



Standard Operating Procedure

DCS, MOD Schools, Early Years Settings

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Lost Child

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

DCS Early Years Settings take the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in their care do not leave a session unaccompanied. The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. In the unlikely event that a child is noted to be missing from an Early Years Setting, the setting puts into practice agreed procedures.

Procedure

Stage One - Search systematically

- All available staff to immediately check toilets, shared areas, rooms and playground to ensure the child is not hiding or locked in anywhere.
- One member of staff to immediately inform the office and the Setting Manager/Deputy Manager and check whether the child has been signed out for an external appointment.
- The register will need to be checked by the Room Leader/Supervisor as soon as a missing child has been reported.
- All other children will be gathered by the minimum number of staff to maintain their safety and a register will be taken to confirm that one named child is missing.
- Calm should be kept in the event of a child reported missing.

Stage Two

- After stage one is completed without resolution (no more than 15 minutes), the Setting Manager will contact the police and parents.
- From this point, the Setting Manager will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident. The Setting Manager will also liaise with the parents/carers.

Stage Three

- The Setting Manager should communicate the incident to their Early Years Advisor, DCS and local Safeguarding Lead.



- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and records kept in the Settings Safeguarding Files/My Concern.
- The Setting Manager, alongside DCS should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective was the response and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again.

Dealing with people's reactions

We accept that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry and that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry. We will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility of individual involved.

When the child is found

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents and others suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found.

We will accept that it is important to remember:

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now need comfort.
- Remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.

After the Incident

- We will review our current procedure.
- We will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.
- Provide practitioner support and training to ensure no future repeats of the incident.