

MISSING CHILD / ABSENT CHILD POLICY

At Stonham Aspal Pre-school the safety and security of our children is our highest priority both in and out of the setting. Every attempt will always be made to ensure the security of the children is maintained at all times, including when children are absent from preschool with no communication from family in concerning circumstances. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child goes missing on the premises

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the child’s keyperson or other member of staff notifies the setting manager.
* The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
* Our setting manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
* 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 then our setting manager calls the police immediately and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child has been abducted, the police are also informed of this.
* The parent/s are then contacted and informed.
* A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
* Our manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
* Our managers contact our chair and report the incident. Our chair comes to the provision immediately to carry out an investigation, with our management team.

Child goes missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our managers or other staff back in our setting premises. If our managers have accompanied the children on an outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing maybe a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child/children.

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer 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.
* Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child is missing.
* Our setting manager is contacted immediately if they are not on the outing and the incident is recorded.
* Our setting manager contacts the parent/s.
* Our staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
* According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, our setting manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
* A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
* Our manager contacts our Chair and reports the incident. Our chairperson comes to our premises immediately to carry out a full investigation, with our management team.
* Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

The investigation

* Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up to date with the investigation.
* Our Chairperson carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff and volunteers who were present.
* Our manager/management team speaks with the parent/s and explains the process of the investigation.
* The parent/s may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
* Each member of staff 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 or 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 senior member of staff 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 of our staff co operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. Children’s social care maybe involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
* In the event of the disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
* The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

* Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try and keep everyone as calm as possible.
* Our staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or 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.
* They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our managers ensure that any staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
* The parent/s may feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame our staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our managers. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff one of whom is the manager and the other should be our chairperson or another member of the management team. No matter how understandable the parent/s anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff are not tolerated, and the police should be contacted.
* 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.
* In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
* Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Absent children

* We ask our parents and carers to inform us if they are planning a holiday during term time, so we can record this in our register.
* Fees remain payable during periods of absence, unless alternative arrangements have been made.
* We must notify Suffolk County Council if children who are in receipt of Early years free funding are absent for long periods of time.
* We must ensure that the emergency contacts for the children are up-to-date and relevant
* All child records must have appropriate and adequate telephone numbers and contact details before their first session in the setting, parents/carers will be reminded to ensure we have correct contact details periodically.
* All records of concern will be kept clearly documented and named (see safeguarding policy).
* Any children who are known to Suffolk County Council Social Care should also have contact details listed for relevant family/social workers or teams with the duty team contact number available in the event of an emergency. Where children in the setting are on Child Protection or Child in need plans, or are Looked After Children, contact may be required with the Social working team to ensure correct and effective planning and strategies are in place.
* In the event that a child stops attending the setting and has been absent for more than two sessions, we will attempt to make contact with parents to enquire about the child continuing with their place at the setting, if no contact can be made after more than three attempts at all numbers and contact methods provided, and we have had no other communication regarding the child’s place in setting, a designated safeguarding team member will discuss with the child’s key person whether any concerns have arisen and/or been recorded. If there are concerns, the safeguarding officer will contact the Customer first (Mash) on 0345 6066167 to discuss whether further action needs to be taken to ensure the child is safe and well.
* As above, if children known to Suffolk County Council Children’s Social Care (a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan) who have unexplained absences or who leave the setting under concerning circumstances, safeguarding procedures will be followed and relevant social workers or social working teams will be immediately informed.

*There are three members of our ‘Child Protection Team’: two designated members of staff and one designated officer from the Management Committee. The designated persons are: -*

* *Siobhan Morley, Pre-School setting manager and SENco*
* *Rachel Hodgson, deputy setting manager and deputy SENco*
* *Anna Westcott – Safeguarding committee member*

***Links to Other Policies***

*Safeguarding Policy*

*Health and Safety Policy*

*Working in Partnership with Parents and Carer Policy*

*Admissions Policy*

*Equality and Diversity Policy*

*Settling in Policy*

Through this policy we promote the five Every Child Matters Priority Outcomes:

* Stay Safe
* Being Healthy
* Enjoy and Achieve
* Make a Positive Contribution
* Achieve Economic Well-being

Responsibility

Stonham Aspal Pre-School will ensure that all staff, parents, volunteers and others involved in its work will follow and implement this policy.

The managerial responsibility for this policy will lie with the Stonham Aspal Pre-School management committee and staff team.

Staff contribute on an annual basis and parents will also be invited to contribute.

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| ***Date*** | ***April 2020*** |
| ***To be reviewed again by:*** | ***April 2021*** |
| ***Chairperson signature*** |  |
| ***Pre-School Manager signature*** |  |