

LOST CHILD POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Children's safety is of paramount concern to Branston Pre-School. In the event that a child becomes lost while in the care of the pre-school, the pre-school will implement the following procedures. These ensure that a systematic approach to finding the child is taken, whilst other children in the pre-school are kept safe and calm.

The Search

In the event that a child is missing, we will instigate an immediate search for the child, notify parents and authorities at the appropriate stage and maintain a high level of care for other children in the pre-school.

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the Pre-school Manager/Supervisor must be alerted. The Manager/supervisor will carry out an initial search of the Pre-school premises. This will include:

- Checking doors/gates for a potential breach of security
- All Pre-school rooms
- Children's, adults and disabled toilets
- Cloakroom area, including behind coats
- Garden area
- Sheds and other storage
- In and around garden play equipment
- All indoor cupboards
- Under seating, under counter areas, behind curtains

While the initial search is carried out, the register should be checked to confirm that the child was in the Pre-School that session, that they have not been collected early and to ensure that no other child has gone astray.

The Manager/supervisor will then send a member of staff and any extra helpers available to search for the child. The search should start with:

- Checking the Pre-school grounds, under and around parked cars etc.
- All other parts of the school

The search should be completed as thoroughly and as quickly as possible, before reporting back to the Manager/ supervisor.

While the extended search is being made, the Manager/supervisor should establish from staff/visitors/visitors who have since left when the child was last seen, what they were wearing and their emotional state (happy, upset etc.) and record this information.

If the child is not found, the Manager/supervisor should contact the police, report the child as missing and follow their advice.

The Manager/supervisor should contact the parents/carer and report the situation. The parents/carer should be asked to come to the Pre-School by the normal route the child would take, preferably by walking. If the child is still missing when the parents arrive at the Pre-School, police advice should be followed. This may include the parents returning home by the normal route and waiting, in case the child manages to make their way home.

The Manager/supervisor should contact the Chairperson to inform them of the situation and the Chairperson should visit the Pre-School as quickly as possible.

Telephone lines should be kept as free as possible so that important information is not delayed.

Pre-School activities for the other children will continue as normal, with staff not involved in the search giving them their full attention, keeping the atmosphere as calm as possible.

The Investigation

The chairperson will carry out a full investigation.

The Manager/supervisor must write an incident report detailing

- the date & time of the incident
- which staff, children, other adults were present
- when and where the child was last seen
- action taken to find the child
- what has taken place since then
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- A conclusion should be drawn as to how the incident occurred

The incident should be reported under RIDDOR arrangements and should be recorded in the incident book. The local authority Health and Safety Officer may also wish to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution OFSTED should be informed.

The insurance department at the PSLA should be informed.

If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff should co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Social Services may also be involved if it seems likely that there will be a child protection issue to address.

Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to keep everyone as calm as possible. Staff will feel worried and may blame themselves. Parents will be fraught and may be angry. Distraught and angry parents should always be dealt with by two members of staff (The Manager/supervisor and the chairperson). Children may also be worried and need reassurance. Depending on the severity of the final outcome, staff and children may need additional support or counselling and the Chairperson should use their discretion to decide what action to take.

Staff and committee members must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.