



Missing Child Policy (including procedure for arrival and departure of children)

Whilst we realise as a setting this very rarely happens, **complacency is a hazard we must avoid at all costs**. The welfare of children in our care is paramount. Children may go missing and EVERY member of staff has equal responsibility in ensuring the safety of the children and knowing where they are.

Systems in place to minimise the risk of children going missing -

Appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the premises and surrounding site is secure.

The attendance register is taken at the start of each session and the number of children in attendance recorded on a display board. It is the responsibility of every member educator to be aware of how many children are present and a quick head count should be taken at intervals during each session. Children who arrive late must be recorded in the register and those who leave early should be marked out accordingly.

Keyworkers of new children should take extra care to be aware of their whereabouts and ensure they know the boundaries of where they can and cannot go. Parents will be advised of our security procedures and be given the opportunity to discuss any concerns, particularly if their child has an adventurous nature.

Parents must be made aware of the need for supervision of children at all times especially while waiting for the group to open and of their responsibility to ensure that their child's arrival is noted.

In the event of a child being found to be missing it is vital that prompt action is taken.

1. **The missing child (children) should be identified and the last known whereabouts recorded.** (The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is noted as soon as possible.)
2. **The senior educator present will arrange for the other children to be satisfactorily supervised.** (The remaining children should be gathered together for a storytime/music session. Without alarming them, the children should be asked if they have seen the missing child.
3. **A systematic search will be carried out to see if the child can be located in the surrounding area.**
 - All toilets, cupboards, kitchen, under tables, cushions, anywhere a child might hide
 - Outside areas including woods and nature area
 - Check all exits for where a child may have been able to leave the premises or site
 - The school grounds, playing field, also check inside the school. Enlist the help of school office staff to search the school and caretakers to continue searching the school grounds
4. **The educator in charge will then inform –**
 - a) **The parents/carers of the child –** alarming them as little as possible. If they do not answer the phone a message must be left on any answering service

before attempting alternative numbers. However if parents do not answer the home phone number **the POLICE** must be called before attempting other child contact numbers. If contacted, parents should be advised to stay at home in case the child arrives there; be advised that we are contacting the emergency services and that an Educator is searching the route the child may take home. Parents should be asked for information of anywhere else the child may head for. E.g. grandparents, other relatives, local park, etc.

- b) **The Police and/or any other emergency services** – The police have the resources to conduct a search and speed is important
 - c) **The appropriate OFSTED officer** – they will need to know our systems for preventing this occurrence and what happened. It is important that the senior officer in charge keeps a record of events.
5. **Check route home** (If the child cannot be located a Educator should search along a possible route the child might take to get home. Where able they should take a mobile phone to keep in contact. If the Educator arrives at the house without finding the child they should make contact with the group for further instructions.)
6. **A record of events should be logged on an Incident form by the senior Educator in charge or by another Educator delegated by them.**
7. **Informing other people –**

As soon as possible after the incident the following people should be notified-

- the group's insurance company
- **ALL** parents
- the Head teacher at Gravenhurst Academy
- Central Bedfordshire's Early Years Team and the local Pre-school Learning Alliance

8. **Dealing with reactions –**

It is natural that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry. Other parents will be rightly concerned for the safety of their own children. The pre-school management and other Educators will also be shocked and upset at any lapse in security. All emotions and reactions must be dealt with in a caring and understanding way. However, until the situation has been fully investigated by all parties all Educators must refer any parent and media enquiries to the Manager.

The following Procedures are in place to try and reduce the likelihood of children going missing or to help in the event of a child going missing.

Arrival of children

- Parents/carers are recommended to park behind the Village Hall in the car park
- Children & parents/carers will enter the gate at the top of Orchard Close and walk down the path towards the Pre-school building.
- Children & parents/carers will wait outside until the start of the session.
- Children should not be left unaccompanied before the start of the session. It is the Parent/carer's responsibility to ensure their children do not climb on the wall or on the ground behind the wall, as this is the property of Gravenhurst Lower School.
- Once the session is open, an Educator will stand at the front door with the register and another Educator must be available to greet children and adults.
- Children should be encouraged to enter the setting independently and hang their coats on their pegs and place lunch boxes in the designated area.
- Other Educators must be ready to greet and settle the children at group time.
- If parents/carers inform a Educator that someone else will be collecting their child the information must be recorded immediately in the Diary and the details passed to the Keyworker. No alternative pick up will be granted without prior notice.
- All Educators are responsible for ensuring that the premises are safe, but the Educator who is taking the register must make sure the main door is shut and the chain has been fitted.
- The registers are stored on Babysdays for easy access, in case of an emergency.

- A record of the current head count for both adults and children will be made on the whiteboard in the entrance area. This will be amended with each departure and arrival either as a group or individuals.

Departure of children

- No child will be allowed to leave the premises unless accompanied by a responsible and authorised adult (over 16). If this will cause issues for the family, a discussion with parents will be had to reach an agreeable solution.
- If children leave the setting early, their time of departure must be recorded in the register and white board changed.
- At the end of the session children will wait on the mat ready to be called by an Educator.
- A Educator should stand at the main door to ensure no children leave unaccompanied.
- Children remaining in session for the After School Club must be supervised by an Educator.
- When all the children have been collected all gates must be secured.
- The identity of people not known to us must be checked before handing over any child. Where there is any doubt the collector should be invited to remain outside whilst their credentials are checked. Educators must ensure that the child does not become concerned or upset nor should the collector be made to feel embarrassed by the situation. The safety of the child is of paramount importance and anyone entrusted with the care of the child will appreciate our vigilance if handled in an appropriate way.
- Educators should be ready to share with parents information about what the children have been doing.

This policy was adopted on:.....

Signed on behalf of the setting.....

Date of next review:.....