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**1.5 Missing child**

**Policy statement**

Children’s safety is Little Owl Childcare’s 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, Staff will alert our setting manager(s).
* The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
* The lead member of staff 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 not found within 15 minutes, Contact Sarah McCormick who will inform 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 settings manager will talk to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
* Sarah McCormick will come to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation.
* Staff should keep calm during this process.

*Child going missing on an outing*

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their designated key-worker/member of staff 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 child as missing if the child is not found within 15 minutes.
* Sarah McCormick is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
* Management will contact the parent(s).
* Our staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
* According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or our manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
* A recent photo and/or a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
* Sarah McCormick will report the incident and come to the premises immediately to carry out an investigation, [with the management team (where appropriate)].
* Staff should keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

*The investigation*

* Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
* Sarah McCormick will carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
* Our manager, together with Sarah McCormick will speak 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 an incident report detailing:
* The date and time of the incident.
* Where the child went missing from e.g. 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.
* 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, and will feel 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. Sarah McCormick 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 the manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one being Sarah McCormick. 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. Sarah McCormick will use her discretion to decide what action to take.
* Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.
* *Procedure to prevent a child becoming LOST.*

1. 1 member of staff will open the door when a child arrives.

2.  Children are greeted and signed in by their parent/carer. This will include the time of
 arrival

3.  Doors are closed at all times, except for when a children arrive where a member of staff will open and close the door after a children have entered.

4.  The door will be secured when parent/carer leaves.

5.  Children may self register as they arrive and then an official register will be done.

6. Head counts will be noted through-out the session.

7. When parents arrive to collect their children, a member of staff will open the door, where parents will be asked to sign out their child before leaving the setting.