**Missing Child Policy**

**Policy Statement**

Children’s safety is always maintained as the highest priority. Every attempt is made through carrying out the collection procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is always maintained. 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 alerts the General Manager (Chelsea Cunningham) and the Deputy Manager (Hannah Parker).
* The General and Deputy Manager 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.
* The General and Deputy Manager talk to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
* The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
* Ensure the safety of the other children, with regard to supervision and security whilst the search is taking place
* If the child cannot be found within fifteen minutes, then the parents/carers, police and Ofsted must be informed. Continue the search, widening the area until the police arrive.

***Investigation***

* Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
* The General and Deputy Manager speaks with the parent’s/carer’s of the missing child.
* The General and Deputy Manager carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the setting.

The General and Deputy Manager write an incident report detailing:

* The date and time of the report.
* What staff/children were in the Nursery and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
* When the child was last seen in the session.
* What has taken place in the session 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 co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub 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 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.

**Procedure**

*Child goes missing on an outing*

* 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.
* The General and Deputy Manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
* The General and Deputy Manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
* The General and Deputy Manager contacts the parent/carer, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the Managers. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
* Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
* In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue’s security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
* The General or Deputy Manager, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

**Investigation is the same procedure as it is above.**

**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 carer responsible for the safety of that child. 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. The General and Deputy Manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

The Parents/Carers 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 the General or Deputy Manager.

When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the General or Deputy Manager.

No matter how understandable the Parent’s/Carer’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 outcome, staff may need counselling and support.

If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Director (Judy Cunningham) General Manager (Chelsea Cunningham) and Deputy Manager (Hannah Parker) will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

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