



## 1.5 Missing Child

### Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our 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 staff member alerts our setting Manager or Deputy Manager.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The Manager or Deputy Manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, our Manager or Deputy Manager calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photograph and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our Manager or Deputy Manager talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- If the Manager/Owner is off-site the Deputy Manager will contact her and reports the incident. The Manager/Owner comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation.

## *The investigation*

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Manager carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- The Manager speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the incident.
  - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
  - Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
  - The report is counter-signed by the 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 our staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. 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 are advised.
- 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.
- Our 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.

- They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our Manager ensures that any 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 our staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our Manager.
- When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff present, one of whom must be the Manager. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our 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. Our 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, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our Owner/Manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must adhere to the Staff Code of Conduct and must not discuss any missing child incident with the press or any other person without taking advice.