

## **Meppershall Preschool**

### **Missing Child Policy**

#### **Statement of Intent**

Children's safety is Meppershall Pre School's highest priority, both on and off the premises. 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. 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, a member of staff alerts our Pre School Leader / Deputy.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Our Preschool Leader and/or Deputy will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, our leader or deputy calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) of the missing child are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our Pre School Leader or Deputy talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Our Pre School Leader or Deputy contacts our chair and reports the incident. Our chair comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management committee, where appropriate.
- There is some CCTV which covers the outside of the building and the corridors leading to the Preschool. These images will be checked by the Preschool Leader as soon as possible. The manager of the village hall has access to this.
- We will endeavour to prevent any incidents of an unsupervised child however if a child has been left on the premises unsupervised, as soon as this is realised the Preschool Leader or Deputy Leader will return to the Preschool immediately to care for the child. The parent will be informed of the incident and the investigation will be carried out as described in this policy.

### ***Child going missing on an outing***

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our manager and/or other staff back in our setting premises. If our manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different, as parents may attend and where they do so are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members 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. A register will be conducted to identify the missing child.
- One staff member (allocated prior to the outing in the risk assessment) searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- Our Preschool Leader or Deputy contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- Our Leader or Deputy is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- Our Pre School Leader or Deputy contacts the missing child's parent(s).
- Our staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a member of staff should remain at the site with a mobile phone, where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- Our manager contacts our chair and reports the incident. Our Committee Chair (or Committee member if not available) comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management committee, where appropriate.
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

### ***The investigation***

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation. This is carried out online by the Preschool Leader who will be supported by the Preschool Committee Chair.
- Our chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our Pre School Leader, together with chair or a representative of our management team speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation within 24 hours of the incident.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted. We can direct them to the Ofsted website to make a formal complaint or the email address of the Committee Chair as follows:  
[meppershallpschair@gmail.com](mailto:meppershallpschair@gmail.com)

- Committee to hold urgent meeting with committee members to discuss event and investigation including how the breach of security happened, staff statements, discuss potential/ suitable disciplinary action and any urgent actions that need to be completed by committee and/or staff
- Chair and another committee representative to arrange meetings with required staff to discuss outcome of committee meeting and whether disciplinary action will be taken.
- Written confirmation of investigation outcomes and next steps / disciplinary action to be provided to required staff by chair / committee. Copy sent to Ofsted where required.
  
- 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 and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in the premises/or 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 senior member of staff and the date and time added.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all our staff co-operate fully. In this case, 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 by the Committee Chair.
- In the event of disciplinary action, the disciplinary policy is followed.
- The insurance provider is informed by the Committee
- Decision is made by committee whether to advise all parents of the incident.

### ***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.
- Our 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.

- They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our manager ensures that any 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 our staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is our Leader or Deputy and the other should be our chair or another representative of the management committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our 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. Our 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, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our chair will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.
- A review meeting to be offered to individual staff members with chair and a committee representative present to discuss the aftermath of the event and whether any further support is required.

<b>Date approved by Pre-school committee</b>	
<b>Signed by Pre-school leader</b>	
<b>Signed by Pre-school chair</b>	
<b>Signed by Pre-school staff</b>	