



Ladybird Forest Pre-School



Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

1.6 Missing Child

Policy statement

Children's safety and welfare is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. If a child is suspected missing, we will react quickly as the chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, the following procedure is followed:

Procedures

Security

- All exits from the premises are locked in a way which makes it unlikely for a child to leave unobserved/unattended, while allowing rapid exit for the whole group in case of an emergency.
- An accurate and up to date register must be kept, and both adults and children, including visitors, should be signed in and out whenever they enter and leave the premises (stating times of arrival and departure).
- Children must always be supervised.
- Staff are required to know how many children should be present and checks should be conducted during the session. An advantage of using a key person system is that each key person is responsible for a few children and is more likely to be aware if one goes missing

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as any member of staff notices or suspects that a child has gone missing, they should notify the Pre-School Manager, Deputy or Lead.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.



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- A thorough and systematic search will be carried out of the building, outdoor area and local area.
- Doors, gates and fences will be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The remaining children will be gathered into one group and a member/s of staff will carry out an activity such as story time.
- If the child is not found, the Manager, Deputy or Lead will contact the local police. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police will be informed of this.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The parents or Emergency contact are contacted and the situation is explained without alarming them.
- If there are enough staff members available, one member of staff will walk the journey to the child's house.
- The incident will be recorded in writing as soon as practicably possible including the outcome, who was missing, time identified, notification to police and findings.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our Manager back in our setting premises. If our Manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. If the whole Pre-School is on an outing, contact details for parents will be taken on the trip by the Manager.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the designated person in charge will be informed.
- All staff members present will be informed and will immediately carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- Some staff will be deployed to start a thorough search of the immediate vicinity using information such as a recent photograph and a detailed description of clothing if available.



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- If appropriate, on-site security will also be informed and a description given.
- The remaining staff will ensure that all other children are supervised, calm, and supported throughout.
- If the child is not found, the designated person in charge will contact the local police. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police will be informed of this.
- The designated person in charge will inform the Pre-School Manager (if not on the outing) who will record the incident (including but not limited to who was missing, time identified as missing and notification to the police) and contact the child's parents/carers giving details of what has happened.
- During this period, staff will be continually searching for the missing child, whilst other staff maintain the safety and welfare of the remaining children.
- It will be the designated person in charge or the Manager's responsibility to ensure that there are adequate staff to care for the children and get them back safe, a member of staff to meet the police and staff to continue the search (this may mean contacting bank staff).
- In the unlikely event that the child is not found the Pre-School will follow the local authority and police procedures.
- Our staff will keep calm to avoid the other children becoming anxious or worried.

The Investigation

- The incident will be recorded in writing as soon as practicably possible including the outcome, who was missing, time identified, notification to police and findings.
- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation including if disciplinary action is to be taken.
- The Board of Directors will carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff and volunteers who were present.
- The Manager speaks with parents/carers and explains the process of the investigation.



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- 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/an outing venue.
 - Which staff and 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/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 are to co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents.
- The local authority Children's Social Care Team may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- Post-incident risk assessments will be conducted following any incident of this nature to enable the chance of this reoccurring being reduced.

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 staff member designated as being responsible for that child. They may be the target of parental anger. The Manager will ensure that staff, in particular those under investigation, receive support if they are feeling vulnerable.



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- When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff present one of whom is our Pre-School Manager. If possible, a Director will be present.
- No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, our staff may need counselling and support.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice

Relevant Ladybird policies:

- 1.2 Safeguarding Children and Child Protection
- 1.5 Drop Off and Collection

Key contact details:

Organisation	Contact details
Police	999
Local authority - Central Bedfordshire Children's Services	0300 300 8585
Local authority - Central Bedfordshire Children's Social Care Team	0300 300 4833



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This policy was reviewed by	Amanda Sanders - Pre-School Manager Victoria Grimes - Admin Manager Rebecca McGough - Chair
Date of review	13 th January 2024
Date for next review	13 th January 2025
Chair's signature	