

Missing Child Procedure



Laurencekirk Nursery aims to be inclusive, to meet the needs of and provide equal opportunities for all the pupils. Parents' cultural and religious views will always be respected.

At Laurencekirk Nursery we adhere to the Health and Social Care Standards 2017:

3.20 – I am protected from harm, neglect, abuse, bullying and exploitation by people who have a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

3.23 – If I go missing, people take urgent action, including looking for me and liaising with the police, other agencies and people who are important to me.

And 'The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)1989':

Article 3 - Adults must do what is best for me.

Article 19 – I have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated.

All external doors are locked after dropping off and pick up times. The staff member on Door and Outdoors must check that all outside gates are locked before children use the gardens. Door Alarms must be activated when appropriate. When children are being collected or dropped off to the nursery, the nursery doors are manned by the member of staff on door duty. Parents are notified in the handbook and induction meetings of the drop off and collection procedures. All children are handed over to the person collecting the child as per the sign in sheet by a staff member before leaving the building. At the induction process, parents/carers complete a 'permission to collect form' which enables specific adults to collect their child.

In the event of a child becoming missing while in our care, the Senior Practitioner or Lead Practitioner will immediately put into place the procedures detailed below. We will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as we have been notified/noticed and that their parents and the authorities are notified at the appropriate stage. We will ensure a high level of care is maintained to all other children attending Nursery while procedures are followed.

Procedures

If a child goes missing:

- If a child is discovered to be missing all staff will remain calm, communicate and support each other.
- An appropriate staff member will carry out a thorough search of all the rooms in the Nursery. Where possible this can be the Senior or Lead Practitioner.
- The remaining children will all be gathered and counted. A story or activity will be conducted to allow other staff members to look for the missing child.
- More assistance should then be sourced e.g. the Head Teacher.
- The door will be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If a breach could have occurred the appropriate staff member will carry out a search of the school building, outside area and the adjoining streets. Where possible this can be the Senior or Lead Practitioner. The Head Teacher or DHT at Laurencekirk School will be informed of the incident.
- If the child lives within walking distance of Nursery, the member of staff conducting the search will ask an additional member of staff to make the journey on foot to check if the child might have tried to go home.
- The person who has gathered the remaining children will check the register to make sure no other child is missing.
- The person who has gathered the remaining children will then sensitively ask the children whether they have seen the missing child,
- The staff team will communicate and coordinate to establish what has happened, who was last to see the child, when and where.

If the child is found

- A member of staff will care for and talk with the child, bearing in mind that they may be unaware of having done anything wrong or, alternatively, may also have been afraid and distressed and may now need comfort. It may be appropriate to include the Senior or Lead Practitioner.
- There should be no more than 2 members of staff with the child as this can be overwhelming for them.

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- The member of staff who has gathered the children will then take the opportunity to speak to the remaining children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises and why.
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead practitioner will inform the parents of the incident. Care Inspectorate will be informed as well as Aberdeenshire Early Years Team.

If the child is not found

- If the child is not found the parent or carer will be contacted by the Head Teacher or Senior/ Lead Practitioner (alarming them as little as possible)
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner will then report the missing child to the police.
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner will give police as much detail about the last known whereabouts of the child and what the child was wearing.
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner will make available to police:
 - A recent photo of the child
 - Details of their relatives and friends
 - Details of places the child often visits
 - Whether they had a medical condition
 - Any other relevant information
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner will meet the child's family when they arrive. Parents should be instructed to go to the main school office.
- Details of the incident to date will be shared with the family and a member of Nursery staff will wait with them until the police arrive (if the family arrive before the police).
- If the child isn't found the investigation will be handed over to the police with full co-operation from Nursery and Primary School
- Liability should not be discussed until the incident has been fully investigated by Nursery, the Care Inspectorate and the Police. This is supported by the Aberdeen Council Corporate Communication Department.

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- Staff and parents will be asked to refer any enquiries they have or any enquiries from the media about the incident to the Head Teacher.
- If the Police are investigating a decision will be taken by Aberdeenshire Council on whether the nursery will be closed due to investigation.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation all staff will co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. The Care Inspectorate will be involved as a Duty of Candour will have been raised and will carry out an investigation when appropriate.

After the Incident

- After the incident as per the Duty of Candour policy, the parents will be invited in for a meeting at the parents' request or at the end of the session. A detailed statement of the incident and the actions taken will be given to the parents which the parents should sign, and a copy should be taken for them to take home. The other copy will be filed in the child's personal file. Duty of Candour expects apologies to be issued to parent/carers and a clear timeline given to them on when they can expect feedback on policy/procedural changes and detailed feedback from investigations.
- Policies and procedures should be reviewed and changed where necessary.
- The Head Teacher and Senior/Lead Practitioner may carry out a full investigation if they feel required.
- The Care Inspectorate must be notified if the child has escaped the building as per our registration through the e-forms system.
- Duty of Candour will be activated, and policy and procedures adhered to.

