

Lost Child Policy

Statement of intent

In the event of a child becoming lost while in the care of the pre-school, the pre-school will immediately put into place the procedures detailed below. These ensure that a systematic approach to finding the child is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the child.

Aim

We will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as possible, parents and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care is maintained to other children at the pre-school while procedures are followed.

Procedures

If a child goes missing from the pre-school:

- The person in charge will carry out a thorough search of all the rooms in the building, outside perimeter and garden.
- The remaining children will be gathered into one large group, e.g. for a story with a member of staff, while other staff search for the missing child. The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray. The children will be sensitively asked whether they have seen the child who is missing, as will all adults, so that it can be established who was last to see the missing child, when and where.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The person in charge talks to staff to establish what happened.
- If the child is not found the parent or carer is contacted (alarming them as little as possible) and the missing child is reported to the Police.
- If the child lives within walking distance of the group, one adult should make the journey on foot in order to catch up with the child if possible.

Outings Procedures

On outings where parents/carers attend with their children, parents/carers are wholly responsible for their children. An outings letter will make this clear to parents/carers and they may be asked to sign to say they accept responsibility.

If a child goes missing from an outing, where parents/carers are not attending and responsible for their own child, the pre-school ensures the following procedures are put into place:

- 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 searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that unless otherwise thought necessary.
- The person in charge is informed, if s/he is not on the outing and if possible makes his/her way to the venue to aid the search and be the point of contact for the police as well as support staff.
- Staff may take the remaining children back to the pre-school.

- The person in charge of the pre-school contacts the child's parent or carer (alarming them as little as possible) who makes their way to the pre-school or outing venue as agreed with the person in charge.
- The staff contact the police using the mobile phone and report the child as missing.
- At an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found. The supervisor may monitor their proceedings.
- The person in charge contacts a member of the Management Team who will come to the pre-school as soon as possible.

When The Child Is Found

- A member of staff will care for and talk with the child, bearing in mind that he/she may be unaware of having done anything wrong or, alternatively, may also have been afraid and distressed and may now be in need of comfort.
- Other adults present will take the opportunity to speak to the remaining children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises and why.

After The Incident

- The pre-school supervisor will sensitively discuss with the child's parents/carers the events surrounding the disappearance of the child.
- If appropriate, a short meeting will be held at the end of the session/start of the following session or a note sent home with the children to give parent/carers brief, accurate information about the incident, as soon as possible, for reassurance.
- Liability should not be discussed until the incident has been fully investigated by the pre-school.
- Staff and parents should be asked to refer any enquiries they have or any enquiries from the media, about the incident, to the named person.

The Investigation

- The Management Team carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff present at the time, or by those who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff write an incident report detailing:
 - the date and time of the report;
 - what staff/children were in the group/outing;
 - when the child was last seen in the group/outing;
 - what has taken place in the group/outing since then; and
 - the time it is estimated that 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. Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a safeguarding children issue to address.
- OFSTED is informed.
- The Pre-Schools' insurance company is informed.