



# St. Mary's Preschool, Lymm

Registered Charity No. 1026307

## 1.5 Missing child

### Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings procedure and our entrance/exit procedure, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing procedure is followed.

### Procedures

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

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the child's key person or member of staff alerts the Preschool Supervisor.
- The register is checked to ensure all other children are accounted for.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could leave the premises.
- If the child is not found, the manager calls the Police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the Police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and note of what the child is wearing is given to the Police.
- The manager talks to staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager contacts the Chair and reports the incident. The Chair comes to the setting premises immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management team.

#### *Child goes missing on an outing*

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the manager and/or other staff back in the setting premises. If the manager has accompanied the children on the outing the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask all the children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that all other children are accounted for.
  - One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
  - A senior member of staff on the outing contacts the Police and reports that a child is missing.
  - The manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
  - The manager contacts the parent(s)
  - The staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
  - According to the advice of the Police, a senior member of staff or the manager where applicable, will remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the Police to arrive.
  - A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the Police.
  - The manager contacts the Chair and reports the incident. The Chair comes to the setting premises immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management team.
- The staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

### *The investigation*

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff members and volunteers who were present.
- The manager, together with the chair speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- 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 our staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

### *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 feeling of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- The manager ensures that any staff under investigation are not only treated fairly, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- When dealing with a distraught or angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the manager and the other should be the chair. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against the staff will not be tolerated and the Police should be informed.
- 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, the 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 chair will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- The staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the media.
- Any media enquiries should be referred to the committee. The committee should identify a spokesperson and all media interaction should be through the agreed spokesperson. All statements should be agreed in advance and, where necessary, agreed with the police press office. The preschool should not comment on any ongoing police investigation.

This policy was adopted by

St Mary's Preschool

On

September 2019

Date to be reviewed

This policy is reviewed in line with national policy changes or every three years, whichever is the soonest. This is the most recent version.

Signed on behalf of the provider

Name of signatory

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)

Chairperson

### Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications

- Managing Risk (2009)