

## Missing Child Policy

### Policy statement

This policy applies to our pupils within the EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

Children's safety is our highest priority at all times, both on and off premises. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our 'Missing Child' procedure is followed. The welfare of children in our care is paramount. Whilst this very rarely happens, complacency is a hazard we must avoid at all costs. Children may go missing, and EVERY member of staff has equal responsibility in ensuring the safety of the children and knowing where they are.

### Systems in place to minimise the risk of children going missing:

- ❖ Appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the premises and surrounding site is secure.
- ❖ The attendance register is taken at the start of each session (morning and afternoon registration), and the number of children attending recorded. It is the responsibility of every member of staff to be aware how many children are present and a quick head count should be taken at regular intervals during each session.
- ❖ Children who arrive late must be recorded in the register, and those who leave early should be marked out accordingly.
- ❖ Staff should maintain extra vigilance with new children. Take extra care to be aware of their whereabouts and ensure they know the boundaries of where they can and cannot go.
- ❖ Parents will be advised of our security procedures and be given the opportunity to discuss any concerns, particularly if their child has an adventurous nature.
- ❖ Prominent notices will be displayed to ensure that gates and doors are kept closed and where appropriate secure.
- ❖ Parents must be made aware of the need for supervision of children at all times, especially while waiting for the Lower School to open, and of their responsibility to ensure that their child's arrival is acknowledged. If arriving before 8.40am, parents of pupils in the EYFS must sign them into the building. Morning care staff will record pupil names and entry times on arrival into the designated Morning Care facilities.
- ❖ Children should be counted before going out to play and again when they are lining up to come back indoors.
- ❖ A member of staff should be at the end of the line to ensure no children are left outside. Once inside it must be ascertained that the correct number of children are still present.

### Procedures

In the event of a child being found to be missing it is vital that prompt action is taken.

#### **Child going missing on the premises**

- ❖ As soon as it is identified that a child is missing, the key person/staff will alert the Head of Lower School or the Deputy Head of Lower School in her absence. The child's last known whereabouts will be recorded.
- ❖ The register will be checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- ❖ The senior member of staff present will arrange for the other children to be satisfactorily supervised. The remaining children should be gathered together for a story/music session. Without alarming them, the children should be asked if they have seen the missing child.
- ❖ The Head of Lower School will designate staff to carry out a thorough search of the building and gardens. This will include:
  - All toilets, cupboards, under tables, cushions, anywhere a child might hide
  - Outside areas including play house, climbing frame
  - Check all exits for where a child may have been able to leave the premises or site

- The school grounds, playing field, car park, also check inside the school.
- Enlist the help of school office staff to search the school and caretakers to continue searching the school grounds
- ❖ The Head of Lower School will inform:
- ❖ The police, and report the child as missing
- ❖ The parent/carer - alarming them as little as possible. If they do not answer the phone a message must be left on any answering service before attempting alternative numbers. However if parents do not answer the home phone number the POLICE must be called before attempting other child contact numbers. If contacted parents should be advised to stay at home in case the child arrives there; be advised that we are contacting the emergency services, and that a member of staff is searching the route the child may take home. Parents should be asked for information of anywhere else the child may head for. E.g. grandparents, other relatives, local park, etc.
- ❖ Check route home (If the child cannot be located a member(s) of staff should search along a possible route the child might take to get home. Where able they should take a mobile phone to keep in contact. If a member of staff arrives at the house without finding the child, they should make contact with the school for further instructions.)
- ❖ A record of events should be logged in the Incident Book by the Senior Leader in charge, or by another member of staff delegated by them.
- ❖ The Head of Lower School will contact the Chair of Trustees, and report the incident. The Chair of Trustees will come to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.
- ❖ The Head of Lower School will contact the appropriate OFSTED officer – they will need to know our systems for preventing this occurrence and what happened. It is important that the member of SLT in charge keeps a record of events.

**This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Head of Lower School, Deputy Head of Lower School and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Head of Lower School has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.**

- ❖ As soon as it is identified that a child is missing, staff on the outing will 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.
- ❖ A member of staff from our setting should immediately notify where possible, a member of staff who works at the place of visit, so that they can assist with the search.
- ❖ The Lead Teacher then contacts the school, immediately and the incident is recorded.
- ❖ The Head of Lower School **will** contact the police and reports the child as missing.
- ❖ The Head of Lower School will contact the parent/carer, who will make their way to the setting.
- ❖ Staff will take the remaining children back to the setting.
- ❖ In an indoor venue, the staff will contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- ❖ The Head of Lower School **will** contact the Chair of Trustees and report the incident. The Chair of Trustees will immediately carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.
- ❖ The Lead Teacher or a member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

### **The investigation**

- ❖ Staff should keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- ❖ The Head of Lower School, together with a representative from the senior management team of the school will speak with the parent(s)/carers.
- ❖ The senior management of the school will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- ❖ The key person/staff member will write an incident report detailing:

- 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, include interviewing staff. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
  - ❖ In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, the Independent Schools Inspectorate 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 Head of Lower School needs 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 Head of Lower School. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative. No matter how understandable the parent/carers 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 chairperson or proprietor will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- ❖ Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press and must refer any parent and media enquiries to the Head of school.
- ❖ Ofsted will be contacted and all regulatory practises will be followed.

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