HALESFIELD DAY NURSERY | POLICIES & PROCEDURES

1.7 Missing Child

Our nursery 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.

Missing children from nursery premises

Even when all precautions are properly observed, emergencies can still arise. Therefore, members of staff will undertake periodic head counts. If for any reason a member of staff cannot account for a child's whereabouts during a session at the Nursery, the following procedure will be activated:

i. The member of staff in question will inform both the nursery manager and the rest of the staff team that a child is missing, and a thorough search of the entire premises will commence. The staff team will be careful not to create an atmosphere of panic and to ensure that the other children remain safe and adequately supervised.

ii. If the child cannot be located immediately following initial checks, or there is any indication that the child has left the premises or is at risk, the manager (or most senior staff member) will call 999 without delay and notify the child's parent/carer.

iii. While waiting for the police and the parent/carer to arrive, searches for the child will continue. During this period, other members of staff will maintain as normal a routine as is possible for the rest of the children at the nursery.

iv. The nursery manager will be responsible for meeting the police and the missing child's parent/carer. The nursery manager will co-ordinate any actions instructed by the police and do all they can to comfort and reassure the parents/carers.

v. The nursery manager (or most senior member of staff present) will contact the Chair of the trustees and report the incident.

Missing children whilst on an outing

During outings each child without a parent or carer on the outing will have a member of staff or an accompanying adult allocated to be responsible for them. The normal adult:child ratio will be increased depending on the outcome of the risk assessment conducted, which considers the venue and travel to and from it. In the case of walks around Halesfield, the adult to child ratio will depend on the route and the number of roads crossed if any.

If coach/bus/train travel is part of the outing the number of adults and children will be counted and double-checked on the coach/bus/train prior to leaving, and a register taken.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing during an outing, the following procedure will be followed:

i. As soon as a child is noticed missing, the incident will be reported to the nursery manager (or the most senior member of staff present). One designated staff member will commence a thorough search, beginning where the child was last reported seen.

ii. The Nursery manager (or most senior member of staff present) will ask all other adults and children to return to a previously agreed meeting point. Staff on the outing will ask the children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. A register will be taken.

iii. In an indoor venue, the staff will contact the venue's staff or security to aid the search.

iv. Staff will remain calm and reassure the other children. The remaining children will stay together in a safe, supervised location; the outing will not resume until the manager confirms it is safe to do so.

v. If the child cannot be located immediately following initial checks, or may have left the venue or be at risk, the manager (or most senior staff member) will call 999 without delay, follow police advice and notify the child's parent/carer. Staff must not wait 15 minutes before seeking police assistance.

vi. The nursery manager or a member of staff will remain at the outing venue to assist in the search once the other nursery children and adults have left.

vii. The nursery manager (or most senior member of staff present) will contact the Chair of the trustees and report the incident.

Immediate response and recording

The manager will coordinate a systematic search, check exits and likely hiding places, allocate named staff to search and supervise other children, and ensure the register and headcount are checked. Staff must never leave other children inadequately supervised.

The manager will record when the child was last seen, when the absence was discovered, checks and searches completed, staff involved, calls to police and parents, advice received, when and where the child was found, and any follow-up action. Records will be kept securely and shared on a need-to-know basis.

When the child is located, staff will check their immediate health and wellbeing, seek medical attention if necessary, reassure the child and family, and follow police or children's social care instructions.

Investigation

Following the incident, the manager will complete a full incident report with the Chair of Trustees and staff, review the relevant risk assessments and procedures, and implement any necessary changes. The manager will assess whether Ofsted must be notified under the current EYFS and make any required notification as soon as reasonably practicable and within the statutory deadline. Safeguarding referrals must not be delayed.