

Acorn Pre-school and the Mighty Oaks Clubs, Shefford

Missing Child Policy and Procedure

Policy statement

The children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings procedure and our Visitors 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.

Acorn has in place the following systems for the protection of children:

- All exits from the premises are locked in a way which makes it impossible for a child to leave unobserved/unattended, while allowing rapid exit for the whole group in case of an emergency.
- An accurate and up to date register is kept and visitors should sign in and out whenever they enter and leave the premises (stating times of arrival and departure).
- The number of children present at each session is prominently displayed within the setting in 2 different places.
- There are always sufficient staff to ensure the children are supervised at all times.

EYFS key themes and commitments

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships	Enabling Environments	Learning and Development
1.3 Keeping safe 1.4 Health and well-being	2.2 Parents as partners	3.4 The wider context	

In the best regulated situation, however, accidents can and do happen.

These are the steps to follow if a child cannot be found:

Procedures

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, a member of staff alerts the manager.
- The manager will check with all members of staff to establish when the child was last seen or if they had been unexpectedly collected and the register was not updated.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Staff will carry out a thorough search of the building, including the Children's Centre and garden.
- 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, the police are called immediately and the child reported as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.

- The parent(s) are then called and informed of the situation and we double check that the child is not there.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The manager talks to staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager contacts our chair and reports the incident. Our chair will come to Acorn immediately to carry out an investigation.
- The remaining children will be gathered into one group and staff will carry out an activity such as story time with them.
- If there are enough staff members available, one member of staff will walk the journey to the child's house.
- It is important that an accurate record of the situation and how it has been dealt with is recorded.
- The relevant risk assessments, policies and procedures will be reviewed.
- Ofsted will be contacted to inform them of the situation.

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 usually attend and 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.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- Our manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- Our manager contacts the parent(s).
- Our 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 our 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.
- Our manager contacts our chair and reports the incident. Our chair comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation.
- 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.
- Our chair, carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager, together with our chair speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) 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.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
- 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.
- 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 manager 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.

This policy gained staff consent on **10th February 2015**

This policy was the subject of parent consultation between and

This policy was adopted at a minuted full meeting of the Committee held on

Confirmed on behalf of Acorn Pre-school and the Mighty Oaks Clubs

Signature

Position Date