

Missing Child from Nursery Procedure

At The Orchard Day Nursery we take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children on the premises. We only release children into the care of individuals who have been notified to us by the parent and have safety systems in place to ensure that children do not leave the premises unsupervised

In the unlikely event of a child going missing within or from the nursery, we have the following procedure which will be implemented immediately:

- All staff will be aware of the procedure when a child goes missing and supply information to support the search, e.g. a recent photograph and a detailed description of clothing
- The nursery manager will be informed immediately and all staff present will be informed. Some staff will be deployed to start an immediate thorough search of the nursery, followed by a search of the surrounding area, whilst ensuring that some staff remain with the other children so they remain supervised, calm and supported throughout
- The manager will call the police as soon as they believe the child is missing and follow police guidance. The parents of the missing child will also be contacted
- A second search of the area will be carried out
- During this period, available staff will be continually searching for the missing child, whilst other staff maintain as near to normal routine as possible for the rest of the children in the nursery
- The manager will meet the police and parents
- The manager will then await instructions from the police
- In the unlikely event that the child is not found, the nursery will follow the local authority and police procedure
- Any incidents must be recorded in writing as soon as practicably possible including the outcome, who was lost, time identified, notification to police and findings
- Ofsted will be contacted and informed of the incident
- With incidents of this nature parents, 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.

At The Orchard Day Nursery Kingston, the safety, welfare and safeguarding of every child is our highest priority.

We take all reasonable steps to ensure that children remain safely within the nursery premises and are appropriately supervised at all times.

Children will only be released from the nursery to a parent/carer or another person who has been authorised by the parent/carer in accordance with the nursery's collection procedures.

The nursery maintains appropriate arrangements for:

- effective supervision of children;
- secure access to the premises;
- monitoring children entering and leaving the building;
- maintaining accurate registers and attendance records;
- safe deployment of staff;
- regular headcounts and/or appropriate checks;
- collection arrangements; and
- responding immediately if a child cannot be located.

The EYFS requires providers to take all necessary steps to keep children safe and to have appropriate safeguarding and welfare arrangements in place. Ofsted's inspection approach also places significant emphasis on children's safety and wellbeing. ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

What is a Missing Child?

For the purpose of this procedure, a child is considered missing when they cannot be located by the staff responsible for their care and their whereabouts are unknown.

This includes a child who:

- cannot be located within their expected room or area;
- cannot be located elsewhere within the nursery;
- has left the nursery premises without authorisation;
- has failed to return from an authorised activity or outing;
- is discovered to be missing during a headcount or register check; or
- cannot be accounted for when children move between rooms, outdoor areas or other parts of the premises.

There is no minimum amount of time that staff should wait before treating a child as missing.

If a child cannot immediately be located, the procedure below must begin without delay.

Immediate Action

As soon as a child is identified as missing:

1. Raise the alarm immediately

The member of staff who identifies that the child is missing must immediately inform:

- the Nursery Manager;
- the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), where appropriate; and
- other available staff.

Staff must remain calm and act immediately.

The exact time the child was identified as missing must be recorded.

2. Establish key information

The manager will immediately establish:

- the child's full name;
- age;
- last known location;

- last known time they were seen;
- who last saw the child;
- what the child was wearing;
- whether the child has any additional needs or vulnerabilities;
- whether the child may have accessed a particular area;
- whether the child may have left the premises;
- whether there are any known risks associated with the child; and
- whether there are any immediate safeguarding concerns.

A recent photograph of the child should be made available to support the search and police response.

Search of the Nursery

Staff will immediately conduct a systematic search of the nursery premises, checking all areas where the child could reasonably be located. Reviewing the CCTV footage when able to do so.

This may include:

- the child's room;
- other rooms;
- toilets and changing areas;
- sleep areas;
- cupboards or enclosed spaces where it is safe and appropriate to check;
- corridors and stairways;
- outdoor areas;
- garden areas;
- storage areas;
- play equipment;
- entrances and exits; and
- any other area identified during the initial assessment.

Staff should search methodically rather than simply repeating the same areas. Doors, gates and other potential exit points will be checked immediately.

Maintaining Supervision of Other Children

The safety and supervision of the remaining children must be maintained throughout the incident.

