



Montessori Home School Hub Ltd

Missing and Uncollected Child Procedure

Version 3.0

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Our Approach

The safety and welfare of every child is our highest priority.

We take a variety of precautions to ensure that children are accounted for and appropriately supervised at all times. These include registration, close supervision, appropriate staff-to-child ratios, ongoing risk assessment, secure access to the setting and regular head counts when children are away from the setting.

All staff have a responsibility for keeping children safe and for following this procedure if a child cannot be accounted for or is not collected as expected.

Precautions Taken

- The setting door is always kept closed and locked unless it is being actively used.
- The setting door is manned by staff at drop-off and collection times.
- When the door is opened to a visitor, staff ensure that no child leaves through the door at the same time.
- The adjoining door to the building next door is kept closed and locked.
- We maintain an appropriate level of supervision throughout sessions and staff remain aware of the whereabouts of the children in their care.
- Registers are maintained and children are accounted for throughout the day.
- Regular head counts are carried out, particularly when moving between areas or when on trips and outings.
- On trips and outings, we maintain appropriate staff-to-child ratios and carry out regular head counts.
- Children are handed directly to their parent or authorised collector at the end of the day.
- Parents are required to inform staff in advance if their child is being collected by another adult.

- Staff will not release a child to anyone who has not been authorised to collect them.
- Parents are required to provide current contact details and appropriate emergency contacts.

Parents are asked to inform MSHS promptly of any changes to:

- home address;
- telephone numbers;
- emergency contact details;
- people authorised to collect their child; or
- any circumstances that may affect the safe collection or care of their child.

Procedure for a Child Going Missing During the Day

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as quickly as possible.

If a child is found to be missing, staff will remain calm and take the following immediate actions:

1. **Alert the DSL or most senior member of staff immediately.**
2. **Account for all other children.**
A head count will be carried out and the remaining children will be kept together and appropriately supervised.
3. **Establish when and where the child was last seen.**
Staff will establish, as far as possible:
 - who last saw the child;
 - when they were last seen;
 - where they were;
 - what they were wearing;
 - whether they had anything with them; and
 - whether there is any information that may indicate where they have gone.
4. **Secure the setting.**
Staff will check doors and other exits and look for any indication that the child may have left the premises.
5. **Carry out a systematic search of the setting and immediate surrounding area.**
This will include, where appropriate:
 - toilets;
 - cupboards;
 - behind and underneath furniture;

- quieter or less frequently used areas;
 - outdoor areas;
 - entrances and exits; and
 - any other place where the child may reasonably have gone.
6. **Consider the individual circumstances of the child.**
Staff will consider the child's age, understanding, individual needs, vulnerability, emotional state, the environment, weather conditions and any other known risks.
7. **Contact the police without delay where appropriate.**
If the child cannot be located promptly, there is reason to believe that they have left the premises, or there is any immediate concern for their safety or welfare, the police will be contacted.

999 will be called where there is an immediate risk to the child's safety or welfare.

8. **Contact the child's parents/carers as soon as reasonably practicable.**
Where the police are involved, MHSH will follow their advice regarding communication with parents/carers.
9. **Seek safeguarding advice where necessary.**
The DSL will consider whether Children's Social Care or another safeguarding professional needs to be contacted.

Important

No member of staff should leave the remaining children unsupervised in order to search for a missing child.

Staff must not put themselves or other children at risk while attempting to locate a missing child.

If a Child Is Believed to Have Left the Premises

If there is evidence or reason to believe that a child has left the setting:

- the remaining children will immediately be secured and supervised;
- the DSL or most senior member of staff will take overall responsibility for the incident;
- staff will establish the child's last known location and, where possible, likely direction of travel;
- exits and the immediate surrounding area will be checked where this can be done safely and without compromising supervision of the other children;
- the police will be contacted without delay;
- the child's parents/carers will be contacted as soon as reasonably practicable;
- relevant information about the child will be provided to the police;
- staff will cooperate fully with the police and any other safeguarding professionals involved.

Staff should not put themselves or other children at risk while attempting to locate a child.

