Missing Child Policy

Policy Statement

Children's safety is our highest priority both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through rigorous risk assessments, staff deployment, head counts, secure entry and exit systems and outing procedures, to ensure children remain safe at all times.

This policy is in line with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Working Together to Safeguard Children and local safeguarding partnership procedures.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing, the following procedures will be followed immediately.

Procedure

Child Going Missing on the Premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff immediately informs the Preschool Leads, Sally Parmiter and Nikki Moss, Nikki Moss is Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Sally Parmiter and Ellie Webb are both Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL).
- The Preschool Leads coordinate an immediate and thorough search of the building, outdoor areas and surrounding premises.
- Staff check all rooms, cupboards, toilets, storage areas, outdoor spaces, exits and hiding places.
- A headcount and register check are completed immediately to ensure no other child is missing.
- Doors, gates and security systems are checked to establish whether there has been a breach of security.
- If the child is not found immediately, the police are contacted without delay.
- Parents/carers are informed as soon as possible.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead of The Sir John Colfox Academy, Carol Duffy, and the Committee Chair are informed immediately.
- Staff record:
    - when the child was last seen
    - where the child was last seen
    - what the child was wearing
    - who was responsible for the child at the time
    - actions taken following discovery of the incident
- Staff remain calm and continue to supervise the remaining children appropriately.

Child Going Missing on an Outing

If the Preschool Leads are on the outing, responsibilities will be delegated accordingly.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff carry out an immediate headcount and gather all remaining children together safely.
- One member of staff searches the immediate vicinity while maintaining sight or communication with the group.
- Staff must not search beyond the immediate area if this would leave children unsupervised.
- Staff must immediately inform the Preschool Leads, DSL and DDSL.
- If the child is not found immediately, the police are contacted without delay.

- Parents/carers are informed as soon as possible.
- In large venues or public places, venue security staff are informed immediately and asked to assist with the search.
- One member of staff may remain at the location where the child was last seen if advised by police.
- Remaining children are reassured and supervised appropriately.
- A written record of events and timings is completed as soon as possible.

Investigation and Recording

Following any missing child incident:

- The Preschool Leads and Committee Chair conduct a full investigation.
- Written statements are obtained from all staff involved.
- A detailed incident record is completed including:
    - date and time of incident
    - names of staff and children present
    - ratio and deployment of staff
    - when and where the child was last seen
    - actions taken
    - time police and parents were contacted
    - outcome of the incident
- A review is undertaken to identify how the incident occurred and whether procedures, staffing arrangements or risk assessments require amendment.
- Ofsted and local safeguarding partners will be informed where appropriate, particularly where there is a significant safeguarding concern within 14 days where required by the EYFS.
- The insurance provider will be informed where necessary.
- Any media enquiries will be handled only by the Preschool Leads and Committee Chair or nominated representative.
- The preschool leads will consider whether the incident meets the criteria for reporting under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). A missing child incident is not normally reportable under RIDDOR unless it results in a reportable injury, death or dangerous occurrence. Where required, a report will be made to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) within the relevant timescales.

Support Following an 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.

• Staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or designated carer responsible for the safety of that child on the outing. They may blame themselves, and their feelings of anxiety and distress may increase as the length of time the child is missing increases.

• Staff may become the understandable focus of parents'/carers' anger and may feel vulnerable or distressed. The preschool leads will ensure that any staff involved in the incident are treated fairly,

supported appropriately, and, where necessary, provided with access to wellbeing support throughout any investigation.

• Parents and carers are likely to feel distressed, anxious and upset. They may direct their concerns or frustrations towards staff or the preschool leader. When dealing with a distressed or angry parent or carer, two members of staff should always be present. One should be the preschool leader and the other, where possible, the chairperson of the committee. We recognise that parents' and carers' emotions may be heightened in such circumstances. However, aggressive, abusive or threatening behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated, and the police may be called if necessary.

• The other children will also be aware that something unusual is happening and may become worried or anxious. Staff caring for them must remain focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. Children's questions should be answered honestly, in an age-appropriate manner, while providing reassurance and maintaining confidentiality.

• Depending on the outcome of the incident, staff may require additional support, supervision, counselling or access to employee wellbeing services. If a child is not found, is injured, or suffers harm, this will be an extremely difficult time for everyone involved. The chairperson and preschool leader will consider what support measures are appropriate.

• Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press, on social media, or with any unauthorised person. Any requests for information should be referred to the preschool leader, chairperson, police or other appropriate authority, as advised.

Review of Procedures

Following any missing child incident:

- risk assessments will be reviewed
- security procedures will be evaluated
- staffing arrangements and supervision levels will be assessed
- any lessons learned will be implemented promptly

The welfare and safety of children will remain paramount at all times.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy has been developed with reference to the following legislation and guidance:

• Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (Department for Education)
• Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government)
• Children Act 1989
• Children Act 2004
• Childcare Act 2006
• Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
• Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
• Human Rights Act 1998
• Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
• Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Missing Child Policy

- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013
- Ofsted: Notifying Ofsted of Significant Events and Child Protection Concerns
- Local Safeguarding Partnership Procedures
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (where applicable to governance arrangements with schools)

This policy was adopted by the Bradpole Preschool Committee

During the Autumn Term 2026

Date to be reviewed Autumn Term 2027