

Essex Wildlife Trust

Nature Nursery: Missing Child – Policy and Procedure

A policy describes what we do and how we do it as an organisation. It is a set of agreed principles which set out a course of action adopted by our staff and volunteers. It will often include acceptable methods, behaviours, and an approved procedure. It is usually internal, although some organisational policies are expected to be publicly accessible.

Version Control

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When review is completed, please send to: businesssupport@essexwt.org.uk

Version	Date	Changes made by	Reason for change
3	31 August 2023	J Burlingham	Update to new format Clarification of responsibilities and job titles Addition of use of CCTV from main reception

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The safety of the children in the care of Essex Wildlife Trust and the Nature Nursery is of the highest priority, both on and off the site. Every attempt will be made, through our Policies and Procedures, to ensure the security of the children.
- 1.2 Care is taken to ensure that the children cannot leave the setting unattended.
- 1.3 Outings from the regular setting are thoroughly planned and only undertaken after Risk Assessments have been completed and when the appropriate adult/child ratios are present.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working within Nature Nursery, and the Nature Nursery Management Committee with responsibility for governance.

3. Purpose of Policy

- 3.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure all staff are aware of procedures to be followed if an incident occurs.
- 3.2 Other policies, site checks and risk assessments provide guidance and procedures to maintain site security within the Nature Nursery

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 The health and safety of children within the care of the Essex Wildlife Trust and the Nature Nursery is of paramount importance.
- 4.2 Nature Nursery will work with children, parents, and the community to ensure the safety of children.
- 4.3 This includes adopting and enforcing policies to ensure children cannot leave the security of the setting unattended.
- 4.4 Any outings from the site are thoroughly planned and only undertaken after Risk Assessments have been completed and when the appropriate adult to child ratios is met.
- 4.5 In the unlikely event that a child does go missing, the procedures detailed in this document will be followed.

5. Procedure

5.1 Child missing on the premises

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing:

- 5.1.1 Staff will blow whistle 3 times at 5 seconds duration to alert other staff of an emergency.
- 5.1.2 The child's key person alerts the most senior member of the Nursery Management team.
- 5.1.3 They will nominate as many staff as possible to conduct a thorough search of all surrounding areas. This can include Essex Wildlife Trust headquarters staff as available if deemed necessary – they will be contacted via phone to the main reception.
- 5.1.4 CCTV cameras for specific areas of the site can be checked via a member of staff at the main reception (this includes the main carpark and area leading to the Nature Nursery but does not include the whole site).
- 5.1.5 All other on-site children will stand with their key person or buddy key person.

- 5.1.6 The registers will be checked to make sure no other child is missing.
- 5.1.7 A headcount will be carried out by a senior member of staff.
- 5.1.8 The most senior member of the Nursery Management team talks to the key person to establish what has happened, where and when the child was last seen. This information is recorded either electronically or on paper.
- 5.1.9 Gates will be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- 5.1.10 All staff are to remain calm and ensure all other children remain safe and supervised.
- 5.1.11 If the child is not found within 10 minutes of thorough searching, the most senior member of Nursery Management Team will call the police immediately and report the child as missing, giving as many details as possible.
- 5.1.12 The parent(s)/carers are contacted and informed of the situation.
- 5.1.13 A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- 5.1.14 The most senior member of the Nursery Management team Manager contacts the Head of Community Engagement to report the incident
- 5.1.15 The Head of Community Engagement contacts the Director of Engagement (Designated Safeguarding Lead, DSL), the Health and Safety Compliance Manager and the Head of Communications immediately. If the Director of Engagement is not available, the Director of People and Culture is contacted as they also hold DSL responsibilities.
- 5.1.16 The Head of Community Engagement ensures all other members of the Nature Nursery Management Committee are informed at an appropriate point.

5.2 Child missing on an Outing

This procedure describes the steps followed during outings away from the Nature Nursery site. The procedure for the conduct of the visit is covered in the appropriate separate policy.

