



St. Thomas a Becket Nursery School
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Registered Charity No. 1097448

Missing Child Policy

Responsibility: Nursery Manager
Review Cycle: Annually

Date of adoption / last review:	Signed / Role	Date of next review:
January 2024		January 2026

St Thomas a Becket Nursery **Missing Child Policy**

Missing Children: Please also see our Safeguarding Policy.

Policy Statement

St Thomas a Becket Nursery are responsible for children in their care at all times, and this responsibility remains in the unlikely event that they would need to report a child missing to the police. Children's welfare and safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

1. In the event that a child is found to be missing, an immediate search will be carried out by all available staff, whilst ensuring that ratio's are maintained.
2. The room register will be checked then begin to check all areas in a logical order, including well known hiding spaces and quiet spaces, inside and out. Staff will be aware of where certain children like to retreat to at times. All staff will be asked when they last saw the child and where. Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
3. Should a child still not be located, the school will be advised and a search of the school playgrounds and field grounds undertaken. A search of the school building may also need to take place.
4. Should the child still not be found the child's parent or carer will need to be informed and the missing child is reported to the police.
5. Information to hand at the point of reporting a missing child will include a detailed description of child and clothing last seen in, photos of the child if they are available at that time.
6. The Nursery Manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this. The record will provide detail of what the child was wearing and where they were last seen and by whom plus measures taken to locate the child.
7. The Nursery Manager contacts the Nursery Lead and reports the incident. The Nursery Lead carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately. The Nursery Lead will inform the Chair of Trustees. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be contacted.

Child going missing on an outing

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

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

1. 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.
2. The Nursery Manager and Nursery Lead are contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
3. The Nursery Manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
4. The Nursery Manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
5. Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
6. 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.
7. The Nursery Manager contacts the Nursery Lead and reports the incident. The Nursery Lead will come to the setting immediately if she can.
8. The Nursery Manager, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Nursery Manager will speak with the parent(s).
- The Nursery Lead will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing. Disciplinary action will be considered.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
 - What has taken place in the group 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 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.
- Ofsted is 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.
- 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 parental anger and they may be afraid. The Trustees, Nursery Lead and Nursery Manager need to ensure that 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 staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the Nursery Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Nursery Manager and the other should be the Nursery Lead or the Chairperson. 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 children's questions honestly but also 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 worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Nursery Lead and the Chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press.