**MISSING CHILD POLICY.**

At Cowling Preschool, children’s safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times. In the unlikely event of a chid going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

**Policy Statement.**

Our children’s safety is our highest priority. Every attempt is made through carrying out procedures and the exit/entrance procedure in particular to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. Head counts will be performed pre, during and post any activity taking place both on and off the premises. Doors and gates will be monitored throughout the session to ensure a secure, safe environment is maintained.

**Procedures.**

Child going missing on the premises:

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the setting leader is alerted.
* The setting leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and the outside area.
* The setting leader calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
* The register is checked to make sure no other child has gone astray.
* Doors and windows are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
* The setting leader talks to 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. The chairperson comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.

Child going missing on an outing:

* 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 no other child has gone astray. One other member of staff searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
* The setting leader must be contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
* The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
* The setting leader contacts the parent, and asks them to make their way to the preschool.
* Staff take the remaining children back to the preschool.
* In an indoor venue, the staff should contact the venue’s security, who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
* The setting leader 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.
* The setting leader or a member of staff may be required by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

**The Investigation.**

* Staff should remain calm and not let other children become anxious or worried.
* The setting leader together with the chairperson speaks with the parents.
* The chairperson and the management committee carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff who were on the outing.
* The key person writes a report detailing:

1. The date and time of the report.
2. What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
3. When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
4. What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
5. The time it is estimated that the child went missing.

* A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened and steps should be taken immediately to prevent future incidents.
* If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff must co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all respects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children’s social services may be involved if it seems likely there is a child protection issue to address.
* The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see reporting of accidents and Incidents Policy); the local Health and Safety Officer may also wish to investigate and decide if there is a case for prosecution.
* In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
* The insurance provider is informed.

**This policy was adopted on .………………………………….......**

**Date to be reviewed ...…………………………………….**

**Signed on behalf of the management committee …………………………………………**

**Name of signatory …………………………………………**

**Role of signatory (e.g. Chair/owner) …………………………………………**

**For Management and staff review:**

**Managing People**

* Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try and keep everyone as calm as possible.
* The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer. They may blame themselves and feeling 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 will be feeling angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out a staff member over others or direct their anger at the manager. When dealing with a parent there should always be two members of staff - the Manager and the Chairperson should both meet with the parent together, as far as possible. 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 not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer the children’s questions honestly and also reassure them.
* In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and 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.