

## **Wendens Ambo Pre-School**

### **1.0 Child Protection**

#### **1.5 Missing Child**

##### **Statement of intent**

At Wendens Ambo Pre-School we believe the care and safety of all children to be paramount, both on and off the premises, and every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings procedure and our exit/entrance procedure, to ensure the security of children at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is as follows.

##### **Aim**

We comply strictly with all safety procedures making it impossible for a child to leave the premises during a session.

##### **Methods**

- A member of staff is by the door to welcome children in the morning, also making sure that no child attempts to leave.
- Once all children attending that morning's session are present a padlock is put onto the gate to keep the children in and intruders out, the door is then locked. The fire escape door is fitted with an alarm which is switched on and tested during the daily risk assessment.
- During outside play, the children are fully supervised by at least two members of staff at all times
- A head count is taken regularly during session time by staff
- If visitors enter the Pre-School during session times a member of staff remains at the gate/door whilst it is unlocked to ensure that no child can leave without an authorised adult.
- At collection times parents may enter the Pre-School to collect their child. A member of staff will stand at the door to prevent children leaving without their parents. Whenever staffing allows, a member of staff will also stand at the gate as a further precaution to stop children leaving unaccompanied by their parents.

##### **If a child goes missing from the Pre-School**

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the child's key person or a relevant member of staff should alert the Manager or Deputy Manager.
- Staff to remain calm, call all children to carpet and remain calmly with them whilst checking the register to make sure no other child has gone astray.
- One/two members of staff to search the Pre-School and garden to look for missing child.

- Doors and gates are checked to determine if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could have wandered out.
- The Manager or Deputy Manager will talk to all members of staff in order to establish what may have happened.
- If the child is not quickly found, the Manager or Deputy Manager will contact the police straight away and report the child as missing. If it is suspected the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The child's parents are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The Pre-School Manager or Deputy Manager writes a report detailing the date and time of the incident, names of all staff and children present, and when the child was last seen.
- The Pre-School Manager or Deputy Manager contacts the Chairperson of the Management Committee and reports the incident. The Chairperson will come to the Pre-School immediately, or as soon as reasonably possible, and carries out a full investigation of the incident, taking written statements from all members of staff who were present at the time.
- Social services may be informed if it seems likely there is a child-protection issue to be addressed.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements and is recorded in the Pre-Schools Incident Book. The local authority Health and Safety office may wish to investigate and decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- Ofsted is informed of the incident.
- The insurance provider is informed.

### **If a child goes missing whilst on an outing with staff**

This describes what to do when our staff has taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Pre-School Manager in our setting premises. If the Manager has accompanied children on the outing the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, a whistle is blown to signal to all children and staff that they need to gather together immediately, and a head count will be done.
- The register will be called to check that no other child has gone astray.
- One/two members of staff will check the immediate vicinity, but will not search beyond that, looking in all hiding places for the missing child.
- If the child is not found quickly a member of staff on the outing will contact the Police and reports the child as missing.
- The Pre-School Manager or Deputy Manager is contacted immediately (if they are not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The Pre-School Manager or Deputy Manager will contact the parent(s) of the child.
- 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 the Pre-School Manager or Deputy Manager where applicable, will 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 Pre-School Manager or Deputy Manager contacts the Chair of the Management Committee and reports the incident. The Chair will come to the premises immediately, or as soon as reasonably possible, to carry out an investigation.
- Staff will remain calm and will not let the other children become anxious or worried.

### **The investigation**

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Chair carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff and volunteers who were present.
- The Pre-School Manager or Deputy Manager, together with the Chair of the Management Committee speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with the Pre-School 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 on 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 on the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place on 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 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.
- 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. The Pre-School Manager should ensure that any staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents may feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the Pre-School Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent(s) there should always be two members of staff present; one should be the Manager (or Deputy Manager) and where appropriate the Chair of the Management Committee should be present also. 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. 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. The Manager and/or Chair 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 from the Manager and/or the Management Committee.

After a review by the Committee Members and Staff this policy was adopted

on: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed on behalf of the Management

Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Signatory: \_\_\_\_\_

Role of signatory: \_\_\_\_\_