



## Lost Child Policy 2022

This policy outlines procedures in the very rare and unlikely event that a child is missing during a playgroup session.

Christ Church Playgroup works hard to keep children safe during their time at Playgroup by:

- Closing and securing all doors in and around the setting;
- Careful management of children and doors at times of arrival and departure;
- Registering children as they arrive at 9.15am and leave at the end of each session;
- Taking regular headcounts during each session, including:
  - whenever children are taken outside of the Angel Room (e.g. to the church garden or any other part of the church building);
  - during their time away from the Angel Room;
  - before and after the children return to the Angel Room;
- Key workers and all staff remaining aware of which children are present or absent;
- Ensuring that parents clearly nominate who is collecting their child.

### Procedures, roles and responsibilities

#### **A. If a child is missing at Playgroup:**

- As soon as any staff member notices that a child is missing, the Playgroup Manager must be informed. She will carry out a definitive head count.
- The Manager will be responsible for searching inside the Angel Room, including the office, toilet and kitchen, balcony, staircases, Church, Fellowship Room and downstairs kitchen and toilets.
- If the child is found on-site, the Manager checks on the welfare of the child, investigates the circumstances of the incident and makes an incident report.
- If the child is not found on site, the Deputy Manager and one other member of staff will be responsible for searching outside the building in the immediate vicinity, viz. in the forecourt, church garden, parish community centre, vicarage garden and entry to Highbury Fields.
- Both staff members searching outside should have mobile phones to keep in contact with the Playgroup and each other during the search.
- If there is no sign of the child, the Manager immediately calls the police, and then the parents, and finally the vicar.
- The Manager contacts the LA designated officer, to inform them of the situation and seek assistance, and the Committee Chair.
- During the search at least one member of staff must care for and keep calm the other children at the Playgroup.

## **B. If a child is missing off-site (e.g. outing or walk)**

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the Manager (or senior staff present) carries out a headcount.
- At least one member of staff searches the immediate vicinity; at least one member of staff remains with all the other children together and keeps them calm.
- If the child is not found, the Manager or senior staff calls the police. If the Manager is not present, the senior staff calls the Manager who then informs the parents.
- The Manager (or if she is not present, the senior staff member) should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police.
- Other members of staff return the children to the setting as soon as possible, if it is safe and practical to do so.
- The Manager contacts the LA designated officer, who should attend the setting, and Chair.
- If the Playgroup is at an organized event/museum/theme park, then the organising authorities should also be informed.

## **C. Recording and reporting**

- Any incident of a missing child must be carefully and accurately recorded and reported. The Manager/DSL must initially complete and circulate a confidential incident report form to the LA officer on the same day that the incident occurred.
  - The report will detail the following:
    - The date and time of the incident
    - Which staff/ children were in the group/outing;
    - When the child was last seen in the group/outing
    - What then took place in the group/outing
    - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- The Manager, *together with one other member of staff and/or the LA officer*, will speak to the parents about the incident, and will continue to keep them apprised of further investigations.
- A record must be kept of all discussions with staff and parents.
- The Manager must carry out a full investigation into the circumstances of the child going missing and being found, in conjunction with the LA officer.
  - Each member of staff present during the incident will write a full report using a Safeguarding incident reporting form, which is filed in the child's file.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- Ofsted must be informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days).
- Staff must be told not to discuss any missing child incident with the press.

## **D. Ramifications**

A missing child is a serious breach and failure of responsibility, and emotions will run high.

- The missing child: Staff should watch carefully for any after-effects of the incident and be prepared to call in specialist support where necessary.
- Other children: It is important to try to keep the children calm and feeling secure during and after the incident. Staff must do their best to reassure and support the other children in the group on the day and afterwards.
- Parents: Even when the child is found, parents may be angry and distraught and may focus their distress on staff.
  - There should always be two staff members present when talking with parents about the incident.
- Staff: Staff will feel extremely worried about the child and may blame themselves. The Manager must try to preserve calm and ensure that staff are treated fairly.

NB Following any incident a strenuous risk assessment will be carried out to integrate any lessons learned.

This policy was first adopted in 2014.

Date of review and update: May 2022

Next review: May 2023

Playgroup manager: Elsa Smirthwaite

Chair: Janet Gilbert