



**Plymouth
Nursery
Schools
Federation**



Missing Child

Policy

Policy statement

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

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing and following an initial search of the area, the senior member of staff in the unit alerts the Designated Person for Safeguarding or their deputy.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) 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, the Senior Designated Person (or their deputy); 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.
- The Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) contacts the Chair of Governors and reports the incident. The Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair) comes to the school immediately to carry out an investigation, alongside the Senior Designated Person (or their deputy).
- The Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) contacts the PCC Press office 304913 to alert them to the situation.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving a senior member of staff and/or other staff back in the school buildings. If the senior member of staff has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. The procedures that relate to the actions taken when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different, as most parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child/ren.

- 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.
- The senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- The Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) contacts the parent(s).
- The staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- If appropriate following advice from the police, a senior member of staff, or our Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo, (if available), and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) contacts the Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair) and reports the incident. The Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair) comes to the premises immediately to carry out an investigation with the Senior Designated Person (or their deputy).
- All other staff remain calm and reassure the other children so that they do not become anxious or worried.
- The Senior Designated Person (or their deputy) contacts the PCC Press office 304913 to alert them to the situation.

The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Chair of Governors carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff and any volunteers who were present.
- The Headteacher, together with the Chair of Governors speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with the school or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - Where the child went missing from e.g the school or outing venue.
 - Which staff/children were in the premises/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 premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - What has taken place in the premises 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 the staff are expected to co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff 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.
- The 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.
- They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our Headteacher ensures that any staff 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 the staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our Headteacher or Day Care Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is the Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher or Day Care Manager and the other should be our Chair of Governors (or Vice Chair). No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against the 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 final outcome, the 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 Chair of Governors will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- The staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice from PCC Press Office staff.

This policy was reviewed by the Governing Body on:

Signed:

Chair of Governors.

Review cycle: Annually. Next review December 2024

