**Missing Child Policy**

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

Child going missing on the premises

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the staff alert the Pre-school 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 gone astray
* 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, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police
* The Pre-school Manager talks to staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this
* The Pre-school Manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately

Child goes missing on an outing

On some occasions staff will arrange outings for the children away from the setting. Consent for such outings will always be obtained before the children are permitted to leave the setting with staff.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different as parents are usually requested to 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 no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate are but does not search beyond that
* The Pre-school Manager is contacted immediately and the incident recorded
* The Pre-school Manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the Manager. The setting is advised as the best place as by the time the parent arrives the child may have returned to the setting.
* Staff take the remaining children back to the setting
* In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found
* The Pre-school Manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson with the management committee carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately
* The Pre-school Manager may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive

The Investigation

* Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried
* The Pre-school Manager together with the chairperson or representative from the management committee speaks with the parent
* The chairperson and management committee carry out a full investigation taking statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing
* The staff right a detailed incident report detailing:

The date and time of 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++

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 breach of security happened
* If the incident warrants a police investigation all staff will 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.
* The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see 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 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 keep everyone as calm as possible
* Staff may be the understandable target of parent anger and may feel afraid. The Pre-school Manager will ensure the staff under investigation are treated fairly and receive support whilst feeling vulnerable
* When dealing with a distraught and angry parent there will be two members of staff, one of which will be the Pre-school Manager. Where possible the chairperson or a representative of the management committee will also be present
* Under NO circumstances will staff tolerate aggressive or threatening behaviour towards them. Staff will call for police assistance if required
* The other children in the setting will be cared for by staff who will not discuss the incident. Staff will answer their questions honestly but reassure them
* Staff will be offered counselling if the child is not found, or injured or worse since this will be an extremely difficult time.
* Staff will not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Signed: .................................................................... Date: .............................

Chairperson