

Wigwam Forest School Ltd

20. Missing child

Policy statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The owner will carry out a thorough search of the buildings and outdoor space.
- Doors and 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, the owner calls the police immediately and reports 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.
- The owner talks to staff/volunteers to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

The investigation

- The owner carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff/volunteers who were present.
- The owner, speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff/volunteer present writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
 - Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
 - 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.
 - The report is counter-signed by the owner 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/volunteers 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.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- 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/volunteers will feel worried about the child, especially the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child. 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. The owner ensures that any staff/volunteers 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. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is the owner. 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/volunteers may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The owner will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff/volunteers must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy was adopted by	Natalie Gafford	(name of provider)
On	July 2021	(date)
Date to be reviewed	July 2020	(date)
Signed on behalf of the provider	Wigwam Forest School Ltd	
Name of signatory	Natalie Gafford	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Director/Owner	