

## **Missing Child Policy and Procedure**

### **Aim**

To ensure that there is a clear procedure which is understood and implemented effectively by all staff.

To enable a missing child to be located as quickly as possible, minimising risk to the child as a result.

### **Policy**

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off the premises. This occurs through robust arrival and departure procedures, secure premises, regular head counts, appropriate supervision levels, talking to children about how to keep themselves safe and positive relationship building to enable children to come to staff with concerns if they are upset.

If for any reason a worker cannot account for a child's whereabouts then following procedure will be used.

### **Procedure**

#### **If a Child is Missing From the Premises**

1. If a staff member believes a child is missing, then they will inform the Manager immediately. The Manager will then make a check of all the children present to confirm who is missing.
2. A Manager will organise a check of all exit doors, outside area, rooms, cupboards and possible hiding places. This check will be carried out quickly and calmly and without panicking the other children.
3. The other children will be kept together with an appropriate worker while the check is being carried out.
4. If the search is unsuccessful and the child is still missing, the Manager or designated worker must contact the police on 999 and the parent/carer of the missing child. This contact will take place as soon as the search has been concluded, and must take place within 15 minutes.
5. The police will be given the following information:
  - The name of the worker
  - The address of the setting

- What has happened
  - Child's name, age and address
  - Time of incident
  - Any further supportive information e.g. if the child has any medical or additional needs, what the child was wearing and any distinguishing features.
6. The search for the child will continue after calling the police.
  7. An Incident Form will be completed and parent's informed whenever a child has been missing; whether for a few minutes and then located, or if the search has been unsuccessful and police have been called.
  8. The Manager will decide whether Ofsted need to be informed.
  9. A review will take place considering how the incident occurred and any learning or changes to make for the future.

### **Missing Child Seen Leaving the Premises or a Child Insists on Leaving the Premises.**

1. Where a child attempts to leave the premises with the knowledge of the staff then the staff have a duty to persuade the child to stay on premises. If unsuccessful, the member of staff witnessing this must inform the Manager immediately, or get a message to the Manager to ensure they do not lose sight of the child. The Manager will inform parents/carers as soon as practical.
2. If appropriate and staffing levels permit then the Manager may authorise a member of staff to follow with mobile phone and observe where the child is going. This must be done in a calm and professional manner so as not to alarm the child into running or taking panic decisions which may result in harm. The Manager may decide the child is unsafe and therefore will call the police, this judgement may depend on the age (under 8 or over 8), ability or vulnerability of the child.
3. If there are not enough staff to leave the premises to observe the child then the staff member must inform the Manager where they last saw the child and the direction they were heading, so this information can be communicated to the police and parents.
4. If it is thought that the child may be a danger to him/herself or others then physical intervention may be used to return the child to the premises. You may want to consider the age, ability and vulnerability in making this judgement. In all cases the parents/carers will be contacted immediately.

5. In all cases an Incident Form will be completed detailing reasoning, decision making and any action taken (this will be done as soon as practicable) and will be shared with parents/carers.
6. Management will be informed. The Manager will decide whether Ofsted need to be informed.
7. A review will take place considering how the incident occurred and any learning or changes to make for the future.

### **Off the Premises**

1. If a staff member believes a child is missing, then they will inform the Manager immediately. The Manager will then make a check and headcount of all the children present to confirm who is missing.
2. The group should stay still and keep together. One staff member will retrace their steps (to a pre-agreed distance, for no more than five minutes), to look for the child, if the rest of the children can safely be supervised during this time.
3. If the search is unsuccessful and the child is still missing, the Manager will inform the staff of the site and ask for their help in finding the child, contact the police on 999 and contact the parent/carer of the missing child. This contact will take place as soon as the search has been concluded, and must take place within 15 minutes.
4. The police will be given the following information:
  - Name of the worker.
  - Address of the venue and phone number of the worker.
  - What has happened.
  - Name, age and address of the child.
  - Time of incident.
  - Any further supportive information e.g. if the child has any medical or additional needs, what the child was wearing and any distinguishing features.
5. We will continue the search after calling the police.
6. An Incident Form will be completed and parent's informed whenever a child has been missing; whether for a few minutes and then located, or if the search has been unsuccessful and police have been called.
7. The Manager will decide whether Ofsted need to be informed.

8. A review will take place considering how the incident occurred and any learning or changes to make for the future.

### **Known Risks**

In exceptional circumstances, where a child is known to be liable to run off the premises, or to go missing on trips, we will work within our Behaviour Management Policy to formulate an individual Behaviour Management Plan in partnership with the parent's/carers and child to explore the strategies and actions needed to reduce the risk of the child going missing. We will consider the benefits of the child's participation as part of this process.