



Harvard Park Policies and Procedures:

Missing Child

19. Missing Child

Policy statement

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 exit/entrance procedure, to ensure the security of children is always maintained. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises (inside the building)

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff who notices informs the designated safeguarding lead who initiates a search within the setting.
- If the child is found on-site, the designated safeguarding lead checks on the welfare of the child and investigates the circumstances of the incident.
- If the child is not found on-site. One member of staff searches the immediate vicinity, if there is no sign of the child, the police are called immediately. The parents/carers are then called and informed.
- The designated safeguarding lead contacts their designated officer/managing director.
- The register is checked and a head count is conducted 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.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The designated safeguarding lead talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

Child going missing off-site (outing or walk)

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

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the senior staff present carries out a headcount.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- If the child is not found, the senior staff calls the police, and then contacts the designated safeguarding lead (if not already on the outing).
- The designated safeguarding lead informs parents/carers.
- Members of staff return the children back to the setting as soon as possible if it is safe to do so.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, 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.
- The designated safeguarding lead contacts the designated officer/managing director.
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

Recording

- The designated safeguarding lead completes and circulates the incident report form to the designated officer/managing director on the same day that the incident occurred.

The Investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days). They are kept up to date with the investigation.
- The parent(s)/carer(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- The designated officer/ managing director carries out a full investigation.
- The designated safeguarding lead and the designated officer/ managing director speaks with the parents/carers together and explain the proves of the investigation.
- Staff and/or volunteers present during the incident write a full report. The reporting form is filed in the child's file. Staff do not discuss any missing child incident with the press.
- 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/carers. 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/carer 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/carers 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 registered provider. 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 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 registered provider will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press.

Dealing with the media

Dealing with the media, whether the press, television or radio, requires specific skills and expertise. The only employees who can deal with the media are those specifically authorised to do so.

- We will seek legal advice on how to handle social media requests and refer to the following guidance- [Handling media attention after a major incident - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/handling-media-attention-after-a-major-incident).
- Only the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) OR the following persons are authorised to deal with the media – Nicki Saunders and Tracey Milstead – the directors.
- Except the individuals identified above, employees are not authorised to deal with the media and should ensure that:
 - they do not speak, write or give interviews to the media
 - they do not bring the nursery into disrepute by publicising material which is confidential or against the interests of the nursery or its employees and families
 - if approached by the media, they immediately refer all enquiries to the appropriate person without answering questions.

This Policies and Procedures pack was adjusted by Harvard Park.

Date meeting was held on 30/04/2026

Signed on behalf of the Directors and Proprietors

Nicki Saunders and Tracey Milstead