**Missing Child Policy**

Please take time to read the pre-school policies and let the Pre-school Leader or Chair know if you have any questions.

The policies are also available to read on our website:

www.streatleyhillpreschool.org.uk

**Statement of intent**

Children’s safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. The number of children attending a session will be counted and checked regularly. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

**Procedures**

###### *A child going missing on the premises*

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/staff alerts the session leader.
* The session leader calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent. The session leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
* The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
* Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
* The session leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
* The session leader contacts the Pre-school Leader (if not already at the pre-school) and Chair and reports the incident. The Pre-school Leader and Chair come to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation.

*A child going missing on an outing*

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

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole pre-school outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer 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.
* The session leader is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
* The session leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
* The session leader contacts the parent and Pre-school Leader (if not already at the pre-school) who makes their way to the setting.
* Staff take the remaining children back to the pre-school.
* In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue’s security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
* The session leader or Pre-school Leader contact the Chair and reports the incident. The Chair comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation.
* The session leader or member of staff 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 become anxious or worried.
* The session leader and Pre-school Leader together with the Chair speaks with the parent(s).
* The Chair carries 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; 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 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. The Pre-school Leader and Chair 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 Pre-school Leader and the other should be the Chair. 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 chairperson or proprietor will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
* Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

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| This policy was adopted at a meeting of Streatley Hill Pre-school Committee on: | 20th March 2012 |
| This policy was last reviewed on: | 29 June 2016 |
| Date of next review: | 29 June 2017 |
| Signed on behalf of the Committee by: | Laura Coyle |
| Role of Signatory: | Chair |