

# Missing Child

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## Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings procedure and our 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 BEL premises*

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the room leader alerts our setting manager.
- The register is checked to make sure all other children are present.
- Our manager 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.
- If the child is not found, our manager calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our manager talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Our manager contacts our chair, and reports the incident. Our chair comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team where appropriate.

### *Child going missing on an outing or walk away from the premises.*

- Headcounts will be carried out constantly to ensure children are all accounted for.
- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer and carry out another headcount to ensure that all other children are present.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but will not search beyond that.
- Our manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The police will be contacted and advice sought.
- 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.
- Where possible, a recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our manager contacts our chair and reports the incident. Our chair comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team where appropriate.
- 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 chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager, together with 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/on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
  - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time of signature added.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all our staff will 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.
- 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.
- Our 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.
- Such individuals may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our manager ensures that any 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 our staff and may single out one staff member over others or may direct their anger at our manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff - our manager and our chair or another representative of the management committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be aggression or threats against our 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. Our 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, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our chair 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 and receiving approval from our manager and our chair. To do so without approval will be a disciplinary matter.