

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Senior Leadership Team on an annual basis.

Date the policy was last reviewed and agreed	Senior Manager		Manager	
	Name	Signature	Name	Signature
January 2026	Natasha Smyth			

This policy is due for review up to 12 months from the above date

Missing Child Policy

Legal Basis: Related Sub Section in The Statutory Framework for The Early Years Foundation Stage (March 2021)

Information for parents and carers

3.97 Providers must share the following information with parents and/or carers:

...

- Details of the provider's policies and procedures - making copies available on request. This includes the procedure to be followed in the event of a parent and/or carer failing to collect a child at the appointed time, **or in the event of a child going missing at, or away from, the setting.**

1 INTRODUCTION

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.

2 CHILD GOING MISSING ON THE PREMISES

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the Manager must be alerted and the register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The Manager and available staff will carry out a thorough search of the building, garden, and grounds, first checking high risk areas/the front gate, road and paths.
- The setting's Manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent and senior manager.
- The setting's Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out and an investigation is carried out.

3 CHILD GOING MISSING ON AN OUTING

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting's Manager and/or other staff back in the setting. If the setting's Manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- 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 Manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- The Manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Manager contacts the parent and senior manager, who make their way to the setting/venue.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- The Manager, or a member of staff, may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

4 THE INVESTIGATION

- Staff should keep calm and try not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Manager will speak with the parent(s).
- The Manager carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - Which staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff member designated as responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- 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.
- 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.

5 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 on 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. The setting's Manager needs 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's Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting's Manager and the other should be deputy manager. 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 manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press or comment on social media posts etc.

STAFF DECLARATION

I agree that I have read and understood the information set out in this policy, and will abide by it.

I understand that if I have any questions about this policy, I will raise them with my manager prior to signing my agreement below.

Staff Name	Staff Signature	Date