

# Coniston Early Years Centre Policy Document

**Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection**  
Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.



High Quality Care for All Children  
A Firm Foundation for Education

## 1.4 Missing Child

### Policy Statement.

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, by following our settings outings 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.

### Procedures

#### *Child going missing on the premises.*

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/staff member alerts the setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff.
- The setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- The setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside areas.
- The register is checked by the remaining staff 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 setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff talks to staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and this information is recorded and will form part of the log of events.
- The setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson comes to the setting at the earliest opportunity to carry out a thorough investigation into the incident, with the management team where appropriate.

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

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting manager/deputy and or other staff back in the setting. If the setting manager/deputy has accompanied the children then the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- 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. Half of the staff on the outing search the immediate vicinity but do not search beyond that. The remaining staff care for and reassure the remaining children.
- The setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting when and if it is practical and safe to do so.
- **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 setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson comes to the setting at the earliest opportunity to carry out an investigation with the management committee where appropriate.
- The setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff/staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

**What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents are in attendance and are responsible for their own child.**

In these circumstances staff will separate into two teams each containing a senior member of staff. The most senior member of staff present will be responsible for coordinating the response should such a situation arise.

One team will support the remaining parents and children, ensuring they are reassured and that they remain together as a group to prevent further possibility of another child becoming detached from the group and to ensure the parents and children remain calm.

The second half of the team will help the parent to search the venue for the missing child and also help to calm and reassure the parent who will obviously be distressed.

***The investigation carried out after any incident of a child going missing regardless of circumstances or place will be as follows;***

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The setting manager/deputy or other senior member of staff together with a representative of the management team, speaks with the parent(s).

- The chairperson 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 (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 informed as soon as is practical but no later than within 14 days of the incident occurring.
- 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 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. Setting managers/deputy's 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 manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting manager/deputy and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee. 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 focussed 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 will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice from senior management, our legal team and the committee. In these cases discussions with press are best avoided altogether to avoid misunderstanding and/or misrepresentation of events.