



Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.

Policy 1.5 – Missing Child

Policy statement

At **Impact Montessori Nursery**, the safety and security of children is our highest priority.

We take all reasonable steps to prevent children from going missing, both on nursery premises and during outings. This includes appropriate supervision, staff deployment, secure entrances and exits, attendance registers, headcounts and outing risk assessments.

If a child is discovered to be missing, staff will act immediately in accordance with this procedure. The priority is to locate the child as quickly as possible, keep the remaining children safe and contact the appropriate emergency services.

1. Child missing from the nursery premises

As soon as a child is believed to be missing:

1. **Alert the manager or most senior member of staff immediately.**
2. Check the attendance register to confirm which child is missing and whether any other child is unaccounted for.
3. Establish when and where the child was last seen.
4. Carry out an immediate and thorough search of the nursery premises, including:
 - o all rooms;
 - o toilets;
 - o cupboards and other accessible areas;
 - o garden and outdoor areas;
 - o quiet or less visible areas; and
 - o entrances, exits, gates and surrounding areas.
5. Check that doors, gates and other security points have not been breached.
6. Staff must **not leave the remaining children unsupervised** while searching.
7. If the child is not located immediately, the manager or senior member of staff will **contact the police on 999 without delay** and report the child missing.
8. If there is any suspicion that the child has been abducted or is at immediate risk of harm, this must be communicated clearly to the police.
9. The parent/carer will be contacted as soon as possible and informed of the situation.

10. Staff will provide the police with:

- a recent photograph, where available;
- the child's name and age;
- a description of the child's clothing;
- any relevant medical or additional needs;
- the child's last known location; and
- any other information that may assist the search.

11. The manager will ensure that a written record is started immediately.

2. Child missing during an outing

If a child goes missing during an outing:

1. The member of staff who notices the child is missing will alert the senior member of staff immediately.
2. The remaining children will be brought together and a headcount carried out.
3. Staff will establish when and where the child was last seen.
4. One or more appropriately deployed staff may conduct an immediate search of the **safe, immediate area**, provided this does not compromise supervision of the remaining children.
5. The senior member of staff will **contact the police on 999 without delay** if the child cannot be located immediately.
6. The nursery manager will be contacted immediately if they are not present on the outing.
7. The parent/carers will be informed as soon as practicable.
8. Staff will provide the police with a recent photograph and detailed description of the child.
9. Staff will provide the police with details of the outing location, route, transport arrangements and any other relevant information.
10. The manager or designated senior member of staff will follow the instructions of the police.
11. A senior member of staff may remain at the location where the child was last seen if requested or advised by the police.
12. The remaining children will be kept safe and appropriately supervised. They will return to the nursery only when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Staff must not put themselves or other children at risk while searching for the missing child.

3. Contacting parents/carers

Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as reasonably practicable once the immediate emergency response is underway.

The manager will provide factual information about:

- when the child was last seen;
- where the child was last seen;
- the action being taken;
- whether the police have been contacted; and
- any further information requested by the police.

Staff must not speculate about what may have happened or provide information that has not been established.

4. Keeping other children safe

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

Staff will:

- keep children together and appropriately supervised;
- maintain normal staffing arrangements as far as possible;
- avoid discussing the missing child in a way that causes unnecessary anxiety;
- provide age-appropriate reassurance;
- answer children's questions honestly and appropriately; and
- ensure that children are not exposed to unnecessary details of the incident.

If additional staff are required to maintain safe ratios, the manager will arrange appropriate cover.

5. Information provided to the police

The following information should be made available where possible:

- child's full name;
- age and date of birth;
- recent photograph;
- physical description;
- clothing and footwear;
- time and location the child was last seen;
- known routes or likely destinations;
- medical or additional needs;
- relevant behavioural or communication information;
- details of the parent/carer;
- names of staff and children present; and
- any information suggesting that the child may be at particular risk.

The nursery will cooperate fully with the police and follow their instructions.

