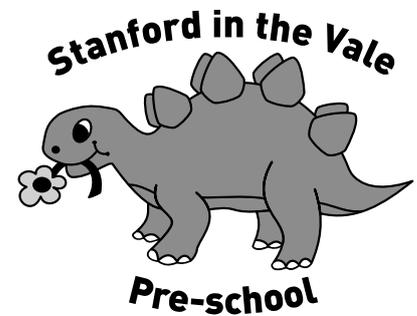


Recreation Ground
Huntersfield
Stanford in the Vale
Faringdon
Oxfordshire SN7 8LR



1.1.9 - LOST CHILDREN POLICY

Revised February 2018

Statement of Intent

Stanford Pre-school takes our children's welfare very seriously both on and off premises. We use this policy in conjunction with our Outings Policy and the Arrival and Departures Policy to ensure the security of children at all times.

Aims

We aim to maintain the safety of our children. Children should never leave Stanford Pre-school unaccompanied. We have procedures in place to minimise the chance of a child going missing.

Even in the best-regulated situation, accidents can and occasionally do happen. The following procedures should be adhered to if a child is found to be missing:

Procedures to minimise risk

- All exits from the premises should be locked/guarded in a way that makes it impossible for a child to leave unobserved/unattended, while allowing rapid exit for the whole pre-school in the case of emergency.
- An accurate and up-to-date register must be kept and both adults and children, including visitors, should be signed in and out whenever they enter and leave the premises.
- During the parental induction parents new to Stanford Pre-school will be asked to advise about particularly adventurous children. Parents will be shown round the building to see where their child can and cannot go.
- All children in Stanford Pre-school should know the rules and the reasons for them.
- Any visitors will be alerted to the need to keep premises locked.
- Premises vary, and each has its own particular hazards. Stanford Pre-school conducts an annual Risk Assessment as well as daily and termly risk assessments.
- Parents and staff should work together for the safety of all the children in Stanford Pre-school. New parents are helped to play an active role by being made aware of all the pre-school's policies and procedures, in particular the Health & Safety Policy.
- Stanford Pre-School ask parents to check their child's enrolment form three times a year to ensure that all the necessary phone numbers are correct, up-to-date and kept together, so that if an incident of this sort does occur, then the pre-school will have the desired information to hand.

Procedures to follow if a child is missing at the setting.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the child's key person / the relevant member of staff **alerts our manager**.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member will gather all remaining children in the group time area so that the manager and other staff members are freed to search for the missing child.
- Our manager and 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 manager asks the staff where and when they last saw the child. The checklist of possible hiding places is consulted. Without causing alarm, the other children are asked whether they have seen the child who has gone missing.
- If the child is not found, **our manager calls the police immediately** and reports the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- **The parents are then called and informed.** If the parents are unavailable or at work, the pre-school should use the alternative emergency contact numbers provided on the child's Enrolment Form.
- If the child lives within walking distance of the pre-school, a staff member who is at the time not working should be telephoned to maintain ratios in the setting, whilst a staff member journeys to the child's home on foot in order to catch up with or intercept the child if possible.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- **Our manager contacts our Chair and reports the incident.** Our Chair comes immediately to carry out an investigation.

Procedure to follow if child goes missing while on an outing.

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting leader and/or other staff back in the setting. If the setting Leader has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as a child is noticed missing, children are gathered into groups with their designated person and a head count carried out so ensure no other children are missing.
- The immediate area is searched and if in an indoor setting, security staff are made aware of the situation so they can begin a search.
- Our senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- Our manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- Our manager contacts the parent(s) and arranges where to meet them.
- Staff take remaining children back to the Pre-school as soon as possible. Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff, or our manager where applicable, should remain on site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A description of the child and what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The manager contacts the Chair and reports the incident. The Chair comes to our premises immediately, to conduct an investigation with the management team.

The Investigation

- Ofsted are informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The Chair, with management committee, will carry out an investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- Our manager together with our Chair or Director speaks with the parents and explains the process of investigation.
- The parents may also raise a complaint with the Pre-School Learning Alliance
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of incident.
 - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue
 - Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the member of staff designated responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the premises or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing
 - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
 - Any unusual behaviour of that child or of any other children that day.
- 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 and parents. 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.
- Stanford Pre-School is currently insured through the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA). The Chairperson is to call the **PSLA Insurance Manager** at National Centre, Telephone number: **020 7697 2500**, Membership number: 11168. S/he will advise the Chair and will contact the insurers on the pre-school's behalf.

Managing people

- Missing children incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to keep everybody as calm as possible.
- Staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child and may blame themselves. 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. Our manager ensures that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- 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 the children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- The child's parents will be frightened, distressed and possibly angry. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at our manager. These feelings are natural. It is Stanford Pre-school's policy to talk through discuss issues with parents, sharing concerns and establishing systems with which both the pre-school and parents feel comfortable. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of the pre-school present one of whom is our manager and other the Chair or a Director. The situation will be easier for all the adults concerned because they will be working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding.

- People who seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later on become very angry, threatening legal action or recourse to the local press. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- Other parents need to be given brief, accurate information as rapidly as possible. This should avoid any undue gossip. It might be possible for the pre-school Chair and Manager to conduct a brief meeting for parents and carers when they come to collect their children. In addition, a short notice from the Chair should be sent home with each child in session the next day, explaining what has occurred. Explanations, in whatever form should be open and frank. Inevitably, the valuable support of the whole Pre-school community will be enlisted in order to learn from the event to prevent any recurrence. It is extremely important for Stanford Pre-school staff and committee members to exercise caution when discussing the incident with anyone. Do not say anything that might invalidate the PSLA insurance by implying that Stanford Pre-school accepts liability. However, this does not mean that Stanford Pre-school should appear to be uncaring. For example, do not say, "No comment!" which can make the pre-school appear indifferent and unhelpful. Instead, say:
 - How sorry the pre-school is that the incident has happened;
 - That a full investigation is in hand; and that the Social Services have been informed and will also be investigating.

Dealing with the media

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

Distressed parents may contact the local press, or reporters might hear about the incident if the police are involved. It is sensible for one person – usually the Chair – to be the individual who speaks to the media for and on behalf of the pre-school. However, reporters could directly approach Stanford Pre-school staff, other committee members, or parents for their views and opinions. Stanford Pre-school Chair should advise all adults about what they should and should not say as early as possible, or ask them to refer all enquiries to the pre-school Chair.

Throughout the handling of this situation, Stanford Pre-school will receive the support of the PSLA. If the Chair speaks to the Insurance Manager at the National Centre, Telephone number: **020 7697 2500**, Membership number: 11168, s/he will alert the PSLA regional centre, who will in turn inform local staff and volunteers to assist as appropriate.

When the child is found

During the time a child is missing, however briefly, all the adults involved – staff, committee, parents and others – suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. However, it is important to remember:

- That the child might also have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort;
- That the child may be completely unaware of having done anything wrong; and
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.

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 Chair and management will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Stanford in the Vale Pre-school Committee

Held on _____ (date)

Date to be reviewed _____ (date)

Signed on behalf of the management committee

Name of signatory

Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner)