

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 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 child's key person staff alerts our setting leader.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The setting 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.
- The setting leader calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The setting leader contacts the owner and reports the incident. The owner comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management team where appropriate.

The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The owner carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff in the room.
- The setting leader together with the manager speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- The key person/ staff member writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - Where the child was last seen in the group.
 - What staff/children were in the group and the name if the staff member designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group, since the child went missing.
 - What has taken place in the group 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 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.

- 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.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
- 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 . 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 any 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 the setting leader and the other should be the proprietor. 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 proprietor 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	Fingers 'n' Thumbs LTD	(name of provider)
On	2020	(date)
Date to be reviewed	Annually	(date)
Signed on behalf of the provider	<i>Denise Jones</i>	
Name of signatory	Denise Jones	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Owner/ Manager	