

Our vision: **'Let your light shine'** based on Matthew 5.16

# Egglescliffe C.E. Primary School



## Missing Child Policy

Reviewed:

November 2021

To be reviewed by:

November 2022

## Policy statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the 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. Should the headteacher be absent the senior teacher deputising for the head should carry out the roles allocated to the headteacher.

## Procedures

### *Child going missing on the premises*

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the head providing information about where the child was last seen.
- The head teacher will instigate a thorough search of the building and grounds.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- If the child is not found, the missing child is reported to the police and the parents are contacted.
- The head teacher begins to record the chronology of the event and maintains communications.

### *Child going missing on an outing*

This describes what to do when staff have taken a class on an outing, leaving the other staff back in the school. If the head teacher has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- 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.
- The visit leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The headteacher is contacted immediately and the incident is logged.
- The head teacher contacts the parent, who makes their way to the school or outing venue as agreed with the head teacher. The school is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the school.
- Staff take the remaining children back to school.
  
- 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 visit leader contacts the headteacher and reports the incident. The headteacher carries out an investigation and may come to the venue immediately.

- The visit leader, 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 visit leader together with the headteacher speaks with the parent(s).
- The headteacher carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- 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.
- The incident will be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). 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 local authority Health and Safety Officer will be contacted. The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); who may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, the Human Resource team 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.
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- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. School leaders 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 setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the visit leader/ teacher and the other should be

the headteacher. 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 headteacher will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must maintain confidentiality about any missing child incident.
- Any statements/ dealings with the press will be done through the Local Authority Press Office, with the Chair of Academy Council and the Headteacher. No other member of staff should answer press questions or brief the press.

Emma Robertson  
**Headteacher**

## **Appendix**

### **Information the police will expect staff to pass on when a child is reported as missing:**

- Child's full name and the name they are known by
- Date of birth
- Home address
- What the child was wearing
- Exactly what time did this happen?
- Has the child done this before?
- Any medical needs/ issues?
- Any family issues?
- Child protection/ Social worker involvement?
- Any local relatives?
- Contact numbers and addresses of above
- Behaviour beforehand- any significant actions/ comments
- Photograph- if one was on file\*
- Other factors/ influences such as self-harm/ drugs available/ taken

The police would expect school to contact the parents initially.

\* Storage of photographic images to be shared for such purposes needs prior permission: school will maintain a log of which parents have given their consent.