Missing Child Policy and Procedure

Beckside Pre-School & Nursery 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. The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. Staff will undertake periodic head counts. If in the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child's whereabouts the following action will be taken:

PROCEDURE FOR IF A CHILD LEAVES THE SETTING UNACCOMPANIED.

Search systematically

The setting is responsible for the missing child and all the other children in the setting. We will:

- Gather the remaining children into one large group, with one/two adults, leaving the remaining adults to search.
- Ask the children, without alarming them, if they have seen the child that is missing.
- Ensure all adults are aware of the situation.
- Establish who last saw the missing child, where and when.
- Check all rooms in the building.
- Check the immediate outside area.

Parents

The setting will:

- Call the child's parents to warn them that the child may be attempting to get home.
- If they are unavailable the setting will use the emergency contact number.
- Ensure that, 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.

Police

- If the above steps do not locate the child, the police will be called.

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 the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Ofsted are informed.
- If the owner/manager is not on the premises she will be informed as soon as possible.
- We will provide the following information to Ofsted/Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership:
  a) What happened?
  b) What systems are in place for preventing such occurrences?
  c) What we did, at what time and in what order.
  d) Who we informed and when.

  We will cooperate fully in any investigation.

Recording

We will start to build a record as soon as is possible in the incident log, this will include;

- The last definite sighting of the child.
- Any unusual behaviour of the missing child or other children.
- How many children were on the premises?
- How many adults were on the premises and who?
- What steps have been taken and when, by whom.

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Dealing with people's reactions

We accept that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry. If the setting shares all policies with parents/carers, the situation will be easier for all because there will be an understanding of working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding.
We accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved, 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. Responses could include:

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
- That a full investigation is in hand.
- That the LSCP/Ofsted has been informed and will be investigating.

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, usually the owner/manager, to be the one who speaks for the setting. All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson.

The spokesperson for Beckside Preschool & Nursery is Helen Kendall, Director/Owner

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.

When the child is found

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents and others; suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember;

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Remain calm and reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.

After the Incident

- We will review our current procedure.
- We will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.

Contacts

- Lincolnshire Police- incident reporting number: *01522 532222*
- Ofsted: Tel. 0300 123 1231
- Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Customer Service Centre: Tel.
  Office hours 01522 782111.
  Out of hours 01522 782333.

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Review Frequency: Annually or following changes to legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements or nursery procedures.