

## MISSING CHILD POLICY

The welfare of children in our care is paramount. We will take every precaution to ensure that children remain safe within the boundaries of The Life Nursery.

### Security measures in place to minimise risk of a child going missing:

- Main door operated by an electronic lock which can only be opened from the outside by a magnetic 'fob' which all staff have, and from the inside by a push button situated high on the wall out of a child's reach.
- Windows set high in the wall with restricted opening preventing children from climbing through them.
- Children greeted by member of staff on arrival and handed over to parent/carer when leaving.
- Register completed promptly at beginning of each session by a member of staff and time in and out recorded. The number of children is displayed on whiteboard in room on the entrance door.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to help their child to self-register with their photo and name registration card.
- Regular 'head counts' are carried out during the day.
- Gate to nursery grounds and play area secured by bolts that cannot be reached by children.
- High perimeter fence to out-door play area which does not allow for climbing over.
- Member of staff supervising outdoor play to check all areas of grounds before coming in at end of session to ensure no child is left outside.

### In the rare event that a child is reported as missing the following actions will be taken:

- Staff will remain calm and inform the Manager.
- The manager will assign members of staff to search the immediate and surrounding areas including 'hideaways' such as den area, toilets, under tables, shelves etc.
- The remainder of the staff will continue to supervise the rest of the children with minimal disruption.
- If, after a thorough search it proves unsuccessful in establishing the whereabouts of the child, the Directors of The Life Nursery, the emergency services and the parent/carer of the child will be contacted and informed.
- Parents/carers will be informed of progress every 10 minutes.
- On arrival of the emergency services and the child's parent/carer, the Manager will be responsible for informing them of all information in respect to the missing child and what action has been taken.
- A photo of the child will be given to the police.
- Once the situation has been resolved, an internal investigation will take place to examine how it occurred and to put immediate measures in place to ensure it does not happen again.
- The Manager will compile a report and send it to Ofsted and the Local Authority.

### The Investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and are kept up to date with the investigation.
- The Directors carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who are present.
- Our Manager, together with our Directors speak to the parent/s and explain the process of investigation.
- Parents may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:-
  - The date and time of incident
  - Where the child went missing from
  - Which staff and children were in the nursery and the named staff member who was designated as responsible for the child (ie outdoor area).
  - When the child was last seen in the nursery, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing
  - What has taken place in the nursery when the child went missing
  - The report is counter-signed by the Manager and the date and time added

- A conclusion is drawn up 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 investigation, including interviewing the staff and parents, children's social care may be involved if it seems likely there is a child protection issue to address.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken place, Ofsted are advised.
- The insurance provider is informed.

**Managing People**

- Missing children incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- Our staff will feel worried about the child, especially the designated person responsible. 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 understandably target of parent anger and may be afraid. The Manager will ensure that any staff under investigation are not only treated fairly but receives support whilst feeling vulnerable.
- Parents will feel angry or frought and may want to blame our staff and may single out one member of staff over the others. They may direct their anger at the Manager. When dealing with a distraught or angry parent there must always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Manager and the other should be the Deputy or a Director. No matter how understandable the parents anger may be, aggression or threats against The Life Nursery staff are not tolerated and the police should be called.
- The remaining children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The 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 the child is not found or is injured or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our Directors will use their discretion to decide what action may be taken.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press/social media, without taking advice.

Reviewed by Louise Gray, Nursery Manager and Kirsty Beck, Deputy Manager – September 2024

Policy read and agreed by:

Name	Date