

Safeguarding children

Missing child

All precautions are taken to ensure that children are safe and secure on the premises at all times. Precautions are also taken if children are taken outside. To maintain security we endeavour to:

- make sure the register is updated as soon as children arrive at or leave the nursery.
- make regular checks throughout the session to ensure that all children are accounted for.
- Make sure all staff know how many children are present.
- Ensure that the children are within visual range of staff at all times.

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 room leader and Manager are informed.
- The Room Leader/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 is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The Manager/ Room Leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken the children on an outing, leaving the Manager/ Room Leader 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 setting manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- A member of the outing staff contacts the police and reports the child as missing.

- The Manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with The Island Day Nursery. 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.
- 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 designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

If the Manager/Room leader has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The settings directors speak with the parent(s).
- The Directors carry 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.
- 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 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. Directors 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 Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Manager/ Room Leader and the other should be a Director. 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 Directors will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

NB: Parents should be aware that, if they are late collecting a child, they will be charged a late collection fee

Persons responsible for implementing this policy:

Erica Dunwell/Heather Bishop/Rosalind Moreno/Cara Bonner – Barton

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