

Missing Child

Policy statement

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

The nursery will work closely with parents, the police, Children's Social Care and other relevant agencies to ensure that any missing child incident is managed swiftly, effectively and in the best interests of the child.

Our Procedures

1. Child going missing on the premises

- a) As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/member of staff alerts the Nursery Manager immediately. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will also be informed as soon as practicable.
- b) The Nursery Manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- c) The Nursery Manager will conduct an immediate headcount and check the register to ensure that no other child is unaccounted for.
- d) Doors and gates will be checked to identify any breach of security through which a child may have left the premises.
- e) The Nursery Manager will speak with staff to establish when and where the child was last seen and will record this information.
- f) If the child has not been found immediately, the Nursery Manager will contact the police to report the child as missing and will then contact the parents/carers.
- g) The Nursery Manager will contact the Regional Nursery Manager and report the incident.
- h) An appropriately delegated member of the Senior Leadership Team will be notified immediately and will oversee the investigation.
- i) The Nursery Manager and/or DSL will consider whether an immediate referral to Children's Social Care is required and will follow local safeguarding procedures.
- j) Ofsted will be notified as soon as reasonably practicable and, in any event, within 14 days of the incident.

2. Child going missing on an outing

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

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



- a) 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 is unaccounted for.
- b) A designated staff member searches the immediate vicinity whilst maintaining supervision arrangements for the remaining children.
- c) Staff will contact the police immediately if the child is not located during the initial search.
- d) The Nursery Manager, or Deputy Manager, is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- e) The Nursery Manager contacts the parent (if not on the outing), who will be asked to make their way to the nursery.
- f) Staff take the remaining children back to the nursery with assistance from the nursery team on site. However, one staff member is to remain behind in the event the child returns.
- g) 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.
- h) The Nursery Manager contacts the Regional Nursery Manager and reports the incident. An appropriately delegated member of the Senior Leadership Team will be notified immediately.
- i) An appropriately delegated member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee the investigation.
- j) The Nursery Manager and/or DSL will consider whether an immediate referral to Children's Social Care is required and will follow local safeguarding procedures.
- k) Ofsted will be notified as soon as reasonably practicable and, in any event, within 14 days of the incident.

3. The investigation

All records relating to the incident will be stored securely in accordance with the nursery's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policies.

- a) Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- b) The Nursery Manager, together with a representative of the management team, speaks with the parent(s).
- c) The Regional Nursery Manager or an appropriately delegated member of the Senior Leadership Team carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff involved.
- d) The key person/staff members write an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - The names of the staff and children who were in the group/outing and the name of the staff member designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- e) A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- f) If the incident warrants a police investigation, staff will 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.
- g) The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- h) In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, LADO is informed.



- i) The insurance provider is informed.

4. Managing people

- a) Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- b) Staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child if on an outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- c) Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Nursery Manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- d) When dealing with distraught and angry parent(s)/carer(s), there should always be two members of staff present, one of whom should be the Nursery Manager and the other an appropriate senior leader.
- e) 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.
- f) 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 Senior Leadership Team will determine what support and actions are required.
- g) Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice from the Communications Manager.

Learning and Improvement

Following any missing child incident, the nursery will:

- Complete a management review.
- Review risk assessments.
- Review staffing, supervision and deployment.
- Identify lessons learned.
- Update policies and procedures where required.
- Share learning with staff through supervision and team meetings.
- Keep a written record of the review, findings, actions taken and any policy updates.

This policy complies with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework, effective from 1 September 2026.

Date policy last reviewed/updated	28 th August 2026	Reviewed by	Terri Noone - Interim Regional Nursery Manager Charlie Walton – Nursery Manager Jodie Richards – Nursery Manager
Date of next review/update	August 2027		