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## Missing Child

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 policy is as follows.

### Procedure:

#### Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key persons/staff alerts the preschool leader
- The setting leader calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parents/ carers and notifies the Designated Safeguarding Lead of Sir John Colfox Academy (Carol Duffy)
- The setting leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has gone missing
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach whereby a child could wander out
- The preschool leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this
- The setting leader contacts the committee chair and reports the incident. The chair comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management team where appropriate

#### Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a group on an outing, leaving the preschool leader and/or other staff back at the setting. If the preschool leader 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 missing. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that
- The preschool leader is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded
- The preschool leader contacts police and reports the child as missing
- The preschool leader contacts the parents, who make their way to the setting
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting



1E

- 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 preschool leader contacts the chair and reports the incident. The chair comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation
- The preschool leader or member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive

### **The investigation**

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried
- The preschool leader, together with a representative of the committee, speaks to the parent/ carer
- The chair carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing
- The key person writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report
  - Which staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff member 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 cooperate fully. In this case, the police will handle 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 the RIDDOR arrangements (see 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 are informed
- The insurance provider is informed

### **Managing a missing child incident**

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible



1E

- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key persons or designated carer responsible for the safety of that child on 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
- The staff may be the understandable target of the parents'/carers' anger, and they may be afraid. The preschool leader needs 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 staff; they may direct their anger at the preschool leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent/carer, there should always be two members of staff; one of whom is the preschool leader and the other should be the chairperson of the committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger, aggression and/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 was updated at a meeting of: The Committee of Bradpole Preschool

Held during the Autumn 2023

Date to be reviewed Autumn 2024