- 5.2.1. As soon the child is noticed as missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their key person or designated group leader.
- 5.2.2 A headcount will be performed and correlated to the register.
- 5.2.3 All staff are to remain calm and ensure all other children remain safe and supervised.
- 5.2.4 One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but remains visible or within contact of the group, and staff ratios must be maintained.
- 5.2.5 The most senior staff member contacts the police and reports that child as missing, giving as many details as possible.
- 5.2.6 The Nursery Management Team is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded e.g. to establish what has happened, where and when the child was last seen. This information is recorded either electronically or on paper.
- 5.2.7 The parent(s)/carers are contacted and informed of the situation.
- 5.2.8 If possible, the staff take the remaining children back to the Nature Nursery, ensuring staff ratios are maintained.

- 5.2.9 According to the advice of the police, a senior member of staff should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- 5.2.10 A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- 5.2.11 The most senior member of the Nursery Management team contacts the Head of Community Engagement to report the incident.
- 5.2.12 The Head of Community Engagement contacts the Director of Engagement (Designated Safeguarding Lead, DSL), the Health and Safety Compliance Manager and the Head of Communications immediately. If the Director of Engagement is not available, the Director of People and Culture is contacted as they also hold DSL responsibilities.
- 5.2.13 The Head of Community Engagement ensures all other members of the Nature Nursery Management Committee are informed at an appropriate point.

5.3 Follow up investigation

- 5.3.1 The investigation is conducted by the Nursery Manager, or, if not available, the most senior member of the Nursery Management team
- 5.3.2 The Nursery Manager ensures Ofsted are informed as soon as possible (within 14 days of the incident) and kept up to date with the investigation.
- 5.3.3 The Nursery Manager, alongside Head of Community Engagement if required, carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all staff and volunteers who were present.
- 5.3.4 The Nursery Manager speaks with the parent(s)/carers and explains the process of the investigation.
- 5.3.5 The parent(s)/carers may also raise a complaint with us or Ofsted, following procedures outlined in appropriate policies.
- 5.3.6 For each member of staff present, a report will be generated detailing:
 - 5.3.6.1 The date and time of the incident.
 - 5.3.6.2 Where the child went missing from e.g., the site or an outing venue.
 - 5.3.6.3 Which staff/children were on the premises/outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
 - 5.3.6.4 When the child was last seen in the premises/on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - 5.3.6.5 What has taken place on the premises/on the outing since the child went missing.
- 5.3.7 The report is counter-signed by the Nursery Manager and the date and time added.
- 5.3.8 The report will be shared with all appropriate members of the Nature Nursery Management Committee and Safeguarding team, and a conclusion is drawn as to how the incident occurred. If necessary, additional reports will be made to appropriate regulatory authorities and bodies.
- 5.3.9 If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff and parents. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- 5.3.10 The insurance provider is informed via the Director of Finance and Systems

5.4 Staff welfare

- 5.4.1 It is recognised that missing child incidents are very worrying for all parties involved, and part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible. Staff will understandably feel worried about the child, especially the key person and/or staff responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases. They may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid.
- 5.4.2 The Nursery Manager will ensure that any staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- 5.4.3 When dealing with parents, there should always be two members of staff present, one of whom is part of the Nursery Management team.
- 5.4.4 Although parent's anger is understandable, aggression or threats against our staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called if this occurs.
- 5.4.5 Other children at the Nursery will be sensitive to what is going on around them and will be worried. Staff will remain 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.
- 5.4.6 In accordance with the severity of the outcome, our staff may need counselling and support from other staff, and the Employee Assistance Program.
- 5.4.7 The staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press, and all communications will be dealt with via the Communication Team via liaison with the Nature Nursery Management Committee.

6. Appendices

This policy is to be read in conjunction with wider Essex Wildlife Trust Policies and Procedures

- 6.1 Accident and Incident Procedure
- 6.2 Changes and events to be notified to Ofsted
- 6.3 Complaints Policy and Procedure
- 6.4 First Aid Policy and Procedure
- 6.5 Health and Safety Policy
- 6.6 Outing and Visits Policy and Procedure
- 6.7 EYFS - Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (up to date version available via Government website)
- 6.8 Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults at risk policies and procedures Part 1 and 2
- 6.9 Visitors and Intruders on the Premises Policy