

 Killorglin Community Childcare Centre CLG		MISSING CHILD POLICY			
POLICY NO.:	CCP No. 22	REV. NO.:	4	REV. DATE:	01.04.2025
PREPARED BY:	 Centre Manager			Date: 30/3/25	
APPROVED BY:	 Board of Directors			Date: 15/5/25	

Children's safety is always maintained as the highest priority both on and off the premises.

We have put into place thorough systems and procedures which are an integral part of staff training and should ensure that children do not go missing or get lost whilst in our care.

If the Early Years Centre policies and procedures are being observed the likelihood of a child being lost is negligible. To ensure that children are not lost while in the care of Scamps and Scholars we:

- Carefully supervise the children at all times.
- Utilise formulated staff supervision plans for the external play areas.
- Maintain appropriate staff: child ratios at all times.
- Closely monitor children in and out of the building, ensuring that when the children are going out on trips or even to the garden, the signing in and out sheet is taken with staff along with emergency contact details and a phone (fully charged).
- Ensure that visitors to the centre are always supervised.
- Risk assessments are carried out in every area where children play on a daily basis.
- If an outing is organised a risk assessment will be carried out before leaving the premises.
- Very occasionally a child may become separated from the main group on an outing become lost. With careful planning and co-operative working among staff children should not be out of sight of an adult at any time.

In the unlikely event that a child is unaccounted for on the premises the following procedure will be followed:

- Scamps and Scholars will ensure a responsible person can help undertake a thorough search of the room, centre and immediate vicinity.
- The manager will be notified and all staff will be notified of the situation.
- The manager or person in charge will free up as many staff as possible to conduct a full search of the premises, inside and out.
- The manager or person in charge will delegate all available staff members to designated areas of the facility to search for the child so that the entire facility can be covered and searched in a systematic manner as quickly as possible.
- Roll calls for all other sections will be taken to check and to make sure no other child is missing and the check that the child has not been collected.
- Doors and gates will be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- CCTV footage may be checked if the child cannot be located to assist in a positive outcome.

- If, following a thorough search of the facility and the immediate vicinity, the child cannot be found the Gardai will be called and the child's parents/guardians will be notified without delay.
- The manager will contact the Chair of the Board of Management to alert the board of the situation.

In the unlikely event of a child being lost while on a trip or outing the following procedures will be followed:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing staff on the outing will ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member will immediately undertake a thorough search of the immediate vicinity.
- One staff member will phone 112, giving their name, location, name and description of the child, name of the childcare centre, and any other relevant information, e.g. any medical condition of the child.
- One staff member will phone the centre manager (if not already present) and also inform the venue (shop, library, play centre, etc.).
- The manager/deputy manager will go to the location, if not already there.
- The centre manager/deputy manager will contact the child's parents/child protection officer and keep them informed of what is happening.
- Staff will return to the centre with all other children when the manager/deputy arrive at the location.
- The manager/deputy will wait for the Gardai to arrive (or ambulance in the case of an injured person).
- Staff will complete a written record of events.
- TUSLA will be notified if it is deemed necessary.

Investigation:

- Staff will keep calm and not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The centre manager will speak with the child's parents.
- Management team will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all staff who were on the outing.
- The manager will write an incident report detailing the following:
 - * The date and time of the incident.
 - * What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff member responsible on the outing.
 - * When the child was last seen in the group.
 - * 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.
 - * The centre insurance provider is informed.

People Management:

Missing child incidents are extremely worrying for all concerned. Part of managing these incidents is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible. The staff will feel worried about the child; especially the member of staff who was responsible for the child whilst on the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time that the child is missing increases. Management should ensure that the staff feel supported while they are feeling vulnerable.

The parents will feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and single out one member over others; they may direct their anger at the centre manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent there should always be one member of staff. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and security may have to 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 the children need to focus on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.

Please see Outings Policy no.12 for further details

