

Missing Child

Policy Statement

The Square Nursery School works with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children, and to give them the very best start in life.

The welfare of every child is paramount.

Children's safety is the highest priority at all times, both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outing's procedure and the exit / entrance procedure, to ensure the security of the children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child Going Missing on the Premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing all staff in the area must be notified.
- Notify the nursery leader.
- The remainder of the children group together while the register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The Square Nursery School leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden along with other staff member(s) that can safely leave the grouped children.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, the setting leader must contact the parent and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The setting leader must follow any advice given by the police.
- The Square Nursery School manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- An Incident form is completed outlining the exact events of what has happened.

Child Going Missing on an Outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting leader and / or other staff back in the setting. If the nursery Leader has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents often attend and are then responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The Square Nursery School leader or manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The Square Nursery School leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Square Nursery School leader follows any advice given by the police.
- The Square Nursery School leader contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the leader. The nursery is usually advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned there.
- Staff take the remaining children back to The Square Nursery School.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who should support the searching process.
- The Square Nursery School leader contacts the nursery owner if they are not present and reports the incident.
- The Square Nursery School manager, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.
- An Incident form is completed outlining the exact events of what has happened.

The Investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Square Nursery School leader together with the owner or deputy manager speaks with the parent(s).

- The manager and deputy, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- 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. Children's Social Services may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution. Ofsted is informed.
- 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.
- The 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.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Nursery leaders need to ensure that 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 staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff,

one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be a senior staff member or the nursery owner. 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. The 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, 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 nursery owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
14 th September 2025	Zoey Gordon	September 2026

This policy has been read and understood by the following staff members:

