

## Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.

### 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.

#### Procedures

If a child goes missing on the premises:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the staff member alerts the manager/person in charge.
- The manager/person in charge will carry out a thorough search of the building and grounds.
- The deputy manager checks the register 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/person in charge calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parents.
- The manager/person in charge talks to staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager/person in charge liaises with police and provides information as required.
- The manager/person in charge contacts the chairperson of the Board of Directors and reports the incident. The chairperson comes immediately to carry out an investigation, with the Board of Directors as necessary.

If a child going missing on an outing:

The following describes what the procedure would be if staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the manager and/or other staff back at the setting. If the manager is accompanying the group or it is a whole group outing with parents in attendance and responsible for their own child/ren the procedures may be a little different and adjusted accordingly.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person 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 the child as missing.
- The manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing). S/he records the incident.
- Our manager contacts the parent(s).
- The child's parents make their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the manager/police.
- 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. In circumstances where the site of the incident has security staff, they should be contacted and will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police/security staff.
- The manager contacts the chairperson of the board of directors who comes down to the setting or venue as agreed and as soon as possible.
- Staff keep calm throughout, offering reassurance to the other children, ensuring their safety and well-being.

## The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The chairperson of the Board of Directors carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff and volunteers present at the time, or who were on the outing.
- The manager together with the chairperson speaks with the parents and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- The manager/staff member(s) write 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 group/outing/premises and the name of the member of staff designated responsible for the missing child;
  - when the child was last seen in the group/outing, including the time that it is estimated the child went missing; and
  - what has taken place in the group/outing since the child went missing.
  - 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 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.
- It may be considered necessary for the incident to be reported under RIDDOR (the Reporting of Injury, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations).

- The incident is recorded in the incident book and the local authority health and safety officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- The Insurance Department at the Pre-School Learning Alliance 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.
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child at the time of the incident. 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. The manager and/or chairperson 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 manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two people present, one of whom is the manager and the other should be the chairperson of the Board of Directors, if at all possible. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police will be called, if necessary.
- 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 and Board of Directors will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Further information:

The Leicester Safeguarding Children Board: [www.lcitylscb.org](http://www.lcitylscb.org)

This procedure was formally a part of the Health and Safety policy and, as such, was adopted at a board meeting of Hopscotch Playgroup, held on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

It was reviewed and updated on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

It was adopted in this format on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

Further reviewed and amended on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

Reviewed 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

Reviewed 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Reviewed 28<sup>th</sup> November 2016

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