

# **WEST PARK ACADEMY**

## **Lost or Uncollected Child Policy**



**Date reviewed:**

**November 2022**

## **Lost or Uncollected Child Policy**

### **Statement of Intent**

At West Park Academy, we are concerned with the development of the whole child – intellectually, morally, spiritually, culturally and physically. In line with our policy of maximising the potential of each pupil, the Academy recognises that it has a responsibility to do everything possible to care for each pupil's physical and emotional wellbeing. With this in mind, the Academy will endeavour to provide a comfortable and safe environment for learning.

Our school has the highest regard for the safety of the children in our care. Staff will always be aware of the potential for children to go missing during sessions.

Even when all precautions are properly observed, emergencies can still arise. Therefore staff will undertake periodic head counts, especially at the transition points of moving around the school or collecting from the playground. If for any reason a member of staff cannot account for a child's whereabouts during a session the following procedure will be activated:

### **Child going missing on the premises**

- If a child is noticed to be missing the staff member should immediately alert the Designated Safeguarding Officer (Mrs Ford), who is also the Deputy Principal. In her absence the Deputy Safeguarding Officers Mrs Hirst (Principal) or Miss Woodcock(EYFS lead)
- Staff will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The DSO or Deputies talk to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Ensure the safety of the other children, with regard to supervision and security whilst the search is taking place
- CCTV camera footage will be checked for sightings of the child.
- If the child cannot be found within 10 minutes then the police and parents must be informed. The DSO or Deputies will be responsible for meeting the police and the missing child's parent/carer. The DSO or Deputies will co-ordinate any actions instructed by the police, and do all she can to comfort and reassure the parents/carers.
- Continue the search, widening the area until the police arrive.
- Staff to keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The DSO speaks with the parent(s).
- Once the incident is resolved, the Safeguarding Team and staff team will review relevant policies and procedures and implement any necessary changes (paying particular note to the relevant provisions of the Academy's Site Security and Risk Assessment policies).
- All incidents of children going missing from the Academy will be recorded on Cpoms and in cases where the police or the Children & Families Assessment

Team have been informed, Ofsted will also be informed, as soon as is practicable.

## Investigation

- The Principal and the Academy's Health and Safety Officer, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the setting.
- The DSO writes an incident report detailing:
  - i. The date and time of the report.
  - ii. What staff/children were in the Nursery/Class and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
  - iii. When the child was last seen in the session.
  - iv. What has taken place in the session since the child went missing.
  - v. The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate further and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.

## 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.

- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Principal needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the DSO/Teacher. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the DSO and the other should be the Deputy. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against 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. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them. In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child

is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Principal and or the Trustees will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

## **Uncollected Child**

At the end of every day, the class teacher will ensure that all children are collected by a parent, carer or designated adult, in accordance with the Academy's procedures. If for some reason a child is not collected at the end of the day/a session (Nursery), the following procedures will be activated:

- If a parent, carer or designated adult is more than 15 minutes late in collecting their child, the DSO or Deputies will be informed.
- The DSO or Deputies will call the parent, carer or designated adult, and use any other emergency contact details available in order to try to ascertain the cause for the delay, and how long it is likely to last. Messages will always be left on any answer phone requesting a prompt reply.
- While waiting to be collected, the child will be supervised by a member of staff who will offer them as much support and reassurance as is necessary.
- If, after repeated attempts, no contact is made with the parent, carer or designated adult, and a further period of 30 minutes has elapsed, the DSO or Deputies will call the Front Door/ Police non-emergency telephone number for advice.
- In the event of the Police being called, the DSO will attempt to leave a further telephone message with the parent/carers or designated adult's answer phone, where available. If the child is taken from the school to a place of safety, a note in an envelope, for the parent/carers or designated adult will be left on the door of the premises. The note will reassure them of their child's safety and ask them to call the Academy's mobile phone number or Police phone number.
- Under no circumstances will a child be taken to the home of a member of staff, or away from the Academy premises unless absolutely necessary.
- The child will remain in the care of the Academy until they are collected by the parent, carer or designated adult, or until alternative arrangements are initiated by the Police. Incidents of late collection will be recorded by the DSO and discussed with parents/carers at the earliest opportunity.
- Ofsted may be informed.

**All pupils will remain the responsibility of the Academy and under no circumstances will a pupil be taken from the Academy by any person who is not authorised to collect them.**