



**Standard Operating Procedure
DCYP MOD Schools Early Years Settings
Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Child Going Missing on an Outing**

Written by: Anita Collins

Date written: 01.08.2021

Reviewed Date: 23.08.2023

Review annually or if any changes are made to support practice.

Child Going Missing on a School Outing

Scope

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

All children are accounted for during the day and their arrival and departure time is marked in the register and staff make regular heads counts.

A clear Risk Assessment is completed for every outing and all staff have a copy of the RA and understand the RA. The RA should clearly state any actions put in place to support any known risks such as if a child is known to need additional support.

This SOP is in conjunction with the DCS Directive 3.2.11 Outdoor Learning and School Visits. All EY Settings must have a nominated EVC.

(EVC is Anita Collins EYSM)

Procedure

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 free staff member searches the immediate vicinity, but does not search beyond that.
- The Early Years Manager/Deputy Manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported (if not on the outing) and the incident information is recorded by the Early Years Manager. The EY Setting mobile is used to keep in touch with the Early Years Manager.
- The Early Years Manager/Deputy Manager contacts the military police, welfare and reports the child as missing.
- The Early Years Manager/Deputy Manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the venue/outing area.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.



- In an indoor building, the staff will contact the venue's Manager who will then handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Early Years Manager/Deputy Manager, designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue/outing until they arrive.

The Early Years Manager/Deputy Manager contacts the EYA immediately reports the incident. The EYA (or nominated DCS School Improvement Service employee) go to the setting immediately to carry out an investigation, with the EY Setting Senior Leadership Team (where appropriate). For the ROW context the EYA may ask the partnership school to attend the site/venue.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Early Years Manager/Deputy Manager together with the EYA (as necessary) speaks with the parent(s). This may be the nominated Senior Leader appointed by the EYA from the partnership school in the ROW.
- The EYA/EYAs carry 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 had taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing
 - The time that it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

The EYA will Contact the DCS Safeguarding Education Manager and Allegations Officer and it will be decided how to proceed with the investigation. 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. British Forces Social Work Service may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

The EYA will contact the Station's Chair of Governors and will report the incident to them.

In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken the EYA will contact Ofsted. A full copy of the investigation is kept securely for Ofsted by the Early Years Manager.

Managing people

Missing children 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 parent anger and they may be afraid. Early Years Manager/Deputy Managers need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support whilst 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 Early Years Manager/Deputy Manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Early Years Manager/Deputy Manager and the other should be the Early Years Advisor or nominated DCS Employee to carry out this necessary and sensitive duty.

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 the children's questions honestly but also reassure them.

In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support organised with the local civilian HR or EAP. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Early Years Manager will work with the EYA to ensure staff receive all the support they need.

Staff must not discuss, post and/or respond to any comments about the missing child incident with members of the local community, on social media or the press.