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Play, Learn and Grow Together – Our Passion is Their Future

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## **Missing Child and Uncollected Child Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

At St Helen's Pre-School, we Play, Learn and Grow Together – Our Passion is Their Future. We recognise that children feel secure and thrive when they are safe, supervised and emotionally supported. The safety of every child aged 6 months to 5 years is central to our safeguarding practice. Robust procedures, vigilant supervision and strong communication ensure that children remain safe and accounted for at all times.

St Helen's Pre-School takes all reasonable steps to prevent a child from going missing, both on and off the premises. Accurate registers (Appendix A) are maintained, regular headcounts are undertaken and staff are deployed effectively to meet EYFS ratio requirements. Clear safeguarding procedures are followed immediately if a child cannot be accounted for or if a child is not collected at the end of a session.

### **Preventative Practice**

Registers are completed immediately, recording each child's arrival and departure times. The Lead Practitioner for the session is responsible for completing and overseeing the register and updating the operational board, which displays the number of children present, staff on duty and ratio requirements and visitors. The Manager or Deputy provides oversight to ensure compliance and safe practice.

Regular headcounts are carried out throughout the session in addition to the register to ensure children are accounted for at all times. Headcounts are always completed following outdoor play and before gates are opened during transition times. A copy of the register is taken on all outings.

Children are supervised closely in all areas of the setting, including during sleep, toileting and personal care routines. External doors and gates remain secure and monitored. Risk assessments are completed for indoor, outdoor and off-site activities.

### **If a Child Goes Missing on the Premises**

If a child is identified as missing, the staff member will immediately inform the Manager or Deputy in charge of the session. A calm but urgent headcount will take place and the register will be checked to confirm attendance.

## Missing Child & Uncollected Child Policy

Staff will be deployed immediately to search all areas of the setting, including classrooms, toilets, sleep areas, outdoor spaces and storage areas. Remaining children will be kept calm and supervised appropriately to minimise distress.

If the child is not located after the checks have been completed, the Manager or Deputy in charge will contact the police immediately and provide a full description of the child, including name, age, clothing, distinguishing features and any medical needs. The child's parent or carer will be contacted without delay.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or Deputy DSL in their absence, will oversee safeguarding procedures and ensure the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is followed. The Chair of the Committee will be informed as soon as practicable.

All entrances and exits will be secured while emergency services respond.

### **If a Child Goes Missing During an Outing**

If a child is identified as missing during an outing, staff will immediately gather all remaining children to their designated adult and conduct a headcount. One staff member will search the immediate vicinity while maintaining visual contact with the group.

The Manager or senior member of staff will be contacted immediately. If the child is not located straight away, the police will be contacted without delay and parents informed. Where appropriate, venue security will be alerted.

Remaining children will be returned safely to the setting if required. Staff will remain calm and reassuring at all times to prevent distress to other children.

### **Investigation and Reporting**

Once the child has been found and is safe, a full written incident report will be completed. The Manager and Chair of the Committee, or nominated Committee representative, will review the circumstances of the incident. Written statements will be obtained from staff involved.

The investigation will consider staffing deployment, supervision, register accuracy, headcount procedures, security systems and risk assessments. A clear record will be made outlining how the incident occurred and what actions are required to prevent recurrence.

Ofsted will be notified within the required statutory timeframe. The incident will be reported under RIDDOR if applicable and our insurance provider will be informed. Where appropriate, external agencies including the police, Local Authority or Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) will be consulted.

The incident will be formally reported to and reviewed by the Committee.

## Uncollected Child Procedure

If a child is not collected at the agreed time, staff will attempt to contact the parent or carer immediately using the contact details provided. If no response is received, emergency contacts listed on the registration form will be contacted. A written record of all contact attempts will be recorded in line with our Safeguarding procedures.

Two members of staff will remain with the child at all times. The child will be reassured and supervised in a calm and safe environment.

If no contact has been made within one hour of closing, the Manager, Deputy in charge of the session or DSL will contact Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) and follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Under no circumstances will a child be left unsupervised.

## Supporting Children and Staff

We recognise that a missing or uncollected child incident may cause distress. Appropriate reassurance and emotional support will be provided to children, families and staff. Following any incident, procedures will be reviewed to ensure continuous improvement and strengthened safeguarding practice.

## Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner in response to legislative or operational changes.

This policy has been adopted by St Helen's Pre-School

Signed on behalf of the setting by:

..... Chairperson

..... Manager

Date: March 2026

This policy runs in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Arrivals and Departures
- Outings
- Health and Safety

## Relevant Guidance and Legislation

- EYFS Statutory Framework

**Appendices** – Please note appendices are held at the Pre-School, please ask to view

A. Registers