

Missing Child

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the 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.

Our Procedures

1. Child going missing on the premises

- a) As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/staff alerts the Nursery Manager.
- b) The Nursery Manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- c) The Nursery Manager will conduct an immediate headcount and the register will be checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- d) Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- e) The Nursery Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- f) If the child has not been found, the Nursery Manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parents.
- g) The Nursery Manager contacts the Head of Finance and reports the incident.
- h) The Head of Finance nominates a member of staff to carry out an investigation.

2. Child going missing on an outing

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

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole nursery outing may be a little different, as parents may attend and are responsible for their own child.

- a) As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- b) One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- c) Staff will contact the Police if the child is not found.
- d) The Nursery Manager, or Deputy Manager, is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- e) The Nursery Manager contacts the parent (if not on the outing), who will be asked to make their way to the nursery.
- f) Staff take the remaining children back to the nursery. However, staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.



- g) 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.
- h) The Nursery Manager contacts the Head of Finance and reports the incident.
- i) The Head of Finance nominates a member of staff to carry out an investigation.

3. The investigation

- a) Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- b) The Nursery Manager informs the parents about the incident.
- c) The nominated member of staff carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- d) The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - The names of the 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.
- e) A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- f) If the incident warrants a police investigation, staff will 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.
- g) 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.
- h) The incident is reported to Ofsted using the online reporting portal - <https://www.report-childcare-incident.service.gov.uk/serious-incident/childcare/update-incident/>
- i) The insurance provider is informed.

4. Managing people

- a) Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- b) Staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child if on an outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- c) Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Nursery Manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- d) 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 Nursery Manager. When dealing distraught and angry parent(s), there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Nursery Manager. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.



- e) 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.
- f) 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 Chief Executive will use discretion on deciding what action to take.
- g) Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice from the Communications Manager.

This policy meets the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the EYFS 4TH January 2024

Date policy last reviewed/updated	June 2024	Reviewed by	Julia Ward, Head of Support Services
Date of next review/update	June 2025		

