



Missing Child Policy

Windmill Under 5s, Lacey Green and Loosely Row Sports Club, Main Road,
Lacey Green, Princes Risborough HP27 0PL
Registered charity no: 1026976

Reviews and Approvals

Policy adopted :	15 September 2009 by Windmill Under 5s Management Committee	
Date of last review:	23 November 2020	
Date of next review:	Autumn Term (November) 2021	
Signed & dated:		Natasha Kann – Chairperson on behalf of the Management Committee

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.

Child Protection

5. Missing Child

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority at all times, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through implementation of our outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure, 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.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the adult who first becomes aware alerts the Preschool Manager.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out. Toilets, changing rooms, kitchen and foyer are checked before the Preschool Manager carries out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Whilst the Preschool Manager is making abovementioned checks, another member of staff checks the register to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- If the child is not found the Preschool Manager will call 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/carer is then contacted.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The Preschool Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Preschool Manager contacts the Business Manager and Chairperson, Designated Officer for Safeguarding on the committee or elected committee member and reports the incident. The Chairperson, with the Business Manager comes to Windmills as soon as possible and supports the police in their investigation. A detailed report of the proceedings is recorded.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Preschool Manager and/or other staff back at Windmills. If the Preschool Manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole Windmills outing may be a little different, as parents/carers usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- 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.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- A staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Preschool Manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The Preschool Manager contacts the parent/carer.
- Staff take the remaining children back to Windmills as soon as possible.
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become worried or anxious.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of our staff, or the Preschool 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 police.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Preschool Manager contacts the Business Manager and Chairperson and reports the incident. The Chairperson/Designated Officer for Safeguarding on the Committee, with the Business Manager comes to Windmills, or the location as advised by the police, as soon as possible and supports the police in their investigation.
- A detailed report is kept of proceedings.

The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Business Manager, together with the Chairperson, speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- Each member of staff present (including any other adults there at the time) writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - What staff/volunteers/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff member who was designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
 - The report is counter-signed by the Preschool Manager 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 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.

- 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 Preschool Manager 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 Preschool Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent/carer, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Preschool Manager and the other should be the Chairperson of the Management Committee or the Business Manager / Designated Officer for Safeguarding on the Management Committee. No matter how understandable the parent's/carer'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 Chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with anyone outside of Windmills' staff or Management Committee, unless part of a formal investigation process, including the press.