

Safeguarding Children

Missing/Lost child

Argyle House School Senior Department

Policy statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times. Every attempt is made through carrying out the collection 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.

1.3 Keeping safe

1.4 Health and well-being

2.2 Parents as partners

3.4 The wider context

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the Senior Manager.
- The Senior Manager 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.
- The Head Teacher talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Ensure the safety of the other children, with regard to supervision and security whilst the search is taking place
- CCTV camera footage will be checked for sightings of the child.

- If the child cannot be found within fifteen minutes, then the parents and the police must be informed.
- Continue the search, widening the area until the police arrive.

Investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Head Teacher speaks with the parent(s).
- The Manager and Head, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the setting.
- The key person/Teacher writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - What staff/children were in the room and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the session.
 - What has taken place in the session 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.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, ISI is informed.
- 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.

- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated teacher responsible for the safety of that child. 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. The Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher and the other from the Senior Management Team. 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 Head and or the Governor will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.