

Critical Incident Policy

At The Orchard Day Nursery Kingston we understand we need to plan for all eventualities to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all the children we care for. With this in mind, we have a critical incident policy in place to ensure our nursery is able to operate effectively in the case of a critical incident.

A critical incident is any event that significantly disrupts the normal operation of the nursery or presents a serious risk to the safety or welfare of children, staff or visitors.

This policy should be read alongside our:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Lockdown Policy
- Fire Safety Policy
- Emergency Evacuation Procedure
- Health and Safety Policy
- Missing Child Policy
- Business Continuity Plan
- First Aid Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

The nursery maintains an up-to-date Business Continuity Plan which is reviewed regularly and tested through staff training and emergency drills.

Principles

In the event of any critical incident our priorities will always be:

- Protect life and ensure the immediate safety of children and adults.
- Contact the emergency services without delay where required.
- Follow the advice of emergency responders.
- Maintain accurate registers and account for every child, staff member and visitor.
- Maintain appropriate supervision ratios wherever possible.
- Inform parents as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.
- Notify Ofsted and other agencies where legally required.
- Record the incident fully.
- Review the incident afterwards to strengthen future practice.

Staff understand that during emergencies clear leadership is essential. The Nursery Manager (or most senior person present) will take overall responsibility for coordinating the response.

Communication with Parents

Parents will be kept informed as soon as it is safe to do so using the nursery communication systems, including telephone calls, text messages, email or nursery communication apps.

Where immediate collection of children is required, parents will receive clear instructions explaining:

- why collection is necessary
- where children are located
- collection arrangements

- expected timescales
- any alternative arrangements if the nursery cannot reopen immediately.

Information shared with parents will be factual, timely and protect the confidentiality of everyone involved.

Flood

There is always a danger of flooding from adverse weather conditions or through the water and central heating systems. We cannot anticipate adverse weather; however, we can ensure that we take care of all our water and heating systems through regular maintenance and checks to reduce the occurrence of flooding in this way. Our central heating systems are checked and serviced annually by a registered gas engineer and they conform to all appropriate guidelines and legislation.

If flooding occurs during the nursery day, the nursery manager will make a decision based on the severity and location of this flooding. It may be deemed necessary to follow the same procedure as the fire evacuation procedure. In this instance children will be kept safe and parents will be notified in the same way as the fire procedure (see Fire safety policy).

Should the nursery be assessed as unsafe through flooding, fire or any other incident we will follow our Nursery operational plan and provide *care in another location/*parents with alternative arrangements in sister nurseries/*options for childcare facilities in the local area.

The nursery carries out regular maintenance of all plumbing, heating and drainage systems to minimise risks.

If flooding, structural damage or another building failure occurs:

- children will be moved immediately to a place of safety
- electricity or gas supplies will be isolated where safe to do so
- emergency services and utility providers will be contacted where appropriate
- the building will not be re-entered until declared safe
- parents will be informed immediately if children need collecting
- where possible the nursery's Business Continuity Plan will be implemented using alternative accommodation or temporary closure arrangements.

Fire

All fire procedures are detailed within our Fire Safety Policy.

If evacuation is necessary:

- children will be evacuated immediately using the nearest safe exit
- registers, emergency contacts and medication will be taken where safe to do so
- staff will complete headcounts at the assembly point
- nobody will re-enter the building until authorised by the Fire and Rescue Service.

Utility Failure

If essential services fail, including:

- electricity
- water

- gas
- heating
- telecommunications
- internet

management will assess whether it remains safe to continue caring for children.

Factors considered include:

- availability of drinking water
- safe toileting facilities
- food preparation
- heating or cooling
- lighting
- safeguarding arrangements.

If children's welfare cannot be maintained the nursery will close until services are restored.

Burglary

The management of the nursery follow a lock up procedure which ensures all doors and windows are closed and locked before vacating the premises. Alarm systems are used and in operation during all hours the nursery is closed.

The manager or most senior member of staff on site will always check the premises as they arrive in the morning.