6. Safeguarding

A missing child is treated as a safeguarding concern.

The manager will consider whether there are any circumstances that indicate an additional safeguarding concern, including:

- possible abduction;
- inadequate supervision;
- a breach of security;
- concerns about a particular adult;
- concerns about the child's home circumstances;
- a child deliberately leaving the premises;
- repeated incidents; or

- any other information suggesting that the child may be at risk of harm.

The nursery will follow its **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** and local safeguarding procedures.

7. Recording the incident

The manager will ensure that a detailed written record is completed.

The record will include:

- date and time of the incident;
- child's name;
- location from which the child went missing;
- time the child was last seen;
- who was responsible for supervising the child;
- staff and children present;
- actions taken to locate the child;
- time the police were contacted;
- time parents/carers were contacted;
- advice or instructions received from the police or other agencies;
- time and circumstances in which the child was found; and
- any follow-up action required.

All staff directly involved may be asked to provide a factual written statement.

Records will be signed and dated and stored securely.

8. Ofsted and other notifications

The manager/provider will determine which notifications are required following a missing-child incident.

Ofsted will be notified where required under the current Early Years Foundation Stage requirements.

Where appropriate, the nursery will also notify:

- children's social care;
- the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), where an allegation concerns a member of staff or another person working with children;
- the nursery's insurance provider; and
- any other relevant agency.

Notifications will be made within the required statutory timescales.

9. Investigation and review

Following the immediate response, the manager/owner will carry out a review of the incident.

The review will consider:

- how the child was able to go missing;
- whether supervision arrangements were appropriate;
- whether security arrangements were effective;
- whether staff followed the relevant procedures;
- whether staffing or deployment contributed to the incident;
- whether risk assessments were adequate;
- whether further training is required; and
- what changes can be made to prevent recurrence.

Where the police are investigating, the nursery will cooperate fully and will not interfere with the police investigation.

10. Supporting staff

Missing-child incidents can be extremely distressing for staff.

The manager will provide appropriate support to staff involved, while ensuring that any safeguarding or disciplinary investigation is conducted fairly and appropriately.

Support may include:

- a private debrief;
- supervision;
- additional management support;
- access to appropriate wellbeing support; and
- further training where required.

Staff involved in an incident must not discuss confidential details outside the nursery or with the media.

11. Supporting parents and carers

The nursery recognises that a missing-child incident will be extremely distressing for parents/carers.

The manager will maintain clear and factual communication with the family throughout the incident, subject to police or safeguarding advice.

Parents/carers may raise a complaint about the incident through the nursery's **Complaints Procedure** and may contact Ofsted where appropriate.

Aggressive, threatening or abusive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated. Where there is an immediate threat to the safety of staff or others, the police will be contacted.

12. Preventative measures

To reduce the risk of a child going missing, the nursery will maintain:

- accurate attendance registers;
- secure entrances and exits;

- appropriate staff deployment and supervision;
- regular headcounts;
- appropriate ratios;
- clear collection procedures;
- outing risk assessments;
- regular checks of outdoor areas;
- visitor procedures; and
- appropriate induction and training for staff and volunteers.

Any identified weakness in security or supervision will be addressed promptly.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and following any significant missing-child incident, or sooner if legislation, safeguarding guidance or local procedures change.

Policy approval

This policy was adopted by: Impact Montessori Nursery

Date adopted: _____

Date of next review: _____

Signed on behalf of the provider: _____

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CHILD MISSING – ACT IMMEDIATELY

- 1. Alert the Manager/Senior Staff.**
- 2. Check register and establish who is missing.**
- 3. Keep all other children supervised.**
- 4. Search the immediate premises/area.**
- 5. If not found immediately → call 999.**
- 6. Give police photo, clothing, description, last known location and any medical/additional needs.**
- 7. Contact parent/carer.**
- 8. Follow police instructions.**
- 9. Record everything — times, actions, calls and advice.**
- 10. Manager considers Ofsted, Social Care, LADO and insurance notifications.**