



## Missing Child Policy

Children's safety is St Mark's Pre-school's highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of the pre-school's 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, the pre-school missing child procedure is followed.

### Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the child's key person or relevant member of staff alerts the pre-school manager.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray, and a headcount is completed.
- The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building, playground 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 not found, the pre-school manager calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The pre-school manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The pre-school manager contacts the Committee Chair and reports the incident. The Chair comes to the provision as soon as possible to carry out an investigation, with the management team where appropriate.

### Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when St Marks Pre-school practitioners have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the manager and/or other staff back in the pre-school premises. If the pre-school manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the practitioners 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 practitioner searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- The senior practitioner on the outing contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The pre-school manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The Pre-School Manager contacts the parent(s).
- The pre-school practitioners take the remaining children back to the pre-school as soon as possible.
- According to police advice, a senior practitioner, or the pre-school manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.

- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The pre-school manager contacts the committee chair and reports the incident. The pre-school committee chair comes to the pre-school as soon as possible to carry out an investigation, with the management team (where appropriate).
- The practitioner team keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

### **The investigation**

- Ofsted is informed as soon as possible and kept up to date with the investigation.
- The pre-school committee chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from the practitioner team and volunteers who were present.
- The pre-school manager, together with the committee chair, speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with the pre-school or Ofsted.
- Each member of the practitioner team present writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the incident.
  - Where the child went missing from, e.g. the pre-school or an outing venue.
  - Which practitioners/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the practitioner who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in the pre-school or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place in the pre-school or on the outing since the child went missing.
  - The report is counter-signed by the senior practitioner 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 pre-school practitioners co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing practitioners and parents. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is 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.
- The practitioner team 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. The pre-school manager ensures that any practitioners 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 the pre-school practitioners and may single out one practitioner 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 practitioners, one of whom is the pre-school manager, and the other should be the pre-school committee chair or another representative of the committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against the pre-school practitioners 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 practitioners 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, the practitioner team may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The pre-school committee chair will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- The practitioner team must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the pre-school held on ..... (date)

Signed on behalf of the pre-school .....

Also see: Accidents and Incidents  
Outings