



Missing Child Policy

Policy Owner:	Lynsey Briddock, Head Teacher
Approver:	Stamfordham Primary School Governing Body
Effective date:	September 2023
Next Review date:	September 2026

Intent

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 exit/entrance procedure and outings procedure and 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.

Implementation

- Child going missing on the premises
- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff member alerts the Early Years Leader and Headteacher
- The Early Years Leader will decide the most appropriate person/s to carry out a thorough search of the building and outdoor area, whilst maintaining the safety of the other children present

- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
 - Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
 - If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
 - The Early Years Leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
-
- **Child going missing on an outing**
 - As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
 - The Group Leader decides the most appropriate person/s to begin a search of the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
 - The Group Leader speaks to a member of the venue staff to assist with the search then contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
 - The Group Leader contacts Stamfordham Primary School to ask that the Headteacher and parent are informed. The parent is asked to make their way to the outing venue or the school. The Group Leader will advise which, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
 - Staff take the remaining children back to school.
 - The Group Leader may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.
 - Staff remain calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried

When the child is found

- A member of staff will care for and talk with the child, who may be unaware that they have done anything wrong. They may also be afraid or distressed and in need of reassurance.

The investigation after the incident

- The Early Years Leader/ Headteacher speaks with the parent(s).
- The Early Years Leader/Headteacher carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The Early Years Leader writes an incident report
- The date and time of the report.
- What 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 is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); 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 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. The Early Years Leader/Headteacher will 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. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- 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 Early Years Leader/Headteacher will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.