06. MISSING CHILD

Policy statement

Children's safety at ASK is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made, through the implementation of our outings procedure and our exit/entrance procedure, 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

Child missing in the building

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the member of staff informs the Designated Safeguarding Lead who initiates a search within ASK.
- If the child is found on-site, the Designated Safeguarding Lead checks on the welfare of the child and investigates the circumstances of the incident.
- If the child is not found on-site, one member of staff searches the immediate vicinity. If there is no sign of the child, the police are called immediately. The parents/carers are then called and informed.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead contacts their Designated Officer/line manager.

Child missing off-site (outing or walk)

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the senior staff present carries out a headcount.
- One member of staff searches the immediate vicinity.
- If the child is not found, the senior staff calls the police and then contacts the Designated Safeguarding Lead (if not already on the outing).
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead informs the parents/carers.
- Members of staff return the children to ASK as soon as possible if it is safe to do so.
- According to the advice of the police, one senior member of staff should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead contacts the Designated Officer/line manager.

Recording and reporting

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead completes and circulates the incident report form to the Designated Officer/line manager on the same day that the incident occurred.

The investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible (and at least within 14 days).
- The Designated Officer/line manager carries out a full investigation.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Designated Officer/line manager speak with the parents/carers together and explain the process of the investigation.
- Members of staff present during the incident write a full report. The reporting form is filed in the child's file. Members of staff do not discuss any missing child incident with the press.

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.
- Our members of staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for 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.
- They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Our manager ensures that any members of staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but also receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame our members of staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is our manager, and the other should be our registered provider/owner. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our members of 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. Our remaining members of staff caring for them need to be focussed on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly and also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, our members of staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. Our registered provider/owner will use his discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our members of staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Dealing with the media

Dealing with the media, whether the press, television or radio, requires specific skills and expertise. The only employees who can deal with the media are those specifically authorised to do so.

- We will seek legal advice on how to handle social media requests and refer to the following guidance: Handling media attention after a major incident - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).
- Only the Owner and/or the Manager are authorised to deal with the media.
- Except those identified above, employees are not authorised to deal with the media and should ensure that:
    a. they do not speak, write or give interviews to the media;
    b. they do not bring ASK into disrepute by publicising material which is confidential or against the interests of ASK or its employees and families; and,
    c. if approached by the media, they immediately refer all enquiries to the appropriate person without answering questions.

This policy was adopted by:	ASK Kindergarten & Clubs
On:	May 07, 2026
Date to be reviewed:	May 07, 2027
Signatory:	Mark Stewart
Role of Signatory:	Owner & Ofsted Registered Provider