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**Lost Child Policy**

**Reviewed February 2021**

Children’s safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made to ensure the security of children is withheld 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 the staff will alert the manager on duty, Jessica Kendrick and/or Charlotte Lucas. The time is noted.
* The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and gardens
* Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security.
* The incident is announced on the walkie talkie system so all staff can check their rooms, individual gardens, and external doors/gates
* If the child is not found within 10 minutes, the missing child is reported to the police and the parent is contacted.
* The manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen, and records are made.
* After the incident the manager, with the proprietor, carries out an investigation and ensures that any failings are corrected.

**Child going missing on an outing**

* 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 manager is contacted immediately, and the incident is reported.
* The manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
* The manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to Free Rangers or the outing venue as agreed with the manager. Free Rangers is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
* Staff take the remaining children back to Free Rangers.
* The manager, with the proprietor, carries out an investigation.
* The outing leader, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

###### The investigation

* Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
* The manager speaks with the parent(s).
* The manager and proprietor, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
* The staff member writes an incident report detailing:
* The date and time of the incident
* What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff member 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 Care 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.
* In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, 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. The manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

Please note that after an incident like this, both the child, other children involved and the staff might need trauma treatment after. Free Rangers would support this.

This policy was first adopted at a meeting of Free Rangers held on 1st August 2011 and Jan 2017 and then again in Sept 2018.

Signed: Role: Owner

Signed: Role: Nursery Manager