The manager will allocate staff so that:

- some staff search for the missing child;
- sufficient staff remain with the other children;
- EYFS staff-to-child ratios are maintained wherever possible;
- children remain appropriately supervised and reassured;
- children are not unnecessarily exposed to distress or information that is inappropriate for their age; and
- normal routines are maintained as far as reasonably possible.

If additional staff are required, the manager will contact available staff or other appropriate support.

The search must never result in all staff leaving the remaining children unsupervised.

If the Child Cannot Immediately Be Found

If the child cannot be located immediately following the initial search, the manager will treat the situation as an emergency.

The manager will:

1. Contact the **police on 999 without delay** where the child is believed to be missing and there is any concern for their safety or whereabouts.
2. Provide the police with all relevant information.
3. Follow the instructions given by the police.
4. Contact the child's parent/carer without delay.
5. Provide the parent/carer with factual information about what has happened.
6. Continue to support and supervise the remaining children.
7. Maintain a clear record of all actions and timings.

The nursery will not delay contacting the police while conducting repeated searches where there is reason to believe that the child may have left the premises or may be at risk.

Contacting the Police

The police will be contacted immediately where a child is believed to be missing from the nursery premises or there is any concern that the child may be at risk of harm.

The manager will provide:

- child's full name;
- age and date of birth;
- recent photograph;
- description of clothing;
- physical description;
- last known location;
- last known time seen;
- any known medical conditions or additional needs;
- any relevant behavioural information;
- details of the child's parents/carers;
- details of the nursery;
- actions already taken; and
- any other information requested by the police.

The manager will follow police instructions regarding further searches and communication.

Contacting Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as reasonably practicable once the immediate emergency response is underway, unless the police or safeguarding authorities advise otherwise.

The nursery will provide clear and factual information and will avoid speculation.

The manager will remain the main point of contact for the family wherever possible. Where the child is located, parents/carers will be updated promptly and appropriate arrangements will be made for the child's return and welfare.

Search of the Surrounding Area

Where appropriate, and only where this can be done without compromising the supervision of the other children, staff may assist with searching the immediate surrounding area. Once the police have been contacted, staff will follow police instructions regarding the search.

Staff must not put themselves or children at risk while searching.

No staff member should leave the nursery alone to conduct an extensive search unless this has been specifically agreed as safe and appropriate.

Safeguarding Considerations

A missing child is a serious safeguarding incident.

The manager and DSL will consider whether the circumstances indicate:

- a failure in supervision;
- a failure in the security of the premises;
- a safeguarding concern;
- an unexplained absence;
- possible unauthorised removal;
- a concern involving a member of staff or another person;
- a concern relating to the child's family circumstances; or
- any other risk to the child.

Where a safeguarding concern is identified, the nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed and the appropriate safeguarding partners will be contacted.

The nursery will cooperate fully with the police, children's social care, LADO or other relevant agencies.

Child Found

When the child is located:

- the manager will establish where and when the child was found;
- the child's immediate welfare will be assessed;
- first aid or medical attention will be provided where required;
- the child will be reassured and supported;
- parents/carers will be informed;
- the police will be updated where they have been involved;
- any safeguarding concerns will be referred appropriately; and
- the circumstances leading to the child going missing will be investigated.

Staff will avoid questioning the child in a manner that could influence or contaminate any later safeguarding investigation.

Where a child makes a disclosure or allegation, staff will follow the nursery's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

If the Child Is Not Found

If the child cannot be located, the nursery will continue to follow the instructions of the police and relevant safeguarding authorities.

The nursery will cooperate fully with any search, investigation or safeguarding enquiry. The manager will ensure that accurate records are maintained throughout the incident. The nursery will not make assumptions about what has happened to the child and will not communicate unverified information to parents, staff or members of the public.

Ofsted Notification

The manager/registered provider will consider whether the incident is a significant event that must be notified to Ofsted. They must also notify the Deputy Operations Manager of the company (Dimitra)

Ofsted requires registered providers to report significant events affecting their childcare as soon as reasonably practicable and within 14 days. Safeguarding and welfare incidents that meet the notification requirements must be reported. ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk))

A missing-child incident will be treated as a serious safeguarding matter and the registered provider will consider Ofsted notification based on the circumstances and relevant statutory requirements.

The manager will retain a record of:

- the decision to notify or not notify Ofsted;
- the reason for the decision;
- the date and time of any notification; and
- any reference or information received from Ofsted.

