

West Hallam Village Pre-School

Lost Child Policy

Policy statement

Child safety is our highest priority both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the entrance/exit procedure to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the event a child becoming lost/missing whilst in the care of the Pre-School, the Pre-School will put into practice procedures. These ensure that a systematic approach to find the child is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the child.

Aim

In the event that a child is lost/missing, we will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as possible, parents and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care is maintained to other children at the Pre-School while procedures are followed.

Procedures

Lost/missing child at Pre-School procedures –

1. As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the Pre-School Manager is alerted. Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could have wandered out.
2. We will check the register to confirm the child came to the Pre-School and to ensure that no other child has also gone astray. A quick search of all rooms, cupboards and all other areas of the Pre-School will take place.
3. The Pre-School Manager will send three members of staff to make an initial search for the child. The search will start with two members of staff going to the area outside the Pre-School, within the boundary of Scargill school, checking the perimeter fence is secure and that the child has not been able to leave the premises. The other member of staff will start a search outside of the Pre-School area, but still within the Scargill School. Each area will be searched systematically, notifying Scargill staff of the situation at each available opportunity. This will be done as quickly as possible.
4. If it becomes clear that the Scargill School perimeter wasn't secure, then one member of staff will proceed through the unsecure exit and start to check the road, being aware of any visual obstruction. The second member of staff will return to the Pre-School and inform the Pre-School Manager of the situation.

5. While the initial search is made, the Pre-School Manager will make enquiries of all adults at the Pre-School to establish the last sighting and time, clothes that the child was wearing, and the mental state of the child (happy, upset etc.).
6. The Pre-School Manager will then telephone the police and report the situation and follow their advice.
7. The Pre-School Manager will telephone the parent or carer and report the situation. They will ask the parent to come to the Pre-School, by using the normal route that the child would take and preferably by walking. The Pre-School Manager will then send a different member of staff to make a search of the area, and continue the search until instructed otherwise.
8. When the parent arrives at the Pre-School, and the child is still lost, the parent will be asked to return home and wait, in case the child has managed to make their way home.
9. Telephone lines should remain as free as possible so that messages are not delayed.
10. The Pre-School activities for the remaining children will continue as normal and staff not involved in the search will give the children proper attention, without causing concern or alarm to the remaining children.
11. The Pre-School Manager contacts the Chairperson and reports the incident. The Chairperson comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation with the committee where appropriate.

Lost/missing child on an outing with Pre-School staff procedures –

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Pre-School Manager and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Pre-School Manager has accompanied the children on the outing the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

We attempt to minimize the opportunity of lost children by ensuring they are properly supervised by a member of staff. A member of staff will be allocated a maximum of 2 children under 3 years and 4 children over 3 years. See Outings Policy.

1. As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff 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.
2. If a child is discovered missing, staff will ensure that all children on the outing are properly supervised in a safe place, and the supervisor will carry out a search of the immediate area but does not search beyond that.

3. The Pre-School Manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
4. The Pre-School Manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
5. The Pre-School Manager contacts the parent who makes their way to the setting.
6. If the child is not found during the initial search, all remaining children will be returned to Pre-School.
7. 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 Pre-School Manager contacts the Chairperson and reports the incident. The Chairperson comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation with the committee where appropriate.
8. The Pre-School Manager or member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

1. Staff must keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
2. The Pre-School Manager together with a representative of the committee speaks with the parent(s).
3. The Chairperson carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
4. 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/outing since the child went missing.
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
5. A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
6. Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.

7. 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.
8. The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see our Accident, Emergency and Incident Policy); The local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
9. In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken Ofsted is informed.
10. The Insurance provider is informed.

Managing People

1. Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
2. 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.
3. Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Managers need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
4. 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 Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Pre-School Manager and the other should be the Chairperson of the committee. No matter how understandable the parents anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and the police should be called.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

**This policy was adopted at a meeting of West Hallam Village
Pre-School Committee.**

Held on (date)

Signed on behalf of the Pre-School

Chairperson Karen Pilkington

Content amended: 1 October 2018 T011

Reviewed annually on: