



## **MISSING CHILD POLICY**

**Reviewed by:** Elaine Boulton, Proprietor

**Date:** August 2021

### **INTRODUCTION**

The welfare of all of our children at Little Swans Day Nursery is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the nursery has been trained to appreciate that they have a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times without compromising the safety of others.

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made when carrying out the outing 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.

These procedures are written in line with current guidance Early Years Foundation Stage – (EYFS). The nursery manager is responsible for ensuring all staff understand and follows these procedures.

Our staffing ratios follow the statutory guidelines of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that he or she is in our care. These are as follows:

#### **On the premises**

- 0-2 years 1 adult to every 3 children
- 2-3 years 1 adult to every 4 children
- 3-5 years 1 adult to every 8 children

## **Off the premises**

- 0-2 years 1 adult to every 1 child
- 2-3 years 1 adult to every 2 children
- 3-5 years 1 adult to every 4 children

## **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

Our nursery procedures and policies which can be found in the folder in the main entrance or online at [www.littleswans.org.uk](http://www.littleswans.org.uk) describe:

- The arrangements for handing over children at the start and end of each day
- The qualifications of our staff and the arrangements for supervising the children whilst they are in nursery
- The arrangements for registering the children in both morning and afternoon sessions, including signing your child on and off the premises
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the building for visitors or collectors of children who are unknown to nursery staff
- The supervision and safety of the playground
- The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving children are set out in a detailed policy document: "Outings and Trips."
- We review these policies regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective.

## **2. Procedures**

### 2.1 Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing a member of staff alerts a member of the management team.
- The senior member of staff will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden 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 senior member talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The senior member of staff will contact the manager immediately

**Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions:**

- The nursery Proprietor will be informed
- Ask all of the adults and children (where appropriate) calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the child
- Ensure the safety of the other children
- An accurate report will be completed

**If the child is still missing, the following steps would be taken:**

- Inform both the Nursery manager or Nursery Owner and the Designated Safeguarding Person
- Inform the child's parents/carers, explaining what has happened and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the nursery at once
- The Designated Safeguarding Person, Nursery Manager or Nursery Owner will notify the Police, Ofsted and the Local Children's Safeguarding Board will be informed
- The nursery would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Ofsted and Children's Services
- The Insurers would be informed
- Staff will complete a report of what has happened and actions taken

**If /when the child is found, the following steps will be taken:**

- Inform both the Nursery manager or Nursery Owner and the Designated Safeguarding Person
- Inform the child's parents/carers, explain the incident if they are not already aware
- The Designated Safeguarding Person, Nursery Manager or Nursery Owner will notify the Police to let them know the child has been found
- Ofsted and the Local Children's Safeguarding Board will be informed and updated about events
- The nursery will co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Ofsted and Children's Services
- The Insurers will be informed
- If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE
- A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

**ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IF A CHILD GOES MISSING ON AN OUTING**

This describes what to do when staff have taken a group of children on an outing, leaving other staff back in the nursery. If the manager has accompanied the children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- 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
- The nursery manager/owner is contacted immediately and informed of the incident
- The manager will contact the police and report the child as missing
- The manager will contact the parents, who will be asked to make their way to the nursery or outing venue as agreed by the manager. The nursery is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have returned.
- The remaining children would be taken back to nursery
- Contact the venue Manager and arrange a search

- The Designated Safeguarding Person would inform the Local Children Safeguarding Board and Ofsted
- The nursery would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care
- The Insurers would be informed
- If the child is injured, report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE
- A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

### **What the police will want to know:**

- Where you are (address of setting or venue).
- The next of kin of the child.
- A detailed description of the child, including age, sex and as much information about their clothing as possible working down from head to toe.
- The circumstances of the incident, including anything that may have triggered the disappearance, how long the child has been missing, where they were last seen, any circumstances in regard to the disappearance.
- Who is looking for the child, where are they, do they have a mobile with them, what is the number?

### **The investigation**

- Staff should keep calm and should not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The senior staff member together with the nursery management speaks with the parent(s).
- The managers together with the police will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report;
  - What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child;
  - When the child was last seen in the group/outing;
  - What has taken place in the group or 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 staff should co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. 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 Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangers Occurrences Regulations (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 incident is reported to Ofsted and the local safeguarding board
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is also informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.

### **ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF ONCE THE CHILD IS FOUND**

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- The Nursery Manager and Nursery Owner will speak to the parents/carers to discuss events and give an account of the incident. A full investigation (if appropriate involving Children Services/ Local Children Safeguarding Board /Ofsted)
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements

### **The Report Should Cover**

- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children
- When the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how s/he appeared to have gone missing,
- Lessons for the future, actions for changes in practice, policies and procedures

### **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. Nursery leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- Managers will comply with the nursery Policy for Supporting Staff involved in a serious incident.
- The parents 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 nursery manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the nursery manager and the other should be either the owner or a senior member of staff. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- Staff should report any aggression/violence
- 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 manager and owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without consultation with the nursery manager and owner as well as the police investigating the incident.

### **Disseminating and Implementing this Policy**

All nursery staff will be required to read this policy as part of their induction and to comply with the contents of the policy. The policy will be kept in the policy folder and will be available for staff to refer to at all times as well as on the nursery website.

The implementation of the policy will be monitored by nursery staff on a day to day basis. If incidences of non-compliance do occur, this will be dealt with on a case by case basis through performance management of staff.

Any adverse incidents will be recorded and reviewed to ensure the policy is fit for purpose.

The policy will be formally reviewed at least every year

Mrs Boulton, Proprietor

### **Useful websites**

- HSE Health & Safety Executive: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk), info line: 0845 345 0055
- 5 Step to Risk Assessment leaflet available to download from [www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm)
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA): [www.rosipa.com](http://www.rosipa.com)