



Missing Child

Policy statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times at Southgate Pre-school, both on and off premises. Every attempt is made, through carrying out the registers and Risk Assessments of our outings and when entering and exiting the preschool, 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 relevant member of staff alerts our setting leader.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- 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 leader will call the police immediately and report 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.
- Staff need to keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and all staff record this.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The setting leader contacts the chair person or other main committee member and reports the incident. The chair person or committee member comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.

Child going missing on an outing

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

Southgate Pre-School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Children, young people and adults at all times and expects everybody working within this setting to share this commitment.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents 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 carer and carry out a headcount and roll call to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member searches the immediate area but does not search beyond that.
- The setting leader is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The setting leader or senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The setting leader contacts the parent.
- Other staff on the outing take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- Staff need to keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- In an indoor venue, the leader or senior staff contacts the venue's security and then contact the police if the child is not found.
- The setting leader contacts the chair person or other main committee member and reports the incident.
- The chairperson or committee member comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable
- The setting leader or a member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the site where the child went missing and wait until they arrive.

The investigation

- The setting leader together with the chair person or representative from the management committee speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- Our chairperson, carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- 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.

- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- 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
- 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. Setting leaders 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 our 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, one of whom is our setting leader and the other should be the chairperson or another representative of the management committee, or even the deputy. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our 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. Our 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, our 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 and committee will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted by: Southgate Pre-School

On: 1st September 2018

Date to be reviewed: September 2019 or when changes occur

Signed by Pre-School Leader:

Signed by Chair Person: