

Auchinairn Early Years Centre



Missing Child on the Nursery Site

Children's safety is always maintained at the highest priority both on and off the premises.

We have put into place thorough systems and procedures which are an integral part of staff training and should ensure that children do not go missing or get lost whilst in our care. If the Early Years Centre policies and procedures are being observed the likelihood of a child being lost or missing is minimal. To ensure that children are not lost or missing while in the care of the nursery we:

- Carefully always supervise children
- Maintain appropriate staff: child ratios at all times
- Closely monitor children in and out of the building ensuring that when the children are going out on trips or even to the garden the signing in and out sheet is taken with staff along with emergency contact details, a phone (fully charged)
- Ensure that visitors to the nursery are always supervised
- A risk assessment is carried out in every area where children play.
- If an outing is organised, a risk assessment will be carried out before leaving the premises.

With careful planning and co-operative day to day working amongst staff, children should not be out of sight of an adult at any time.

In the unlikely event that a child is unaccounted for on the premises, the following policy will be followed:

1. Member of staff who has noticed the missing child will calmly inform the nearest member of the Leadership Team and Head of Centre/Depute for urgent action to be taken.
2. Key workers will count and name check all the pupils present against the register. The signing in sheet is to be checked to make sure no other child is missing and to check the child has not been collected

3. AT THE SAME TIME all other available staff will conduct a thorough search of the premises and notify the Leadership Team member and Head of Centre/Depute if the child is found immediately.
4. A thorough check of all exits to be made to make sure all gates/doors were locked/bolted and there are no other ways a pupil could have left the nursery. If something is discovered this needs to be drawn to the attention of the Leadership Team and Head of Centre/Depute immediately.
5. Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the nursery and immediate vicinity, communicating via mobile phones/walkie talkies.
6. If, following a thorough search of the nursery and the immediate vicinity, the child cannot be found (up to 10 minutes) the police will be called and the child's parents/carers will be notified without delay.
7. If the missing child has any special medical or learning needs then these need to be noted, and police informed of this.

The police will want to know:

- Where you are (address of setting/venue).
- The next of kin of the child.
- A detailed description of the child, including age, sex, working down from head to toe including as much clothing description as possible.
- The circumstances of the incident, including anything that may have triggered the disappearance, how long have they been missing, where were they last seen,
- Who is looking for the child, where are they, do they have a mobile with them, what is the number?

The incident should be relayed to other important agencies including East Dunbartonshire Council and Care Inspectorate.

- When the child is found, members of staff will care for and talk with the child, bearing in mind that he/she may be unaware of having done anything wrong or, alternatively, he/she may also have been afraid and distressed and may now be in need of comfort.
- A member of staff will also speak to the remaining children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises and why.
- After the incident the Keyworker and Head/Depute of Centre (or Leadership Team Member) will sensitively discuss with the child's parents/carers the events surrounding the disappearance of the child. If appropriate, a short meeting will be held at the end of the session/start of the following session. Accurate information about the incident will be shared with parents/carers, as soon as possible.

Investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried
- Nursery Head/Depute of Centre to speak with parents
- Management team carry out full investigation taking written statements from all staff who were involved
- The Head/Depute of Centre writes an incident report detailing

-The date and time of the report

-What staff/children were involved in the incident

-When the last child was last seen in the group

-What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing

-The time estimated the child went missing

A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened and risk assessments and procedures updated.

People management

Missing child incidents are extremely worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incidents is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible. The staff will feel worried about the child. Staff may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time that the child is missing increases. Nursery Head/Depute of Centre should ensure that the staff feel supported while they are feeling vulnerable.

The parents will feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and single out staff members over others; they may direct anger at the nursery Head/Depute of Centre. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent there should always be two members of staff. No matter how much understandable the parent/carer's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and security 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 the children need to focus on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.

Health and Social Care Standards: 3.23

SSSC –

Realising the Ambition – 2.1 2.2

HGIOEC – 2.1

UNCRC – Article 9

Quality Framework – 1.2

This policy has been updated after consultation with staff and parent/carer

Signed.....

May 2024