

## **Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection**

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.



### **Fun, Adventure and Learning in the woods**

## **1.5 Missing child**

### **Statement of intent**

The health & safety of children is of paramount importance. Wild Tots Forest Kindergarten staff & management work with children, parents and the community to ensure the safety of children and to give them the very best start in life.

We have strict procedures and policies in place to prevent children from leaving the kindergarten base site unattended and we take every care to ensure that these are followed. This includes maintaining a high ratio of adults to children which is adapted according to the ages and abilities of the individual children in our care.

Outings from the kindergarten base are thoroughly planned and only undertaken after risk / benefit assessments have been completed.

### **Procedures**

#### *Child going missing on the premises*

In the unlikely event that it is found that a child is missing we will act in accordance with the following procedures.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the manager will be informed and the children will gather in their key worker groups.
- A headcount will be carried out to ensure that no other child has gone astray. • The manager will nominate as many adults as possible to thoroughly search the immediate vicinity of the last place the child was seen.
- All staff will be extra vigilant to any potentially suspicious behaviour or persons in the area. • The staff will be careful not to create an atmosphere of panic and to ensure that the other children remain safe and adequately supervised, returning to the kindergarten base if felt this is necessary. • If after 5 minutes of thorough searching the child is still missing, the manager will inform the police and then the child's parents.
- While waiting for the police and parents to arrive, searches for the child will continue. During

this period, other staff members will maintain as normal a routine as is possible for the rest of the

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children attending the setting.

The incident will be recorded in the Incident Book with the following information:

- The date and time of the report

- Which staff/ children were in the group
- When the child was last seen in the group
- What has taken place in the group since then
- The time it is estimated that the child went missing

A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the child's key person alerts our setting manager. ▪

The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.

- Our manager will carry out a thorough search of the Forest school site.
- 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 within 5 minutes, our manager will call the police immediately and reporting the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police. ▪ Our manager talks to our staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
  - Our manager contacts our director and reports the incident. Our director comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation, [with our management team where appropriate].

### *The investigation*

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation. ▪ Our director carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- Our manager, together with our owner speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us 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. which part of the setting.
  - Which staff/children were present and the name of the staff member who was designated as

responsible for the missing child.

- When the child was last seen at the kindergarten site, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place at the kindergarten setting 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*

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- 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 our manager and the other should be our director. 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 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. Our director 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.

This policy was adopted by Wildlings Forest Kindergarten On August 2020

Date to be reviewed August 2023

Signed on behalf of the provider H.Standen

Name of signatory Hannah Standen

Role of signatory (e.g. chair,  
director or owner)

Director