



1.5 Missing child

POLICY STATEMENT

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. 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 key person/staff alerts the nursery manager.
- The nursery manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent(s). The nursery manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gate are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The nursery manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The nursery manager contacts the chair of committee and reports the incident. The chair comes to the setting as soon as possible to carry out an investigation, with the management team where appropriate.

Child going missing on an outing, e.g. on a visit to Walter School

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This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the nursery manager and/or other staff back in the setting. If the nursery manager has accompanied 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 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.
- The nursery manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The nursery manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The nursery manager contacts the parent(s), who make their way to the nursery.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the nursery.
- In another setting, the staff will liaise with the head teacher who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The nursery manager contacts the chair of committee and reports the incident. The chair comes to the setting as soon as possible to carry out an investigation, with the management team where appropriate.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The nursery manager, together with a representative of the committee, speaks with the parent(s).
- The chair carries out a full investigation where appropriate 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.

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- 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.
- The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the incident happened. This will be evaluated, and the risk assessment amended.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff 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 fully reported, and a written record kept in the nursery.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- 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. The nursery manager needs 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 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

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staff, one of whom is the nursery manager and the other should be the chair or vice chair of the management committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against 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. 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 chairperson and nursery manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press or anybody outside the nursery without taking advice.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the Meadow Nursery School Parents' Association Committee	
Held on	31 st March 2014
Policy reviewed	July 2025
Date to be reviewed	July 2027
Signed by Chair	
Name	Samantha Foster-Kennedy
Signed by Nursery Manager	
Name	Debbie Hill