

# Oyster Bay Nursery

## Lost Child Policy

Date written: October 2026

Date of last update: October 2026

Date agreed and ratified by October 2026

Date of next full review: September 2027

**This policy will be reviewed at least annually and/or following any lessons learnt and/or updates to national or local guidance and procedures.**

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| **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** | Debra Hines |
| **Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)** | Grace Sidders<br>Rachel Finch |
| **Nominated Individual** | Debra Hines |
| **Nursery Manager** | Grace Sidders |

**1. Policy Statement**

At Oyster Bay Nursery, the safety and welfare of children are our highest priority at all times, both on and off the premises.

We take all reasonable steps to prevent a child from going missing, including following secure entrance and exit procedures, maintaining appropriate supervision, completing accurate registers and carrying out regular checks of the nursery environment.

Although every precaution is taken, we recognise that a child going missing is a serious incident requiring immediate action. This policy sets out the procedures staff must follow to locate the child, protect the other children, inform the appropriate people and investigate the incident.

**2. Preventative Measures**

To reduce the risk of a child going missing, staff must:

- Follow the nursery's arrival, collection, entrance and exit procedures.
- Maintain appropriate supervision of children at all times.
- Complete and check attendance registers.
- Ensure doors, gates and other access points are secure.
- Conduct regular headcounts, particularly during transitions between rooms, outdoor play and outings.
- Follow the nursery's outings and off-site visits procedures.
- Ensure children are handed over only to authorised adults in accordance with nursery procedures.
- Report any security concerns or breaches immediately to the Nursery Manager.

**3. Procedure if a Child Goes Missing on the Premises**

If a member of staff notices that a child is missing, they must act immediately.

1. **Raise the alarm:** The staff member must inform the Nursery Manager or the most senior member of staff immediately.
2. **Maintain supervision:** The manager will organise staff to search the premises and garden while ensuring the remaining children continue to be safely supervised and supported.
3. **Search thoroughly:** Staff will check the rooms, toilets, sleeping areas, outdoor spaces, cupboards or other safe areas where a child could reasonably be located.

4. **Check attendance:** The register and headcount will be checked to establish whether any other children are unaccounted for.
5. **Check security:** Doors, gates and access points will be checked for possible breaches of security.
6. **Establish last known whereabouts:** Staff will identify when and where the child was last seen and who was responsible for supervising them.
7. **Contact emergency services:** If the child is not immediately located, or there is any reason to believe the child may be in danger, the manager or designated staff member must contact the police on **999 without delay**. Staff must not delay contacting the police while continuing the search.
8. **Inform parents or carers:** Parents or carers must be contacted promptly and given clear, factual information about the situation.
9. **Follow police instructions:** Staff must cooperate fully with the police and follow their directions.

The manager will allocate clear responsibilities so that the search, supervision of the other children, communication and emergency response can happen at the same time.

**4. Procedure if a Child Goes Missing During an Outing**

If a child goes missing during an outing or off-site visit:

- Stop the group in a safe location and immediately inform the visit leader.
- Confirm the child is missing by checking the register and completing a headcount.
- Establish the child's last known location and arrange a coordinated search of the immediate area, where safe.
- Ensure the remaining children stay with designated staff and remain supervised.
- Contact the police on **999 without delay** if the child cannot be located immediately or may be at risk.
- Contact the nursery to inform the Nursery Manager and request further support.
- Inform the child's parents or carers as soon as practicable.
- Follow police instructions and do not leave the remaining children without appropriate supervision.

Staff must not place themselves or other children at unnecessary risk while searching.

**5. Procedure if a Child Is Found Outside the Nursery**

If a child is found outside the nursery premises without an authorised adult:

- Bring the child to a safe place, if it is safe to do so.
- Inform the Nursery Manager immediately.
- Establish how the child left the premises and whether they have been injured or distressed.
- Contact the parents or carers.
- Seek medical assistance if required.
- Record and investigate the incident, even if the child appears unharmed.
- Review security and supervision arrangements and take action to prevent recurrence.

