly.
- Children are made aware of the physical boundaries of the setting.
- Staff will always be aware of children's whereabouts i.e. key persons will note where their key children are at all times, particularly the younger and more adventurous children.
- Parents are made aware of the need for supervision of children at all times, particularly younger siblings who do not normally attend the Preschool
- Children are counted before going outside to play and counted back in again to ensure that the correct number of children in attendance is ascertained.
- A member of staff checks the outside area once the last child has gone inside, to ensure that no child is left behind.

Procedure in the event of a child being found to be missing

Prompt action will be taken:

1. The missing child will be identified and the last known whereabouts recorded.
2. The senior member of staff will arrange for the other children to be satisfactorily supervised. The remaining children should be gathered together for a storytime /music session. Without alarming them, the children should be asked if they have seen the missing child.
3. A systematic search will be carried out to see if the child can be located in the surrounding area:
 - All rooms, toilets, cupboards, under tables, cushions , behind screens and anywhere a child might hide.
 - Check all exits for evidence of the doors having been opened.
 - Check all outside areas including playhouse, sheds, behind all toys.
 - Check that the Gate has not been opened
 - Note any cars or suspicious persons in the car park.

The search will continue for 10 minutes, after which, if the child has not been found then the police will be called and then the child's parents. If the parent is unavailable, then a message must be left.

Staff will continue to search for the missing child until the police arrive. The senior person will liaise with police regarding the circumstances surrounding the incident and take instruction as to the next steps.

4. A record of events will be kept. The following details are noted (see attached proforma) in order to help as much as possible in the investigation and search.
 - Date, time and location of disappearance
 - Who was responsible for the child at the time
 - What was the child wearing
 - Any distinguishing features
 - Circumstances surrounding disappearance
 - Time that parents / police contacted.

The record of events should be logged in the Incident book by the senior person in charge or by another delegated member of staff.

Informing other people:

As soon as possible after any incident the following people should be notified and the time of contact recorded:

- Ofsted
- The insurance company
- All parents
- Surrey Early Years Team
- The Duty Social Worker

A full written report of the incident is then recorded.

Dealing with reactions

It is understandable in such circumstances that all concerned will be very emotional and parents are likely to be shocked, distressed and angry. All emotions and reactions must be dealt with by staff in a caring and understanding way. However, until the situation has been fully investigated by all parties, all staff must refer any parent and media enquiries to the Pre-school manager whilst always observing our confidentiality policy.

Evaluation

Once the incident is resolved, the Manager and the staff team will review relevant policies and procedures and implement any necessary changes to security procedures.

Review / Version Control				
Review period - 3 years				
Version	Created	Reviewed	Initials	Changes
Lost Child Procedure (v1.0)	03/2020		DH / AP	
Missing Child Policy (v2.0)	09/2021		DH AP	Rewritten
Missing Child Policy - Oct24 – v2.1	10/2024		DH AP	Changed template and version control. Reviewed and minor changes to wording
Missing Child Policy – v2.2	09/2026		DH SH AP	Minor changes to wording

Little Stars Preschool

Missing Child Procedure Proforma Record

Name of child:		
Date.:	Time:	Location:
Who was responsible for caring for the child?		
What was the child wearing?		
Any distinguishing features?		
Circumstances surrounding disappearance? Eg. where was the child last seen?		
Police contacted? Yes / No		Time:
Parents contacted? Yes / No		Time:
Outcome:		