

St Nicolas Playgroup

Missing Child Policy



1.0 Introduction

Children's safety and security is our highest priority. Every attempt is made to ensure the security of the children in our care. Regular headcounts are carried out during the day, when transitioning as a group from one area to another and when out of the setting on trips and local activities in the community. In the unlikely event of a child going missing the following procedure is followed.

1.1 Procedure if a child goes missing in the setting

- As soon as it is noticed a child is missing, the staff alerts the Manager and other staff.
- A thorough search of the premises is done. Staff members are to continue looking if the ratio is met while calls are being made.
- The manager will call the police to report the child missing and then calls the parent.
- The register is checked to ensure no other child is missing.
- Doors and locks are checked to see if there is any breach of security.
- The Manager talks to staff to find out when the child was last seen and records this.
- The Manager contacts the Chairperson to report the incident, and the Chairperson comes immediately to the setting.
- We will reassure the other children with us if they become distressed.

1.2 Procedure if a child goes missing on an outing

- As soon as staff notice a child is missing - staff ask the children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity giving a description to others of what the child was wearing and a description of their appearance.
- Call the child's name loudly and shout out what they were wearing to alert others of a missing child. Children like to hide or wander off, but hearing their name should bring them out into the open.
- In an indoor venue, staff contact the venue's security who handle the search and contact the police.
- The Manager is contacted immediately if not on the outing and the incident is recorded.
- The Manager/supervisor contacts the police to report the child missing.
- The Manager contacts the parents who are asked to make their way to the venue.
- Staff return with the remaining children to the setting or calls made for early collection.
- The Manager contacts the Chairperson to report the incident, and the Chairperson comes immediately to the venue to conduct an investigation.
- If the Manager is advised by police, they remain at the venue.
- Staff members remain calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

*** Remember: Time is of the essence when a child goes missing. Stay calm but work quickly to find the child or alert authorities. ***



2.0 We will try to avoid situations such as this by implementing the following measures:

2.1 In the setting

- Training staff to ensure that all procedures are followed when we are outdoors or on outings.
- Staff to child ratios are observed at all times.
- Regular headcounts undertaken to ensure all children are accounted for.
- When transitioning from outside to inside, a member of staff will carry out a 'sweep' of the area, lifting equipment, boxes and looking inside tents etc. When all clear the main door can be double locked.

2.2 On outings

- On outings, children will wear high-vis jackets, so they are easily recognizable.
- Children will be divided into small groups of 4 or less and assigned to a staff member who will take regular headcounts.
- Ensuring that children hold hands with a partner and walk with adults.
- Avoid going to overcrowded places.
- Teaching children about the dangers of wandering off and talking to strangers.

3.0 The Investigation

- The Manager and a member of the committee talk to the parents.
- The Chairperson carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all staff.
- The key person writes a report detailing:
 - the date and time
 - what staff were on the trip or on the premises
 - the name of the staff member responsible for the missing child
 - when the child was last seen
 - what actions have taken place since the child went missing
 - the estimated time 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 cooperate fully.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements.
- In the case of disciplinary action needing to be taken Ofsted are informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.

4.0 Staff

- Try to keep staff calm.

“This policy comes under the umbrella of Safeguarding”



- Staff may be a target of parental anger and may be afraid. The manager and committee will ensure staff are treated fairly and receive support.
- Staff may need counselling.
- Staff must not discuss the incident with the press.

5.0 Parents

- When dealing with a distraught and angry parent there should always be two members of staff, one must be a Manager or committee member. If possible, we will take notes.
- No matter how angry a parent is, aggression and threats to staff will not be tolerated and the police are called if necessary.

Ofsted will be notified of any instance of a lost child after the event.

This policy was adopted at a meeting held at the playgroup on February 3rd 2022

This policy was reviewed by:	The Manager	Signed
On:	Date: 21 August 2025	VE Evans
Date of next review:	Date: 21 August 2026	