

St Marychurch Pre-school

Missing Child Policy

Statement of intent

The highest priority at all times both on and off premises is the children's safety.

Aim

Our aim of maintaining safety is made through carrying out the 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.

Method

Children missing from the setting

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing practitioners will alert the person in charge.
- The person in charge will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The person in charge talks to the practitioners to establish where and when the child was last seen and records this.
- If the child is not found the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.

The person in charge contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

Children missing on outings

If a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not attending and responsible for their own child, the setting ensures that there is a procedure that is followed.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, practitioners on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child had gone astray. One practitioner searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The person in charge of the setting contacts the child's parents who make their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the person in charge.
- A practitioner contacts the police using the mobile phone and report the child as missing.
- In an indoor venue, practitioners contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The person in charge contacts the chairperson of the management committee who comes down to the setting as soon as possible.
- The person in charge contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson comes to the setting, or outing venue as agreed with manager or supervisor, immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.
- The person in charge, or a practitioner may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.
- Practitioners take the remaining children back to the setting.

The investigation

Practitioners keep calm and do not let other children become worried or anxious.

- The manager together with the chairperson, speaks with the parent(s).
- The management committee chairperson carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the practitioners present at the time, or who were on the outing.
- The key person/practitioner writes an incident report detailing:

- the date and time of the report
- which practitioners/children were in the group/outing and the name of the practitioner designated responsible for the missing child.
- when the child was last seen in the group/outing
- what has taken place in the group/outing since the child went missing and
- 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 practitioners co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing practitioners. Childrens Services may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements and is recorded in the incident book, the local authority health and safety officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- OFSTED is informed
- The Insurance Department at the Pre-school Learning Alliance is informed.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned and therefore part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- All practitioners will feel worried about the child, especially 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.
- It is understandable that practitioners may be the target of parental anger and they may be afraid. It is necessary that the person in charge ensures that the practitioner under investigation is not only fairly treated, but also receives support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parent(s) will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame practitioners and may single out one practitioner over others; they may direct their anger at the person in charge. Two practitioners should always be present when dealing with a distraught and angry parent, one of whom is the person in charge and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against practitioners are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- It is necessary that all practitioners be aware that the other children are sensitive to what is going on around them and may also be worried. The remaining practitioners caring for the children must not discuss the incident in front of them and must be attentive to their needs. However, they should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- Depending upon the severity of the final outcome practitioners may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very challenging time. The chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Practitioners must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Signed: _____

Position: Chairperson

Dated: _____

We aim to provide a safe, stimulating, caring, happy Pre-school where all children and their families are welcome. We provide a curriculum based on the Early Years Foundation Stage using individual children's interest and needs.