



Play • Learn • Grow

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Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

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

Missing Child Policy and Procedure

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises and we will do everything in our power 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 setting leader is alerted.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The remaining children will be gathered together and kept occupied. Without alarming them, the children should be asked if they have seen the missing child.
- A quick systematic search of all rooms, cupboards and all areas in the pre-school and its immediate grounds will take place. If the child is still not located, we will extend the search to include the school and any other area the child may have had access to.
- While the initial search is made, the session leader will make enquiries of all adults at the pre-school to establish the last sighting and time, clothes that the child was wearing (if possible), and the mental state of the child (happy, upset etc.) and this will be recorded.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.

- The setting leader calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- If the parent/carers do not answer their contact number a message must be left asking them to contact the pre-school ASAP.
- If contacted the parents/carers should be advised to stay at home in case the child arrives there. They should also be advised that we have contacted the emergency services.
- Parents/carers should be asked for information of anywhere else the child may head.
- Telephone lines should remain as free as possible so that messages are not delayed.
- The preschool activities for the remaining children will continue as normal and staff not involved in the search will give the children proper attention
- The setting leader contacts the chair and reports the incident. The chair or deputy comes to the setting as soon as possible to carry out an investigation.

The investigation

- The setting leader together with a representative of the management team, speaks with the parent(s).
- The chair will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The setting leader 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 designated 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 incident may be 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.

Before any child is taken out of the setting the following security systems are put into place.

- Parents/carers must sign an Information Required form when their child starts at the setting giving permission for the child to take part in outings.
- A minimum of two staff from the setting accompany children on outings.
- Before each outing we carry out an assessment of required adult to child ratio.
- Parents/carers accompany their own children on all day trips where possible.
- Staff carry out a risk assessment prior to the visit, identifying any potential hazards. These risk assessments do not need to be written, these are for us to judge. Most venues will have their own risk assessments and can make these available.
- Children should have a sticker label / badge for their coat with the name of the setting and telephone number – but never the name of the child.
- All children will wear a high vis jacket on outings.
- All staff on the trip should be aware of emergency procedures and the person in charge should carry at least one fully charged mobile telephone with a list of emergency contact details for the children.

Children going missing off the premises

Small group outing

Staff may take a small group of children on an outing leaving the setting leader and/or other staff back in the setting. If the setting leader has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- 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 setting leader is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing and follows their advice.
- The setting leader contacts the parent / carer, who should come to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- The setting leader contacts the chair and reports the incident. The chair, or nominated committee member in the first instance, comes to the setting as soon as possible to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.

Whole Setting Outing

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the session leader will ensure that all adults and children return to a meeting point, and will dispatch staff to search for adults and parent/carers. A count will be made to confirm all who are present. Adults will be asked when they last saw the child, and what clothes he/she was wearing (if possible). A member of staff will stay at the meeting point so that if the child is found, this can be reported to the session leader.
- The session leader will alert officials at the venue that there is a missing child to allow the venues policy or procedure to begin.
- The police should be telephoned to report the situation and staff will follow their advice.
- If the parents/carers of the missing child are not on the outing, the session leader will telephone them and advise them of the situation.
- A record of events will be made, and as soon as possible after the incident the relevant people/agencies should be informed. See Child Going Missing on Premises (page 2 of this policy).

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. Setting leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents / carers 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 leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the session leader. 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, is injured or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The chair will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Any meetings held following the incident will involve the parent / carer, setting leader and chair.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted at meeting of	First Step Pre School Committee	(name of provider)
Held on	<u>29th June 2017</u>	(date)
Date to be reviewed	<u></u>	(date)
Signed on behalf of the provider	<u>Signed copy can be viewed at Pre School</u>	
Name of signatory	<u>Signed copy can be viewed at Pre School</u>	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	<u>Signed copy can be viewed at Pre School</u>	
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