If a child is found by a member of the public or another agency, staff must cooperate with those involved and follow any police or safeguarding instructions.

**6. Investigation and Record Keeping**

Once the immediate emergency has been addressed, the Nursery Manager or Nominated Individual will conduct an investigation, unless the police advise that particular enquiries should be delayed or handled by them.

The investigation will include:

- Speaking to the staff involved to establish when and where the child was last seen.
- Obtaining written accounts from relevant staff as soon as practicable.
- Reviewing the attendance register, headcounts and supervision arrangements.
- Recording the sequence of events, including actions taken and the times at which they occurred.
- Identifying any security failure, supervision issue or procedural weakness.
- Considering whether other children may have been affected.
- Establishing what changes are needed to reduce the risk of a similar incident.

An incident record should include, where known:

- The child's name and date of birth.
- The date, time and location of the incident.

- The time the child was last seen and when their absence was discovered.
- What the child was wearing.
- The staff and children present and the relevant supervision arrangements.
- The search areas and actions taken.
- The times parents or carers, the police and other relevant agencies were contacted.
- When and where the child was found, if applicable.
- Any injuries, medical assistance or welfare concerns.
- The outcome of the investigation and actions taken to prevent recurrence.

Records must be factual, confidential and stored securely. Staff must cooperate with any police or safeguarding investigation and must not interfere with enquiries.

**7. Reporting the Incident**

The Nursery Manager or Nominated Individual will consider which notifications are required, based on the circumstances of the incident.

This may include notifying:

- The child's parents or carers.
- The police and emergency services.
- The relevant local authority safeguarding team, where appropriate.
- Ofsted, where required by the applicable reporting requirements.
- The nursery's insurance provider.
- The relevant health and safety authority, where applicable.

The manager will assess whether the incident meets the criteria for reporting under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), rather than assuming that every missing-child incident is automatically reportable.

Any required notifications must be made within the applicable timescales. The nursery will keep a record of notifications and advice received.

**8. Supporting Parents, Children and Staff**

A missing-child incident can be extremely distressing for the child, their family, staff and other children. Oyster Bay Nursery will respond sensitively and professionally.

**Parents and carers**

- A manager or senior member of staff will communicate with parents or carers wherever possible.
- Information will be accurate, clear and honest.
- Staff will acknowledge the seriousness of the situation and explain the actions being taken.
- Where appropriate, a second senior staff member will be present when communicating with distressed parents.
- Threats or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated; the police will be contacted if necessary to protect people's safety.

**The other children**

- Staff will continue to supervise and reassure the children in their care.
- Children will not be exposed to unnecessary details or adult discussions about the incident.
- Staff will answer children's questions calmly and honestly in an age-appropriate way.

**Staff**

- Staff involved will be treated fairly and given the opportunity to provide factual accounts.
- The manager will recognise that the incident may cause distress and will offer appropriate support.
- Any concerns about staff conduct will be managed through the relevant procedures, without prejudicing police or safeguarding enquiries.

**9. Communication with the Media**

No member of staff may discuss a missing-child incident with the press, post information on social media or share identifying details publicly without authorisation.

All media enquiries must be referred to the Nominated Individual or designated spokesperson. Staff must follow police advice regarding the release of information and protect the child's privacy.

**10. Review and Risk Assessment**

Following any missing-child incident, the Nursery Manager will review the circumstances and complete or update a risk assessment.

The review will consider:

- The effectiveness of supervision and headcounts.
- The security of doors, gates and access points.
- Staffing arrangements and staff understanding of procedures.
- Whether policies, training or communication need to be improved.
- Any additional measures needed to prevent recurrence.

Any identified actions will be recorded, assigned to a responsible person and monitored to completion.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following a serious incident or a relevant change in legislation or statutory guidance.

**11. Staff Responsibilities**

All staff must understand this policy and know who to contact if a child is missing.

Staff must act immediately, remain calm, maintain supervision of other children, provide accurate information and follow the instructions of the Nursery Manager and emergency services.

**The safety and welfare of children must always come first. Staff must never delay contacting the police when a child may be at risk.**