

## SAFEGUARDING & WELFARE REQUIREMENT: CHILD PROTECTION

### 1.6. Missing Child



#### Policy Statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off our premises. Every attempt is made, through carrying out the outings procedure and the drop off and collection procedure, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedures are followed.

#### Procedures

*If a child goes missing on the pre-school premises:*

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the pre-school Manager.
- The register is checked to ensure no other child has gone astray.
- The pre-school Manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Doors 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 pre-school Manager calls the police and reports the child as missing. If it is a suspected abduction, the police are informed of this.
- The parents are called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given 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 committee Chairperson and reports the incident. The Chairperson comes to the pre-school immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.

*If a child goes missing on an outing:*

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the pre-school Manager and/or other staff back in the setting. If the pre-school Manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting 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 member of staff searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.

- Our Manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- Our Manager contacts the child's parent(s).
- Our staff take the remaining children back to the pre-school as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or our manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our Manager contacts our committee Chairperson and reports the incident. Our committee Chairperson comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation.
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

### **The Investigation**

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- Our committee Chairperson carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our Manager, together with the Chairperson, speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the incident.
  - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
  - Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
  - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all our staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
- 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 calm as possible.
- Our 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.
- Our staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our Manager will 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 our Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is our Manager and the other should be our committee Chairperson. 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 very difficult time. The committee 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.

**This policy was adopted at a meeting held by St John's Playtime Pre-school committee on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2009.**

**This policy was reviewed on: April 2023**

**This policy will be reviewed again on: April 2024**

**Signed on behalf of the Management committee and provider:**

**Name of Signatory:** Lisa Calver 

**Role of Signatory:** Committee Chairperson