

## Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.



### Missing child 1.5

#### 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 child's key person or relevant practitioner alerts the supervisor.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The supervisor will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area.
- Doors and gates 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 supervisor 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.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing are given to the police.
- The supervisor talks to our practitioners to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The supervisor contacts the owner and reports the incident who will carry out an investigation.

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

This describes what to do when our practitioners have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the manager or supervisor and other practitioners back in our pre-school premises. If our manager or supervisor 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 practitioners 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 practitioner searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- Our senior practitioner 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).
- Our practitioners take the remaining children back to the pre-school as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior practitioner, or the 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, the pre-school camera is always taken on outings so this should be easily assessable.
- Our practitioners 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 practitioners and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager 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 practitioner present writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the incident.
  - Where the child went missing from e.g. the pre-school or an outing venue.
  - Which practitioners/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the practitioner 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 a 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 practitioners co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation including interviewing practitioners 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 practitioner will feel worried about the child, especially the key worker 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 practitioner under investigation is not only fairly treated, but will receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame our practitioners and may single out one practitioner over others; they may direct their anger at our manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two practitioners one of whom is our manager or supervisor. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our 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. Our remaining practitioners 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 practitioner 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 practitioner must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Policy adopted on 1/6/15

Signed on behalf of Bagshot Pre-school **Susan Michel**

Role within the Pre-school Manager