

# Missing Child

## Policy Statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every effort is made to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our Missing Children procedure is followed.

## Procedure

For all offsite activities:

- All offsite activities have a clearly identified educational purpose.
- There is a designated lead for each offsite activity.
- The offsite activity is fully risk assessed before the outing takes place.
- The designated lead ensure they have the following on them for each offsite activity:
  - List of all children participating in the offsite activity.
  - nursery mobile phone
  - portable first aid kit
  - Medication and medication forms for individual children
- We ask parents to give permission for offsite activities by signing a permission statement. Children will only participate in these activities if the parent has given permission.
- Ratios are maintained during offsite activities and additional practitioners will supervise activity if staffing permits.
- The designated lead continuously counts the children during the offsite activity.
- We keep records of vehicles, named driver and insurance details of vehicles/companies that transport children.
- We ensure that seatbelts are worn whilst travelling and car seats/booster seats are used as appropriate to the age of the child.
- We ensure that contracted drivers are from reputable companies, do not have unsupervised access to the children and are not included in the ratios.

Child going missing on an outing:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, practitioners on the outing carry out a headcount to ensure no other children have gone astray. The designated lead searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- The police and venue security (if applicable) are contacted to report the child as missing.
- The person responsible for the nursery is contacted immediately and the incident is recorded.

- The person who is responsible for the nursery contacts the child's parent, who should make their way to the nursery.
- The remaining children are returned to the nursery.
- A practitioner may be advised to stay at the venue until the police arrive.
- A recent picture of the child (if possible) will be given to the police and a description of what they are wearing.
- The person who is responsible for the nursery or RUSU Chief Executive conducts an investigation.

#### Child going missing on the premises:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/practitioner informs the person who is responsible for the nursery.
- The person who is responsible for the nursery will conduct a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to ensure all other children are present.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The person who is responsible for the nursery calls the police on 0999 and reports the child as missing and also University Security on 6300. The parent is then called.
- A recent picture of the child will be given to the police and a description of what they are wearing.
- The person who is responsible for the nursery talks to the practitioner to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The person who is responsible for the nursery or RUSU Chief Executive will then conduct an investigation.

#### **The Investigation**

- The Nursery Manager as well as a representative of the management team speaks with the parents,
- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Nursery Manager or RUSU Chief Executive carries out a full investigation taking full written statements from all the practitioners in the room or on the outing.
- The parents may wish to make a complaint to the nursery or directly to Ofsted.
- Key people/practitioners write an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the incident
  - Where the child went missing e.g. the nursery or outing venue

- When the child was last seen in the group/outing
  - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing
  - The estimated time the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
  - If the incident warrants a police investigation, all practitioners co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing practitioners. Children's social care may be involved if it seems that there is a child protection issue to address.
  - In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted will be informed.
  - The insurance provider is informed.

### **Managing People**

Missing child incidents are worrying for all involved. Part of managing the incident is to try and keep everyone as calm as possible. Practitioners may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases. The Nursery Manager will need to ensure that practitioners under investigation are not only treated fairly, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

Practitioners may be the target of parental anger and they may be afraid. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two practitioners, one of whom is the manager and the other should be the RUSU Chief Executive. No matter how understandable the parents anger may be, aggression or threats against the practitioner will not be tolerated.

The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. The remaining practitioner caring for them needs 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. Practitioners must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.