



Procedure for Collection of Children, Uncollected and Lost Children

Where a parent/carer does not collect a child

When someone other than a parent/ carer is to collect a child:

- i) The child's parent should have given written consent to someone else picking up their child by signing the notice on the back of the playroom door at the beginning of the playgroup session, giving name and telephone number of the person collecting their child.
- ii) If no consent has been given, and another known adult comes to collect the child, then, having regard to the safety of all the children, that adult should be asked to wait in the lobby area until the Play Leader or the person in charge has an opportunity to establish the position by contacting the parent/carer.
- iii) If the staff do not know the adult then s/he should be asked to wait in the lobby area until the parent/carer has been contacted, where they will be asked to either contact the unknown adult by mobile to provide an agreed password or speak by phone to the unknown adult in the presence of the Play Leader/person in charge to verify the identity of the unknown adult. The child will be reassured that someone will be along to collect them soon.
- iv) If the child's parent/carer has given prior written consent to releasing the child (as in B (i) below) or if a known adult says that they have been asked to collect the child by his or her parent/carer and if in both cases a satisfactory explanation has been given, then the child may be released provided that they are leaving playgroup with an adult known to Whitsers staff. If the adult is not known to Whitsers staff then that child must not be released without the specific consent of the child's parent or carer.

If no-one comes to collect the child:-

- i) Whitsers staff should try to contact the child's parents by telephone. If they cannot be reached then staff should try the other contact numbers on the registration card including a designated parent of another playgroup child. If any of the contacts can be reached by telephone, and that person can collect the child, then at least two adults (preferably two members of staff including the Play Leader or person in charge), or failing that one staff member who has had a DBS check and one other adult, should wait with the child until he or she is collected. If, in exceptional circumstances, one of the adults has to leave the premises whilst a child is still present it is their personal responsibility to find a replacement adult before they leave. Such a person should be a committee member or a relief staff member with DBS check.

Under no circumstances should Whitsers staff go to look for the parent or take the child home with them.

- ii) If after a reasonable time no-one has contacted Whitsers, or if no designated contact can be reached, or if Whitsers has been contacted by the parent/carer to say that the

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- iii) child will be collected late, then at least two adults (including one member of staff or person who has had a DBS check) must stay with the child until he or she is collected by the parent/carer, or the parent/carer gives explicit permission for the child to be collected by another adult known to Whitsers.
- iv) Where a child has been collected more than a few minutes late, Whitsers reserves the right to charge the parent/carer for the costs involved in keeping staff on the premises. See Late Collection Charge Policy.
- v) If there continues to be no contact from the parent or carer after 6pm, then the Play Leader or person in charge should call the duty social services as appropriate.
- vi) Children's parents should be encouraged to sign a consent form authorising at least one other parent to collect their child in an emergency. This consent will be kept with the child's records and will be updated at least annually.

Lost child

It is obviously to be hoped that a child will never be lost from Whitsers' premises or whilst on an outing organized by Whitsers. In order to maximize children's safety the following precautions shall be taken:-

- i) During playgroup sessions the internal door between the hall and the lobby area shall be kept locked.
- ii) Before outside playtimes, the two gates leading from the outside play area to the Memorial Hall car park shall be checked to ensure that they are secure.
- iii) A register is kept of all children present for each session. The register is taken when children arrive and leave.
- iv) On outings all children should be accompanied by a named adult (often a parent) who will be responsible for that child for the entire duration of the outing.
- v) The adult: child ratio on outings shall not exceed one adult to two children.
- vi) In the unlikely event of a child becoming lost:-
 - a) An immediate search should be made of any enclosed spaces (for example cupboards, kitchen, toilets, hall) to which the child may have had access;
 - b) If appropriate, all external doors should be checked to ensure that they are secure;
 - c) Remaining children should be reassured and brought to a secure space and supervised whilst all available adults continue with the search for the lost child.

If the child is not found within 10 minutes of starting the search:

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- vii) The Play Leader shall telephone the child's parents to inform them of the situation.
- viii) If the child remains lost after a reasonable time, the Play Leader shall at his or her discretion, telephone the police to report the child as missing.
- ix) Ofsted will be informed of the incident.
- x) If appropriate, Whitsers staff may telephone the parents of other playgroup children to arrange for them to collect their children, so that more staff can be released to search for the missing child.
- xi) The Play Leader may also at his or her discretion call upon relief members of staff or committee members to assist with the search.
- xii) Any incident involving a lost child will be promptly reviewed in terms of risk assessment so that there is minimal risk of a similar situation arising in the future.
- xiii) If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff will co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- xiv) If appropriate, 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.
- xv) In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- xvi) The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

All concerned will be anxious and worried about the child. Staff may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.

Staff may fear being the target of parental anger. Setting leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative, or the proprietor. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.



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 children's questions honestly but also reassure them.

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