



1.5 Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. We take all reasonable steps, through our outings procedures and our entrance and exit procedures, to ensure children always remain safe. In the unlikely event that a child goes missing, all staff must act immediately, remain calm and follow this procedure.

What every member of staff needs to know:

- Raise the alarm immediately using the agreed code phrase.
- Do not leave other children unsupervised.
- Search only your allocated area unless directed otherwise.
- Report immediately to the DSL or most senior member of staff if the child is not found.
- Remain calm and follow instructions.

Procedures

Child goes missing on the premises:

Stage 1 – Raise the alarm

- The child's group teacher says clearly and calmly: 'William Willow has lost his friend (child's name).' This discreetly alerts staff without unnecessarily alarming the children.
- Other staff immediately supervise the remaining children.

Stage 2 – Immediate search

- Carry out a rapid search of allocated areas (toilets, office, kitchen, cupboards and any area capable of hiding a child).
- The Manager or senior member of staff allocates search areas to avoid duplication.
- Staff should not leave the premises or wider search area unless directed by the Manager or Police.

Stage 3 – Escalation

- If the child is not immediately located, notify the DSL or most senior member of staff.
- The DSL/Manager contacts: Police, Parents/Carers, Ofsted and the LADO as appropriate.
- Provide Police with a recent photograph and description of the child's clothing.
- Remain calm, reassure children and do not discuss the incident in front of them.

Child goes missing from Forest School, Tractor Trailer or a Farm Walk

Stage 1 – Raise the alarm and secure the group

- As soon as a member of staff notices that a child is missing, that member of staff immediately raises the alarm – Say clearly to other staff 'William Willow has lost his friend (child's name).' This discreetly alerts staff without unnecessarily alarming the children.
- All children are gathered and a headcount is completed to ensure no other child is missing.
- Staff remain calm, reassure the children and avoid discussing the incident in front of them.

Stage 2 – Immediate search

- One designated member of staff carries out a rapid search of the immediate vicinity only.
- The remaining staff stay with the rest of the group and continue to supervise the children.
- Staff must not extend the search beyond the immediate area unless directed to do so by the Police.

Stage 3 – Escalation

- If the child is not located immediately, the senior member of staff contacts the Police and reports the child missing.
- The Manager is informed immediately (if not present on the outing).
- The Manager contacts the child's parent(s)/carer(s).
- The remaining children are returned to the setting as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.
- A senior member of staff remains at the location where the child went missing until the Police arrive.
- Staff provide the Police with a recent photograph (where available) and a description of the child's clothing.

Emergency contacts

- Police – 101 (or 999 if an immediate emergency).
- Parents/Carers.
- Ofsted – 0300 123 1231.
- LADO – 01865 810603 (Jo Lloyd).

Remember: Children who remain in your care continue to need your full attention. While the missing child is the priority, the safety and wellbeing of the remaining children must be maintained throughout the incident.

Once the Police arrive

Once the Police have arrived, they will take the lead in managing the incident and coordinating the search. All staff must:

- Follow the instructions of the Police at all times.
- Continue to supervise and support the remaining children.
- Provide any information requested promptly and accurately.
- Avoid speculation and share only factual information.
- Remain available to assist the Police until released by the senior officer in charge.

The Manager or DSL will continue to liaise with the Police, parents/carers, Ofsted and other agencies as required until the incident has been resolved.

Once the child has been found

Once the immediate incident has been resolved, the following actions will be taken:

- Inform Ofsted as soon as possible and keep them updated.
- Managers carry out a full investigation and obtain written incident reports from all staff/volunteers who were present.
- Incident reports should include: date/time, location, staff and children present, when the child was last seen, actions taken and outcome.
- Identify how the incident occurred and any improvements required.
- Parents are kept informed throughout the investigation.
- Co-operate fully with any Police or Children's Social Care investigation.
- Inform the Early Years Alliance insurance provider where appropriate.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are to be advised.

Supporting staff, children and families

Missing child incidents are extremely distressing. The purpose of any investigation is to establish the facts, identify lessons learned and improve future practice. Staff will be treated fairly and supported throughout the process. Children will be reassured in an age-appropriate way and staff must not discuss the incident in front of them. Parents will be kept informed with sensitivity. Staff must not speak to the press without management approval.

Learning and review

- Review the incident and identify lessons learned.
- Update risk assessments and procedures where required.
- Share learning with staff through meetings or supervision.
- Review whether any additional training is required.

This policy was adopted by	The Willow On The Farm Nursery
On	15 th July 2019
Review Frequency	Annually or sooner if required
Drawn up on behalf of the provider by	Dawn Wilson-Fry
	Deputy Manager
Reviewed	25/08/2021 DWF
	27/06/2022 DWF
	12/07/23 NJR
	30/07/2024 NJR
	10/08/2025 NJR
	29/07/2026 NJR