



### 06.5 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.

#### In the building

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff informs the Pre-school Lead who initiates a search within the setting.
- If the child is found on-site, the Pre-school Lead checks on the welfare of the child and investigates the circumstances of the incident.
- If the child is not found on site, one member of staff searches the immediate vicinity, if there is no sign of the child, the police are called immediately.
- The parents are then called and informed.
- The Pre-school contacts their designated officer (Committee Chair), to inform them of the situation and seek assistance.

#### Off-site (outing or walk)

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the senior staff present carries out a headcount.
- One member of staff searches the immediate vicinity.
- If the child is not found, the senior staff calls the police and then contacts the Pre-school Lead.
- The Pre-school Lead informs the parents.
- Members of staff return the children to the setting as soon as possible if it is safe to do so. According to the advice of the police, one senior member of staff should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- The Pre-school lead contacts the designated officer (Committee Chair), who attends the setting.

#### Recording and reporting

- A record is made on 06.1a Child welfare and protection summary and 06.1b Safeguarding incident reporting form. The Pre-school Lead completes and circulates 06.1c Confidential safeguarding incident report form to the designated officer on the same day that the incident occurred.

## **The investigation**

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days).
- The Committee Chair carries out a full investigation.
- The Pre-school Lead and the Committee Chair speak with the parents together and explain the process of the investigation.
- Each member of staff present during the incident writes a full report using 06.1b Safeguarding incident reporting form, which is filed in the child's file.
- 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.

## **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. Setting leaders need 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 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 setting leader and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or 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 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.

- 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.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.