



Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

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

1.5 Missing child

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 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 key person/staff alerts the manager.
- The manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager immediately carries out an investigation.

Child going missing on a small group outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on a local outing around the pre-school, leaving the manager and/or other staff back in the setting.

- 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.

- The manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting leaving one member of staff behind to carry on searching for the child in the immediate vicinity and to be the point of contact for the police. The member of staff stays in contact with the setting by mobile phone. If extra support is needed to safely return the remaining children to the setting the manager will review her staffing and instruct a member of staff to assist.
- The manager carries out an investigation.
- The search continues until the child is found.

Child going missing on a whole group outing

This describes what to do when the whole group is on an outing. Parents may or may not be present. If parents do accompany their child on an outing, then they are normally responsible for their own child. The parents will be informed of this by the manager.

- 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 and the parent if present searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- If the search is unsuccessful and the child is still missing after 5 minutes the manager contacts the parents if they are not on the outing, and the missing child is reported to the police.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security for assistance.
- The manager carries out an investigation.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the designated meeting point or the setting leaving one member of staff and the parent if present behind to carry on searching for the child in the immediate vicinity and to be the point of contact for the police. The member of staff stays in contact with the setting by mobile phone.
- The search continues until the child is found.

The investigation

Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried. The manager

speaks with the parent(s).

The manager carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.

The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:

- The date and time of the report.
- What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
- When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
- What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
- 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. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

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.

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 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 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 manager and the other should be the nominated person or representative, or the proprietor. 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 manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	Fyfield Village Pre-School Ltd
Held on	August 2019
Date to be reviewed	August 2020
Signed on behalf of the provider	
Name of signatory	Lisa Carey
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Director