



## Missing Child Policy

### Policy Statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through carrying out the outings 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 key person/staff alerts the setting manager or deputy.
- The setting manager/deputy will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area.
- The setting manager/deputy calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parents.
- The register is checked to make sure all other children are accounted for.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The manager/deputy talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager/deputy contacts the chair of the committee and reports the incident.

#### *The Investigation*

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The setting manager/deputy and the child's key person, speaks with the parent(s).
- The chair of the committee will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report
  - What staff/children were in the group and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child
  - When the child was last seen in the group
  - The time that it is estimated that the child went missing
  - What has taken place in the group since the child went missing
- 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 being 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 staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated person 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 be afraid. The manager 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 manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting manager/deputy and the other should preferably be the chairperson of the management committee or representative. No matter how understandable the parents 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 chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.