Missing Child

Little Nestlings takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in their care do not leave a session unaccompanied.

If a member of staff is not able to account for a child's whereabouts, the following action will be taken:

Procedure for a child going missing from the nursery or leaving the nursery unaccompanied:

The nursery is responsible for the missing child and all the other children in the setting.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person will alert the Manager who must establish who last saw the missing child, where and when.
- The remaining children will be gathered into one large group, with one/two adults, leaving the remaining adults to search the nursery systematically.
- Ensure all adults are aware of the situation.
- A register will be taken to make sure that no other children have gone astray, and the children will be asked if they have seen the child that is missing.
- The doors will be checked to see if these has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The manager will carry out an investigation into the incident.
- If the child cannot be found, the nursery manager will contact the child's parents and warn them that the child may be attempting to get home.
- If they are unavailable the setting will use the emergency contact numbers.
- If the child lives within walking distance of the setting, one adult will make the journey on foot in order to catch up with or intercept the child if possible.
- Remember, that as soon as parents are informed, they will need advice and support.
- If the above steps do not locate the child, the police will be contacted to report the child missing.

Procedure for a child going missing on an outing:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that all other children are accounted for.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- The nursery manager will be contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The nursery manager will contact the child's parent(s).

- Our staff will take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or manager where applicable, 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 manager will carry out an investigation into the incident.

Informing other people

We will ensure that:

- We make regular checks to ensure that if an incident of this sort does happen, we have all the necessary phone numbers at hand – correct, up to date and kept together.
- If the police are called, then the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and Ofsted will be informed.

The Investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The nursery manager will carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- The manager will speak with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with the nursery 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

We accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry, threaten legal action or approach the local press. We will be

clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

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 a manager. 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 management 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.

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 sensible for one person, which will be the Manager, to be the one who speaks for the setting.

All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson.

Informing other parents

We recognise that other parents will need to be given brief, accurate information as rapidly as possible. We will ensure that this happens by:

- Calling a short meeting when parents/carers collect children, or
- Talking to parents/carers when they arrive at the next session, or
- Sending a note home with each child.

This policy was reviewed in	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
September 2026	*Elizabeth Ross-Whittall*	*September 2027*