**MISSING CHILD POLICY**

Children’s safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure 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.

# From the playroom

The staff at Fowey Pre-school will take the following action:

* as soon as it is noticed a child is missing, the staff alerts the setting manager.
* all other children are contained at the tables or together on the floor
* double-check the room
* find out when the child was last seen, where and by whom – record this
* leave a minimum number of adults with the children in the room to maintain the ratios whilst the rest of the staff check the building, starting with the exits and taking a quick look outside the exits
* the register is checked by remaining adults to make sure no other child has gone astray
* one adult would go to the main entrance as far as the Primary School entrance and back to Pre-school where all the staff would return and be handed a map of the school grounds (kept in a separate, labelled file in the top drawer of the filing cabinet)
* a member of staff would then telephone the Police, the Primary School and College and the parents
* the map of the school grounds is categorised into zones and each adult to be assigned to a particular zone to search for 10 minutes (or as long as it takes to do one zone) and then return to the playroom
* by this time, the Police will have arrived and the staff will follow their guidance as to what further action to take.
* The setting manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

# On outings

The staff of Fowey Pre-school will take the following action on all outings:

* the Risk Assessment form is always completed before setting out
* ensure that manager and deputy manager take mobile phones
* ensure that the daily register and details of all children and adults present are with the staff
* ensure that the correct ratio is maintained, and that each child has a designated adult responsible for them.

As soon as a child is noticed to be missing, everybody will stop, staff ask the children to stand with their designated person, a headcount will be done to double-check and the staff will try to determine when the child was last seen, where and by whom.

The children will be looked after by one adult to four children whilst the remainder of the staff check the immediate vicinity for 10 minutes, retrace their steps and then return to the group. The Police and parents would be contacted along with the management to seek their help and take their advice. Two members of staff to stay with the Police whilst the rest of the group go to the designated pick up point.

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 setting management will contact the chairperson and report the incident. The chairperson with the management committee, carry out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

# The investigation

* staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried

* The setting leader together with the chairperson or representative from the management committee, speaks with the parent(s).

* The chairperson and management committee carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing

* The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:

* + The date and time of the report
  + What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child
  + 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 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. Children’s Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

* The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see reporting of accidents and incidents); 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.

# 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.

* Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Setting leaders need to ensure that 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 staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative. No matter how understandable the parent’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 final 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 chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

* Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice. Staff must not discuss the situation via social media.

# EYFS key themes and commitments

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A Unique Child** | **Positive**  **Relationships** | **Enabling**  **Environments** | **Learning and Development** |
| 1.3 Keeping safe 1.4 Health and wellbeing | 2.2 Parents as partners | 3.4 The wider context |  |

Date of next review: September 2024

Signed…………………………………. Position…………………………… Date……………

Copies of the original signed document are available upon request.