

## 1.9 Missing child

### Policy

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 outing's 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 the key person/staff alerts the manager.
- The manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen, reviews CCTV and records this.
- The manager contacts the area manager and/or director and reports the incident. The area manager comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management where applicable.

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

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting leader and/or other staff back in the setting. If the 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 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.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- The manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- Our manager contacts the parent(s).
- Our staff take the remaining children back to the setting 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 area-manager and/or director and reports the incident. Our area manager and/or director comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team.
- 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 area manager and/or director, carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.

- Our manager, together with our director/or a representative of our management team 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, describing the scene / activity or event or detailed overview of the day/ time and/or place.
  - 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.
- Area manager / director must inform the insurance provider and potentially seek legal advice.

#### *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. It is understandable to feel anxious in these circumstances.
- There may be incidents whereby parents are displaying anger, impatience and they may be afraid. The manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable. We deal with all matters calmly.
- 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 setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the manager and the other should be the area manager or representative for the directors. 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 may also be 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 chair person, area manager or director will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.