



## **High Legh Preschool Nursery - 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 our arrival and departure procedure and our procedures when on outings, to ensure the security of children is always maintained.

### **Procedures Arrival and departure procedures:**

- A Nominated member of staff marks each child's arrival time as they enter the setting in the morning, and this is double checked at 9.15am and 1.15pm. Children's arrival and departure times are entered accordingly throughout the day.
- Our systems prevent unauthorised access to our premises
- We only allow access to visitors with prior appointments
- We check the identity of any person who is not known before they enter the premises.
- A staff member will remain by the entrance until children have entered. The door will then be closed to prevent any children leaving unattended.
- A laminated sheet is displayed and updated when necessary, so all staff are aware of how many children (and how many adults) are present at any one time.
- When children are departing, a staff member will stand at the door to ensure no child leaves the setting unattended.
- We always keep the front door and back gate locked.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing, the following missing child procedures are followed. Child going missing on the premises:

- When it is first noticed that a child has gone missing the person in charge will be alerted.
- The register will be checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The person in charge will carry out a thorough search of all rooms, toilets, kitchen and store areas. Doors are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- Should this be in vain, the playground, outside perimeter of the building and surrounding area will then be searched.
- If the child is not found, the person in charge will call 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.
- Following the incident of a missing child, the person in charge will talk to staff ascertain when and where the child was last seen, and the information will be recorded.
- The Nursery manager will contact the Chairperson of the Committee and reports the incident. RIDDOR and Ofsted will be informed (RIDDOR - Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations).

### **Child going missing on an outing:**

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Nursery Manager and/or other staff back in the setting premises. If the Nursery Manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- When on an outing, staff will always have a checklist or register of children present. A mobile phone will be carried by the most senior staff member and used for emergency purposes only.
- 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 Nursery Manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The Nursery Manager will contact the parent(s).
- The Pre-school staff will take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the Police, a senior member of staff, or the Manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the Police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the Police.
- The Nursery Manager contacts the Chairperson of the Pre-school and reports the incident.
- The staff will keep calm and will not let the other children become anxious or worried.

### **The Investigation**

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up to date with the investigation.
- The Committee Chairperson carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present
- The Manager, together with the Chairperson will speak with the parent(s) and explain the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us 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 staff will 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.
  - 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. The Nursery Manager 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 staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is the Manager and the other should be a representative of the Committee. 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 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 Chair of the Committee will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.