WALTHAMSTOW MONTESSORI SCHOOL

MISSING CHILD POLICY

Statement of Policy

On school premises:

The entire WMS team is fully committed to and trained in the safety and security of every child in our care.

All children are accounted for in thorough procedures throughout the day. These include at arrival time where every child is individually greeted and then their attendance recorded on a register and then each class is physically checked and counted and the numbers recorded on a board as a double check.

Registers are taken upon arrival in the morning and again after lunch.
Regular headcounts are made throughout the day and when children move to a different room or activity or go out to play in the garden.

If a child is missing, staff alert the Principal or senior member of staff who thoroughly checks both inside and outside the building. If there is no sign of the child the police are contacted immediately and the child's parents/carers are informed of the situation. Staff will await instructions from the police while senior staff continue to search for the child.

Ofsted would then be contacted and a written report submitted by a senior member of staff.

Off-site activities:

When taking children on outings or off-site activities, a risk assessment and site visit are carried out prior to the outing. Regular headcounts are made throughout the trip. Children are allocated to certain members of staff with higher than usual ratios to ensure that children are thoroughly safe in unfamiliar surroundings.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a head count to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The senior management team (if not on the outing) are contacted immediately and the incident is reported and the incident is recorded.
- The senior management team contacts the police and reports the child as missing.

- The senior management team contacts the parent/s/carer/s, who make their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the senior management team. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent/carer arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting.
- In an indoor venue, the staff will contact the venue's security who will then handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Senior staff member will contact the Principal to report the incident. The Principal carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately
- The setting leader or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation:

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The senior management team speaks with the parent/carer(s).
- The Principal carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The Principal writes an incident report detailing:

    - The date and time of the report.
    - What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child?
    - When the child was last seen in the group/outing? What had taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing?
    - The time that 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 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 children 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 for the outing. 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 parent/carer anger and they may be afraid. The senior management team will ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support whilst feeling vulnerable.
- The parents/carers 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 Principal. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent/carer, there will always be two members of staff, one of whom is the a Senior Teacher and the other will be the Principal. No matter how understandable the parent/carer's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police will be called, if necessary.
- 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 will answer the 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 will use her discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press.

This policy was adopted on: **01.03.2016**

Date Last Reviewed: 4th September 2026

Date to be Reviewed: 4th September 2027