



## **Welbourn Preschool Missing Child Policy & Procedure**

Welbourn Preschool takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in their care do not leave a session unaccompanied. 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. Staff will undertake periodic head counts using the key person system in addition to the registration procedure. The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed:

### **PROCEDURE FOR IF A CHILD LEAVES THE SETTING UNACCOMPANIED**

#### **Search systematically**

The setting is responsible for the missing child and all the other children in the setting. We will:

- Gather the remaining children into one large group, with one/two adults, leaving the remaining adults to search
- Ask the children, without alarming them, if they have seen the child that is missing
- Ensure all adults are aware of the situation
- Establish who last saw the missing child, where and when
- Check all rooms in the building
- Check the immediate outside area
- Seek the cooperation of others users in the building

#### **Parents**

The setting will:

- Call the child's parents to warn them that the child may be attempting to get home
- If they are unavailable the setting will use the emergency contact number
- Ensure that, if the child lives within walking distance of the setting, one adult will make the journey on foot in order to catch up with or intercept the child if possible
- Remember, that as soon as parents are informed, they will need advice and support.

#### **Police**

- If the above steps do not locate the child, the police will be called

## **Informing other people**

We will ensure that:

- We make regular checks to ensure that if an incident of this sort does happen, we have all the necessary phone numbers at hand, correct, up to date and kept together
- If the police are called then the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Board and Ofsted are also informed
- If the Chairperson/Leader is not on the premises, she/he will be informed as soon as possible
- We will provide the following information to Ofsted/the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Board:
  - a) What happened?
  - b) What systems are in place for preventing such occurrences?
  - c) What we did, at what time and in what order
  - d) Who we informed and when

We will cooperate fully with any investigation.

## **Recording**

We will start to build a record as soon as is possible in the incident log, this will include:

- The last definite sighting of the child
- Any unusual behaviour of the missing child or other children
- How many children were on the premises?
- How many adults were on the premises and who?
- What steps have been taken and when, by whom?

## **Dealing with People's Reactions**

We accept that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry. If the setting shares all policies with parents/carers, the situation will be easier for all because there will be an understanding of working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding.

We accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry, threaten legal action or approach the local press.

We will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

Responses could include:

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
- That a full investigation is in hand.
- That the LSCB/Ofsted has been informed and will be investigating.

## **Dealing with the Media**

Distressed parents may contact the local press, or reporters may hear about the incident if the police are involved. It is sensible for one person, usually the Chair, to be the one who

speaks for the setting. All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson. The spokesperson for the setting is: **Kathryn Barker**.

### **Informing other Parents**

We recognise that other parents will need to be given brief, accurate information as rapidly as possible. We will ensure that this happens by:

- Calling a short meeting when parents/carers collect children, or
- Talking to parents/carers when they arrive at the next session, or
- Sending a note home with each child.

### **When a child is Found**

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents and others suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember: Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare/premises and security - June 2011.

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.

### **After the Incident**

- We will review our current procedure.
- We will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.

### **The Investigation**

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up to date with the investigation
- Our Chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present
- Our Manager, together with our Chair speaks with the parents and explains the process of the investigation
- The parents 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, 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 most senior member of staff and the date and time added
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security has happened
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all of our staff cooperate fully. In this care, 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

### **Contacts**

- Lincolnshire Police - Tel: 01522 532222
- Ofsted - Tel: 0300 123 1231
- Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Board Customer Services Centre:  
Office Hours Tel: 01522 782111 Out of Hours Tel: 01522 782333

This policy was adopted by Welbourn Preschool

Signed on behalf of the setting:

**Chairperson**

**Secretary**

**Date**

**Review Date**

October 2020

October 2021