



Early Years Missing Child Policy

Reviewed by Governors March 2020

Next full review March 2021

Change log:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>Change(s) made</u>	<u>Page in policy</u>	<u>By whom</u>
02/01/2020	Updated to reflect current practice. Reformatted.	All	SMT
18/11/2020	Sent to Governing Body for approval.		

St Petroc's Early Years 0-5 years: Missing Child

Policy statement

At St Petroc's Early Years, the safety of our children is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the writing of risk assessments, professional judgement and adherence to other policies, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our Missing Child procedure is followed.

The definition of 'missing' in this context is **'not present without authorisation or explanation'**.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

Children are regularly headcounted, and always when moving from room to room.

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the child's key person (where possible) or any member of staff alerts Ben Hilton or in his absence, Tahira White. The following steps will then be taken:

1. Take a register in order to ensure that all other children are present.
2. Ask all of the adults and children calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the child. This information is recorded.
3. Alert the office staff with the name and form of the child.
4. Occupy all other children in their classroom(s).
5. The manager or senior member of staff will carry out a thorough search of the internal and external school premises, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards and washrooms where a small child might hide.
6. 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 still not found, the following steps would be taken:

1. The manager or senior member of staff will call the police immediately and report the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
2. The parent(s)/carer(s) are then called and informed of the situation, and what steps have been taken. The parent(s)/carer(s) are asked to come to the school at once.
3. A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
4. The manager or senior member of staff contacts the Chair of Governors and reports the incident. The Chair of Governors comes to the provision as soon as they can to carry out an investigation.
5. The Local Children Safeguarding Board is informed.
6. Insurers are informed.
7. [If the pupil is injured] A report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when our staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving our manager and/or other staff back in our setting premises. If our manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

1. *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.
2. Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
3. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
4. The senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
5. The manager or senior member of staff is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
6. The manager or senior member of staff contacts the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them of the situation, and what steps have been taken. The parent(s)/carer(s) are asked to come to the venue/school at once.
7. Staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible.
8. 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.
9. A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
10. The manager contacts our Chair of Governors and reports the incident. The Chair of Governors comes to the provision as soon as they can to carry out an investigation.
11. The Local Children Safeguarding Board is informed.
12. [If the pupil is injured] A report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

The investigation

1. Ofsted, ISA and MIST are informed as soon as possible and in any event within 24 hours will be appraised of the investigation and outcome.
2. The Chair of Governors carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
3. The manager, together with a representative of the SMT speaks with the parent(s)/carer(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
4. The parent(s)/carer(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
5. Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
 - a. The date and time of the incident.
 - b. Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
 - c. Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
 - d. When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.

- e. What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
6. The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
7. A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
8. If the incident warrants a police investigation, all 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 may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
9. In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
10. The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.

Our staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the 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 manager ensures that any staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

The parents will 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 manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is our manager or a senior member of staff, and the other should be the Chair of Governors. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff are not tolerated, and the police 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 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.

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. The Chair of Governors 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.