

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Missing child policy

Portsmouth Primary School and Early Years



PORTSDOWN
Primary School & Early Years

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1. Aims

The missing child policy and procedures aim to ensure:

- Children's safety is maintained whilst in the Early Years setting – inside and outside as well as when on outings.
- We follow a strict protocol when handling situations where a child has gone missing from either the setting or while on a trip.

2. Legislation

This policy is based on requirements set out in the [2026 statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#).

3. Policy Statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made e.g., through carrying out the procedures in the Nursery Child Collection policy, 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. This is detailed in this policy.

4. Procedures

4.1 Child goes missing on the premises

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing by the key person/staff, the following actions are put in place:

- Nursery Manager -or in her absence the deputy manager- is informed immediately.
- The main school office is alerted to inform the Headteacher - or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

- A thorough search is made of the buildings and gardens.
- Nursery staff perform headcount/ register checks to ascertain that no other child is missing.
- Doors, gates and security cameras are checked to see if the child has left the school's site.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police by the Headteacher, Nursery Manager or school office as directed by the Senior Leadership Team.
- Nursery Manager or Nursery Deputy will investigate to find out when and where the child was last seen.

Please note that many of these actions would be conducted at the same time. As an example, it would likely be that the cameras were checked while the search was being completed.

4.2 Child goes missing on an outing (please also refer to the school's Educational Visits and Curriculum Visitors to School Policy)

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing by the key person/staff, the following actions are put in place:

- **Head count and registers checked** to ascertain no other child is missing
- **Searches made of the immediate vicinity** whilst other children remain in adult/child ratio with the remaining qualified staff
- **School office contacted immediately** to inform the Headteacher/SLT
- **Police are contacted** to report the child as missing.
- **In a specific venue, staff will inform the venue's security staff/ front office/ site manager or relevant member of the venue's staff**
- **Parent/carer contacted** by the school office /SLT and advised to make their way to the nursery or outing venue as agreed with whoever reported the incident to the parent. The nursery is advised as the best place for the parent to attend, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the group or Nursery.
- The group leader of the outing may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until the police arrive.

- Staff to take the remaining children back to the Nursery/ provision provided for the children to be collected by the school.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Investigation Responsibilities

- The Headteacher and Nursery Manager will carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The Key person /staff member writes an incident report (this will be recorded on the school's child protection programme-CPOMs) detailing:
 - The date and time of the report;
 - The date and time of the incident;
 - What children/staff were in the group 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, risks identified and actions to minimize the occurrence again
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff are expected to co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. The Local Authority (LA) and children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

5.2 Reporting Responsibilities

- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations). The LA Health and Safety officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- OFSTED is informed.
- Staff must not discuss/report any missing child incident with the press without taking advice from the Headteacher first.

5.3 Managing People Responsibilities

- 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 be worried about the child, especially the Key Person or designated carer responsible for the safety of the child for the outing/ at school. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will likely rise as the length of time the child missing increases.
- Staff may understandably be the target of parent anger and they may feel afraid. The Headteacher and Nursery Manager will ensure staff under investigation are not only treated fairly but receive support when feeling vulnerable. Procedures will be followed according to the 'Allegations against Staff' policy
- The Parents may 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 leaders. When dealing with a distraught parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Headteacher or Nursery Manager. The chair of governors may be involved. No matter how understandable the parent's anger, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated. The police should be called if threats are made.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They 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 difficult time. The Headteacher /Chair of Governors will ascertain what action to take.