Recording the Incident

A full written record will be completed as soon as reasonably practicable.

The record will include:

- child's name and age;
- date and time;
- location where the child was last seen;
- staff responsible for the child;
- time the child was identified as missing;
- circumstances leading to the child being identified as missing;
- searches undertaken;
- areas searched;
- staff involved;
- time the police were contacted;
- time parents/carers were contacted;
- advice and instructions provided by the police;
- time the child was located;
- where and how the child was found;
- the child's condition;
- any first aid or medical treatment provided;

- any safeguarding referrals;
- Ofsted notification and outcome where applicable;
- any witnesses;
- immediate actions taken; and
- recommendations for preventing recurrence.

All records will be stored securely and handled in accordance with the nursery's data protection and safeguarding procedures.

Notification to Other Agencies

Depending on the circumstances, the nursery may need to notify or seek advice from:

- the police;
- local authority children's social care;
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), where relevant;
- the safeguarding partnership;
- Ofsted; and
- other relevant agencies.

The manager will follow local safeguarding procedures and any instructions given by statutory agencies.

Supporting Children, Parents and Staff

A missing-child incident can be extremely distressing for children, parents/carers and staff.

Following the incident, management will:

- provide appropriate reassurance and support;
- consider whether children witnessed or were affected by the incident;
- provide parents/carers with appropriate information;
- offer staff an opportunity to discuss the incident;
- identify whether any staff member requires additional support;
- consider whether further safeguarding or wellbeing support is required; and
- make appropriate referrals where necessary.

Information shared with children will be age-appropriate and will not compromise any police or safeguarding investigation.

Media and Confidentiality

Staff must not speak to the media or provide comments, photographs or information about the incident.

Any media enquiry must be directed to the nursery owner/registered provider or designated spokesperson.

Staff must maintain confidentiality and must not discuss the incident on personal social media or other public platforms.

Information about the child and family must only be shared with those who have a legitimate need to know.

Post-Incident Review and Risk Assessment

Following every missing-child incident, the manager will complete a full incident review and risk assessment.

The review will consider:

- how the child became missing;
- supervision arrangements;
- staffing and deployment;
- room and outdoor layouts;
- security of doors and gates;
- registration and headcount procedures;
- transitions between rooms or areas;
- communication between staff;
- whether policies and procedures were followed;
- whether staff require additional training;
- whether the environment needs to be changed;
- whether additional security measures are required; and
- whether any safeguarding concerns remain.

Actions identified through the review will be documented, assigned to a named person and monitored until completed.

Where necessary, the nursery will update its:

- risk assessments;
- supervision arrangements;
- safeguarding procedures;
- security procedures;
- staff training;
- collection procedures; and
- missing-child procedure.

The aim of the review is not to assign blame but to identify what happened, learn from the incident and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Prevention

The nursery will take proactive steps to reduce the risk of a child going missing, including:

- maintaining accurate registers;
- carrying out appropriate headcounts;
- maintaining effective supervision;
- monitoring children during transitions;
- ensuring doors and gates are appropriately secured;
- checking outdoor areas before children enter them;
- ensuring visitors follow nursery procedures;
- ensuring children are released only to authorised adults;
- maintaining appropriate staff deployment;

- ensuring staff understand the missing-child procedure; and
- regularly reviewing environmental and supervision risk assessments.

Children's movements will be monitored particularly carefully during:

- transitions between rooms;
- outdoor play;
- toilet routines;
- arrival and collection;
- outings and trips; and
- changes to the normal daily routine.

Staff Training

All staff will be made aware of this procedure during induction and will receive regular reminders as appropriate.

Staff will understand:

- what constitutes a missing child;
- that there is no requirement to wait before beginning the procedure;
- who must be informed;
- how to search safely;
- how to maintain supervision of other children;
- when the police must be contacted;
- how to respond to parents/carers;
- safeguarding responsibilities;
- recording requirements; and
- the importance of learning from incidents.

The procedure will be reviewed following any incident or significant change to the nursery's premises, staffing arrangements or safeguarding requirements.

Headcounts

The nursery uses the Famly app to support accurate attendance recording and daily headcounts.

All staff are responsible for knowing which children are present in their care and for ensuring that children are accounted for throughout the day.

