

LOST CHILD POLICY & PROCEDURE

Policy Statement

EDG Nursery takes all reasonable steps to ensure children are supervised, accounted for and kept safe at all times.

A child being unaccounted for is a **serious safeguarding incident** and requires an immediate response.

This procedure applies where a child:

- cannot be located within their classroom or nursery;
- becomes separated from their group;
- leaves or may have left the premises without an authorised adult;
- becomes missing during an outing or trip; or
- is unaccounted for following a headcount, transition or emergency.

The EYFS requires early years providers to have procedures covering children going missing at or away from the setting.

Preventing a Child Going Missing

Staff must maintain effective supervision and know where children are throughout the day.

This includes:

- accurate attendance registers;
- regular headcounts;
- headcounts before and after transitions;
- careful supervision of entrances and exits;
- ensuring security gates and doors are closed and secured appropriately;
- appropriate staff deployment;
- checking children when moving between rooms, gardens and communal areas;
- appropriate supervision during outings;
- ensuring children are only released to authorised collectors.

Staff must remain particularly vigilant during:

- arrival and collection;
- garden access;
- room transitions;
- outings;
- staff handovers;
- busy periods;
- events involving parents/visitors;
- toileting or changing routines.

IF A CHILD CANNOT BE LOCATED

ACT IMMEDIATELY

The member of staff identifying that a child cannot be located must:

1. ALERT

Immediately inform the Room Leader and Nursery Manager.

2. CHECK

Confirm the child's attendance and when/where they were last seen.

3. HEADCOUNT

Complete an immediate headcount of all children.

4. SECURE

Ensure entrances, exits and gates are monitored/secured to prevent any further risk.

5. SEARCH

Begin an immediate coordinated search.

6. ESCALATE

If the child cannot be located promptly, the Nursery Manager will contact **999**.

Staff must **never delay escalation simply because they believe the child is probably somewhere within the nursery.**

Searching the Nursery

Management will coordinate the search so that a child can continue to receive appropriate supervision.

Areas checked should include:

- the child's classroom;
- adjoining rooms;
- toilets and bathrooms;
- sleep areas;
- cupboards or spaces a child could access;
- communal areas;
- corridors;
- garden/outdoor areas;
- entrances and exits;
- buggy/storage areas where accessible;
- other classrooms;
- any other accessible area of the premises.

Where available and appropriate, **CCTV may be checked immediately** to establish the child's last known location or direction of travel.

Staff must not leave other children inadequately supervised while searching.

If the Child May Have Left the Premises

Where there is any reasonable possibility that the child has left the nursery:

999 must be contacted without unnecessary delay.

Management should provide:

- child's name;
- age;
- description;
- clothing;
- photograph where available;
- time and location last seen;
- relevant medical/SEND information;
- circumstances of disappearance;
- nursery address and contact information.

Staff should follow police instructions.

Parents/Carers

The child's parents/carers must be informed by the Nursery Manager or authorised senior person.

Communication should be factual and calm.

Management should explain:

- what has happened;
- action already taken;
- whether police have been contacted; and
- what parents should do next.

Staff must not speculate, assign blame or provide unverified information.

Missing Child During an Outing

If a child becomes unaccounted for during an outing:

1. **Stop immediately and alert the outing lead.**
2. Complete a headcount.
3. Establish where and when the child was last seen.
4. Alert appropriate staff/security at the venue where applicable.
5. Search the immediate area while maintaining safe supervision of the other children.
6. Contact **999 without unnecessary delay** if the child cannot be promptly located.
7. Inform the Nursery Manager.
8. Inform the child's parents/carers.
9. Follow police/emergency-service instructions.

The remaining children must continue to be appropriately supervised.

Where necessary, the outing may be terminated and children returned safely to the nursery.

When the Child Is Found

Finding the child **does not** end the safeguarding response.

The child should be:

- reassured calmly;
- checked for injury or distress;
- provided with appropriate first aid/medical attention where required; and
- supported by a familiar adult.

Staff must not reprimand, blame or frighten the child.

Management must immediately inform the police, parents and other agencies already involved that the child has been found.

Immediate Management Review

The Nursery Manager must establish:

- where the child was found;
- how long they were unaccounted for;
- where they were last known to be;
- who was supervising;
- whether ratios/deployment were appropriate;
- whether a door, gate or security system failed;
- whether supervision procedures were followed;
- whether the register/headcount was accurate;
- whether CCTV provides relevant information;
- whether any child has suffered or may have suffered harm;
- what immediate action is required to prevent recurrence.

Relevant evidence, including CCTV where applicable, must be preserved.

Recording the Incident

A full written incident record must be completed as soon as possible.

It should include:

- child's details;
- date and time;
- location;
- when the child was last seen;
- when the child was identified as missing;
- search actions;
- staff involved;
- time police were contacted;
- time parents were contacted;
- where and when the child was found;
- child's condition;
- immediate action taken;
- management findings; and
- actions to prevent recurrence.

The incident must also be considered under EDG Nursery's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

Ofsted and External Notifications

Management must consider whether the circumstances require notification to:

- Ofsted;
- Southwark safeguarding services;
- LADO, where staff conduct or suitability may be involved;
- police;
- other relevant agencies.

Ofsted requires registered providers to notify it of applicable significant events, and the current guidance states that significant-event notification requirements are statutory.

Where an incident is reportable, EDG Nursery will make the notification within the applicable statutory timescale.

Nick Ng – Nursery Director / Safeguarding Oversight must be informed of significant safeguarding or regulatory incidents and will support/submit required Ofsted notifications.

Where management is uncertain whether an incident meets a notification or referral threshold, the current Ofsted and Southwark requirements must be checked rather than assumed.

Staff Conduct or Safeguarding Concerns

Where the incident may have resulted from:

- inadequate supervision;
- failure to follow procedures;
- a security breach;
- inappropriate staff conduct;
- negligence;
- deliberate action; or
- another safeguarding concern,

the Nursery Manager/DSL must determine whether the matter also requires action under:

- Low-Level Concerns Policy;
- Allegations Against Staff Procedure;
- Whistleblowing Procedure;
- Disciplinary Procedure; and/or
- Southwark LADO procedures.

Staff must not investigate allegations against colleagues themselves.

Learning and Prevention

Following every missing-child incident, management will review the circumstances and identify any required changes to:

- staffing/deployment;
- supervision;

- headcounts;
- registers;
- room transitions;
- outings;
- security;
- gates/doors;
- risk assessments;
- staff training;
- policies or procedures.

Any identified actions must be recorded and followed through.

Key Points for Staff

CHILD CANNOT BE LOCATED?

STOP - ALERT - HEADCOUNT - SECURE - SEARCH - ESCALATE

Do not assume another practitioner has the child.

Do not leave other children inadequately supervised while searching.

Check the register and last known location immediately.

Tell management immediately.

Use CCTV where appropriate to establish the last known location.

If the child may have left the premises or cannot be promptly located → 999.

Do not blame or reprimand the child when found.

Record everything.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Arrivals and Departures Policy
- Security and Access Procedures

EDG Nursery- Policy Version | Policy Version 1 | Created March 2026 | EY489739

All policies contained within this handbook have been created in line with current legislation and statutory guidance. EDG Nursery reviews all policies annually and updates them sooner where changes to legislation, statutory guidance, and recognised sector best practice.

- Outings Policy
- Staff Deployment and Supervision procedures
- Accident and Incident Policy
- Low-Level Concerns Policy
- Allegations Against Staff Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure