

Missing Children from Nursery Procedures



Approved by: Trust Safeguarding Lead

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Last reviewed in: April 2026

Next review due by: April 2028

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Changes History

Issue No	Date	Amended by	Summary of Changes
1	June 2024	Jemma Lynch, Trust Safeguarding Lead	New Policy
2	April 2026	Jemma Lynch, Trust Safeguarding Lead	Updated to reflect changes in EYFS 2025

Authorisation (Responsible Owner)

Name	Role	Approval Date
Karen Davies	Nursery Manager - Chalkstone	1 April 2026
Laurel Parry	Nursery Manager – Norton	1 April 2026

Distribution List – Once authorised (Informed)

Name	
Nursery Managers and Deputy Managers	For uploading to Famly and distributing to parents and carers
Dave Gooderam	For uploading to the Nursery websites

Review Period

Date Document Reviewed	By Whom
April 2028	Nursery Managers

1. Policy Statement

At Unity Stars Nursery, we take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety, security and welfare of every child in our care. Children are supervised at all times, and robust systems are in place to prevent them leaving the premises or being unaccounted for. This procedure sets out the immediate and coordinated response required in the unlikely event that a child goes missing, either from the nursery premises or while on an outing.

Our approach aligns with the **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (2025)**, the **Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) Missing Children and Young People Protocol (2023)**, **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)**, and **Ofsted** reporting expectations.

The welfare of the child is our highest priority. Every minute counts, and swift, calm, and coordinated action is essential.

2. Preventative Measures

To minimise risk, the nursery maintains strict access controls and supervision arrangements, including:

- Secure perimeter boundaries, coded entry systems, and self-closing gates.
- Controlled collection procedures, ensuring children are only released to individuals authorised by parents/carers.
- Regular headcounts throughout the day, including during transitions, outdoor play, and trips.
- Clear risk assessments for all outings, including designated staff roles and ratios exceeding statutory minimums.
- Staff induction and annual training in this procedure to ensure familiarity, confidence, and quick response.

3. Immediate Procedures if a Child Goes Missing

If at any point a member of staff cannot account for a child under their supervision, **the situation will be treated as an emergency** and the following actions will be taken **immediately and simultaneously**:

Raise the alarm.

- The staff member will alert the Nursery Manager or the senior member of staff on duty without delay.
- The remaining children will be gathered into a safe area and supervised by designated staff to ensure calm and continuous oversight.

Obtain key information.

- The lead adult (usually the Manager or Room Leader) will record and communicate the missing child's **full name, age, physical description, distinguishing features, clothing, any known vulnerabilities or medical needs, and the time/location last seen**.

Immediate coordinated search.

- Staff will be allocated specific search zones (indoor rooms, outdoor play areas, toilets, car park, corridors, and immediate perimeter areas).

- Searches will be systematic and continuous, while ratios for remaining children are maintained.
- Entry and exit points will be checked immediately by designated staff.

Escalate promptly if not located.

- If the child is not located after a **maximum of five minutes** of searching the immediate area, the Nursery Manager will **contact the Police by dialling 999**, providing all known details.
- Parents/carers will be informed **as soon as reasonably practicable**, once the search has been initiated and Police have been called.
- The Manager (or delegated lead) will remain the single point of contact for coordinating with emergency services.

Preserve evidence and support emergency services.

- The area last seen will be secured and staff will record relevant details for Police investigation.
- Staff will provide photographs and recent information from the child's file if requested.

Maintain care for remaining children.

- A minimum of two staff members will remain with the other children, ensuring they are calm, safe and emotionally supported.
- Routine activities will continue where possible to minimise distress.

4. If a Child Goes Missing on an Outing

- The senior member of staff will lead the immediate search of the area while ensuring ratios are maintained.
- The venue's security and/or management will be informed, and local staff will assist in searching all accessible areas.
- If the child is not found **within five minutes**, the Police will be contacted immediately, followed by notification to the Nursery Manager and the child's parents.
- The nursery's emergency contact procedures will be followed, and all actions recorded contemporaneously.
- Staff will remain at the location until the child is safely recovered or the Police direct otherwise.

5. After the Child is Found

Once the child has been located:

- The child's physical and emotional wellbeing will be assessed immediately.
- If any injury, illness or distress is apparent, appropriate first aid will be given and medical attention sought as required.
- Parents/carers will be informed and supported sensitively.
- The Manager will notify Ofsted as soon as possible, providing a full account of the incident and actions taken.
- A formal Reflective Practice Review will be carried out **within 24 hours** to evaluate the effectiveness of procedures and identify any learning or improvement actions.

6. Reporting and Record-Keeping.

A detailed written record will be made as soon as practicably possible, including:

- The date and time the child was discovered missing;
- Who raised the alarm and what actions were taken;
- Times and outcomes of all searches, calls, and notifications;
- Details of conversations with Police, parents, and Ofsted;
- Outcome and any lessons learned.

All reports will be reviewed by the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and retained securely in line with **UK GDPR (2018)** and **Data Protection Act (2018)** requirements.

7. Post-Incident Review and Support

Following any missing child incident:

- The **Nursery Manager and DSL** will conduct a full debrief with all involved staff, ensuring a clear chronology and reflective discussion.
- The incident will be reviewed as part of the setting's **Safeguarding and Health & Safety audit cycle**, with any necessary changes to policy, training, or environment implemented promptly.
- Support will be offered to staff, children, and families affected by the incident, including referral to wellbeing or counselling services if appropriate.
- Any lessons learned will be shared across the Unity Schools Partnership Early Years network to support organisational learning.

8. Media and Communications

In the event of media interest, staff must not speak directly to journalists. All communications will be directed to the Unity Schools Partnership Communications Lead:

Dave Gooderham – dgooderham@unitysp.co.uk

No photographs, statements, or details are to be shared without authorisation.

9. Review and Oversight

This procedure will be reviewed annually or immediately following any incident. Updates will ensure alignment with revised **EYFS**, **Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership guidance**, and **UKHSA** Health and Safety recommendations.