



Unaccounted for / missing Child Procedure

Policy Statement

At Clare House Nursery, the safety and wellbeing of every child is our highest priority. We take every reasonable precaution to prevent a child from becoming lost through secure premises, robust arrival and collection procedures, regular head counts, accurate registers and careful supervision both within the nursery and on outings.

Although the likelihood of a child becoming unaccounted for is extremely low, all staff are trained to respond immediately, calmly and effectively should such an incident occur. This procedure should be read alongside our Outings Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Health and Safety Policy and Arrival and Collection Procedures.

Preventing a Child Going Missing

We reduce the risk of a child becoming lost by:

- Maintaining appropriate staff-to-child ratios.
- Completing regular head counts throughout the day.
- Keeping registers accurate and up to date.
- Ensuring all external doors and gates remain secure.
- Carrying out thorough risk assessments for outings.
- Closely supervising children at all times.
- Following robust arrival, departure and visitor procedures.
- Regularly reviewing our security measures and staff practice.

If a Child Goes Missing Within the Nursery

As soon as it is discovered that a child is unaccounted for:

- The practitioner immediately informs the Room Supervisor and Nursery Manager.
- Staff remain calm and reassure the other children.
- The Room Supervisor checks the register to ensure all other children are accounted for.
- The Nursery Manager, Deputy Manager and Room Supervisor immediately search the building, outdoor areas and surrounding grounds.
- All exits, gates and security points are checked for any signs of a breach.
- Where available, the Administrator (or designated member of staff) will immediately review CCTV footage to assist with locating the child.
- If the child cannot be located immediately, the police will be contacted without delay.
- Staff will continue searching while awaiting the arrival of the police.
- The Nursery Manager will contact the child's parents/carers as soon as practicable and work alongside the police throughout the incident.
- If there is any indication that the child may have been deliberately removed or abducted, this will be communicated immediately to the police.
- A recent photograph of the child together with a description of the clothing they are wearing will be provided to the police.
- The Chair of the Committee will be informed immediately.

If a Child Goes Missing on an Outing

If a child becomes unaccounted for during an outing:

- The senior member of staff immediately stops the group and carries out a head count.
- Remaining children are kept together in a safe place and reassured.
- One member of staff searches the immediate area without leaving the vicinity.
- The senior member of staff contacts the police immediately.
- The Nursery Manager is informed without delay.
- The Nursery Manager contacts the child's parents/carers.
- Additional staff, where available, will attend to support the safe return of the remaining children to the nursery.
- One senior member of staff remains at the location where the child was last seen until the police arrive.
- If the outing involves transport, such as a minibus, the remaining children will remain in a safe supervised location until appropriate arrangements are made.

If the Child is Found

When the child has been safely located:

- The child's welfare will be checked immediately.
- Parents/carers will be updated without delay.
- A detailed Incident Record will be completed.
- Ofsted will be notified where required under the EYFS Statutory Framework (September 2026).
- A RIDDOR report will be completed if required.
- The incident will be reviewed to identify any learning or improvements to practice.

If the Child is Not Found

If the child is not located, or is found injured:

- The police will continue to lead the search.
- Children's Social Care will be informed where appropriate.
- Staff will fully cooperate with all agencies involved.
- All advice provided by the police and Children's Social Care will be followed.

Review and Investigation

Following any missing child incident:

- The Nursery Manager and Chair of the Committee will carry out a full investigation linking into HR for support and guidance.
- Parents/carers will be kept informed throughout the investigation.
- Each member of staff involved will provide a written account of events.
- A full chronology of the incident will be recorded.
- Risk assessments, policies and procedures will be reviewed.

- Any lessons learned will be shared with staff to improve future practice.
- Appropriate support will be offered to the child, family and staff following the incident.

Incident Record

The written record will include:

- Date and time of the incident.
- Where the child became unaccounted for.
- When the child was last seen.
- Staff and children present.
- Actions taken and by whom.
- Times of all actions.
- Police incident number (where applicable).
- Advice received from external agencies.
- Outcome of the incident.
- Recommendations for future practice.

All records will be stored securely in accordance with our Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

Our Commitment

At Clare House Nursery, every child has the right to feel safe, secure and protected. We continually review our security procedures, staff practice and risk assessments to minimise the possibility of a child becoming unaccounted for. Should such an incident occur, we will act immediately, work closely with emergency services and families, and take all necessary steps to safeguard the child while continually learning from the incident to strengthen our practice.

