Tring Stepping Stones Pre-School

06 Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults procedures

**06.5** **Missing child**

***Child going missing on the* premises indoors**

 As soon as we notice a child is missing the member of staff who noticed it alerts the pre-school leader.

 The pre-school leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and outdoor area.

 The children should be grouped onto the carpet and the register is checked to make sure no other children are missing

 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, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.

* The pre-school leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

 The pre-school leader contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

*Child going missing on the premises whilst playing outside*

 If a child is discovered to be missing from the outside area all staff to be alerted to the situation, an immediate headcount should be taken.

 All children should be brought inside and grouped onto the carpet and the register taken.

 Staff will search outdoors calling the child’s name loudly and clearly. The search will include the pond area, the area around the church and Dolphin Square.

 If the child is not found the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.

 The pre-school leader contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately*.*

*Child going missing on the premises during a split play session*

 If a child is discovered to be missing either in/outdoors all staff to be alerted to the situation.

 All children should be brought inside and grouped onto the carpet and the register taken.

 Continue as above.

*Child going missing on an outing*

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the pre-school leader and/or other staff back in the setting. These types of outings would only ever be local such as walk in local vicinity or perhaps a visit to the local library although generally the whole session attends the library. If the pre-school Leader has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

 As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person 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 pre-school leader is contacted immediately and the incident is reported they contact the police and reports the child as missing.

 The pre-school leader contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the pre-school leader. Pre-school is usually advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.

 Staff take the remaining children back to pre-school.

 In an indoor venue, pre-school staff contact the venue’s security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.

 The pre-school leader contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

 The pre-school leader, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

If a child goes missing when the whole of pre-school attends it will be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child. The procedures above are followed however a member of staff and the parent will search the immediate area for the child. The venue is informed so that they can assist in the search. The remaining pre-school staff, children and parent helpers are moved to an area in the venue where they can be kept safe and secure whilst the pre-school leader, parent and venue staff assist with the search for the child. A member of staff will supervise the remaining children and parent helpers and will be responsible for contacting the parents who have not attended the outing so they can collect their child from the venue.

**Recording and reporting**

* A record is made on 06.1a Child welfare and protection summary and 06.1b Safeguarding incident reporting form. The manager as designated person completes and circulates 06.1c Confidential safeguarding incident report form to the designated officer on the same day that the incident occurred.

**The investigation**

 Staff will keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

 The pre-school 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.
* Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation (at least within 14 days)
* Each member of staff who was present during the incident writes a full report using 06.1b Safeguarding incident reporting form.
* The report must include:

 The date and time of the report.

 What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff/parent 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 the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.

 We would inform Ofsted of the incident in writing and keep a copy of this and would take actions to try and prevent such an incident happening again. We would also implement anything Ofsted suggests in response to our letter

 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 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. The pre-school 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 pre-school leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the pre-school 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.

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| This policy was adopted at a meeting of | Tring Stepping Stones Pre-School |  |
| Held on |  |  |
| Date to be reviewed | January 2024 |  |
| Signed on behalf of the management committee |  |  |
| Name of signatory |  |  |
| Role of signatory (e.g. chair) |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| staff name | sign when policy has been read | date |
| Lucy Brittain |  |  |
| Nicola Poulton |  |  |
| Nicola Reynolds |  |  |
| Kim Smith |  |  |
| Nicke Cooke  Jo Davis |  |  |

September 2013 review- no changes

January 2015- no changes

January 2016- no changes

January 2017-  Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.

January 2018- no changes

March 2019 – no changes

March 2020 – no changes

March 2022- added Ofsted should be informed within 14 days.

**Recording and reporting**

* A record is made on 06.1a Child welfare and protection summary and 06.1b Safeguarding incident reporting form. The manager as designated person completes and circulates 06.1c Confidential safeguarding incident report form to the designated officer on the same day that the incident occurred.

January 2023 – to playing outside section, added that immediate headcount should be taken. Amended reporting section to state that all members of staff present during the incident must write a full report not just the staff member who noticed the absence.