

# Sunbeams Play

Registered Charity No. 1152188

## Safeguarding Children and Young People

### 8. Missing Child or Young Person.

#### Policy statement

Children's and young people's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children and young people is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child/young person going missing, our missing child/young person procedure is followed.

#### Procedures

##### Child/young person going missing on the premises

As soon as it is noticed that a child/young person is missing:

- The key person/staff alerts the setting leader.
- The setting leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child/young person has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child/young person could wander out.
- If the child/young person is not found, the parent/carer is contacted and the missing child/young person is reported to the police.
- The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child/young person was last seen and records this.
- The setting leader contacts the management team and reports the incident. They come to the setting immediately and carry out an investigation.

## **Child/young person going missing on an outing**

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

What to do when a child/young person goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents/carers usually attend and are responsible for their own child/young person.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child/young person is missing, staff on the outing ask children/young people to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child/young person has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The setting leader or manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child/young person as missing.
- The setting leader contacts the parent/carer, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the setting leader. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent/carer arrives, the child/young person may have been returned to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children/young people back to the setting.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child/young person is not found.
- The setting leader contacts the senior management and reports the incident. The management and proprietor carries out an investigation and if possible come to the setting immediately.
- The setting leader, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

## **The investigation**

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children/young people become anxious or worried.
- The setting leader together with the **senior staff** member speaks with the parent(s)/carer(s).
- The **senior management team** carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report.
  - What staff/children/young people were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child/young person.
  - When the child/young person was last seen in the group/outing.
  - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child/young person went missing.
  - The time it is estimated that the child/young person went missing.

- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff 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.
- 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.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.

### **Managing people**

- Missing child/young person incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The staff will feel worried about the child/young person, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child/young person for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child/young person is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental/carer anger and they may be afraid. Setting leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents/carers will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent/carer, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be one of **the senior staff**. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children/young people 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/young people's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child/young person is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The chairperson or proprietor will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child/young person incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted on

20<sup>th</sup> April 2015

Policy updated

April 2020

Date to be reviewed

April 2021

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of Signatory

Role of Signatory

Reviewed By	Date