Missing child Policy

Policy statement

Children’s safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off 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. These procedures are written in line with current guidance Early Years Foundation Stage –

(EYFS). The pre-school managers, Mel Riches & Trudy Saunders, are responsible for ensuring all staff understand and follow these procedures.

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.
* If the child is found on-site, the designated person checks on the welfare of the child and investigates the circumstances of the incident.
* If the child is not found on site, one member of staff searches the immediate vicinity, if there is no sign of the child, the police are called immediately.
* The parents are then called and informed.
* The designated person contacts their designated officer, to inform them of the situation and seek assistance.
* Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
* The setting Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
* The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
* Ensure the safety of the other children, with regard to supervision and security whilst the search is taking place
* Continue the search, widening the area until the police arrive.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the

other staff back in the nursery. If the senior member of staff has accompanied children on

the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole nursery outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

• 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 senior member of staff is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.

• The manager contacts the police immediately and reports the child as missing.

• The manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the nursery or outing venue

as agreed with the manager. The nursery is advised as the best place, as by the time

the parent arrives, the child may have been returned.

• Staff take the remaining children back to the nursery.

• The senior member of staff, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to

stay at the venue until they arrive.

Investigation

* Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
* The setting manager speaks with the parent(s).
* The Manager carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the setting.
* The key person/Manager writes an incident report detailing:

1. The date and time of the report.
2. What staff/children were in the pre-school and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
3. When the child was last seen in the session.
4. What has taken place in the session since the child went missing.
5. The time estimated that the child went missing.
6. A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

* If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff cooperate 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. The local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
* Ofsted are informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days).
* 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. 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. Setting leaders need 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 setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting Manager and the other should be the deputy. No matter how understandable the parent’s anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.

July 2023 - Mel Riches