



NORTH STAR NURSERY AND HOLIDAY CLUB

LOST CHILD POLICY PROCEDURES FOR WHEN A CHILD LEAVES THE GROUP UNACCOMPANIED

North Star Nursery has consulted the Pre-School Learning Alliance procedure prior to writing the outlined procedure below.

"This should never happen, and very rarely does. Groups should have in place the following systems to protect the children." (PSLA info 44)

- All exits must be locked/guarded in a way that makes it impossible for a child to leave unobserved, while allowing quick and easy exit for the whole group in an emergency situation.
- An accurate and up-to-date register must be kept of all children, staff and visitors, via registers and visitor's books.
- On induction, key persons of new children will need to seek from parents' knowledge of the children and patterns of behaviour, and inform the family which parts of the Nursery are out of bounds.
- All children must know the rules and the reasons for them.
- Notices should be displayed alerting visitors to the need to keep doors closed.
- The Nursery Manager, with all staff involvement and input from parents, must conduct regular risk assessments so they are aware of any potential dangers.
- Parents and staff must work together for the safety of the children by communicating safety implementations and concerns.
- Ensure correct and up-to-date contact numbers are available.
- Advice must be taken from registered inspectors and independent consultancy.

"In the best regulated situations, however, accidents can and do happen. These are the procedures to follow if you cannot find a child."

1. Find out quickly

The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. Staff should know how many children are in their care and what activities they are engaged in (see Health & Safety Policy), whether on Nursery premises or outings.

2. Search systematically

The group is responsible for the missing child and for those in the group. Therefore, staff need to be deployed in the care of remaining children and in the search for the missing child.

- Check the register- was the child attending today?
- Count and recount the children to ensure who is missing.
- Check with room colleagues.
- Check other areas of the Nursery, inside and outside, and with staff so that all know the problem. Try to establish who was the last to see the child, when and what they were doing.
- Without alarming them, ask the children themselves whether they have seen the child who is missing (the child may be engaged in a game of hide and seek).
- Seek support from the messengers on site in Polaris House.

3. Parents

Alarming them as little as possible, the most senior staff member, would call the child's parents/carers on their contact numbers. If the child lives within walking distance and is able to make the journey, one staff member should make the journey on foot in order to catch up with or intercept the child if possible. Then make circuit checks of the surrounding area.

Remember: - once parents are informed they will need advice and support.

4. The Police

If the above steps do not locate the child, the police must be called. They have the resources to conduct a search and speed is important.

5. Informing others

Carry out regular risk assessments and staff training. Ensure correct and up-to-date contact numbers are at hand.

If you do have to call the police, then Ofsted Early Years Department need to be informed also. They will need to know

- What risk assessment procedures you have
- What systems are in place to prevent this happening
- What you did at what time and in what order
- Whom you informed and when
- They will want to conduct their own investigation.

Contact Chairperson of the North Star Nursery Management Committee and relevant Research Council Representative.

Contact the insurance company (Pre-School Learning Alliance/Royal & Sun Alliance, call the Insurance Manager at National Centre 0207 697 2585). S/he will advise you and should contact the insurers on your behalf, otherwise contact them direct.

6. The Accident & Incident book

Start to record the event and actions taken as soon as an adult is able to do so. It is very important, even if the child is likely to be found quickly. It will provide evidence for potential hazards as well as those incidents that actually happen. Record when the child was last seen and anything unusual about the child's behaviour or messages from parents/carers.

7. Dealing with people's reactions

The child's parents/carers will be distressed, frightened and probably angry, with other emotions expressed as well; because of this people's behaviour can be unpredictable. These feelings are natural. If safety issues have been talked through with parents and they are aware of the systems in place, both the Nursery and the parents should feel more comfortable with the situation and there is a known course of action to follow.

From the very beginning it is important to be careful about the words used when talking to people about the incident. Do not imply that you accept responsibility as this may invalidate your insurance. Remember to appear caring.

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened
- That a full investigation is in hand
- That Ofsted have been informed and will carry out an investigation
- That the Nursery Management Committee has been informed and will support in any way possible
- Do not say "no comment" which makes you appear indifferent.

8. Dealing with the media

Distressed parents may contact the local press, or reporters may hear about the incident if the Police are involved. It is advisable for one person to speak on behalf of the Nursery/Holiday Club, preferably the Chairperson or Nursery Manager in consultation with the Committee. However, reporters do not always approach the group direct. As early as is possible advise all adults (parents/carers, staff and students) that they should refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson.

By informing the Pre-School Learning Alliance, the regional centre will inform the local staff who in turn will support the Nursery and draw upon the charity's PR company, who will advise the Nursery.

9. Informing other parents and carers

Other parents need to be given brief, accurate information quickly. This will help prevent gossip. Contact should be made via telephone or if possible by calling a short meeting, in any case a letter should be sent home with each child. We cannot hide what has happened, nor should we try to. It is important that all people connected with the Nursery can learn from the events to ensure it does not happen again.

It will be good practice to inform the local '*Early Years Team*' and the '*Nursery Watch Pyramid System* (see Notice Board in Office).

10. When the child is found

During this distressing time, however brief, all the adults involved suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control these emotions when the child is found. Try to remember the child, too

- might have been afraid and distressed and need comfort.
- be completely unaware of having done anything wrong (one child found quite safe after a terrifying few minutes said simply, "I just went to get mummy" PsLA)
- needs to understand why they must not leave the group or the building and why.

Use this opportunity to talk to the children about their safety.

11. Support and advice

All people involved will need support and possible counselling after the event. Staff should discuss and review the day and any changes they would like to make in hindsight. The parents of the child in question need to be able to see the written account of the incident and question the actions of staff.

Other points of contact are:-

- Pre –school Learning Alliance for policy and procedure clarification.
- Pre-school Learning Alliance Development worker
- Ofsted Early Years Inspectorate/Adviser.

This policy links to:	Health and Safety Policy Risk Assessment Policy Security Policy Ratio Maintenance Policy Unexplained Absence, Arriving and Departing Procedure Communications Policy Special Educational Needs Policy Positive Behaviour Management Policy Confidentiality Policy Data Protection Act Statement Walks, Outings and Off-Site Procedures Staff Induction Staff Training Staff Handbook Complaints Procedure
-----------------------	---

Policy Review History	
2008	v.1
August 2015	v.2
September 2016	v.3

This policy will be reviewed in September 2017 unless a review of events, legislation or guidance from health professionals or Ofsted indicates that a review should take place sooner.