Missing Child Policy/Procedure

Academic year 2026/27 | Reviewed at least annually

Statement of Intent

At The Wendy House, children's safety and security are our highest priority.

We maintain appropriate supervision, registers, security arrangements and collection procedures to minimise the risk of a child becoming missing.

In the unlikely event that a child cannot be accounted for, staff will act **immediately** and follow this procedure.

The safety of the remaining children will be maintained throughout.

Preventing a Child From Going Missing

We reduce the risk of a child becoming missing by:

- maintaining accurate attendance registers;
- completing regular headcounts;
- ensuring appropriate staff-to-child ratios;
- supervising children appropriately;
- monitoring entrances and exits;
- maintaining appropriate security arrangements;
- ensuring children are only released to authorised adults;
- checking numbers when children move between areas;
- ensuring staff know which children they are responsible for; and
- maintaining additional vigilance during arrival, collection and transitions.

All staff share responsibility for children's safety and whereabouts.

If a Child Cannot Be Accounted For

If a member of staff believes a child may be missing, they must inform the **Manager/setting leader immediately**.

Staff will remain calm and avoid unnecessarily alarming the other children.

The Manager/setting leader will immediately coordinate the response.

Immediate Headcount and Register Check

All children will be brought together or otherwise safely accounted for.

A headcount will be completed immediately and checked against the attendance register.

Staff will confirm:

- which child is believed to be missing;
- when and where the child was last seen;
- which staff were present;
- whether the child may have been collected;
- whether collection information has been received; and
- whether the child may be elsewhere within the setting.

The register and collection information will be checked carefully.

Search of the Premises

The Manager/setting leader will designate appropriate members of staff to search for the child.

The search will include all relevant areas, such as:

- the main play areas;
- toilets;
- quiet or hidden spaces;
- storage areas where accessible;
- outdoor areas;
- behind or underneath equipment;
- entrances and exits; and
- the immediate surroundings where appropriate and safe.

Staff searching must remain in communication with the Manager/setting leader wherever possible.

The remaining children must continue to be appropriately supervised.

Staff must not all leave the setting to search.

Five-Minute Procedure

The initial search and checks will be carried out **immediately and must not delay contacting the police**.

If the child has not been located within **five minutes**, the police will be contacted without further delay.

Where circumstances indicate that the child may be in immediate danger, the police will be contacted **immediately rather than waiting five minutes**.

Contacting the Police

If the child remains missing, the Manager/setting leader will contact the police by calling **999** where the child is missing and there is an immediate risk to their safety.

Staff will provide the police with relevant information, including:

- child's name;
- child's age;
- description of the child;
- clothing;
- when and where they were last seen;
- any relevant medical or SEND information;
- any communication difficulties;
- any known risks;
- details of the setting;
- searches already undertaken; and
- parent/carer contact details.

Staff will follow police instructions.

Contacting Parents and Carers

The child's parents/carers will be contacted as soon as possible.

They will be informed:

- that their child cannot currently be located;
- what action has been taken;
- whether the police have been contacted; and
- what they should do next.

Communication will remain calm, factual and sensitive.

Emergency contacts may be used if parents/carers cannot be reached.

If the Child Is Found

If the child is found, the Manager/setting leader will immediately:

- ensure the child is safe;
- provide reassurance;
- check whether the child is injured or requires medical attention;
- inform all staff involved in the search;
- inform the parent/carer;
- update the police if they have been contacted; and
- follow any instructions provided by the police or other authorities.

The child will **not be blamed, punished or made to feel responsible** for the incident.

Staff will respond sensitively and consider why the child became separated or missing.

Supporting the Other Children

Staff will remain calm and reassuring.

The other children will be supervised appropriately and staff will avoid creating unnecessary anxiety.

Any questions from children will be answered simply and appropriately according to their age and understanding.

Management Committee

The Manager/setting leader will inform the **Chair of the Management Committee** of the incident as soon as reasonably practicable.

The Committee will support the Manager in reviewing the incident and any actions required.

Ofsted Notification

Ofsted will be notified of a missing-child incident where required by the Early Years Foundation Stage and Ofsted notification requirements.

Notification will be made within the applicable statutory timescale.

Any other relevant agencies will also be informed where required.

Safeguarding

A missing-child incident will be treated as a serious safeguarding matter.

The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** will consider whether:

- there are wider safeguarding concerns;
- children's social care should be contacted;
- the incident may have involved an unauthorised adult;
- security arrangements were compromised;
- staff practice contributed to the incident; or
- further safeguarding action is required.

Our **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** will be followed where appropriate.

Investigation and Review

Following the incident, the Manager and Management Committee will carry out an appropriate review.

The purpose of the review is to establish what happened and identify whether anything needs to change to prevent a recurrence.

The review may consider:

- staffing and supervision;

- staff deployment;
- registers and headcounts;
- entrances and exits;
- security arrangements;
- collection procedures;
- the environment;
- communication between staff;
- the child's individual needs;
- SEND or communication needs;
- risk assessments;
- staff training; and
- whether policies or procedures require amendment.

Where another organisation is carrying out an investigation, The Wendy House will cooperate fully and will not take action that could interfere with that investigation.

Recording the Incident

A full written record will be completed as soon as practicable.

The record will include:

- child's name;
- date and time;
- when the child was last seen;
- where the child was last seen;
- time the child was identified as missing;
- staff present;
- headcounts completed;
- areas searched;
- actions taken;
- time police were contacted;
- time parents/carers were contacted;
- advice or instructions received;
- time and location where the child was found;
- child's condition when found;
- any medical treatment required;

- staff involved;
- notifications made; and
- actions identified following the review.

The record will be stored securely.

Staff Support

We recognise that a missing-child incident may be distressing for staff as well as children and families.

Staff involved will be given appropriate support and an opportunity to discuss the incident.

Where necessary, supervision or additional wellbeing support will be offered.

Confidentiality

Information regarding a missing-child incident will be handled sensitively.

Details will only be shared with individuals and organisations who have an appropriate need to know.

Safeguarding and legal responsibilities will take priority where information needs to be shared.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and following any missing-child incident.

It will also be reviewed sooner where statutory requirements, safeguarding guidance, security arrangements or the needs of the setting change.

Policy Approval & Review

Policy year	2026/2027
Approval status	Awaiting Management Committee approval
Next scheduled review	March 2027