

POLICY NO.58 Missing Child Policy**REV: 03 DATE: 10.08.2022**

Children's safety is always maintained at 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 minimal. To ensure that children are not lost while in the care of Scamps & Scholars we:

- Carefully always supervise children
- 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, 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 group on an outing or become lost. With careful planning and co-operative working amongst 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 policy will be followed:

Please see Outings Policy no.12 for further details

1. Scamps & Scholars will ensure a responsible person can help undertake a thorough search of the nursery and the immediate vicinity.
2. The manager will be notified, and all staff will be notified of the situation.
3. The manager or person in charge will free up as many staff as possible to conduct a full search of the premises, inside & out.
4. The manager or the person in charge should 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.

5. Roll calls for all other sections will be taken to check and to make sure no other child is missing and to check the child has not been collected
6. Doors and gates to be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
7. CCTV footage may be checked if the child cannot be located to assist in a positive outcome.
8. If, following a thorough search of the facility and the immediate vicinity, the child cannot be found the garda will be called and the child's parents will be notified without delay.
9. Management should contact the chair of the board 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:

1. 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 no other child has gone astray
2. One staff member to immediately undertake a thorough search of the immediate vicinity
3. Phone 112 (give your name, location, name and description of the child/staff, name of the nursery, and any other relevant information e.g. any medical conditions of child)
4. Fit person to phone centre manager (if not already present), and to inform venue (shop, library, museum etc)
5. Manager/deputy to go to venue/ location
6. The centre manager to contact parents/ child protection officer and keep informed of what is happening
7. Staff to return other children safely to the nursery when manager arrives
8. Manager/responsible person to wait for police/ ambulance in case of injured persons
9. Staff must do a written record of events
10. TUSLA will be notified if deemed necessary

Investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried
- Nursery manager to speak with parents
- Management team carry out full investigation taking written statements from all staff who were on the outing
- The manager 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 member responsible
- When the last child was last seen in the group
- What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing
- The time estimated the child went missing
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened
- The insurance provider informed

See policy no 12 – Outings policy

People management

Missing child incidents are extremely worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the 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 anger at the nursery manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent there should always be one members of staff. No matter how much understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and security 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 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.

Approval Date: _____

Implementation Date: _____

Signed: _____
(On behalf of the Board of Directors)