

Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. 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 relevant member of staff alerts our setting manager.
- The register is checked immediately to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The manager/deputy manager/staff 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, our manager, deputy manager or senior person in charge 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.
- Our manager talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

Child going missing in the grounds

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members ask children to stand together and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- All children return to the school with a staff member, any extra staff check the immediate area for the missing child.
- A Manager or senior staff member searches the immediate vicinity/grounds.
- A search is carried out inside the building
- A senior staff member contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- The manager/deputy manager records the incident.
- The manager deputy manager contacts the parent(s).
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Staff should keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

The investigation

- OFSTED are informed as soon as possible giving the details of the investigation.
- Our manager or deputy manager carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers or any persons who were present.
- Our manager or deputy manager speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with Wickham Montessori 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 setting or an 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 our staff must co-operate fully.
- The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

- Try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- Staff will feel worried about the child & may blame themselves. Feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the target of parental anger and they may be afraid.
- Any staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents may feel angry, and fraught, they may direct their anger at our staff, no matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff are not tolerated, and the police will be called.
- Other children on the premises will be cared for by remaining staff and may not discuss the incident between themselves or in front of children or parents. They should answer children's questions honestly, but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, our staff may need counselling and support. Our manager or deputy manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press or anyone outside the school premises without seeking prior permissions from the Child's family.