On a Trip or Outing

In the unlikely event that a child cannot be accounted for whilst on a trip or outing, we will follow the following procedure.

Immediate Action

1. Gather the remaining children together and take a head count.
2. Alert the member of staff leading the outing.
3. Establish when and where the child was last seen.
4. One member of staff may search the immediate vicinity, provided that this does not leave the remaining children unsupervised or compromise the required staff-to-child ratio.
5. A second member of staff will remain responsible for the other children.
6. Where possible and appropriate, ask venue staff to secure or monitor entrances and exits.
7. If the child cannot be located promptly, or there is any concern for their safety, the police will be contacted without delay.
8. The child's parents/carers will be contacted as soon as reasonably practicable.
9. Staff will follow the instructions of the police and venue staff and provide all relevant information about the child.
10. The member of staff leading the incident will ensure that the remaining children continue to be supervised safely.

If necessary, and only where appropriate staffing arrangements can be maintained, the remaining children may be returned to the setting while another member of staff remains at the venue to assist the police.

Information to Provide to the Police

Where the police are contacted, staff should provide as much relevant information as possible, including:

- child's full name and age;
- a recent photograph, where available;
- description of the child;
- clothing and footwear;
- time and location the child was last seen;
- likely direction of travel, if known;
- any known destinations or places the child may go;

- relevant individual needs or vulnerabilities;
- any known risks or concerns;
- parents'/carers' contact details; and
- any other information requested by the police.

Once the Child Is Located

Once the child has been found:

- ensure that the child is safe and appropriately supervised;
- check whether the child is injured or distressed and seek medical assistance where necessary;
- inform the police immediately if they have been involved;
- inform the child's parents/carers;
- reassure the child and provide appropriate comfort;
- reassure the other children and explain, in an age-appropriate way, that the child has been found and is safe;
- consider whether the child needs any additional support following the incident; and
- consider whether the incident raises any wider safeguarding concerns.

Unexpected Non-Attendance

If a child is expected to attend MHSH but does not arrive and the parent/carer has not informed the setting:

- staff will check emails, messages and other communications for information about the child's absence;
- staff will contact the parent/carer;
- if the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the emergency contacts recorded for the child will be considered;
- the circumstances of the absence will be considered, including any known safeguarding concerns or individual vulnerabilities;
- the DSL will be informed if the absence remains unexplained or gives rise to a safeguarding concern.

Where there is concern that a child may be at risk of harm, MHSH will seek appropriate safeguarding advice and make a referral where necessary.

Late or Non-Collection of Children

MHSH understands that occasional delays can happen. Parents/carers are asked to contact the setting as soon as possible if they know they will be late.

If a child has not been collected at the agreed time, we will ensure that the child remains safely supervised by an experienced member of staff who is known to them.

The child will be treated with care and reassurance, and staff will seek to minimise any anxiety or distress.

If a Child Is Not Collected

Staff will:

- check emails, messages and the setting phone for information about a change to the normal collection arrangements;
- check whether another member of staff has received information from the parent/carer;
- contact the parent/carer using the available contact details;
- if necessary, contact the authorised emergency contacts recorded for the child;
- make reasonable attempts to establish who is able to collect the child safely; and
- keep a written record of attempts to contact the parent/carer and other authorised contacts.

The child **must not leave the setting with anyone who is not authorised to collect them.**

Where an unfamiliar authorised collector arrives, staff may request identification or other confirmation before releasing the child.

If No One Can Be Contacted

If the parent/carer and emergency contacts cannot be contacted:

- staff will continue to make reasonable attempts to contact them;
- the child will remain safely supervised at MHSH;
- staff will not take the child to their own home;
- staff will not leave the child unsupervised;
- staff will not attempt to locate the parent/carer themselves;
- the DSL or most senior member of staff will be informed; and
- consideration will be given to contacting Children's Social Care.

The decision about when to contact Children's Social Care will be based on the circumstances rather than a fixed period of time.

Factors considered will include:

- the length of time the child has been waiting;
- the child's age and individual needs;
- the time of day;
- weather or environmental conditions;
- whether the parent/carer has made contact;
- whether a realistic collection arrangement has been made; and
- any other safeguarding concerns.

