



## Missing child

### 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 a staff member alerts Jenny Whyton or Vicky Louch.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Jenny Whyton or Vicky Louch will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- Jenny Whyton or Vicky Louch calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- Jenny Whyton talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this. A description of what the child was wearing is also recorded and shared with the police.
- Jenny Whyton contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson comes to Southwell Smiley Faces immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.

#### *Child going missing on an outing*

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our manager and/or other staff back in our setting premises. If Jenny Whyton has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- 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. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- Jenny Whyton is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- Jenny Whyton contacts the parent, who makes their way to Southwell Smiley Faces.
- Staff take the remaining children back to Southwell Smiley Faces.
- The manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson comes to Southwell Smiley Faces immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.
- Jenny Whyton, or a member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

### *The investigation*

- Ofsted will be informed as soon as possible and kept up to date with the investigation.
- The chairperson and management committee, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The manager together with the chairperson or representative from the management committee speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- Each 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. Jenny Whyton will 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 will be Jenny Whyton and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or a representative. 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 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 IS APPLICABLE TO BOTH PRTE-SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOL CLUB

Updated: September 2017

The following policies support our Missing Child Policy:

Risk Assessment

Supervision of Children on Outings and Visits

Maintaining Children's Safety and Security

Health and Safety General Standards