

## 1.5 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 procedure and our exit/entrance procedure, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

This policy shall be applied whether the group are at the Kindergarten HQ, within the Woodland Kindergarten, or at another location (i.e walking).

Woodland boundaries are clearly marked and made known to the group.

The group will be counted in and checked at start and end of day, then at other relevant points in the day – particularly after activities that include members splitting up.

Good communication within the group will encourage collective responsibility for each others' safety – leaders are always approachable and should be made aware if there are any concerns as to a participants whereabouts.

If a child is discovered to be missing from the group the following procedure will be implemented immediately:

The Kindergarten Manager is to be informed immediately.

The activity for the rest of the group will be suspended and the remaining children will be given a quiet activity, being careful not to increase their anxiety. At least one adult is to remain with this group whilst the other adults search for the missing child.

If after five minutes, the child has not been located, the Manager is to phone 999 and alert the police, following the Emergency Procedures Policy

Details of the situation, including the last known position of the missing child, their description and clothing and any timings will be relayed.

The parents/guardians will be contacted to inform them of the situation.

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Details will be recorded on the Emergency Procedures Record Sheet.

Our manager contacts our owner and reports the incident. Our owner comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation.

### *The investigation*

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- Our owner, carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager, together with our owner, speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- 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. 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 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 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 owner. 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 final 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 owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted by	Hidden Valley Bushcraft	(name of provider)
On	25/08/2018	(date)
Date reviewed	16/10/2019	(date)
Date to be reviewed	16/10/2020	
Signed on behalf of the provider	<i>L Goldsmith</i>	
Name of signatory	Louise Goldsmith	

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)

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Owner

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