



Missing Child Policy

Policy statement

Children's safety is Little Cherries' 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, staff alert the setting leader. All staff & adults present at the group are informed.
- A small number of staff gather all the remaining children together into one large group and keep them occupied - for example by reading a story - while the others search.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and outdoor area.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the external gates are found not to be secure, a staff member will immediately search the surrounding area, spending no more than 5 minutes looking for the child before returning to the pre-school.
- The School Office is contacted to alert the school so that they can monitor/check the CCTV/ and to ask for help with the search. Tel: 01223 508772.
- If the child is not found in the pre-school rooms or outdoor area, the search is extended to the school grounds and buildings.
- If the child is not found within 5 minutes, the police are contacted and the missing child's parents/carers are informed.
- If the police are contacted, the children's social care department (0345 045 5200) must also be contacted.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The setting leader contacts the chairperson and reports the incident on the Incident Record Sheet.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when Little Cherries have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the manager and/or other staff back at the setting premises.

- 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.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- Little Cherries' senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- Little Cherries' manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- Little Cherries' manager contacts the parents or carers.
- Little Cherries staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or the manager where applicable, should remain at the site 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.
- The manager contacts the Chair of Little Cherries and reports the incident.
- Little Cherries staff aim to keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

When the child is found

- The child will be reassured and comforted preferably until a parent/carer can be present, when ideally two members of staff and the parent will be able to talk with the child. One of the two staff members should take notes. It should be understood that the child may be unaware of having done anything wrong, or alternatively may also have been afraid and distressed and may now be in need of comfort.

The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- Little Cherries Chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.

- The manager, together with the Chair, speaks with the parent(s)/carers and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parents/carers 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 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.
- 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.
- OFSTED must be contacted to report any incident Tel: 0300 123 1231. Little Cherries registration number 221863.
- Our Insurance provider, Preschool Learning Alliance must be informed: 020 7697 2585 (membership no: 16583)
- The Charity Commission must be informed using a 'Serious Incident Report' via the website www.charitycommission.gov.uk
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.

Once the incident is resolved the Committee, Manager and staff will review relevant policies and procedures and implement any necessary changes.

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 is not only fairly treated, but receives 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 where possible- the Manager and the Chair. 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. No one should accept liability for the incident until investigations are complete. However, that does not mean that you should appear uncaring. Do not say 'No comment' which can make you appear indifferent and unhelpful. For example, you could say:
 - How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
 - That a full investigation is in hand.
 - That the appropriate authorities have been informed and will be investigating.

This policy was adopted by	Little Cherries	(name of provider)
On	March 2019	(date)
Date to be reviewed	March 2020	(date)
Signed on behalf of the provider		
Name of signatory	Jennie Peacock	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Chair	