



**Little Acorns Nursery
at High Halden**

Church Hill, High Halden
Kent TN26 3JB
Telephone 01233 850113

Uncollected Child/Missing Child

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure 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 on the premises:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the manager.
- The manager calls the police and reports the child as missing and then calls the parent.
- The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson comes to setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the Trustee Committee where applicable.

Child going missing on an outing:

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the manager and/or other staff back at the setting. If the

manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated practitioner and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- The manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The manager contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson comes to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the Trustee Committee where applicable.
- The manager or a member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation:

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The manager together with the chairperson or representative from the Trustee Committee speaks the parents.
- The chairperson and Trustee Committee carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.

The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:

- ❖ **The date and time of report.**
- ❖ **What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the designated staff responsible for the missing child.**
- ❖ **When the child was last seen in the group/outing**

- ❖ **What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.**
- ❖ **The time it is estimated that the child went missing.**
 - A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
 - If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. 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 Health & Safety policy); the local authority Health & Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
 - In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
 - 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.
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The manager will ensure that staff under investigation are not fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative, or proprietor. No matter how understandable the parent's anger

may be, aggression or threats against 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. 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, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The chairperson or proprietor will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Uncollected Child

In the event that a child is not collected by an authorised adult at the end of a session/day, the setting puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the child is cared for safely by an experienced and qualified practitioner who is known to the child. We will ensure that the child receives a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible.

We inform parents/carers of our procedures so that, if they are unavoidably delayed, they will be reassured that their children will be properly cared for.

Procedures

Parents of children starting at the setting are asked to provide the following specific information which is recorded on our Registration Form:

- **Home address and telephone number – if the parents do not have a telephone, an alternative number must be given, perhaps a neighbour or close relative.**

- **Place of work, address and telephone number and signatures of adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting, for example a childminder or grandparent.**
- **Who has parental responsibility for the child.**
- **Information about any person who does not have legal access to the child.**
- On occasions when parents are aware that they will not be home or in their usual place of work, they inform us in writing of how they can be contacted.
- On occasions when parents or the persons normally authorised to collect the child are not able to collect the child, they provide us with written details of the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting the child. We agree with parents how to verify the identity of the person who is to collect their child.
- Parents are informed that if they are not able to collect the child as planned, they must inform us so that we can begin to take back-up measures. We provide parents with our contact telephone number.
- We inform parents that we apply our child protection procedures in the event their children are not collected from the setting by an authorised adult within one hour after the setting has closed and the staff can no longer supervise the child on our premises.
- If a child is not collected at the end of the session/day, we follow the following procedures:
 - **The child's file is checked for any information about changes to the normal collection routines.**
 - **If no information is available, parents/carers are contacted at home or work.**
 - **If it is unsuccessful, the adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting – and whose telephone numbers are recorded on the Registration Form – are contacted.**
 - **All reasonable attempts are made to contact the parents or nominated carers.**
 - **The child does not leave the premises with anyone other than those named on the Registration Form or in their file.**

- If no-one collects the child after one hour and there is no-one who can be contacted to collect the child, we apply the procedures for uncollected children.
- We contact our local authority children's social care team: **0300 0411 111**
- For full day care, this will be out of hours duty officer: **0300 0419 191**
- The child stays at the setting in the care of two fully vetted workers until the child is safely collected with by the parents or by a social care worker.
- Social Care will aim to find the parent or relative if they are unable to do so, the child will become looked after by the local authority.
- Under no circumstances do staff go to look for the parent, nor, do they take the child home with them.
- A full written report of the incident is recorded in the child's file.
- Depending on the circumstances, we reserve the right to charge parents for additional hours worked by the staff.
- Ofsted may be informed: **0300 1231 231**

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Little Acorns Nursery

Date to be reviewed

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of signatory

Role of signatory (e.g. chair/ owner)