

# CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY (formerly called 'Missing Child Policy')

## Amendment History

Revision	Author	Description of change	Date updated
1	Karen Walls	Amendment history added and general changes in policy wording	October 2005
KASC policy	Carol Hooper	Adapted from adopted Kineton Playgroup policy	August 2006
2 (KASC)	Carol Hooper	Developing policy following operation of KASC	February 2007
2 Playgroup)	CH/SM	Amendment to general wording	March 2007
3	CH	Merge KASC and Playgroup policies; update footer	March 2008
4	CH/ SM	Reviewed: no change required	March 2009
5	CH/AF	Reviewed: no change required	March 2010
6	CH/AF	Reference to time that playgroup become responsible for children	January 2011
7	CH/HS	Reviewed: no substantive changes	March 2012
8	CH	Contact numbers checked and updated	January 2013
9	CH	Contact numbers checked	January 2015
10	CH	Contact numbers checked	November 2016
11	CH & SF	Take walkie-talkie when collecting children from school or activity clubs	February 2018
12	CH & SF	Reviewed; no substantive changes	January 2020
13	CH	Reviewed; no substantive changes.	July 2022
14	CH, TH & XF	Reviewed; no substantive changes.	July 2023

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY (formerly called 'Missing Child Policy')**

There are two areas or times when a child may go missing

- when they do not reach where they are supposed to be and
- when they go missing during a session.

If a child does not turn up at a Playgroup or Breakfast Club session for which they have a place, then they remain the responsibility of their parents or carers and have not yet become the responsibility of Kineton Playgroup; Playgroup staff may assist in locating any child, but must remember their main responsibility is to the children registered for and at the session.

If a child is booked to attend a place at KASC, they may go missing between the end of the school day at Kineton Primary School and collection and registration by KASC staff. The child remains the responsibility of Kineton Primary School until registered at KASC, but KASC staff may take the lead in locating the child. In that situation, KASC staff should adopt the following procedure (in cooperation with staff from Kineton Primary School) as if a child had gone missing from a session.

### **PROCEDURE FOR WHEN A CHILD LEAVES THE SETTING UNACCOMPANIED OR DOES NOT REACH KASC**

#### **SYSTEMS TO BE IN OPERATION ON A DAILY BASIS**

- All exits from the premises will be locked or guarded in a way which makes it impossible for a child to leave unattended or unobserved while allowing for rapid exit for the whole group in the case of an emergency. The session supervisor or deputy will remain at the entry point while children are arriving and departing until such times as the main exit and entry doors are secured. Where keys are used, such keys are to be kept accessible to members of staff to allow rapid exit in an emergency. Some entry/exit points are secured by codes. Reference to 'premises' includes the KASC collecting point at Kineton Primary School; children attending KASC are supervised and escorted by KASC staff to Helen's Place. Breakfast Club children are supervised and escorted by KASC staff to the primary school main site and handed over to supervision by Kineton Primary School staff.
- An accurate and up-to-date day list will be kept and both adults and children, including visitors, will be signed in and out whenever they leave or enter the premises. Signatures should be in ink.
- When new children start, staff will take special care to ensure that both children and their parents know where they may or may not go. Staff will also seek advice from parents of children new to the group so that they are forewarned about particularly adventurous children.

## **Procedure to be followed if child cannot be found**

### **1. Find out quickly**

Members of staff know how many children are due at each session by using a day list system, which lists the names of children and staff registered to attend. Activity clubs for school age children and other events are recorded on the day list, and one-off absences or attendances are also recorded. The day list system requires children and staff to sign in and out, and record the times of their arrivals and departures. This means the number and identities of children on the premises at any time can be easily checked.

Members of staff collecting children from school, whether at the end of school or after activity clubs, may take a walkie-talkie with them to report any issues to those members of staff remaining at playgroup as soon as they become aware of them.

### **2. Procedures at Playgroup and KASC sessions**

At beginning of KASC sessions: If an expected child is not waiting in their classroom (Reception and KS1) or does not come to the KASC meeting place (KS2) then the following procedures should be followed by the session supervisor and supporting staff.

