



Missing Child Policy

Policy Statement

At Goudhurst Village Pre-school, children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the 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

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/staff alerts the Pre-school Manager.
- The Pre-school Manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- The Pre-school Manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside areas.
- 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 Pre-school Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Pre-school Manager contacts the Trustees and reports the incident. An investigation is carried out by the Trustees.

Child going missing on an outing

When the whole Pre-school goes on an outing, usually the parents attend and are responsible for their own child. However, if this is not the case:

- 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.
- The incident is recorded.
- The Pre-school Manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing
- The Pre-school Manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- Children are taken back to the setting.
- The Pre-school Manager contacts the Trustees and reports the incident. An investigation is carried out by the Trustees.
- The Pre-school Manager or member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The Investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Pre-school Manager speaks to the parents.
- The Trustees carry out a full investigation taking a written statement from all the staff who were on the outing.
- The Key person writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - What staff/children were on the outing and the name of the staff member, designated responsibility for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen on the outing.
 - What has taken place on the outing since the child went missing.
 - The estimated time the child went missing.
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- 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.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements; the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- 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.
- 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. Pre-school leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- Parents may 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 Pre-school Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Pre-school Manager and the other should be a Trustee.
- Aggression or threats against staff will not be 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 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 Trustees will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Goudhurst Village Pre-school

Held on.....

Date to be reviewed.....

Signed on behalf of the provider.....

Name of signatory.....

Role of signatory.....