

Missing Child Policy – Pre Prep

Procedure to be followed in the Event of a Child Being Lost

(To be read in conjunction with Cheam School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policies)

All children in Pre-Prep are counted on arriving at and on leaving the classroom, playground, dining hall or any other location. All staff should also regularly ‘spot check’ in classrooms and outside to ensure that all children are accounted for.

The indoor and outdoor premises are safe and secure. The outside play areas are fenced in and the children are supervised with the correct ratios at all times. The department produces risk assessments for playtime and these are reviewed at least annually. No one unauthorised should be able to enter the Pre Prep premises and steps are taken to prevent intruders entering the premises. There are keypads on external doors and there are signing in/out procedures and name badges for visitors. All staff must be vigilant and challenge anyone who they do not recognise or who is not in possession of an official visitor’s badge.

Any staff, parent or child arriving and departing outside the usual times is recorded in a separate signing in/out book. The children are only released into the care of individuals named by the parents. Written permission from parents is needed when children are to be picked up by a different adult.

Children do not leave the premises unsupervised, for example staff from the PE department collect from and return children to their Pre Prep teacher when giving individual lessons. Children are counted on arriving at, and on leaving, the classroom, playground, dining room or in any other location. Staff regularly ‘spot check’ in the classroom to ensure that all children are present and no child is unaccounted for.

Missing child procedure

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions.

If a child is not accounted for, one member of staff should take responsibility for the class or group while the other member(s) of staff search the immediate area. The staff member in charge of the remaining group should check the register to ensure that all other children are present.

- If a quick local search does not yield results, the Pre Prep Head should be notified.
- All available assistants and grounds staff should instigate an immediate search. Priority should be given in the first instance to checking the road and the pond area as these are the areas which present the most danger.
- The secretary will check the pupil’s records of the missing child for any relevant details that might have a bearing on the situation (e.g. medical conditions, court orders). Secretary will then check the signing in/out book.
- The staff member with the rest of the class will, if appropriate, ask the children the last time they saw the missing child and what they were doing.
- CCTV cameras (located in the Director of Finance and Operations office) are to be checked

- The Headmaster and DSL to be informed
- If the home of the missing child is within walking distance, a member of staff should walk the route.

If a full scale search has not revealed the whereabouts of the child the following steps would be taken:

- The Headmaster/Head of Pre-Prep will ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion.
- Staff will continue to search the premises.
- The police and local safeguarding board will be informed. This should be done under the guidance of the Headmaster and/or Director of Finance and Operations. No teacher should take responsibility for this action without notifying the Head of Pre-Prep and a member of the School's Senior Management Team.
- The chair of governors should be informed

Actions to be followed by Staff once the child is found

- The Headmaster/Head of Pre-Prep will contact the parents and any emergency services involved.
- Talk to, take care of and if necessary, comfort the child. Counselling may be necessary.
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises
- Inform all staff involved in the search that the child has been found
- A full investigation takes place to ensure correct procedure was followed
- Media queries should be referred to the Head of Pre-Prep/Headmaster
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements.
- The report should be detailed covering time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appears to have happened, the length of time the child was missing, and lessons for the future.

School trips

All trips must be sanctioned first by the Head of Pre Prep and then the Headmaster. Staff must read and follow the policy on School Trips shown as Part K of the school Handbook. All staff must be particularly vigilant when taking small children off school premises. There should be a minimum of 1 adult:5 children when off site. For Early Years the ratio is a minimum of 1:4. Staff should always, in doing a risk assessment, consider what action they would take if a child went missing. Staff must take a register of all children who are on the trip and regular headcount checks must be made, particularly after any change of location. It is essential that no transport departs until staff have checked that every child is on board and safely seat belted.

Children should never be allowed to run ahead of a member of staff. When groups are moving around there should always be one member of staff leading and one at the rear to ensure that no children get left behind. If a child goes missing one member of staff should take charge of the rest of the group and the other should organise the search. The Head of Pre Prep should be informed within 20 minutes of any child going missing on a school trip.

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other children were present.
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity.
- One adult would retrace steps to the last place where the child was seen, the remaining children staying in one place with the other staff.

- If the child was not located, the remaining children would be taken back to school, or arrangements would be made with the School.
- Ask the Headmaster, Deputy Head or Head of Pre-Prep to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Discuss with them whether they should come to the location or wait at the School.
- Contact the venue Manager and arrange a search if in a building or on a site such as a garden/castle etc.
- Contact the Police.
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care.

Abduction

This is most likely to be by an estranged relative and in most cases staff will have had warning and strategies will have been discussed. School must always be vigilant in challenging anyone on the premises who they do not recognise or who is not in possession of an official visitor's badge. Children should not be allowed to leave the premises without written permission of the usual carer on the appropriate form. Verbal permission will be accepted in cases of emergency on the same day and caution should be exercised by staff. It is not sufficient for the child to recognise the person who is collecting as this could be someone to whom the parent does not want to hand custody.

If it is suspected that a child has been abducted the Head of Pre-Prep or a member of SMT should be informed immediately. Parents and the Headmaster should be notified; it might then be necessary to inform the police depending on circumstances. The Head of Pre-Prep should take responsibility for getting together descriptions and timings immediately so that the police are given as much information as possible on arrival.

Procedure for the discovery of a 'wandering child'

On discovering a child wandering around the School premises without supervision or in suspicious circumstances:

- ASK where they are going/where they are supposed to be.
- ACCOMPANY the child to the care of a responsible adult. It is not advisable to send them to another unsupervised place unless you are to join them directly. The Front Office/Pre-Prep Reception are generally the most suitable places, as checks may be made by phone on where the child should be.
- No child must be able to leave the Pre-Prep unsupervised. Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) children should always be under supervision of a member of staff when moving around the School site. Any Pre-Prep child found wandering should be accompanied back to Pre-Prep and the incident reported to the Head of Pre-Prep. The Head of Pre-Prep and the child's class teacher will discuss the incident and decide if further action is required.

Wandering is the tendency for an individual to try to leave the safety of a responsible person's care or a safe area, which can result in potential harm or injury. This might include running off from adults at school or leaving the classroom without permission. This behaviour is considered common and short-lived in toddlers, but it may persist or re-emerge in children with autism.

If a child is prone to 'wandering' the boundaries within school premises must be made explicitly clear and visible boundary markers must be created. A 1:1 person must be assigned to track the child especially during transitions. The children are taught danger awareness through social stories to

explain what could happen if they left the premises unaccompanied. Wandering incidents happen when we least expect them so it's extremely important to always maintain close supervision and to regularly reassess and update security measures as needed.

The gates to Pre-Prep are kept shut at all times and constant reminders are made to the whole school and Prep pupils to assist with this.

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