1. Ensure rest of children are safe by taking them to Helen's Place under care of members of staff not involved in searching for the missing child.
2. Ask other children for information, and check with school office and school registers, to see if the child was at school that day, or if they have been signed out early. Check the bus register. If possible, check with the class teacher. Check with the playground duty staff whether the child has left the building.
3. Check with any school activity clubs.
4. Check route from classroom to KASC meeting area including toilets, cloakrooms, hall and nearby classrooms. Check routes around school to KASC meeting area and Helen's Place.
5. Check Playgroup and KASC diaries, email and any answer phone or other recorded messages. Cross-check any verbal reports (eg 'she's gone to tea with X') with parents by phone. Contact parents to confirm where they expect the child to be – sometimes parents forget to notify changes of plan.
6. If a child is still missing contact Kineton Primary School and assist them with their search procedures.

During Playgroup, Breakfast Club or KASC sessions, or if child continues to be absent without explanation: apply the procedures set out below.

### **3. Search systematically**

Playgroup is responsible for the missing child and also for the other children in the group, from the time of registration for that session (ie when they are signed in on the day lists). The session supervisor must

be told immediately if a child is missing. If child is not found quickly, then contact the manager. When and if considered necessary the manager may contact a Board member or call in extra members of staff to help. If appropriate, contact members of Kineton Primary School staff still on site for assistance. The remaining children will be gathered together in one large group in the setting and as far as possible continue to carry out their usual activities; without neglecting the needs of these remaining children the other staff members and any other adults will carry out a search.

Without alarming them, staff will ask the children themselves whether they have seen the child who is missing.

The session supervisor (or manager, when on site) will: -

- Check that all the adults are present and that they all know the current situation
- Try to establish who last saw the child, when and what they were doing.
- Check every room in the setting premises, then the school building and premises and also any accessible outside area. Awareness of possible hiding places in and around the premises can be useful! If the school premises are being used by other people or organisations, inform them and, if appropriate, seek their co-operation.
- The child may be attempting to get home. If the child lives within walking distance of the setting, then one adult will make the journey on foot by the most used route in order to catch up with or intercept the child if possible.

#### **4. Parents**

The child's parents need to be informed as soon as possible, but without alarming them initially. Alternative contact numbers for working parents are kept in the children's records. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure all emergency contact numbers for children are up-to-date (although reminders are published in newsletters). As soon as parents are informed, they will need advice and support.

#### **5. Informing the police and other people**

If the above steps do not locate the child, other parties must be informed:

1 Contact the police immediately; they have the resources to conduct a search and speed is important in such cases.

**Non-emergency contact: 101**

**Warwickshire control room: 01926 415000**

2 As soon as the police have been informed, contact Ofsted who will conduct its own investigation.

**Ofsted: 0300 123 1231**

The relevant department will need to know:

- What happened
  - What the staff did, at what time and in what order
  - Whom the staff informed and when
  - What systems are in operation
- 3 Contact Warwickshire County Council's Critical Incident Team and Early Years Support Team

**Warwickshire County Council:  
01926 410410**

- 4 Contact Playgroup's insurance company to inform them of the incident. The insurance company will also provide help and support thought their legal services and in dealing with any media attention.

**Moreton Michel Insurance Company:  
020 8603 0941**

## **6. Recording the incident**

Each adult present and involved must build up a record of the event as soon as possible. This should include notes of the last definite sighting of the child and anything unusual about the behaviour of that child on that day or any other children.

## **7. Dealing with people's reactions**

The child's parents will be frightened, distressed and probably angry. Be aware that because powerful emotions are involved, people's behaviour may be unpredictable. It is therefore important to be very careful from the beginning about words used to talk to people about the incident. Say how sorry you are that the incident has happened, that a full investigation is in hand and that Ofsted and the police have been informed and will also be investigating.

## **8. Dealing with the media**

Distressed parents may contact the local press or reporters might hear about the incident if the police are involved. The Manager, Chairperson and nominated board member will be the ones who speak to the media on behalf of Kineton Playgroup Ltd. All adults will be advised to refer all enquires to the agreed spokespersons. Staff will be able to draw upon the services of the EYA's PR Company.

## **9. Informing the other parents**

Other parents will be given brief, accurate information as rapidly as possible. A short meeting will be called, if possible, when parents and carers collect from the session or a note will be sent home with each child.

## **10. When the child is found**

During the time that the child is missing, all adults involved will suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is therefore important to remember that:

- The child may have been afraid and distressed and may need

comforting

- That the child may be completely unaware of having done anything wrong
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises and the reasons why.
- Adults involved in this type of incident may need help and support after the child has been found. It is vitally important that all members of Kineton Playgroup Limited help and support the parents and each other at this time.