

# ***Missing Child Policy***

## **Statement of Intent**

Blakeney Pre-school' staff will take a shared and equal responsibility in ensuring the safety of children in their care and of knowing where they are at all times. In the event of a child going missing from Blakeney Pre-school, staff will follow procedures to facilitate the rapid and safe recovery of the child.

## **Aims**

- To acknowledge that children can go missing and take equal responsibility for minimizing this risk.
- To ensure that a missing child is located as quickly and safely as possible and that the correct people are informed of the incident.
- To inform parents/carers of our procedures so that if a child does go missing, they can be assured that we are doing everything that we are capable of to find them.

## **In order to fulfil these aims**

### **Systems in place to minimise the risk of children going missing**

- Appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the premises and surrounding site is secure. Gates and doors are kept closed and where appropriate secured (see [Premises and Security Policy](#)).
- The attendance register is taken at the start of each session and the number of children is noted. Parents also sign their children in on arrival. It is the responsibility of every member of staff to be aware how many children are present and a quick head count should be taken at intervals during each session.
- Children who arrive late must be recorded in the register and those who leave early should be marked out accordingly.
- Key persons of new children and all staff should take extra care to be aware of their whereabouts and ensure they know the boundaries of where they can and cannot go.
- Parents will be advised of our security procedures and be given the opportunity to discuss any concerns, particularly if their child has an adventurous nature.
- Parents must be made aware of the need for supervision of children at all times especially while waiting for the group to open and of their responsibility to ensure that their child's arrival is noted. Similarly, parents must be aware that once their child has been handed back to them at the end of the session, the child is once again their responsibility.
- At the end of outside play it must be ascertained that the correct number of children are still present. A head count must be taken as the children are brought in and before the door is closed. A member of staff must always check the outside area after all of the children have gone in.

## Procedures to follow in the event of a child found to be missing

The sooner an absence is noted, the greater the chances of finding the child safe. The following procedures should be followed as soon as a child is known to be missing.

- The missing child should be identified and their last known whereabouts recorded.
- The Pre-school Leader will arrange for the other children to be satisfactorily supervised (the remaining children should be gathered together for a story/music time).
- Without alarming them, the children will be asked if they have seen the missing child.
- A systematic search will be carried out to see if the child can be located in the surrounding area.
  - All toilets, cupboards, kitchen, under tables, behind curtains, anywhere a child might hide.
  - Outside areas including shed, school playground and field area -also check with Mandy (school secretary if she has seen the child)
  - All exits where a child may have been able to leave the premises or site.
  - The car park and staff car park
  - 1 or 2 staff members (depending on ratios –will request help from school staff) will then continue to search for the child in the surrounding roads and the route that the child may take home ( taking a mobile phone to stay in contact with Blakeney Pre-school).
- At this point, the Pre-school Leader will inform
  - **The parents/carers of the child**
    - i. If they do not answer the phone a message must be left on any answering service before attempting alternative numbers.
    - ii. If parents do not answer the first contact number the police must be called before attempting other child contact numbers.
    - iii. If contacted, parents should be advised to stay at home in case the child arrives there; be advised that we are contacting the emergency services and that a member of staff is searching the route the child may take home.
    - iv. Parents should be asked for information of anywhere else the child may head for.
  - **The police and/or and other emergency services**
    - i. The police have the resources to conduct a wide-ranging search at speed.
  - **The appropriate OfSTED officer**
    - i. OfSTED will need to know the systems in place for preventing this occurrence and details of the incident.
- As soon as possible after the incident the following people should be notified
  - Blakeney Pre-school' insurance company
  - ALL parents
  - Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board via Children's Help Desk
- It is natural that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry. Other parents will be rightly concerned for the security. All emotions and reactions must be dealt with in a caring and understanding way. However, until the situation has been fully investigated by all parties staff must refer any parent and media enquiries to the pre-school committee.

## **Records**

- It is important that a record of events with accurate timings should be logged on an Incident Form by the Designated Child Protection Officer.
- The following details will need to be noted in order to help as much as possible in the investigation and search:
  - Date and location of disappearance.
  - The adult who was responsible for the care of the child at the time of his/her disappearance.
  - What the child was wearing.
  - Any distinguishing features.
  - The circumstances surrounding disappearance.
  - The time parents/others agencies were contacted.
  - A record of events.

## **Contact details**

Children's Help Desk 01452 426565

OfSTED 0300 123 1231

Local Authority Designated Officer for Allegations (LADO) 01452 426994 or 583638

The LIVE version of the Designated Child Protection Officer handbook should be used for guidance. [www.gscb.org.uk/handbook](http://www.gscb.org.uk/handbook)