



# HARPOLE PRE-SCHOOL

"Kind Hands, Kind Hearts, Fun Learning"

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## 1.5 Missing child Policy & Procedure

*Harpole Pre-school has adopted the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA) policy Missing child. The PLA ensure that their policies adhere to statutory guidance and legislative procedure and they provide the pre-school with any updates. All policies and procedures are ratified by the Pre-school Trustees on a rolling programme. The pre-school staff, led by Sharon Matthews, ensure that their practice is in line with the policies and procedures outlined in the PLA guidance.*

### **Policy Statement**

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings procedure and our 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 followed.

### **Procedures**

#### *Child going missing on the premises*

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff informs the setting manager/safeguarding lead who initiates a search within the setting.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Our supervisor/deputy will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- 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 found on-site, the designated safeguarding lead checks on the welfare of the child and investigates the circumstances of the incident.
- If the child is not found on site, one member of staff searches the immediate vicinity and if there is no sign of the child, the police are called immediately.
- The designated safeguarding lead contacts their designated officer/line manager and the parents/carers are called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our supervisor/deputy talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Our supervisor/deputy contacts our chair and reports the incident. Our chair comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team where appropriate.

### *Child going missing on an outing*

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

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members 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.

- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that a child is missing.
- If the child is not found, the senior staff calls the police and then contacts the designated safeguarding lead, if not already on the outing.
- The designated safeguarding lead informs the parents/carers.
- Members of staff return the children to the setting as soon as possible if it is safe to do so. According to the advice of the police, one senior member of staff should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- The designated safeguarding lead contacts the designated officer/line manager.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

### *The investigation*

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible (at least within 14 days) and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The designated officer/manager carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager, together with a representative of our management team speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes a full report detailing:
  - The date and time of the incident.
  - Where the child went missing from, for example the setting or an outing venue.
  - Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
  - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all our staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- Staff do not discuss any missing child incident with the press or others outside the setting.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
- 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.

- Our 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.
- They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our supervisor ensures that any 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 our staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our supervisor. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff present one of whom is our supervisor and the other should be our chair or another representative of the management committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our 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. Our 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, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our chair will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

<b>This policy was adopted by</b>	Harpole Pre-school	<i>(Name of provider)</i>
<b>On</b>		<i>(date)</i>
<b>Date to be reviewed</b>		<i>(date)</i>
<b>Signed on behalf of the provider</b>		
<b>Name of signatory</b>		
<b>Role of signatory</b>		