



Missing Child Policy and Procedure

Aim

As part of our high regard for the safety of the children in our care we will always be extremely aware of the potential for children to go missing during sessions.

Policy

We will ensure that all precautions are properly observed, and will remain aware that emergencies can still arise. Therefore staff will undertake periodic head counts, especially at the transition points between sessions. If for any reason a worker cannot account for a child's whereabouts during a session the following procedure will be used: Whenever a child goes missing (and is not found to be in the Caretaker's House, school hall or school playground), even for a few minutes, this will be recorded as an incident, the parent/carer will be informed when they collect the child and the incident will be reported to the Play Centre Manager.

If a child is missing at collection time

1. Parents/carers are asked to tell the setting in advance, if a child will not be attending the session.
2. The register should be taken when collecting children to ensure they are all accounted for, in line with the *Arrival and Departure Policy and Procedure*.
3. If a child on the register cannot be found at the school, the school contact should be informed that the child is missing. This will often establish that the child has not been at school or was taken home.
4. If the child does seem to be missing, the worker will agree with the school what action to take. The setting is not responsible for children who are missing from school and cannot go and look for them, but we will ensure that parents/carers are informed.
5. If it is thought that the child has gone straight home or with another child, the Play Centre Manager will be contacted immediately. The remaining children will be taken to the setting. The Play Centre Manager will contact parents/carers to advise them what action is being taken.
6. The worker involved will complete an incident form as fully as possible.

If a child is missing from the premises

1. If a child is thought to be missing after arriving at the premises, the Play Centre Manager will be informed immediately. They will make a careful check of all the children present to confirm who is missing.



2. The Play Centre Manager will then organise a check of all exit doors, outside area, rooms, cupboards and possible hiding places. This check will be carried out quickly and without panicking the other children.
3. The other children should be kept together with an appropriate worker while the check is being carried out.
4. If the search is unsuccessful and the child is still missing, after five minutes the Play Centre Manager must contact the police on 999 and the parent/carer of the missing child.
5. The police will be given the following information:
 - The name of the worker
 - The address of the setting
 - What has happened
 - Child's name, age and address
 - Time of incident
6. The search for the child will continue after calling the police and until the child is found or the police take responsibility for the search.
7. The worker involved will complete an incident form as fully as possible

Off the premises

1. On trips away from the setting, children should be divided into groups with no more than five children allocated to each worker. We will decide in advance how to arrange the groups: it may be sensible to have groups of ten with two adults, especially if volunteers are helping.
2. Each adult will have details of which children they are responsible for, including their names and what they are wearing. Trip consent forms and contact details for parents/carers will be taken on the trip so that parents/carers can be contacted in an emergency. ID bands may be used.
3. We will make sure that children know who is responsible for them, including the worker's name and what they are wearing, that they know not to stray and that they know if they want to go anywhere e.g. to a shop or to the toilet, they must ask.
4. If appropriate, we will give children labels or wristbands with the setting's name and a contact number on them.
5. We will tell the children what to do if they become separated from the group:
 - Stay where you are - we will come back to look for you
 - Look around you - can you see your group or one of the other groups?
 - If it seems like a long time before we find you, who can you talk to?
 - a. Someone in uniform from the attraction you are visiting.
 - b. A shopworker if you get lost while travelling.
 - c. A uniformed policeman or woman.
 - d. Someone with other children.



6. We will take a regular headcount of the group. This will depend on the children and the activity. If on taking a headcount a child appears to be missing, the Play Centre Manager will be contacted immediately.
7. The group should stay still and keep together. If there is another adult with the group, one of them will should retrace their steps (to a pre-agreed distance, for no more than five minutes), to look for the child.
8. If the child is still missing after five minutes, we will inform the staff of the site and ask for their help in finding the child and contact the police on 999. We will be prepared to give them the following information:
 - The worker's name and phone number and where we are.
 - What has happened.
 - Name, age and address of the child.
 - Time of incident.
9. We will contact the parent/carer of the missing child and inform them of what has happened and the steps that are being taken to find their child. We will ensure the Play Centre Manager knows what actions have been taken.
10. We will continue the search after calling the police and until the child is found or the police take responsibility for the search.
11. The worker involved will complete an incident form as fully as possible.