



Stockland and Yarcombe Preschool

Missing Pupil Policy and Procedure

Policy statement

The safety and security of the children at Stockland and Yarcombe Preschool is paramount at all times, both on and off premises. Every care is taken to ensure that our pupils are accounted for at all times when they are in our care.

In summary the measures in place to ensure a pupil does not go missing include:

- Requirement for all visitors to register on arrival, present evidence of identity on their first visit and obtain and wear visitor's badge.
- Boundary security regularly checked by the Manager.
- Staff and children are trained and confident to challenge unknown persons. Information is immediately made available to staff about challenging unknown persons on the premises.
- Supervision of children at all times and overall staff vigilance as part of school culture.
- Sufficient staff to maintain ratios appropriate to the venue and the nature of the activity being undertaken.
- Safe Collection policy for pupils.
- Rigorous risk assessments for trips.
- A full risk assessment in place for pupils who are known to be vulnerable to leave the school site.

Each pupil who arrives at the setting is registered first thing in the morning. Staff maintain the appropriate high level of supervision throughout the sessions and are aware of the location of the pupils in their care at all times. If pupils are taken out of the room for interventions this is communicated to the room leader who has the overarching responsibility at that time, similarly if they need to go to the toilets the leader and other staff are aware. The register is taken again in the afternoon.

Stockland and Yarcombe Preschool has rigorous procedures for pursuing unexplained absences, including the aim to contact parents by 9.15 am if a child has not arrived in the setting and the reason for absence is not known. This should ensure that staff become aware at the earliest opportunity of any child who may have gone missing on the way to school. In these circumstances, this policy along with the Attendance Policy will be followed. No child is allowed to leave the school site with an adult other than a parent without permission being received from a parent either by telephone or email. This rule must be rigorously enforced.

In cases where a parent is legally denied access to their child all staff must be informed of the circumstances and, if possible, the parent. If a child is seen (or believed) to be taken from the school site by an unapproved adult, the police and parents will be immediately informed.

In the unlikely event of a pupil going missing, our missing pupil procedure is followed.

1. Pupil going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a pupil is missing the key person/staff alerts the Manager or a senior member of staff if the Manager is unavailable.
- The Chairperson is informed.
- The Manager or a senior member of staff will be designated as the Missing Child Lead (MCL) and will organise a thorough search of the building and grounds using all available staff.
- The register is checked to make sure all other pupils are present and not involved.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could leave the site.
- The Manager will talk to the staff and appropriate children, i.e. peers, to find out when and where the pupil was last seen.
- Any information and relevant details need to be recorded and conveyed as quickly as possible to the MCL.
- After no longer than 20 minutes, the Manager calls the parent/carer to ascertain whether the child has been collected.
- If the whereabouts of the pupil remains unknown, the Manager or MCL will ring the police and update the Chairperson, giving all the information accumulated so far.
- Searches/ information continues to be explored.
- Once police arrive all relevant information about the child will be given. The police will then take over the search.
- The Chairperson reports the incident to the Core Committee.
- Once the incident is concluded the Chairperson and or Core Committee, with the MCL, carries out an investigation to review the reasons and revise measures if necessary.
- A final report needs to be written up and held on the child's file.

2. Pupil going missing on an outing

When on excursions off the setting premises, staff implement strategies to maximise the safety and security of the pupils in accordance with the visits policy. Full risk assessments are carried out (and there is a risk assessment in place for local walks that is reviewed regularly), a list of all the children's names is carried by the trip leader. The children are split into small groups according to staff/pupil ratios for the age of the children and the purpose of the trip or activity, and each group is managed by a separate member of staff. The number of pupils is checked regularly by the group leader with frequent roll calls. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) should be written for every off-site trip with a focus on Missing Child and age/ location/activity appropriate guidance. The SOP should be shared with all staff on the trip. To minimise the risk of missing children on an educational visit, children must be briefed before setting off on the importance of staying with the group leaders and reminded to encourage each other to keep with the group. Trip leaders should also agree a meeting point and ensure all children are aware of this point.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing on an outing, our missing pupil procedure is followed.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with the designated person (second in command) 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 venue is contacted by a staff member and alerted to the position in order to support the search.
- The Manager is contacted immediately by the leader of the group/MCL, and the incident is reported to Chairperson while the search is maintained by those available.
- After the initial search, no longer than 20 minutes, the Manager or MCL contacts police and gives them all the details as accurately as possible.
- The Chairperson is updated.
- The Manager or MCL contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the Manager. The setting is advised as the best place to meet the parent, as by the time the parent arrives, the pupil may have been returned to the setting.
- Staff members take the remaining pupils back to the setting as soon as possible.
- The MCL or designated member of staff must stay at the venue until the police arrive.
- Once the position is resolved the Chairperson reports the incident to the Core Committee.
- The Chairperson and or Core Committee, with MCL and Manager, carries out an investigation to review the reasons and revise measures if necessary.

3. The investigation

- Staff members keep calm and do not let the other pupils become anxious or worried.
- The Manager/MCL together with Chairperson speak with the parent(s).
- The Chairperson carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the area or who were on the outing.
- The Manager/key person/staff member (as appropriate) writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - What staff/pupils were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing pupil.
 - When the pupil was last seen in the group/outing.
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the pupil went missing.
 - The time it is estimated that the pupil 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. Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a pupil protection issue to address.

- The incident is reported under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences) arrangements; 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.
- The Chairperson is kept informed at all times of all developments.

4. Managing people

- Missing pupil incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The pupils may also be 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 pupils' questions honestly but also reassure them.
- Parents should be informed of any incident involving a missing pupil by a member of the team - Manager/MCL or Chairperson.
- Staff may feel vulnerable during this process and will need support.
- There should always be two senior members of staff present when handling the situation with parents.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a pupil is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time.
- The Chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Members of staff, volunteers and Trustees must not discuss any missing pupil incident with the press without permission from the Chairperson who will have taken appropriate advice before appointing a spokesperson for the organisation.

This policy is linked with:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Safe collection of pupils
- Attendance Policy

This policy and procedure is reviewed by the Manager and Committee on an annual cycle and approved by Chairperson.

Reviewed by Committee: 6th January 2025

Approved by Chairperson: 6th January 2025

Next review: September 2025