

Zoe's Childcare Ltd

Missing Child Policy

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Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the setting Manager.
- The setting Manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The setting Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Ensure the safety of the other children, with regard to supervision and security whilst the search is taking place
- CCTV camera footage will be checked for sightings of the child.
- If the child cannot be found within fifteen minutes then the parents and the police must be informed.
- Continue the search, widening the area until the police arrive.

Child going missing on an Outing

- The senior staff member on the outing must be informed as soon as it is realised that a child is missing and will take charge of the incident
- An immediate roll call and register will be taken of the whole group.
- Ensuring remaining staff/child ratios and safety of the children, staff will be deployed with mobile phones to search the immediate area. The senior staff member will contact personnel at the venue if appropriate to alert them that a child is missing and their own procedures need to be put in place.
- If the child is not located the senior staff member will inform the police
- The senior staff member will inform the nursery who will take responsibility for informing the parents.
- Practitioners from nursery will be sent to assist the safe return of the remaining children if appropriate
- The senior staff member will await instructions from the police
- Any incidents must be recorded in writing
- Ofsted will be informed by the nursery manager

Investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The setting manager speaks with the parent(s).
- The Manager carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the setting.
- The key person/Manager writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - What staff/children were in the Nursery and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the session.
 - What has taken place in the session 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 is 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.

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. 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 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 owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.