

St Joseph's Pre-school

Missing child Policy

Children's safety is the highest priority at all times both on and off premises and we ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child policy is followed.

Child going missing on the premises

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the session leader and manager are advised

A headcount is carried out and the register is checked to confirm that the child is missing and to make sure all the other children are present

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 after a quick and thorough search, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police

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

The manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident.

The chairperson, with the managers carries out an investigation.

Child going missing on an outing

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that all other children are present

One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.

The police are contacted and the child is reported as missing

If the manager has not accompanied the group she is contacted immediately and the incident reported

The child's parent is contacted and advised to make their way to the setting or outing venue. The setting is usually advised as the appropriate place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting

Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.

In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security or management who will be responsible for carrying out the search and will contact the police if the child is not found

The manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident

The manager, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The Investigation

Staff remain calm and support the other children who may become anxious or worried

The manager together with the chairperson or trustees representative speaks with the parent(s)

The manager together with the chairperson or trustees representative carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff who were present in the pre-school session or who were on the outing

The appropriate staff member writes an incident report detailing:

- The date and time of the report
- Which staff and children were in the group or outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child
- When the child was last seen in the group or outing
- What has taken place since the child went missing
- The estimated time that the child went missing

A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened and a disciplinary review is undertaken

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 safeguarding 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

Ofsted will always be informed of any incident involving a missing child

The insurance provider is informed

Managing people involved in missing child incident

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 designated carer responsible for the safety of that child during 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 anxious and concerned.

Managers 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 pre-school management. When dealing with parents, there should always be two members of staff present, one of whom is the manager and the other should be the chairperson of the trustees. Although the parent's anger may be very understandable, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called if this occurs

The other children may also be sensitive to what is going on around them and be worried about what has happened. The 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 and with reassurance.

In accordance with the severity of the outcome of the missing child incident, 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 management will use their discretion with support from the chairperson if needed, with regards to staff support and wellbeing. This may include offering time off or access to counselling services

Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without management permission

This policy was reviewed and amended at a meeting of the trustees held on:

11th November 2021

Signed by [Signature] Name THERESA HALL

Role of trustee Chairperson

