

Missing Child Policy

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 - Child going missing on the premises

- 👉 As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the relevant member of staff alerts the Preschool Manager.
- 👉 The Pre-school Manager will assemble the children and take the register, whilst another member of staff carries out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- 👉 Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security where a child could wander out.
- 👉 The Pre-school Manager talks to staff to establish what has happened.
- 👉 If the child is not found immediately, and it is suspected that the child may have left the premises, the parent/carer is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police within 5 minutes.
- 👉 A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- 👉 Other staff / helpers continue to search the immediate vicinity, whilst ensuring the remaining children are kept safe.
- 👉 The Preschool Leader contacts the chairperson, and reports the incident. Chairperson comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation.

Child going missing on an outing - If a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not attending and responsible for their own child, the Preschool ensures that the following procedure is followed..

- 👉 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 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 senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- 👉 The Preschool Manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- 👉 The Preschool Manager contacts the parent(s).
- 👉 The 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 Preschool 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.
- 👉 The Preschool Manager contacts the Chairperson and reports the incident. The Chairperson comes to the premises immediately to carry out an investigation.
- 👉 Staff keeps 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.
- 👉 The Chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff and volunteers who were present.
- 👉 The Pre-school Manager 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 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 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 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. 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. Preschool 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 Preschool Leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent,

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there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Pre-school Manager 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 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 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 Pickering Pre-School Playgroup held on 31st August 2023.

Date to be reviewed – Before end of August 2024.

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of signatory – Richard Allenby (Chairperson).