

13.0 Missing Child Procedure

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outing's 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.

Procedure

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the relevant member of staff alerts the Senior Leader.
- The register is taken to ensure that no other child has also gone missing and a head count is completed immediately.
- The Senior Leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and outdoor areas.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could leave the site.
- If the child is not found, the Senior Leader calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing and the circumstances, including a full description of the child and what they were wearing. The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- The CEO and Chair of Trustees are informed of the incident
- The CCTV footage is reviewed

Child going missing on an outing

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone missing.

- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- The lead member on the outing contacts the police and reports the child missing, and works in accordance with their advice.
- The Senior Leadership Team member is contacted and they will inform the missing child's parents immediately and then record the incident.
- The staff on the outing, take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible, reassuring the children and remaining calm.

Our Senior Leader will start an investigation and Inform the CEO of the incident.

The Investigation

A designated Senior Leadership Team member investigates. Including taking written statements from those who were present and reviewing CCTV footage.

The Senior Leader, together with our CEO/Chair speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.

Each member of staff present writes a witness statement:

- The date and time of the incident.
- A detailed account of what happened.

A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

The LBWF Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be informed of the incident. Our team will cooperate fully with their investigation including interviewing staff and parents. If the incident warrants a Police investigation, we will follow their advice and cooperate fully.

Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.

The insurance provider is informed.

The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us and/or Ofsted.

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 Team will feel worried about the child, especially 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.

They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Senior Leader 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 the Senior Leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is a senior. 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 team 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 team members may need counselling and support. Our CEO/Chair will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

Our team must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice from a Senior Leader.

Policy Name	Missing Child Policy
Version Number	V1
This policy was developed by	The Early Years Alliance
These people were consulted/involved in developing the policy	Senior Leadership Team Safeguarding Team Governance Group

This Policy was adopted by	Trustee Board
Date	February 2024
Signed	Bisi Oyekanmi
Name	Bisi Oyekanmi
Role	Chairperson
Next Review Date	February 2025