

# Missing Child Policy

## **Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection**

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

## **Safeguarding and welfare Requirement: Staff : Child Ratios**

Children must always be within sight and hearing of staff.

## **Policy Statement**

It is the responsibility of the senior staff member in charge to ensure that all children are always present and accounted for. Every staff member is responsible for ensuring that the children are adequately supervised and are always safe.

Children's safety is always maintained as the highest priority both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the steps as laid out in the Outings Policy and the Procedures for Drop-off and Collection of Children to ensure the security of children is always maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

## **Procedures**

**Child going missing on the setting premises:** As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing

1. The staff raise the alarm to the leader.
2. The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray. This should be confirmed by another member of staff.
3. The setting leader will carry out a quick but thorough search of the building and outdoor areas.
4. Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
5. If the child is safe and located quickly, log the event on an incident form.

**If the child is not found:**

1. Contact the police by dialling 999
2. Contact the child's parent
3. Ensure that the safety of the other children and staff ratios within the setting are maintained.

A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.

The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

**If a child is found to have left the premises unsupervised:**

1. The child's parents are informed of the incident.
2. The senior staff member in charge at the time of the incident writes a full report of the incident.
3. The proprietor investigates the incident and immediately puts in place any changes to routines, procedures or to the environment that will ensure that such an incident does not occur again.
4. The incident is reported to Ofsted within 14 days.

**In the event of a child going missing whilst on an outing within Parkfield School grounds:**

1. Raise the alarm to the senior member of staff.
2. Call all the children together and carry out a headcount. This should be confirmed by another member of staff.
3. Keep all the children together in a group and ensure that their safety and staff ratios are maintained.
4. Carry out a quick but thorough search of the immediate area, particularly around the last place that the child was seen.
5. If the child is safe and is located quickly and within the immediate area of the group, (i.e. has not wandered far away from the group or left the school grounds), ensure the safety and security of the child by insisting that they always hold an adult's hand until back on the setting premises.

**If the child is found to have wandered far from the group or to have left the school grounds:**

1. If the child is not located within the immediate area of the group, keep all the other children together in a group whilst ensuring their safety and maintaining staff ratios.
2. The group leader carries out a quick but thorough search of the wider area, starting from where the child was last seen.
3. Use the setting's mobile phone to call the setting and inform the manager of the incident.
4. Take all the children back to the setting as quickly as possible, whilst ensuring their safety.
5. Once the child is located and is safe ensure that they are kept safe and secure by insisting that they always hold an adult's hand until back on the setting premises and by returning to the setting as quickly as possible.
6. The child's parents are informed of the incident.

7. The senior staff member in charge at the time of the incident writes a full report of the incident.
8. The proprietor investigates the incident and immediately puts in place any changes to routines or procedures that will ensure that such an incident does not occur again.
9. The incident is reported to Ofsted within 14 days.

**If the child is not found:**

1. After conducting a quick but thorough search of the school grounds and the immediate surrounding area, the staff members return as quickly as possible to the setting.
2. Contact the police by dialling **999**
3. Contact the child's parents
4. Ensure that the safety of the other children and staff ratios within the setting are maintained.

**In the event of a child being lost on an outing away from the setting and the school grounds:**

On outings away from the setting and school grounds parents are generally required to attend and to be responsible for their own children. This is made clear in information that is given to parents prior to the outing and parents are verbally reminded of this in a briefing before embarking on the outing.

In the event of a child going missing on such an outing the parent responsible for the child should inform a staff member as soon as possible if they have been unable to locate their child by carrying out a quick search.

Most public venues (and especially those catering for children) have their own procedures in place in the event of a lost/missing child. Parkfield Montessori Pre-School staff will be aware whether the venue has such a procedure, this will have been recorded in the setting's risk assessment prior to the outing and will have been shared with all staff.

A Parkfield Montessori Pre-School staff member should report the missing child immediately to a member of staff of the venue who should immediately put the venue's own procedures into action.

On outings away from the setting staff members are usually not directly responsible for any children. This being the case, as many staff members as possible should help with the search for the child, starting from the area where the child was last seen.

**The investigation**

The setting leader/proprietor speaks with the parent(s) and explain the process of the investigation.

The proprietor carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.

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. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

The incident is reported to Ofsted within 14 days; 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 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.

Staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child. 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 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 setting 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 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 proprietor 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 is reviewed annually, or as deemed necessary.

Policy reviewed and updated.....(date)

Signed.....