

Missing Child Policy

September 22



To be Reviewed: September 2024

Policy statement

Child safety is our highest priority, both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through the implementation of our outings risk assessments and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. A register is taken hourly and our risk assessment outlines all procedures in place to ensure security and safety 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 the Headteacher.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child is missing.
- The Headteacher will carry out a thorough search of the building & garden.
- 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 Headteacher calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is believed 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 was wearing is given to the police.
- The Headteacher talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Headteacher contacts the Chair of Governors and CEO and reports the incident. A representative from the Governors/Directors comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Headteacher and/or other staff back in the school. If the Headteacher has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole school outing may be a little different, as parents often 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 has gone astray.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- Senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that a child is missing.

- The Headteacher is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is reported.
- The Headteacher contacts the parent(s).
- Staff take the remaining children back to the school as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or Headteacher 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 Headteacher contacts a representative of the Governors (preferably the chair if available) and HAT and reports the incident. A representative of the Govrneors/HAT comes to the setting to carry out an investigation.
- 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.
- The Chair carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff/volunteers who were present.
- The Headteacher, together with Chair (representative of the HAT) speaks with the parent(s) and explains the investigation process.
- 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 report.
 - Where the child went missing from
 - Which staff/children were in the premises/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the setting/ or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - What has taken place in the setting 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 staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. 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 is informed.
- 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.
- 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. The headteacher needs 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 Headteacher. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Headteacher and the other should be a representative from the Governors/Directors. 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 Chair/Head will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice from the Headteacher.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements: Child Protection

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

UNCRC article 3 *All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for the children.*