

### **13. Missing Child policy**

**Welford Pre-school has the highest regard for the safety of the children in our care. Staff will always be extremely aware of the potential for children to go missing during sessions.**

#### **Statement of intent**

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times, both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through adhering to 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 as follows.

#### **Method**

If a child goes missing from Welford Pre-school:

- The person in charge will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The person in charge talks to staff to establish what happened.
- If the child is not found, the parents/carers are contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.

If a child goes missing from an outing where parents/carers are not attending or are not responsible for their own child, Welford Pre-school ensures that the following procedure is followed:

- 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 person in charge is informed. If they are not on the outing, they will make their way immediately to the location to aid the search, be the point of contact for the police, and support staff.
- Staff take the remaining children back to Welford Pre-school.
- The person in charge of Welford Pre-school contacts the child's parents/carers who makes their way to Welford Pre-school or outing location as agreed with the person in charge.
- Staff contact the police using the mobile phone and report the child as missing.
- In an indoor location, staff contact the location's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The person in charge contacts the chair of the management committee or another committee officer, and requests they come down to Welford Pre-school as soon as possible to undertake an investigation as detailed below.

## **The investigation**


- The chair of the management committee or another committee officer carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff present at the time, or who were on the outing.
- The key person/ staff writes an incident report detailing:
  - the date and time of the report;
  - what staff/ children were in the group/outing;
  - when the child was last seen in the group/outing;
  - what has taken place in the group/outing since then; and
  - 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 must co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Social Services may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) arrangements and is recorded in the incident file; the local authority health and safety officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- OFSTED is informed.
- Our insurers are contacted.

## **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. Welford Pre-school's leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents/carers 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 Welford Pre-school's leader. When dealing with distraught and angry parents/carers, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is Welford Pre-school's leader and the other should be the chair of the management committee or another committee officer. No matter how understandable the parents/carers' 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 as this will be a very difficult time. The chair of the

management committee or another committee officer will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Date reviewed	<b>20<sup>th</sup> January 2021</b>
This policy was adopted at a meeting of Welford Pre-school held on	<b>28<sup>th</sup> January 2021</b>
Signed on behalf of the Committee	
Role of signatory	<b>Chair</b>