



20. Missing Child Policy

Policy Statement

At The WonderWorks (the company) children's safety is always maintained as the highest priority - both on and off nursery premises. Every attempt is made, through carrying out the procedures as outlined in the *Trips and Outings Policy*, and the secure entrance of the nursery, the nursery layout, and daily opening and closing checks to ensure the security of children is always maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedure to follow if a child becomes missing on a nursery outing

- Inform the Manager or the most senior member of staff present on the trip, of the incident immediately.
- An immediate head count, and name check of all children must be taken to ascertain the whereabouts of all children.
- Staff need to stay calm.
- A staff member(s) stays with the children while another staff member (s) searches the building or the local area.
- If there is no sign of the child, the named person must call the police and give a description of the child and any key information about the child.
- Call the Nursery Manager if not present.
- The Nursery Manager should call the Director Of Childcare or Nominated Individual, to inform them of the situation.
- The Nursery Manager will call the parent as soon as possible.
- If possible, leave one staff member in the area as a point of reference (if a child is lost on an outing)
- If the child is found by a staff member the child will not be admonished - instead comfort and reassurance will be given, if necessary. It will be explained to the child and all other children that they must not leave the group, and why.
- Following the incident, a full risk assessment will be performed, and the incident reviewed to determine how to prevent a recurrence in the future

Procedure to follow if a child becomes missing when attending within the nursery building

- Inform the Manager or the most senior member of staff on site, of the incident immediately.
- An immediate head count, and name check of all children must be taken to ascertain the whereabouts of all children.
- Staff need to stay calm.
- Staff member(s) stay with the remaining children, within their standard play spaces, whilst other staff member(s) search the building for the child.
- If there is no sign of the child, the named person must call the police and give a description of the child and any key information about the child.
- The Nursery Manager, or most senior person on site, should call the Director Of Childcare or Nominated Individual, to inform them of the situation.
- The Nursery Manager or most senior person on site, will call the parent as soon as possible.
- If the child is found by a staff member the child will not be admonished - instead comfort and reassurance will be given, if necessary. It will be explained to the child and all other children that they must not leave the room alone, and why.
- Following the incident, a full risk assessment will be performed, and the incident reviewed to determine how to prevent a recurrence in the future

Procedures to reduce the possibility of children getting lost in the nursery

To ensure that children cannot leave the nursery grounds the nursery all staff must be aware of the following:

- Staff are always vigilant around the door/exit areas.
- Children's registers are accurate at all times and children are signed in and out immediately when they arrive or depart.
- There is a sign on the doors to remind parents to keep doors closed and check that the doors do close properly behind them.
- Children are taught not to open the door without an adult.
- All nurseries have a visitor's book to be signed on arrival and departure.
- Where nurseries have an intercom, a staff member is designated "door duty" to reduce too many people opening the door and reduce the chances of 'tail gating'.
- When conducting fire drills and evacuation practice, a member of staff should do a head count, and name checks are carried out using the register, so staff are aware of numbers and names of children that should be present.

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, and to offer support.
- 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. Staff's feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- The person in charge must remain calm, to ensure that feelings of anxiety and distress do not negatively impact the staff's responses to ensuring the child's safe return as soon as possible.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Nursery manager, and company Directors, will 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 also 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, or a Director. 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 manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.