Should they discover that the nursery has been broken into they will follow the procedure below:

- In an emergency dial 999, or non-emergency dial 101, with as many details as possible, i.e. name and location, details of what has been found and emphasise this is a nursery and children will be arriving soon
- Contain the area to ensure no-one enters until the police arrive
- Where it is safe to do so, the staff will direct parents and children to a separate area as they arrive. If all areas have been disturbed staff will follow police advice. This may include temporary short-term closure and/or following the relocation procedure under the flood section wherever necessary to ensure the safety of the children
- The manager on duty will help the police with enquiries, e.g. by identifying items missing, areas of entry etc.
- A manager will be available at all times during this time to speak to parents, reassure children and direct enquires
- Management will assess the situation following a theft and ensure parents are kept up to date with developments relating to the operation of the nursery
- Arrangements will be made to ensure the nursery is made safe and secure again.

Following any burglary security arrangements and risk assessments will be reviewed.

Abduction or threatened abduction of a child

We have secure safety procedures in place to ensure children are safe while in our care, including taking reasonable steps to ensure that children do not leave the premises

unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised persons entering the premises and at risk of abduction.

The nursery has robust arrival, departure and security procedures to minimise the risk of a child leaving the premises unsupervised.

If an abduction or attempted abduction occurs:

- police will be contacted immediately by dialling 999
- parents will be informed immediately
- all remaining children will be safeguarded
- Ofsted and the Local Authority will be notified where required
- detailed written records will be completed
- staff will fully cooperate with police investigations
- support will be offered to children, families and staff following the incident.

The nursery will always comply with court orders relating to parental responsibility. Copies of relevant legal documentation must be provided by parents.

Staff are vigilant at all times and report any persons lingering on nursery property immediately. All doors and gates to the nursery are locked and cannot be accessed unless staff members allow individuals in. Parents are reminded on a regular basis not to allow anyone into the building whether they are known to them or not. We also have visual reminders about closing the door behind them to prevent tailgating (another person accessing entry behind them). Visitors and general security are covered in more detail in the Supervision of visitors policy.

Children will only be released into the care of a designated adult; see the Arrivals and departures policy for more details. Parents are requested to inform the nursery of any potential custody proceedings or family concerns as soon as they arise, so the nursery is able to support the child. The nursery will not take sides in relation to any custody arrangements and will remain neutral for the child. If an absent parent arrives to collect their child, the nursery will not restrict access **unless** a court order is in place. Parents are requested to issue the nursery with a copy of these documents should they be in place. We will consult our solicitors with regards to any concerns over custody and relay any information back to the parties involved.

If a member of staff witnesses an actual or potential abduction from nursery, we have the following procedures which are followed immediately:

- The staff member will notify management immediately and the manager will take control, dialling 999 and requesting the police, instructions from the emergency response team will be followed
- The parent(s) will be contacted
- All other children will be kept safe and secure, reassured and calmed where necessary
- The police will be given as many details as possible including details of the child, description of the abductor, car registration number if used, time and direction of travel if seen and any family situations that may have impacted on this abduction
- Any incidents must be recorded in writing as soon as practicably possible including the outcome, who was abducted, time identified, notification to police and findings

- In the unlikely event that the child is not found, the nursery will follow the local authority and police procedures
- Ofsted will be contacted and informed of the incident
- With incidents of this nature parents, carers, children and staff may require support and reassurance following the traumatic experience. Management will provide this or seek further support where necessary
- In any cases with media attention staff will not speak to any media representatives
- Post-incident risk assessments will be conducted following any incident of this nature to enable the chance of this reoccurring being reduced.

Suspicious Person or Security Threat

Staff remain vigilant for unknown persons, suspicious behaviour or attempts to gain unauthorised access.

If concerns arise staff will:

- challenge unknown adults where safe
- secure entrances
- initiate lockdown where appropriate
- contact police immediately if necessary
- follow emergency services advice throughout.

