

Missing Child Policy

Published: 05 June 2025

Next review: 05 June 2026



Purpose of the Policy

The safety of children in my care is taken very seriously, and every precaution is taken to ensure that children do not leave a session unaccompanied. The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered.

Supervision and Security Measures

Children are supervised at all times to prevent them from leaving the premises unsupervised. I have measures in place to ensure unauthorised persons cannot enter the setting, including CCTV systems and regular checks of visitor identities. Visitors to the setting are required to sign in on a visitor book, and additional security checks may be implemented for individuals not known to me.

In the event of not being able to account for a child's whereabouts, the following actions will be taken.

Procedure for a Child Going Missing or Leaving the Setting Unaccompanied

1. Immediate Action:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, I will raise the alarm.
- The remaining children will be gathered into one group and asked to remain seated together and as quiet as possible to aid in calling for the missing child or hearing their location.
- Ensure any adults in the home are aware of the situation and are cooperating to find the child.

2. Initial Search:

- A register will be taken to make sure no other children are missing.
- The children will be asked if they have seen the missing child.
- Doors and gates will be checked to see if there has been a breach of security.
- CCTV will be checked for any footage of the child leaving the setting.

3. If a Breach is Identified:

- If another registered adult is present, they will be asked to search the local area.
- If no other adults are present, the child's parents will be contacted to warn them that the child may be attempting to get home.
- If parents are unavailable, the emergency contact will be called.
- Support and advice will be given to the child's parents as soon as they are informed.

4. If the Child is Not Located:

- If the above steps do not locate the child, the police will be contacted on 999 to report the child missing.

Procedure for a Child Going Missing on an Outing

1. Immediate Action:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the children will be asked to stand together, and a headcount will be completed to ensure no other child is missing.
- Raise the alarm to other adults in the area, giving a loud description of the missing child.

2. Initial Search:

- With the children congregated, search the immediate vicinity, keeping the children in view at all times.
- If at a business premises, a staff member will be asked to inform the manager so a lockdown can be initiated.

3. If the Child is Not Located:

- The child's parents will be contacted to warn them that the child may be attempting to get home.
- If parents are unavailable, the emergency contact will be called.
- Support and advice will be given to the child's parents as soon as they are informed.
- The police will be informed of the emergency on 999.
- Acting on police advice, the group will remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- Provide the police with a recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing.

Informing Other People

Regular checks will be made to ensure that all necessary phone numbers are correct, up-to-date, and kept together.

If the police are called then the Calderdale Safeguarding Children's Board and Ofsted will be informed.

The investigation

Ofsted will be informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.

A full investigation will be completed, taking written statements from all adults who were present.

The parents will be spoken to and explained the process of the investigation.

The parents may also raise a complaint or contact Ofsted.

There will be an incident report created detailing:

- The date and time of the incident.
- Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
- Which adults/children were in the premises/on the outing.
- When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
- A conclusion as to how the breach of security happened.

If a police investigation is warranted, all adults will cooperate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing the adults present and the parents. Children's social care may be involved if a child protection issue needs addressing.

The insurance provider will be informed.

Managing people

I accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and 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.

I will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. It will be important to be focused on their needs and not discuss the incident in front of them. Children's questions will be answered honestly, with a view to also reassure them.

Dealing with the media

I will not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking legal advice and appointing a professional legal spokesperson.

All adults and parents will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed legal spokesperson.

Informing other parents

I recognise that other parents will need to be given brief, accurate information as rapidly as possible. I 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.