

Missing child

Children's safety is always our highest priority, both on and off the premises.

The following procedures would be followed in the event of a child missing whilst on the register of attendance at St Joseph's Pre-School Unit.

Procedures

In the building St Joseph's Pre-School Unit

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff will inform the designated safeguarding lead or deputy who initiates a search within the setting.
- If the child is found on-site, the designated safeguarding lead checks on the welfare of the child and investigates the circumstances of the incident.
- If the child is not found on site, one member of staff searches the immediate vicinity, if there is no sign of the child, the police are called immediately.
- The parents are then called and informed.
- The designated person contacts the committee designated officer, to inform them of the situation and seek assistance.

Off-site St Joseph's Pre-School Unit (outing or walk)

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the most senior staff present will carry out a headcount.
- They will instruct another member of staff to search the immediate vicinity.
- If the child is not found, the senior member of staff will call the police and then contact the designated safeguarding lead if they are not on the premises.
- The designated person will inform the parents.
- Members of staff will return the children to the Pre-School Unit as soon as possible if it is safe to do so. One member of staff will remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- The designated safeguarding lead contacts the Committee designated officer for support.

Recording and reporting

- A record will be made on the child's file and an incident report will be completed.
- The Manager as the designated person completes and circulates the confidential safeguarding incident report to the Committee designated safeguarding officer on the same day that the incident occurs.

The investigation

- Ofsted will be informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days of the incident).
- The Committee designated officer will carry out a full investigation.
- The designated person and the Committee designated officer will speak with the parents together and explain the process of the investigation.
- Each member of staff present during the incident will write a full report in their own words, this will be filed in the child's file.
- Staff will never discuss any missing child incident with the press or members of the general public.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident will be to try and keep everyone as calm as possible.
- We understand that 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. We recognise that they may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise if the length of time the child is missing increases.
- We recognise that staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be worried about this.
- The Committee and the Manager will ensure that staff who are under investigation are not only treated fairly but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- We understand that parents might 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 manager.
- We will do everything we can to support parents who might be feeling distraught and angry,
- We will ensure that there are two members of staff in the presence of the parents one of whom will be the manager or Deputy.
- No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff will not be tolerated, and the police will be called in these incidences.
- We recognise that the other children may also be sensitive to what is going on around them, and that they too may be worried about the missing child.
- Remaining staff caring for the children at this time will remain focused on their needs and will not discuss the incident in front of them. Staff will answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the outcome, staff may be offered counselling and other outside support.
- If a missing child is not found, or is injured, or worse, we recognise that this will be a very difficult time.
- The Manager and Committee will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff will not discuss a missing child incident with the press, unless requested under guidance from the police, with permission from parents/carers concerned.