Daily Headcount Requirements

A headcount must be completed and recorded on Famly:

- at the start of the session;
- when children arrive or leave throughout the day;
- before and after moving between rooms or areas;
- before going outside;
- immediately after returning indoors;
- before and after sleep/rest periods, where applicable;
- before and after meals where children move between areas;
- before leaving the nursery for an outing;

- immediately on returning from an outing;
- whenever there is a change in staffing or room deployment that could affect supervision;
- following any significant interruption or change to the normal routine; and
- whenever a member of staff is unsure whether all children are present.

The nursery may require additional headcounts at any time where the manager or staff member considers this necessary.

Recording the Headcount on Famly

The staff member responsible for the group will complete the headcount using the nursery's Famly attendance/headcount procedure.

Staff must:

1. Physically count the children who are present.
2. Check the children against the attendance information shown on Famly.
3. Confirm that the number of children physically present matches the number recorded as present on Famly.
4. Record/complete the headcount on Famly in accordance with the nursery's system.
5. Report and investigate any discrepancy immediately.

A Famly record must never be completed based solely on assumption or on the expected attendance list. Staff must physically account for every child.

Responsibility for Headcounts

The staff member leading the room or group is responsible for ensuring that the headcount is completed.

Where staff are working together, the headcount should be completed by one member of staff and independently verified by another member of staff where reasonably practicable, particularly:

- before leaving an area;
- before going outdoors;
- after returning indoors;
- during transitions;
- before leaving the premises; and
- after returning from an outing.

Staff should clearly communicate the headcount result to colleagues, for example:

“12 children present – 12 accounted for.”

Where two adults are available, both should be confident that all children have been accounted for before the group moves.

During Transitions

Particular care must be taken when children move:

- between rooms;
- between indoor and outdoor areas;
- to toilets or changing areas;
- to sleep areas;

- to meals;
- between different parts of the nursery;
- onto or off transport; or
- on and off the nursery premises.

Staff must complete a headcount before the transition and immediately after the transition. Staff must not rely on another room or member of staff having completed the headcount.

Discrepancies

If the physical number of children does not match the number recorded on Family:

- the group must remain in a safe location;
- staff must immediately recount the children;
- staff must check the Family attendance record;
- staff must establish whether a child has arrived, left, moved rooms or is elsewhere in the nursery;
- the room leader/manager must be informed immediately; and
- the missing-child procedure must be initiated immediately if a child cannot be accounted for.

Staff must not assume that the Family record is correct.

If a child cannot be located, the Missing Child from Nursery Procedure must be followed immediately. There is no requirement to wait before beginning a search.

Outdoor Headcounts

Before children go outdoors:

- staff will check the number of children physically present;
- the number will be checked against Family;
- the headcount will be recorded as required;
- staff will ensure that all children are accounted for before leaving the room.

On returning indoors, the children will be physically counted again and checked against the attendance information.

Where children remain outdoors for an extended period, staff will continue to monitor and count children at appropriate intervals and whenever children move between areas.

Outings

For outings away from the nursery premises, staff must use the nursery's agreed attendance and headcount procedure.

Headcounts will take place:

- before leaving the nursery;
- on arrival at the destination;
- before moving between locations;
- before leaving the destination;

- on arrival back at the nursery; and
- at any other point identified within the outing risk assessment.

A written or electronic record of children present must be maintained throughout the outing.

Accuracy of Famly Records

All staff must ensure that attendance information on Famly is accurate and updated promptly.

Staff must not:

- mark a child as present when they have not arrived;
- leave a child recorded as present after they have been collected;
- record a child as absent without appropriate knowledge of their whereabouts;
- alter attendance information inaccurately; or
- complete a headcount without physically checking the children.

Where an error is identified, staff must inform the manager and correct the record in accordance with the nursery's Famly procedures.

Management Monitoring

Management will regularly monitor Famly attendance and headcount records to ensure that:

- headcounts are being completed as required;
- attendance records are accurate;
- discrepancies are appropriately investigated;
- staff understand their responsibilities;
- transitions are being safely managed; and
- any recurring issues are identified and addressed.

Where monitoring identifies concerns, management will provide additional guidance, supervision or training.

The nursery will review its headcount procedure following any missing-child incident, near miss, safeguarding concern or significant change to the nursery's operating arrangements.

Important: Famly is an electronic recording system and does not replace active supervision. Staff must always physically account for the children in their care.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
<i>11/08/2026</i>	F.Joyce	<i>December 2026</i>