



Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

Procedures

6.5 Missing child Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Children's safety is our highest priority at all times both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the 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 member of staff informs the designated person who initiates a search of the building and the garden areas.
- If the child is found on-site, the designated person checks on the welfare of the child and investigates the circumstances of the incident.
- If the child is not found on site, one member of staff searches the immediate vicinity, if there is no sign of the child, the police are called immediately.
- The parents are then called and informed.
- The designated safeguarding lead/officer (manager) speaks to practitioners to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing may be given to the police.

- If the manager is away from the setting the deputy manager will contact the manager and report the incident. If feasible the manager will immediately come to the setting to carry out an investigation.

Child going missing on an outing/walk

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the lead practitioner carries out a headcount.
- One practitioner searches the immediate vicinity.
- If the child is not found, the lead practitioner calls the police and then contacts the designated safeguarding lead and setting manager (if not on the outing).
- The designated person/setting manager contacts the parent(s).
- Members of staff return the other children to the setting as soon as possible if it is safe to do so. According to the advice of the police, one senior member of staff should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- If appropriate, practitioners contact the venue's security.
- All staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The manager and team will carry out an investigation as soon as possible.
- A record is made of the incident on the same day.

The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days).
- The designated safeguarding lead/officer (manager) carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the practitioners and volunteers who were present on the outing.
- The designated safeguarding lead/manager and deputy manager speak with the parent(s) together and explain the process of the investigation.
- Each member of staff that was present writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - Where the child went missing from.
 - What practitioners/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the practitioner designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen.
 - 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 practitioners co-operate fully. 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.
- The practitioners will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated safeguarding lead responsible for the safety of that child on 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.
- Practitioners may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The setting manager must ensure that practitioners under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be aggression or threats against the setting manager or practitioners should not be tolerated; if this occurs 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 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 outcome, practitioners may need counselling and support. The setting manager will use her discretion to decide what action to take.
- Practitioners must not discuss any missing child incident with the press.

This policy was updated on the 23rd July 2026 by Susannah Townley, Manager.

This policy is due to be reviewed on the 23rd of July 2027