



Stepping Stones Nursery

Missing Child Policy



United Learning
The best in everyone™

At Stepping Stones Day Nursery, children's safety is always maintained as the highest priority both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of the children is maintained at all times.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing within/from the nursery, we have the following procedure which will be implemented immediately:

Lost child procedure

- All staff present will be informed and an immediate thorough search of the premises will be made followed by a search of the surrounding areas, ensuring that all other children remain supervised throughout.
- All staff will be aware of the procedure when a child goes missing and supply information to support the search, e.g. a recent photograph and a detailed description of clothing.
- A staff member will notify the Manager, whilst the other staff continue to search.
- The Manager will carry out a second search of the area and contact any other staff on site to help.
- If the child has still not been accounted for within a maximum of 15 minutes, the Manager will contact the police.
- The Manager will also contact the parents of the missing child.
- During this period, staff will be continually searching for the missing child, whilst other staff maintain as near to normal a routine as possible for the rest of the children in the nursery.
- The Manager will meet the police and parents.
- The Manager will then await instructions from the police.
- Any incidents will be recorded in writing and shared with appropriate services and kept on file.

Child going missing on an outing

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

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff 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 Manager is contacted immediately, and the incident is reported (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The staff will contact the venue's security who will then handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found (as appropriate)
- The Manager or Lead on outing contacts the police and reports the child as missing (as appropriate)

- The Manager contacts the parent.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- The Manager contacts the Regional Director and reports the incident.
- The Manager and designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

Managing people

Missing children's incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible. The 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. Staff may be the understandable target of parent anger and they may be afraid. The Manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support whilst feeling vulnerable. The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may 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. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against 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 the children's questions honestly but also reassure them. In accordance with the severity of the outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. United Learning will use their discretion to decide what action to take. Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Investigation

Staff must keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried. The Manager and UL representative carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the setting. The key person/Manager writes an incident report detailing:

- The date and time of the incident. What staff/children were in the Nursery and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
- When the child was last seen in the session.
- What has taken place in the session since the child went missing.
- 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, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.

In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed. The insurance provider is informed.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
<i>April 2025</i>	<i>E. Keller</i>	<i>April 2027</i>

