



Maeda Gakuen

Safeguarding & Welfare: Missing Child

Policy statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times, both on and off premises. Our outings procedure is followed 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 the key person/staff alerts the setting leader (manager or deputy).
- ♣ A thorough check is made of the premises to try to locate the missing child.
- ♣ The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- ♣ If the child cannot be traced, the setting leader calls the police and reports the child as missing. This is followed by a call to the parent.
- ♣ Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- ♣ The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- ♣ The setting leader contacts the owner/director and reports the incident. The owner/director comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation involving all relevant staff.

Child going missing on an outing

- ♣ As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, a register is taken to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- ♣ The setting leader or manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- ♣ The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- ♣ The setting leader contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- ♣ Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.

The investigation

- ♣ Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- ♣ The setting leader together with the owner, speaks with the parent(s).
- ♣ The management /owner 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 were in the group/outing and the name of the staff 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.
- ♣ 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.
- ♣ Ofsted are informed within 14 days of the incident.
- ♣ The insurance provider is informed. Safeguarding & Welfare: Missing Child 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 staff 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.
- ♣ Staff may be the understandable target of parental 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 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, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be the owner. 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 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.
- ♣ 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 owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- ♣ Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was revised in August 2017 by Nikita Phadnavis (Manager) of Maeda Gakuen Yochien.