



Cranbrook Education Campus Missing Child Policy

Policy Date: May 2018

Review Date: May 2020

Review Committee: Performance and Standards

Safeguarding and welfare requirement: “Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.”

Policy Statement

Children’s safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our off site procedure and our exit/entrance procedure, to ensure the security of children 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:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the Early Years Leader and Head of Campus will be alerted;
- The register is checked to make sure no other child is missing;
- All available staff will carry out a full search of the premises, inside and out;
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security;
- If the child is not found within 30 minutes, parents/carers and the police will be informed. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this;
- A recent photograph and information about what the child is wearing is given to the police; and
- The Early Years Lead will question staff to clarify where and when the child was last seen and record this. Further investigation will be carried out as appropriate including informing OFSTED.

Child going missing on an outing from the setting:

- As soon as it is noted that a child is missing the staff members on the outing undertake a head count of all other children to ensure nobody else is missing;
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that;
- A senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports the child as missing if the child has not been found after the initial search;
- The school is contacted immediately on discovery of the missing child – the incident is recorded and the parents/carers are contacted;
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting once the police have arrived and taken control of the situation;
- A recent photograph and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police; and
- Staff will remain calm avoid other children becoming anxious or worried.

The investigation following a missing child:

- OFSTED are informed as soon as possible and kept up to date with the investigation;
- The school carries out a full internal investigation, taking written statements from all staff and volunteers present at the time of the incident;
- The Early Years Lead/Head Teacher speaks with the parents and explains the process of the investigation;
- The parents may also raise a complaint with the school or OFSTED;

- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
 - the date and time of the incident
 - from where the child went missing (premises or outing)
 - which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as being responsible for the missing child
 - when the child was last seen on the premises/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 staff and parent interviews. Children's 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 of this; and
- 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 will feel worried about the child, especially the key person/adult responsible for the safety of the child at the time. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases;
- They may be the understandable target of parent anger and they may be afraid. The school will ensure that any adult under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support whilst feeling vulnerable;
- Parents will feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and single out one staff member above others – they may direct anger at the Senior member of staff. When dealing with a distressed and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff present – the Early Years Leader and a member of SLT (Senior Leadership Team). No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff will not be tolerated and the police will be called if necessary;
- Other children will also be sensitive to what is happening around them. The remaining staff caring for them need to focus on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also seek to reassure them;
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or dies, this will be a very difficult time. The Executive Head Teacher and Trustees/Governors will use their discretion to decide what action to take; and
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press – the Senior Management team will issue an official press release if appropriate.