



## **Safeguarding children**

### **1.2a Missing child**

#### **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.

#### **Procedures**

##### *Child going missing on the premises*

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the Pre-School Manager.
- The Pre-School 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.
- If the child is not found, the parent/carer is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The Pre-School Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Pre-School Manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

##### *Child going missing on an outing*

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Pre-School Manager and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- Preschool staff will always carry the Preschool mobile phone with all parents/ carers contact details.
- Children wear Hi-Vis jackets that have our preschool name and contact phone numbers displayed. Staff also wear Hi-Vis jackets to aid the children in recognising staff.

- 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.
- Pre-school staff will immediately try to locate the child using calls with which the child is familiar (Can you hear me? One, two, three, where are you?)
- If the child is still missing the staff member in charge will contact the Pre-School Manager (via our mobile phone if the Manager is not present)
- The Pre-School Manager will immediately contact the police and the child's parents/ carers.
- Staff will return the other children back to pre-school, the extra staff ratio will allow for one member of staff, nominated by the Pre-School Manager to remain in the area to continue searching, and to act as a point of call for the emergency services.
- Further actions will be guided by the advice of the emergency services.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents/carers 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 Pre-School Manager (if not present) is contacted immediately using the mobile phone and the incident is reported.
- The Pre-School Manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Pre-School Manager contacts the parent/carer, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the Manager. The setting is advised as the best meeting 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.
- In 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 Pre-School Manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.
- The Pre-School Manager or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

#### *The investigation*

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Pre-School Manager together with the chairperson or a representative from the management committee, speaks with the parent(s)/carer(s).


- The chairperson and management committee carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were present 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 occurred.
- 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 the 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 policy 3.6 Recording and reporting of accidents and incidents). The local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be 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 carer responsible for the safety of that child for the duration of 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 Pre-School Manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents/carers 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 Pre-School Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent or carer, there should always be two members of staff; one of whom is the Manager and the other should be the chairperson or a representative of the management committee. No matter how understandable the parent or carer'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 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.

<b><i>This policy was originally adopted at a meeting of Nomansland Pre-school</i></b>	
<b><i>Held on</i></b>	<b><i>28 April 2010</i></b>
<b><i>Last review/update approved</i></b>	<b><i>March 2018</i></b>
<b><i>Date to be reviewed</i></b>	<b><i>March 2019</i></b>
<b><i>Signed on behalf of the management committee</i></b>	
<b><i>Name of signatory</i></b>	<b><i>Nikola Bishop</i></b>
<b><i>Role of signatory</i></b>	<b><i>Chair</i></b>