

MISSING CHILD POLICY

Every effort is made to ensure the safety of the children whilst they are in the school's care. **EVERY** member of staff has equal responsibility for ensuring the security and safety of children is maintained always including when they are away on school outings.

To prevent a child going missing:

- All children are registered at the start of each session;
- The completed registers are returned to the School Office so that they can follow up any absences and call parents;
- Children are always counted before going out to play and again when they are lining up to come back indoors;
- A member of staff will always be at the end of the line to ensure no children are left outside.

However, in the unlikely event of a child going missing the following procedure will be followed:

Roles and Responsibilities

- It is the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure that all staff are aware of this policy, what is expected and the procedures to follow and to ensure that the policy is reviewed as a minimum annually (or earlier where appropriate, e.g. to ensure compliance with statutory changes or identified best practice).
- It is the responsibility of all staff to read the policy and act always according to its guidance.
- It is the responsibility of parents to ensure they provide correct and updated contact information in a timely basis and know the procedures for handover of the child at the beginning and end of sessions.
- It is the responsibility of Governors to ensure they are aware of the school's procedures and to challenge/support the school in its review of this policy.

Reducing the risk of children going missing

- Risk assessments are carried out regularly and daily checks undertaken to ensure that our premises inside and out are safe and secure;
- Risk assessments are carried out prior to a school outing;
- Access to the setting is via a keypad entry system connected to CCTV which ensures that no child can leave unsupervised and no visitors can enter unnoticed;
- Parents who come to School during the School day after dropping off time or after the day have ended are requested to report to the School office.

- All visitors are asked to sign the Visitors Book at the main reception and timings of their arrival and departure are recorded;
- Children are registered on arrival and signed in a late book if they arrive late. Children are registered again for afternoon sessions;
- At the end of the school day children are only handed over to their parent / carer or designated adult (approved by the child's parent / carer);
- When a child is collected from during the school day whether due to illness or a prearranged appointment, they must always be collected from the School Office so that a note is made in the register to record the fact that they are no longer on the premises;
- Under NO circumstances are children can leave the premises unaccompanied;
- A headcount of children is done at regular intervals by the responsible member of staff;
- When there is a trip off the School premises then it is the responsibility of the staff taking the trip to ensure that a regular register is taken, or head count made, this will depend on the nature of the trip, the mode of transport used and the location of the trip.
- Thorough risk assessments and adequate staff/pupil ratios, (one adult per four children is preferred for EY), no less than one staff member to 8 pupils are provided when pupils leave the school premises. Adequate communication contact and a list of pupils/groups to be taken on visits out of school will be logged.

Procedure in the event of a child going missing from the setting:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person / staff member will calmly alert the Head/Early Years Manager/ Senior Management Team (SMT);
- The register will be checked to establish which child has also gone missing;

The management team will co-ordinate the search and ensure:

- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out;
 - All inside and outside areas will be thoroughly searched, including cupboards, toilets and sheds;
 - CCTV camera footage is checked for sightings of the child.
 - A member of staff will check with the School Office if there is a possibility that the child has another commitment, e.g. play rehearsal, School trip, external appointment etc and inform the School Office of the situation;
 - The Manager will talk to the staff to find out where the child was last seen, what he / she was wearing, any distinguishing features, any special medical or learning needs and will record this;
- Notify the SMT member if the child is found immediately;
 - If the child has not been found after 15 minutes, the Police and the Child's parents / carers will be informed;
 - The search will continue, widening the area until the police arrive.
 - The Police will be informed of the information recorded by the Manager;

- Parents / Carers will be asked to bring with them a recent photograph of their child;
- Staff will remain calm and not alarm the children;
- The remaining staff will ensure that the children continue to participate in their activities and every effort will be made to ensure that they are not unduly alarmed. The incident will not be discussed in front of them;

Procedure in the event of a child going missing from a school outing:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person / staff member will calmly alert the designated lead;
- The register will be checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray;
- A staff member will search the immediate vicinity;
- A member of staff will inform staff at the venue giving a description of the child;
- If the child is not found straight away, the designated lead will contact the SMT at the school, who will contact the parents.
- The remaining children will be taken back to school if it is within walking distance;
- In the event of a trip which has been reached by coach the children will be taken back to the coach;
- In the event of a trip which has been reached by public transport the children will be taken to a suitable place where they will be safe and the ability to monitor them is not compromised;
- If the child is not found after 10 minutes, the designated lead will use their mobile phone to contact the Police;
- Once the police have arrived the designated lead will liaise with them and seek advice relating to whether the rest of the children should return to the school;
- The child's parents will be called and explained to what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion;

Police involvement and following procedures:

- As soon as the police arrive a member of staff will liaise with them to assist with their search and answer any questions, they may have;
- The Early Years Manager, Head teacher or member of the SMT will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff present at the time of the incident detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - What staff/children were in the group and the name of the staff members designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group.
 - What has taken place in the group since the child went missing including conversations and police advice.
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened and a Risk Assessment is undertaken to avoid reoccurrence.
- A copy of this will be sent to the parents, the Chair of Governors and filed. A report will be made to the Governing Body;
- Ongoing risk assessments will be carried out and an immediate review will take place after the incident;

- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff will co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Services may be involved if it seems likely that there is a Safeguarding issue to address;
- Where applicable, the incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, the relevant body would be informed in writing by the Head teacher, for example the Local Safeguarding Body and Ofsted within 14 days of the incident.
- The insurance provider is informed.

Additional notes:

Missing child incidents are a cause for concern 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.

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 feel afraid. It is important 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 one individual. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Lead Teacher and the other should be the Headteacher. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff will not be tolerated, and the police will be called.