Contacting Children's Social Care

If reasonable attempts to contact the parent/carer and authorised emergency contacts have been unsuccessful, or if there is a concern about the child's welfare, MSHS will seek advice from or contact **Brighton & Hove Front Door for Families**.

Front Door for Families:

01273 290 400

Out of Hours / Emergencies

- **Emergency Duty Service:** 01273 335905 or 01273 335906.

For safeguarding concerns outside normal working hours, MSHS will use the current local authority emergency arrangements.

If the child is believed to be in immediate danger, **999 will be called**.

The child will remain safely supervised until appropriate arrangements have been made for them.

Under no circumstances will a member of staff leave the child to look for the parent/carer.

Persistent Late or Non-Collection

Where a parent/carer is persistently late collecting their child, MSHS will seek to understand the reasons and, where appropriate, arrange a meeting with the parent/carer.

The purpose will be to establish:

- whether the situation is short-term or ongoing;
- why the parent/carer is regularly late;
- whether there is anything MSHS can reasonably do to support the family; and
- what arrangements can be put in place to ensure the child is collected safely and on time.

Parents/carers will be reminded of their responsibility to collect their child at the agreed time.

Persistent failure to collect a child, particularly where there is a pattern of unexplained or unreasonable non-collection, may constitute a safeguarding concern or neglect.

Where concerns cannot be resolved with the family, MSHS will seek advice from Children's Social Care and make a referral where appropriate.

If a Parent or Carer Arrives but There Is a Safeguarding Concern

If a parent/carer or authorised collector arrives but staff have a safeguarding concern about whether the child can safely be released to them, the DSL or most senior member of staff will be informed immediately.

Depending on the circumstances, MSHS may seek advice from:

- the police;
- Children's Social Care; or
- another appropriate safeguarding professional.

Any relevant court order, care arrangement or safeguarding information held by MSHS will be taken into account.

Staff will record the circumstances and actions taken.

Allegations or Concerns About a Member of Staff

If a missing-child incident raises an allegation or concern about the conduct or suitability of a member of staff, volunteer or other person working with children, the DSL/director will follow the relevant procedures within the **Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy**.

Appropriate safeguarding advice will be sought and, where necessary, the LADO, police or Children's Social Care will be contacted.

A missing-child incident does not automatically require a LADO referral. LADO involvement will be considered where there is an allegation or concern about an adult working with children.

Recording and Investigation

Following any missing-child incident, MSHS will complete a written record as soon as reasonably practicable.

The record will include, where relevant:

- the child's name;
- date and time of the incident;
- names of staff present;
- number of children present;

- when and where the child was last seen;
- the circumstances leading to the child being considered missing;
- searches undertaken;
- times and details of telephone calls or other communications;
- when the police or Children's Social Care were contacted;
- advice or instructions received;
- when and where the child was located;
- the child's condition when located;
- when and how parents/carers were informed;
- any injuries or medical treatment;
- any safeguarding concerns identified; and
- actions taken following the incident.

Staff involved may be asked to provide written accounts of what they saw and did.

The DSL/director will review the incident and consider whether any changes are needed to:

- supervision arrangements;
- staffing;
- premises security;
- risk assessments;
- trip and outing arrangements;
- staff training;
- registration or collection procedures; or
- safeguarding procedures.

Any learning will be shared with staff as appropriate.

Recording an Uncollected Child

Following an incident involving an uncollected child, a written record will be made and retained in accordance with MHSH's record-keeping arrangements.

The record will include:

- the date and time the child was due to be collected;

- the time the child was actually collected;
- the name of the person who collected the child;
- all attempts made to contact the parent/carer;
- details of calls or messages to emergency contacts;
- any responses received;
- any contact with Children's Social Care or other professionals; and
- any relevant safeguarding concerns or actions taken.

Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually and sooner if:

- there is a significant incident;
- safeguarding guidance or local procedures change;
- an incident identifies a need for improvement;
- there are significant changes to the setting, premises or staffing; or
- the procedure is otherwise found to require amendment.