

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE MISSING CHILD POLICY

Policy statement

We always keep children safe and secure by ensuring the gates are locked and children are always supervised during the day. Entry to the buildings is only possible with a security tag. All adults are reminded to close gates behind them.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff member or teacher alerts the Nursery Manager, Deputy Nursery Manager.
- The Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years is also alerted.
- The Nursery Manager/Deputy Nursery Manager carries out a thorough search of the buildings and outside areas.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- 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 parent is contacted, and the missing child is reported to the police. /
- The Nursery Manager/Deputy Nursery Manager or Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years or Nursery Manager contacts the Head of Hazelwood School to report the incident.
- Senior management carries out an investigation.

Child going missing on an outing

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person 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 Nursery Manager/Deputy Nursery Manager and Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years are contacted immediately, and the incident is reported.
- The Nursery Manager or Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Nursery Manager or Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years contacts the parents, who makes their way to the Hazelwood Nursery site or outing venue as agreed.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the Nursery site.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.

- The Nursery Manager or Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years contacts the Head of Hazelwood School and reports the incident.
- Senior management carry out an investigation.

The Investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Nursery Manager and Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years together with the Head of Hazelwood School, speaks with the parent(s).
- Senior management carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room/class or who were on the outing.
- The key person or teacher writes an incident report detailing:
 - the date and time of the report,
 - what staff and children were in the group, class or outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child,
 - when the child was last seen,
 - what has taken place in the group, class or outing 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 cooperate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Surrey Local Referral, Intervention and Assessment Services may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident must be reported to Ofsted in writing and if necessary, ISI and RIDDOR will also be informed.
- 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.

- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Nursery Manager/Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years will ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- If dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Nursery Manager or Deputy Head, Wellbeing and Early Years and the other the Head of Hazelwood School.
- The remaining staff need to be focused on caring for the other children 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 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.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press.

This Policy was ratified by the Compliance Committee: 21 November 2025