



## Missing child

### Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made through procedures to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. For example, our procedures for entry and exit of the building, carrying out risk assessments and arrangements for outings and supervising children both inside the setting and the extended area, such as the roadway, field and playpark. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed. (See Maintaining children's safety and security on and off premises policy)

### Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the staff alert the manager/s.
- The register is checked to ensure all other children are present.
- The manager/s will carry out a thorough search of the building.
- The manager/s will search the immediate vicinity outside the setting (e.g. car park, pavement, park, woodland).
- Doors are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, the missing child is reported to the police and parents are contacted. A recent photo and note of what the child is wearing is given to the police. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police will be informed of this.
- The manager/s talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager/s contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson or representative comes to the setting as soon as practically possible, to carry out an investigation, with the management team where appropriate.

## Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the manager/s and/or other staff back in the setting. If the manager/s 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 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 person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child is missing. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The manager/s is contacted immediately, and the incident is reported.
- The manager/s contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The manager/s contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- Where relevant, staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The manager/s contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the manager/s, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.
- A designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

## The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- Our chairperson, carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our managers, together with our chairperson 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 present on the outing, 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.
- The 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.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our management team will ensure 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 supervisor. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is our manager/s and the other will 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 would 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 will focus on their needs and will not discuss the incident in front of them. They would 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 and/or manager/s will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

- Staff will not discuss any missing child incident with the press or anyone outside of the setting without taking advice.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	NWPS
Held on	
Date to be reviewed	May 2024
Signed on behalf of the provider	
Name of signatory	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	