



## PUDDLEDUCKS Nursery & Pre-School

### MISSING CHILD POLICY

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#### **Policy Statement**

Children's safety is our highest priority both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedures to ensure the security of the children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

#### **Procedures**

##### *Children going missing on the premises*

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts our setting manager.
- The 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 gates are checked to make sure if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If a child is not found, our manager calls the police immediately & reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted the police are informed of this.
- The parents are then called and informed
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Manager contacts the Directors and reports the incident. The Manager/Directors, carries out an investigation.
- The Manager/Directors informs necessary regulators, as per our Safeguarding Policy and follows the advice of the Police.

##### *Child going missing on an outing*

This describes what to do if the staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the supervisor and/or other staff back at the setting. If the supervisor has accompanied the children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting 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, 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.

- Our senior member of staff on the outing contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The supervisor or manager is contacted immediately and the incident is recorded.
- The Supervisor/Manager contacts the parent.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- According to 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 & wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child was wearing is given to the police.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Manager contacts fellow Directors and reports the incident. The Manager/Directors, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.
- The setting leader, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.
- 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.
- The setting leader together with the Directors, 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 chairperson and management committee or owner, carry out a full investigation taken written statements from all the staff in the room or who were present.
- Each member of staff writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report
  - What staff and children were in the group and outing and 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
  - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and date and time added.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- 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 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 Accident 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 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 adult 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. Setting leaders need 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 our manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the manager and the other should be a named director. 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 counseling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The directors will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.