If a child goes missing from an outing we will follow the these procedures:

- Staff will always have a method of communication e.g. mobile phone so that they can obtain the children attending the outings contact details in case of an emergency situation.
- Staff work together to gather children at the end of an outing, likely in coloured key groups to allow an efficient process to take place. The children should then be lined up for walking back to nursery or getting on a bus etc.

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- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing#, children will be brought together, and a head count conducted. Appropriate staff levels will stay with these children as necessary and all other members of staff will search the area.
- If the child is still not found, the Senior/Lead Practitioner will be informed if she is not on the outing.
- The Senior/Lead Practitioner and any other members of staff will make their way to the venue to aid the search, be a point of contact for the police and support staff.
- Where appropriate the staff on duty will take the remaining children back to the nursery.
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner will contact the child's carer who can then make their way to the nursery or the outing venue.
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner should contact the police and report the child missing.
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner will give police as much detail about the last known whereabouts of the child and what the child was wearing.
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner will make available to police:
 - A recent photo of the child
 - Details of their relatives and friends
 - Details of places the child often visits
 - Crucial information such as Additional Support Needs or medical conditions
 - Any other relevant information
- The Head Teacher or Senior/Lead Practitioner will meet the child's family when they arrive at Nursery or the Outing Venue.
- Details of the incident to date will be shared with the family and a member of Nursery staff will wait with them until the police arrive (if the family arrive before the police).
- If the child isn't found the investigation will be handed over to the police with full co-operation from Nursery and Primary School.

Absent Children

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In the instance that a child does not attend nursery for their regular session, the following procedure will be carried out to discover why they have not attended:

- The child is marked as absent on the register and if a reason has been given either face to face from a parent/carer or via a telephone call, message or email correspondence, then the appropriate absence code is written in the box for the office staff's reference.

SEL: Unwell, PER: Appointment, OAT: Other attendance, TBC: To be Confirmed.

- If a child fails to attend with no explanation, then staff will contact the school office to see if an explanation has been provided directly to them.
- If a child fails to attend with no explanation either to the nursery staff or the office directly, then staff may be able to speak to a parent/carer if they are dropping or collecting other children at the school. However, it should be noted that this is not always possible or appropriate.
- If there is no explanation for the child's absence, then the office staff will send out a text message to the parent/carer asking for a reason for non-attendance. If a reason is provided following this text, then the nursery staff will be informed.
- If no response is provided following the text message and the child is absent the next day, then another text message is sent requesting a reason for absence. If there is no response to this text through the morning, then the parent/carer will receive a phone call in the afternoon seeking a reason for absence.
- On the third day of absence, the parent/carer will receive further phone calls through the day seeking a reason for absence.
- If there is still no response, then a letter is hand delivered to the parent/carer indicating that a reason for absence must be provided; failure to do so will result in the school contacting the police.
- It may be necessary to issue a phone call immediately to find a reason for absence depending on the individual situation of a child and their family.

Children on the Child Protection Register or Looked after Children will have additional procedures in place regarding concerns about unauthorised or unexplained absences. If the staff are concerned about the whereabouts or lack of

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engagement from a parent/carer, they have the right to investigate further by contacting the appropriate agencies such as Social Work or the Health Visitor. This will be done at the discretion of the Senior Practitioner or Head Teacher.

Uncollected Child

If a child has not been collected from nursery at their due time and there has been no indication from the parent/ carers of their need to be late, the following procedure will be followed;

- Staff are to wait for 10 minutes after the expected collection time before they call the parent/ carer or the person who has been recorded as picking the child up as per the collection sheet.
- If staff are unable to contact said people, the emergency contacts would be the next port of call.
- In the instance of not being able to contact anyone, staff would try all contacts again every ten minutes in the hope they gain contact with the parent/ carer or emergency contact.
- Staff are to inform the Senior Practitioner or Head Teacher of the incident and decide on a plan of action, if no contact has been made.
- Failing this staff would be obliged to call the Duty Social Worker 01467 537111 (9am – 5pm) or 03456 081206 (Out of Hours); this is particularly relevant for staff who are working until 6pm at night.
- At no time should the staff leave the child unsupervised or take the child home to the child's house.
- The Out of Hours Duty Social Worker would be expected to support in the incident of an uncollected child out of hours.

Procedures in Place to Lessen a Child Not Being Collected

- Parent/Career has nursery contact details available to them through the Parent Handbook and Newsletters.
- Parents are to phone and inform staff of changes.
- Contact details are checked and updated twice a year.

