**Lost Child Policy & Procedure**

**Statement of intent**

At Singleton Playschool, it is our intention to maintain children’s safety as the highest priority at all times both on & off the premises.

**Aim**

We aim to ensure that every attempt is made, through carrying out the outings procedure & 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.

**Method**

**If a child goes missing from the setting:**

* The person in charge will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area, alerting members of School Staff to help carry out the search.
* 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.
* If the child is not found the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
* The supervisor talks to staff to establish when & where the child was last seen & records this.
* The Leader/Manager contacts the Chairperson and reports the incident.
* The chairperson with the management committee, carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.
* The chairperson informs Ofsted in writing within 14 days of the incident, outcome and review of procedures.

**If a child goes missing from an outing** where parents are not attending and responsible for their own child, the procedure is as follows:

* As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
* The leader is informed immediately and the incident reported to venue staff.
* The playschool leader finds a member of staff at the venue to close all exits/gates etc and then contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
* The leader then contacts the child's parent who makes their way to the Playschool or outing venue as agreed with the person in charge.
* Staff takes the remaining children back to the Playschool.
* In an indoor venue, staff contacts the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
* The leader contacts the Chairperson of the Management Committee who comes down to the Playschool as soon as possible.

**The investigation**

* Staff keep calm & do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
* The manager/committee chairperson carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff present at the time, or who were on the outing.
* The key person/ staff writes an incident report detailing:

- the date and time of the report;

- what staff/ children were in the group/outing;

- when the child was last seen in the group/outing;

- what has taken place in the group/outing since then; and

- 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.
* OFSTED is informed.

**Managing people**

* Part of managing the incident is to try and keep everyone as calm as possible.
* 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 & their feelings of anxiety & 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 supervisor needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only treated fairly but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
* The parents will feel angry & fraught. They may want to blame staff & may single out one staff member over others. When dealing with a distraught parent, there should always be 2 staff members. Aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated & the police should be called.
* The other children may too be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs & 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 outcome, staff may need counselling & support.
* Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

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