



SHEBBEAR COLLEGE

MISSING CHILD POLICY - EYFS

This policy applies to Early Years Foundation Stage

Reviewed: September 2024 by L. Dennis and C. Roadnight

Reviewed by SLT: September 2024

Next Review: January 2025

Policy Review at Shebbear College

The SLT acknowledge their responsibility to ensure that this policy is effective and follows regulatory requirements. The SLT and Governors undertake a regular review (at least annually) to satisfy themselves that the implementation of this policy is effective.

Policy statement

At Shebbear College EYFS setting, Pupils' safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings policy and our policy on Maintaining Pupils safety and security on the premises, to ensure the security of pupils is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- Pupils are regularly head counted, 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 our EYFS Lead or Head of Prep, or in their absence, another senior member of staff.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The EYFS Lead, Head of Prep or senior member of staff will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- 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 EYFS Lead, Head of Prep 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.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The EYFS Lead, Head of Prep or senior member of staff will talk to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The EYFS Lead, Head of Prep or senior member of staff contacts the Chair of Governors, and reports the incident. Our Chair of Governors comes to the provision as soon as they can to carry out an investigation.

Child going missing on an outing

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

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask pupils 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.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.

- The EYFS Lead and Head of Prep are contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- The EYFS Lead/Head of Prep contacts the parent(s).
- Staff take the remaining pupils back to the setting as soon as possible.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or the EYFS Lead should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The EYFS Lead/Head of Prep contacts our Chair of Governors, and reports the incident. Our Chair of Governors comes to the provision as soon as they can to carry out an investigation.
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other pupils become anxious or worried.

The investigation

- 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.
- Our Chair of Governors carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present.
- The EYFS Lead, together with a representative of our management team speaks with the parent(s) and explains the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
 - Which staff/pupils were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
 - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- 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. Pupils' social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
- 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. The EYFS Lead 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 the EYFS Lead. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the EYFS Lead or a senior member of staff, and the other should be our Chair of the 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 pupils are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. Our 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 pupil 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. Our 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.