

The Enchanted Wood Day Nursery Ltd: Safeguarding Policies

Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority at all times, both on and off premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our 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 the key person/staff member alerts a member of the management team.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- A member of the management team 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, a member of the Management Team calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- A member of the management team talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- A member of the management team contacts the nursery Directors and reports the incident. A Director comes to the nursery immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management team where applicable.

Child going missing on an outing

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

This describes what to do when our staff members have taken a small group of children on an outing, leaving a member of the management team and other staff back in the nursery. If a member of the management team 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 we may possibly have parents attending who 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.
- A member of the management team is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- A member of the Management team contacts the parent(s).
- Our staff members take the remaining children back to the Nursery as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or a member of the management team 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.
- A member of the management Team contacts our nursery Director's and reports the incident. A nursery Director comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team where applicable.
- Our staff members 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.
- A nursery Director carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- A member of the management team together with a nursery Director 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.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

- Where the child went missing from e.g. the nursery or an outing venue.
- Which staff/children were in the nursery/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
- When the child was last seen in the nursery/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- What has taken place in the nursery or on the outing since the child went missing.
- The report is counter-signed 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 members co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff members and parents. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- 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.
- 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.
- Staff members may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our Management team ensures that any staff member 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 our staff members and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the management team. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is a member of the management team and the other should be a nursery Director. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff members 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. Our 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.

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff members may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The nursery Directors and management committee will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.