

# Lost or Uncollected Child

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**Little Pippins has the highest regard for the safety of the children in our care from the time they arrive until the time they leave. Staff will always be extremely aware of the potential for children to go missing during sessions or outings.**

## Lost Child

Even when all precautions are properly observed, emergencies can still arise. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our Arrivals and Departures policy and Visits and Outings policy, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. Therefore, members of staff will undertake periodic head counts, especially at the transition points between sessions.

If for any reason a member of staff cannot account for a child's whereabouts during a session, the following procedure will be activated:

- The member of staff in question will inform both the Manager, or her deputy if she is not present, and the rest of the staff team that the child is missing and a thorough search of the entire premises will commence. Staff will be careful not to create an atmosphere of panic and to ensure that the other children remain safe and adequately supervised.
- The Manager or her deputy will nominate a member of staff, to search the area surrounding the premises. All staff will be extra vigilant to any potentially suspicious behaviour or persons in and around setting. Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- If the child is not found, the Manager will inform the police and then the child's parent/carer.
- While waiting for the police and the parent/carer to arrive, searches for the child will continue. During this period, other members of staff will maintain as normal a routine as is possible for the rest of the children at Little Pippins. Children are sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The 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.
- The Manager or her deputy will be responsible for meeting the police and the missing child's parent/carer. The Manager or deputy will co-ordinate any actions instructed by the police, and do all she can to comfort and reassure the parents/carers.

- A designated person will start to build up a record of the event as soon as an adult has to time to do so. Even if the child is found safe within a few minutes, this will be done. The last definite sighting of the child and anything unusual that day about behaviour of the child or any of the children will be recorded.
- Once found, the child involved may be afraid and distressed or may be unaware of having done anything wrong. Staff will act accordingly with comfort and reassurance. This will be followed by further discussion with the whole group about not leaving the premises and why.

If a child goes missing on an outing, the following procedures will be followed:

- 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.
- The senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- The Manager or her deputy is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded. The Manager contacts the parent(s).
- 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, or our Manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A description of what the child is wearing should be given to the police and if possible, a recent photo.
- The staff should keep calm and not let the other children become anxious or worried.

The Manager will contact the Chair to report any incidents when a child goes missing and the Chair will carry out an investigation taking written statements from all the staff and volunteers who were present.

Once the incident is resolved, the Management Committee and the staff team will review relevant policies and procedures and implement any necessary changes (paying particular note to the relevant provisions of the Site Security and Risk Assessment sections in our Health and Safety Policy).

All incidents of children going missing from the Pre-school will be recorded on an Accident/Incident Report Form, and in cases where either the police or the Children & Families Assessment Team have been informed, Ofsted will also

be informed, as soon as is practicable (Ofsted telephone number 0300 123 1231).

All relevant telephone numbers and emergency numbers are kept up to date and accessible to all staff.

The reaction of parents/carers may be emotional, including fear, distress and/or anger. This will be dealt with carefully and sensitively. Understandably, parents/carers may want to blame staff or single out one staff member over others; they may also direct their anger at the Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff; one of whom is the Manager, the other should be our Chair or another representative of the management committee. Aggression or threats against staff will not be tolerated, and if necessary the police should be called.

All parents will be given a brief, accurate account of the incident and informed of what procedures/investigation/policy changes have taken place since the event.

Staff and other adults involved may also suffer from distress, fear or guilt. The group will support each other. The Senior Practice Manager will ensure that any staff under investigation are not only treated fairly but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press or on social media.

### **Uncollected Child**

At the end of every session, Little Pippins will ensure that all children are collected by a parent, carer or designated adult, in accordance with the Arrivals and Departures policy.

On occasions when parents, or the persons normally authorised to collect the child, are not able to collect the child, they must complete a 'Change to person collecting your child' form to provide us with written details of the name, address and telephone number of the person who will be collecting their child and a password.

In the event of the collection arrangements changing and the child is already attending the session, a phone call authorisation from the parent will be accepted assuming the person collecting is given the password and can share this on arrival. Also, the parent will be required to give a brief description of the person to help staff make an identification if the person is not already known. The staff member dealing with the call, needs to complete a 'Change to person collecting your child' form detailing the request has been made via phone. If there is any doubt, a child will not be handed over, and the manager or the deputy will follow this up with further checks directly with the parent.

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.

If a child is not collected at the expected time, the following procedures will be put into practice:

- If a parent, carer or designated adult is more than 10 minutes late collecting their child; the Manager or her deputy will be informed.
- The child's file is checked for any information about changes to the normal collection routines for example, if a 'Change to person collecting your child' form has been completed.
- The Manager, or her deputy if she is not present, will call the parent, carer or designated adult, and use any other emergency contact details provided on the Child Information and Permissions Form in order to try to ascertain the cause for the delay, and how long it is likely to last. Messages will always be left on any answerphone requesting a prompt reply.
- While waiting to be collected, the child will be supervised by at least two members of staff, one of whom will be the Manager or her deputy who will offer them as much support and reassurance as is necessary.
- If, after repeated attempts, no contact is made with the parent, carer or designated adult, and a further period of 30 minutes has elapsed, the Manager or deputy may call local authority children's social care team. If the children's social care team is unavailable, or as our local authority advise, we will contact the local police.
- In the event of the Police being called, the Manager/deputy will attempt to leave a further telephone message with the parent/carer or designated adults' answerphone, where available.
- After an additional 15 minutes if the child has not been collected, we will contact the above statutory agencies again.
- Under no circumstances will a child be taken to the home of a member of staff, or away from the Little Pippins premises unless absolutely necessary.
- The child stays at the setting in the care of two of our fully-vetted workers, one of whom will be our manager or deputy manager until the child is safely collected either by the parents or by a social care worker, or by another person specified by social care.
- 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 will we go to look for the parent, nor leave the setting premises with the child.
- We ensure that the child is not anxious, and we do not discuss our concerns in front of them.
- A full written report of the incident is recorded in the child's file.

Incidents of late collection will be recorded by the Manager and will be discussed with parents/carers at the earliest opportunity. A written report is recorded on the child's file. Parents and carers will be informed that persistent late collection may result in the loss of their child's place at Little Pippins.

Depending on circumstances, Little Pippins reserves the right to charge parents a late collection fee see (Admission and Fees Policy) and for the additional hours worked by staff and any costs incurred.

The contact details provided by parents on the Pre-School Information and Permissions Form will be regularly reviewed to ensure emergency contact details are up to date.

Ofsted may be informed (Ofsted telephone number 0300 123 1231)

Children's Social Care Team

Thames Valley Police non-emergency enquiries      08458 505505

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Little Pippins Management Committee

Held on:      5<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Signed on behalf of the Management Committee: *Laura Norton*

Role of signatory: Chair

Review date      2021

### **Related Policies**

Visits, Outings and Emergency Procedures  
Health and Safety  
Arrivals and Departures