



Lechlade Little Learners
PRESCHOOL

Missing child policy

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of the Lechlade Little Learners 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, a member of staff alerts our setting manager.
- The daily register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray and a head count will be done.
- Our manager 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, our manager will call the police immediately and report the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police will be informed of this.
- The parent(s) will then be called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our manager will talk to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and record this.
- Our manager will contact our committee chair and report the incident. Our committee chair will come to the provision as soon as possible to carry out an investigation, where appropriate.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our manager and/or other staff back in our setting premises. If our manager has accompanied 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 parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer 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.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- Our manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- Our manager contacts the parent(s), who either make their way to the setting or the outing venue if agreed.
- Our manager will, if possible, make their way to the venue to aid the search and be point of contact for the police and parents, and to support the staff.
- Our staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- With the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or our manager where applicable, should 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.
- Our manager contacts our committee chair and reports the incident. Our committee chair comes to the setting as soon as possible to carry out an investigation, with our management team (where appropriate)
- Our 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.
- Our committee chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager, together with the committee 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.

- o When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- o What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
- The report is countersigned 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 will cooperate 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 our 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. We understand that:

- Our 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.
- They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our manager will ensure that any staff under investigation is not only fairly treated, but will 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 our manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there will always be two members of staff, one of whom will be our manager and the other should be our committee chair or another representative of the management committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff will not be tolerated, and the police may be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. Our remaining staff will be focused on their needs and will not discuss the incident in front of them. They will 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. Our committee chair will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff **will not** discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was reviewed October 2024.

Signed on behalf of the committee by

This policy is to be reviewed annually unless legislation requires before.