Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection
Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.

16. MISSING CHILD

Policy Statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made 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.

Procedures

Children are supervised at all times and members of staff make head counts on a regular basis. In the event of a child being lost the manager and/or deputy will check the register to identify the lost child.
If after 15 minutes of searching the child has still not been found the parents/carers/guardians and the police will be contacted but the search will continue.
Once the matter has been resolved the manager and/or chairperson will investigate the incident and address the situation. Staff will be addressed and dealt with as deemed necessary.

If a child goes missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing a member of staff alerts the setting manager and/or deputy who will organise staff present with starting a search, whilst continuing to care for the remaining children.
- The setting manager and/or deputy and one other staff member will carry out a thorough search of the building and outdoor area, whilst the safety of the other children is maintained by the remaining staff
- The register is checked and all children in the setting accounted for.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If after a maximum of 15 minutes the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police. Remember that as soon as parents/carers are informed, they will need advice and support.
- The setting manager and/or deputy talks to all the staff and adults on the premises to find out when and where the child was last seen and a written record should be made.
- The setting manager and/or deputy should contact the chairperson immediately to report the incident. If requested, the chairperson will go to the setting immediately with any available committee members, to assist if required with the situation. All management, staff and committee present will carry out an investigation as soon as possible.

If a child goes missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff take a small group of children on an outing, leaving other staff back in the setting. What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as some parents/carers usually attend and are responsible for their own child and occasionally one other (always under the supervision of a staff member), but the same guidance should be followed.

- 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.
- If at an indoor venue, the staff should contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- If on an outdoor visit the visit manager and/or deputy should contact the police and report the child as missing. The setting manager and chairperson is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.

- The manager contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the manager. The setting should usually be advised as the best place to meet, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- A designated staff/committee member must stay at the venue until the police arrive.
- The manager and/or deputy should contact the chairperson. If requested they will go to the setting immediately with any available committee members to assist, if required, with the situation, all management, staff and committee present will carry out the investigation/ search/ reports as soon as possible.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The manager together with the chairperson speaks with the parent(s).
- The manager will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff on the premises 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/adults/children were in the group/outing and the name of the designated adult and/or staff member who was responsible for the missing child;
  - When and where the child was last seen in the group/outing;
  - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing;
  - The estimated time that the child went missing.
- 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. Children's Services may be involved if it seems likely that there is a safeguarding 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.
- An incident report (copy attached) is filed and 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 in the setting or on 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 therefore they may be afraid. Setting manager and/or deputy need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents/carers 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 everyone connected to the setting management, staff and committee. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two Playgroup members present. One should be a member of staff (the manager where possible) and the other should be the chairperson or other delegated committee member.
- 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 chairperson and/or manager and/or committee will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without the permission of the chairperson who will take advice from the Early Years team.

This policy was adopted by	Feltwell Playgroup
On	20.03.2026
Date to be reviewed	(on or before) 20.03.2027
Signed on behalf of the provider	J.I.
Name of signatory	Jonathan Irving
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Committee Chairperson

Report to be completed if a child goes missing

To be completed by the Manager or Deputy of the setting

Name of childcare setting:	FELTWELL PLAYGROUP
Address:	THE W.I. HALL, THE BECK, FELTWELL, THETFORD, NORFOLK. IP26 4DB
Telephone number:	07582371984
Name of child:	Male: Female:
Date of birth:	
Address:	
Telephone number:	
Name of parent/guardian:	
Date, time and location of disappearance:	
Who was responsible for caring for the child at the time he/she disappeared?	
What was the child wearing?	
Any distinguishing features?	
Circumstances surrounding disappearance:	
Follow up action:	
Time parent/guardian informed:	
Time police informed (if child not located after parent/guardian has been contacted):	
Details of contacted person and advice given:	
What happened next:	

Name and Signature of Manager/Deputy:
Date:
Name and Signature of Chairperson:
Time and Date informed:

Follow up actions carried out:
(If necessary) Children/staff/parents/carers/guardian supported:
Date Ofsted informed (within 14 days of incident):
Policies/ Procedures/ Risk Assessments reviewed:
Adjustments/Additions made to any of the above:
Signed by Manager/Group Manager and/or deputy:
Date:
Signed by Chairperson:
Date:
Print and Signed by Parent/Guardian where possible:
Date:
Any comments made by Parent/Guardian: