



## **MISSING CHILD POLICY**

Safeguarding Children

### **Policy Statement**

We take an uncompromising view of children's safety at Rainbow's End Pre-School. We ensure the safety of the children both indoors and outdoors, on and off the premises, through several strictly adhered to procedures. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

### **Procedure for a child going missing on the premises**

1. As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the staff member alerts all staff present and the setting manager.
2. The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
3. The other staff members will gather the children in the quiet room and take the register.
4. The manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent/carer
5. Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security.
6. The manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
7. The manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson or vice chair comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.
8. The child's file will be made available to the police with a detailed sequence of events, which will be written down as soon as possible. This information will include the time when the child was missing, their temperament, what they were wearing, what the child had said to staff that day and over the week and whether there were any signs of where the child may have exited.

### **Procedure for a child going missing off the premises**

1. As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand in their partners whilst a headcount is carried out and register taken.
2. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
3. The manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
4. The most senior staff member on excursion contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
5. The manager contacts the parent/carer, who makes their way to the setting or venue whichever is most appropriate.
6. Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
7. 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.
8. The manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.
9. The manager, or a member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

At all times, sufficient staff will remain on the premises so that the majority children are supervised. So that a full search can be made, the manager may contact other parents asking them to either collect their child or assist with a search of the area. This will obviously be dependent on the advice from the police. The manager will document the incident and reassure staff during this difficult time to avoid panic.

## The Investigation

- The manager together with the chairperson or representative from the management committee, speaks with the parent(s)/carer(s).
- The chairperson and management committee carry 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.
- Once the child is found, staff, parents and officers will all be informed, and a follow up meeting will be held to discuss the incident and if necessary to look at any policies and procedures that may need to be changed
- The manager will contact Ofsted and the insurance company.
- It will also be necessary for the committee to call for an urgent review of the settings security and risk assessments etc.
- 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.

### Emergency contact numbers:

**Police – Emergency 999**

**Ofsted: 0300 123 1231**

### 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 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.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents/carers 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 manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent/carers there should always be two members of staff. If possible, one should be the manager and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee. No matter how

understandable the parent's/carer'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 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, 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.

### **Premises and Security**

- Daily Risk Assessments are made in the setting (see Health and Safety Policy) to ensure that the environment is safe and secure inside and outside.
- Children will only be released to individuals named by the parent (see Arrivals and Departures Policy).
- We take steps to prevent intruders. During Pre-school hours there are no other users of the hall. We have a visitors' book and known visits are written in the setting diary and staff are notified.
- Visiting professionals will be asked for identification before entering the pre-school. Unfamiliar visitors will be asked to wear a visitors' badge.
- On arrival and departure a member of staff is allocated to supervise the doors to ensure a child does not leave without their designated adult.

### **Policy Review**

As part of Rainbows End Pre-School monitoring of child protection and safeguarding this policy will be subject to periodic review.

Policy adopted by: Rainbow's End Pre-School  
Date: 01.01.2024  
Policy Review Date: 31.12.2024 (or sooner if required)