



Missing Children

Kids Club Ely Ltd has the highest regard for the safety of the children in our care. Staff will always be extremely aware of the potential for children to go missing during sessions.

Even when all precautions are properly observed, emergencies can still arise. Therefore members of staff will undertake periodic head counts, especially at the transition points between sessions (in addition to the registration procedures set out in the Arrival and Departures policy). If for any reason a member of staff cannot account for a child's whereabouts during a session at the Club, the following procedure will be activated:

- The Manager/Co-ordinator will inform the rest of the staff team that the child is missing. A member of the team will contact Cathy/Ann who will come to the club for support and to carry out an investigation.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- A thorough search of the entire premises will commence.
- The staff team will be careful not to create an atmosphere of panic and to ensure that the other children remain safe and adequately supervised.
- The Manager/Co-ordinator will nominate as many members of staff as possible to search the area surrounding the premises.
- All staff will be extra vigilant to any potentially suspicious behaviour or persons in and around the Club.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If after 10 minutes of thorough searching the child is still missing, the Manager/Co-ordinator will inform the police and then the child's parent/carer.
- The Manager/Co-ordinator talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- While waiting for the police and the parent/carer to arrive, searches for the child will continue. During this period, other members of staff will maintain as normal a routine as is possible for the rest of the children at the Club.
- The Manager/Co-ordinator/Owners will be responsible for meeting the police and the missing child's parent/carer. The Manager will co-ordinate any actions instructed by the police, and do all they can to comfort and reassure the parents/carers.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Manager and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Manager has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole group outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child. However, child safety remains our priority, and the same search procedure will be followed.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer 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.
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- The Manager (if present) or lead practitioner contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Manager (if present) or lead practitioner contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- 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 Manager contacts Ann Turner & Cathy Price and reports the incident. They will come to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, where applicable.
- The Manager or a member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive. During this time, staff will ensure that all other children remain supervised throughout and that normal routines are maintained as far as possible.

Any incidents (either on or off the premises) must be recorded in writing on an incident report form, and Ofsted must be contacted and informed of any incidents.

The Investigation

- The Manager together with Ann Turner and/or Cathy Price speaks with the parent(s).
- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Owners, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff and volunteers who were present.
- 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.

- - 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 staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. 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.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, 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. Our Manager will 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 Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Manager and the other should be the Company owner or representative. 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 owners will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Once the incident is resolved, the Management and the staff team will review relevant policies and procedures and implement any necessary changes (paying particular note to the relevant provisions of the Club's Site Security and Risk Assessment policies).