Bomb threat/terrorism attack

If a bomb or terrorist attack threat is received at the nursery, the person taking the call will record all details given over the phone as soon as possible, raising the alarm and contacting emergency services as soon as the phone call has ended. The management will follow the fire evacuation procedure and guidance from the emergency services to ensure the safety of all on the premises. The person who took the call will provide as much detail to the emergency services as possible. Ofsted will be notified.

With incidents of this nature parents, carers, children and staff may require support and reassurance following the traumatic experience. Management will provide this or seek further support where necessary.

Infectious Disease or Public Health Incident

The nursery follows guidance issued by:

- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)
- Department for Education
- Local Health Protection Team
- Local Authority
- Ofsted

Where required we may:

- exclude individuals in accordance with national guidance
- increase cleaning and infection control measures
- notify parents of confirmed outbreaks
- temporarily close rooms
- restrict visitors
- implement additional hygiene procedures.

Children will only be excluded where national guidance recommends.

Extreme Weather

Where severe weather presents risks to travel or safe operation, management will assess:

- staffing levels
- heating and utilities
- access to the building
- local authority advice
- Met Office warnings.

Parents will be informed at the earliest opportunity if opening hours need to change.

Any other significant incidents

All incidents will be managed by the manager on duty and all staff will co-operate with any emergency services on the scene, where applicable. The fire evacuation procedure will be followed for any other incident that requires an emergency evacuation. Other incidents, e.g. no water supply, will be dealt with on an individual basis taking into account the effect on the safety, health and welfare of the children and staff in the nursery.

If there is an incident outside of the nursery building and it is safer to stay inside the building, we will follow the Lockdown policy. Emergency services advice will be taken.

National outbreaks of infection and/or health pandemics

In the event of a national outbreak of a health pandemic, we will follow Government health advice and guidance, legal advice and advice from our insurance provider.

The setting will remain open as long as we have sufficient staff to care for the children. Depending on the nature of the pandemic we will follow all advice and implement measures to ensure that risks to vulnerable children and staff are minimised. This may include excluding infected children, staff, parents or family members from the setting for a set period of time, to prevent the spread of infection. This decision will be made in consultation with parents, staff, legal advice and our insurance provider. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis.

The nursery manager will notify Ofsted in the event of a critical incident.

Notification to Ofsted

The nursery will notify Ofsted without delay of any significant event affecting:

- the safety or welfare of children
- serious accidents
- serious injuries
- serious safeguarding incidents
- significant operational disruption

where required under the EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements.

Other agencies, including the Local Authority, Environmental Health, UKHSA or the Health and Safety Executive (RIDDOR where applicable), will also be informed where legally required.

Loss of Staff

Where staffing levels unexpectedly fall below safe legal requirements due to illness or emergency:

- relief staff will be contacted
- management staff may provide direct care
- rooms may be combined where appropriate
- admissions may be temporarily suspended
- parents may be asked to collect children if safe ratios cannot be maintained.

The nursery will never knowingly operate below EYFS statutory requirements.

Safeguarding During Critical Incidents

Safeguarding remains everyone's responsibility during any emergency.

Staff will:

- continue to supervise children at all times
- maintain registers throughout the incident
- ensure medication accompanies children if relocated
- continue to follow safeguarding procedures
- report any safeguarding concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If concerns arise about a child's welfare during a critical incident, Children's Social Care (SPA/MASH) and other relevant agencies will be contacted without delay.

Supporting Children, Families and Staff

Following a critical incident, children, families and staff may require emotional support.

The nursery will:

- provide reassurance and consistent routines
- communicate openly with families
- access external support services where appropriate
- make reasonable adjustments for children or staff affected
- hold staff debrief sessions
- monitor children's wellbeing in the days and weeks following the incident.

Learning from Incidents

Following every critical incident, management will complete a formal review to identify:

- what happened
- what worked well
- lessons learned
- improvements required
- any policy or risk assessment updates
- staff training needs.

Actions identified will be implemented promptly to strengthen the nursery's emergency preparedness and continually improve the safety and wellbeing of everyone within the setting.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
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06/08/2026	F.Joyce	December 2026
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