



Missing Child Policy and Procedure

Reviewed by Amanda Parker
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Introduction

Rosemary Works School takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in their care do not leave a session unaccompanied. The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. In the unlikely event that a child is noted to be missing from school, the school puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the most effective resolution of this potentially distressing situation.

Preventative measures

Many of our school routines and procedures are in place to contribute to the prevention of a child going missing and to ensuring the safety and security of all children at all times. These include:

- Registers and recorded centrally at the start of morning and afternoon sessions
- Staff escorting children to sessions in other areas of the school, including specialist lessons
- Code lock on gate from playground, supervised by video entry system
- Staff supervision during lessons, activities and free play time
- Front door supervised by admin staff and video entry system
- Taking paper lists to off-site activities and taking roll call before moving between places
- Teaching children to walk with a partner and stay with the group when off site.
- Ensuring one member of staff at the front and one at the back when walking in public

Procedure for a missing child from school

If, in the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child's whereabouts, the following action will be taken:

Stage One - Search systematically

- All available staff to immediately check toilets, shared areas, rooms and playground to ensure the child is not hiding or locked in anywhere.
- One member of staff to immediately inform school office and the SMT or member of staff in charge and check whether the child has been signed out for an external appointment or has an internal appointment with a visiting professional. (e.g. Speech Therapist). The attendance register will be checked by office staff as soon as a missing child has been reported.
- One member of staff to gather class and call the register to confirm that one named child is missing.
- Staff will ensure that all other pupils are kept safe and closely supervised throughout incident should it be during the school day. Calm should be kept in the event of a child reported missing at the end of the school day.

Stage Two – contact police

- After stage one is completed without resolution (no more than 10 minutes), school office staff will contact the police and parents. At this point, school will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident. The Head Teacher will liaise with emergency services and parents.
- Staff will call registers in all classes to confirm presence of other pupils.
- The police will be provided with the following information:
 - the pupil's name
 - the pupil's age
 - an up-to-date photograph if possible
 - the pupil's height and physical description
 - any disability, learning difficulty or special educational needs that the pupil may have
 - the pupil's home address and telephone number
 - a description of the clothing the pupil is thought to be wearing The last definite sighting of the child.
 - Any unusual behaviour of the missing child or other children.
 - What steps have been taken and when, by whom.

Stage Three

- The Headteacher should communicate the incident to the appropriate Local Authority Office and the Board of Directors.
- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and placed in the pupil's confidential record. All staff should input any relevant information; including conversations with parents, child minders, police, the Local Authority and any other person they feel has contributed to the collection of evidence.
- The Senior Management Team should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective was the response and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again.

We will ensure that:

- We make regular checks to ensure that if an incident of this sort does happen, we have all the necessary phone numbers at hand – correct, up to date and kept together.
- If the police are called then the Hackney Children's Services and Ofsted are also informed.
- If the Head Teacher or Director is not on the premises, they will be informed as soon as possible via the school office team, or another senior staff member.

Procedure for a child missing from a school trip or off-site activity

If a child is missing during an educational visit or off-site activity, the following procedure will be followed.

Stage 1 – keep group safe and search

- a roll call will be taken
- staff will maintain the safety and well-being of other children
- the security of the venue will be informed, where relevant
- the group leader will contact the Headteacher
- at least one member of staff will search the immediate vicinity

Stage 2 – contact police

If the child is not found after 10 minutes, the police will be called and provided with the information set out above. The Head Teacher will contact the parents of the missing child.

Subsequent actions will follow the procedure outlined above for a child missing from school.

Dealing with people's reactions

We accept that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry. If the setting shares all policies with parents, the situation will be easier for all because there will be an understanding of working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding.

We accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry, threaten legal action or approach the local press.

We will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

Responses could include:

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
- That a full investigation is in hand.
- That the Local Safeguarding Children's Board/Ofsted has been informed and will be investigating.

Dealing with the media

Distressed parents/carers may contact the local press, or reporters may hear about the incident if the police are involved. It is sensible for one person, usually the Headteacher or member of the Board of Directors to be the one who speaks for the setting. All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson.

The spokesperson for Rosemary Works School is Amanda Parker, Head Teacher or Jacqueline Logue, Director for Safeguarding.

When the child is found

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents/carers and others suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember:

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.

After the Incident

Following an incident involving a missing child, the school will keep a full written record, including:

- the child's name
- relevant dates and times (e.g. when it was first noticed that the child was missing)
- the action taken to find the child
- whether the police or any other external agency were involved
- outcome or resolution of the incident
- any reasons given by the child for being missing
- any concerns or complaints about the handling of the incident
- a record of the staff involved.

A full written record of the incident will be kept on the child's file. The School will then conduct a full investigation into the incident in collaboration with all staff involved.

As a result of this, we will review our current procedure and staff training needs. We will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness. We will cooperate fully in any external investigation from Ofsted or Hackney Children's Services.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required.