Brabyns Nursery School

MISSING CHILD POLICY

Last reviewed: September 2026
Next review: September 2027

1. Purpose

The safety and welfare of every child at Brabyns Nursery is our highest priority.

We take all reasonable steps to prevent a child from becoming missing and ensure that staff know what action to take immediately should a child be unaccounted for.

All staff have a responsibility to maintain appropriate supervision and to know the whereabouts of the children in their care at all times.

This policy covers situations where:

- a child cannot be located within the nursery;
- a child leaves or is believed to have left the nursery premises without authorisation;
- a child becomes separated from the group during an off-site visit;
- a child is collected or removed by an unauthorised person; or
- a child is unexpectedly absent and their whereabouts cannot be established.

2. Preventative Measures

Brabyns Nursery has procedures in place to minimise the possibility of a child going missing.

These include:

- maintaining appropriate staffing levels and ratios;
- ensuring children are appropriately supervised at all times;
- maintaining secure entrances, exits, gates and boundaries;
- carrying out regular checks of the nursery environment;
- completing headcounts and regular checks of children's whereabouts, particularly when moving between areas;
- maintaining accurate registers and attendance records;
- following the Collection and Non-Collection of Children Policy;
- ensuring visitors sign in and are appropriately supervised;
- completing risk assessments for off-site visits;
- ensuring staff understand their safeguarding and supervision responsibilities.

Staff must never assume that another member of staff is supervising a child without confirming this.

3. Child Missing from the Nursery

If a child cannot be located, staff must act immediately.

The member of staff who becomes aware that the child is missing must:

1. Inform the Nursery Manager or most senior member of staff immediately.
2. Ensure the remaining children are safely supervised and accounted for.
3. Establish when and where the child was last seen.
4. Check the child's usual areas, toilets, sleep areas, garden and other appropriate areas within the nursery.
5. Check all entrances, exits and boundary areas.
6. Ask staff and, where appropriate, children whether they have seen the child.
7. Check the register and any collection/signing-out information to establish whether the child may have left legitimately.
8. Maintain clear communication between staff throughout the search.

The search must be organised so that the remaining children continue to receive appropriate supervision.

4. If the Child Cannot Be Found Immediately

If the child is not located promptly, the Nursery Manager or designated senior member of staff will escalate the response without delay.

This may include:

- contacting the child's parents/carers;
- contacting the police by calling 999 where there is an immediate concern for the child's safety or whereabouts;
- providing the police with a recent photograph and relevant information about the child;
- informing the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL;
- contacting other relevant agencies where appropriate.

There should be no unnecessary delay in contacting the police where there is reason to believe that the child may have left the premises or is at immediate risk.

Staff must continue searching while maintaining the safety and supervision of the other children, unless directed otherwise by the police or emergency services.

5. Child Missing During an Off-Site Visit

Before any off-site visit, staff must ensure that appropriate risk assessments, staffing arrangements, contact details and emergency procedures are in place.

If a child becomes missing during an outing:

1. The member of staff noticing the child missing must alert the rest of the staff team immediately.
2. A headcount of the remaining children must be completed.
3. The group must remain together and safely supervised.
4. Staff should establish where and when the child was last seen.
5. Staff should retrace movements or search appropriate areas where this can be done safely.
6. The venue's security or management team should be informed immediately where appropriate.
7. The Nursery Manager or nursery base should be contacted.
8. Parents/carers should be informed as soon as appropriate.
9. The police must be contacted without delay where the child cannot be located promptly or there is any concern for their safety.
10. Staff must follow the instructions of the police or emergency services.

The safety of the remaining children must be maintained throughout.

6. Child Leaving the Nursery Premises

If a child is seen leaving, or is believed to have left, the nursery premises without authorisation:

- the Nursery Manager or most senior member of staff must be informed immediately;
- staff must establish the child's last known location and direction of travel;
- the remaining children must be safely supervised;
- staff should search the immediate safe area where appropriate;
- parents/carers must be contacted;
- the police must be contacted immediately where the child cannot be located or there is an immediate concern for their safety.

Staff should not place themselves or other children at unnecessary risk while attempting to locate a missing child.

7. Child Removed by an Unauthorised Person

Children will only be released in accordance with the nursery's Collection and Non-Collection of Children Policy.

Staff must not allow a child to leave with an adult who is not authorised to collect them.

Where there are known legal restrictions relating to who may collect a child, these must be clearly recorded and communicated to relevant staff on a need-to-know basis.

If a child is seen or believed to have been removed from the nursery by an unauthorised person:

- the Nursery Manager and DSL must be informed immediately;
- the police must be contacted on 999 where the child has been taken without permission or there is an immediate safeguarding concern;
- parents/carers should be contacted as appropriate;
- staff must provide the police with all relevant information, including descriptions, photographs and vehicle details where available.

Staff must not place themselves or the child at additional risk by attempting to physically intervene.

8. Unexplained Absence

If a child does not arrive for a booked session and the nursery has not been informed of the reason for absence, staff will follow the nursery's Attendance Policy.

Where the nursery is unable to establish the child's whereabouts, or where the absence raises a safeguarding concern, the matter must be referred to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay.

A child's unexpected or unexplained absence may be a safeguarding concern, particularly where there are existing welfare concerns or the family cannot be contacted.

9. Safeguarding

A missing child incident must always be considered from a safeguarding perspective.

The DSL will consider whether the incident indicates any wider concerns relating to:

- the child's safety or welfare;
- supervision or staffing;
- neglect or other safeguarding concerns;
- unauthorised collection;
- family circumstances;
- possible harm, exploitation or other risk.

Safeguarding concerns must be dealt with in accordance with the nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

If a child is in immediate danger, the police should be contacted by calling 999.

10. When the Child Is Found

When the child is found:

- they should be reassured and comforted;

- staff should establish, as far as is appropriate for the child's age and stage of development, where they have been and what happened;
- any injury or signs of distress must be assessed and appropriate action taken;
- parents/carers must be informed;
- the DSL must be informed where appropriate;
- the incident must be recorded fully.

Staff should respond calmly and sensitively. The purpose is to understand what happened and ensure the child's safety rather than to blame or frighten the child.

11. Following Up an Incident

Following a missing child incident, the Nursery Manager and DSL will review what happened and consider whether any further action is required.

This may include:

- reviewing the circumstances and timeline of the incident;
- speaking with staff involved;
- reviewing supervision arrangements;
- reviewing relevant risk assessments;
- checking registers, signing-in/out records and other relevant records;
- reviewing CCTV where available and appropriate;
- considering whether any safeguarding referral is required;
- identifying any changes needed to procedures, staffing or the physical environment;
- informing the Bellevue Education Director/Central Team where appropriate;
- considering whether Ofsted or another relevant authority must be notified.

Any required notifications will be made in accordance with statutory requirements and the nursery's safeguarding and incident-reporting procedures.

12. Recording and Confidentiality

All missing child incidents must be recorded accurately, including:

- the date and time of the incident;
- when and where the child was last seen;
- who was present;
- actions taken;
- when parents/carers and emergency services were contacted;
- when and where the child was found;
- any injuries or concerns identified;
- actions taken following the incident.

Records will be stored securely and information will only be shared with those who have a legitimate reason to receive it.

13. Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for maintaining effective supervision and following this policy.

Staff must:

- know the children in their care;
- remain aware of children's whereabouts;
- follow agreed supervision arrangements;
- complete headcounts when required;
- report concerns immediately;

- never assume another member of staff is responsible for a child without confirming this;
- follow safeguarding procedures at all times.

14. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Collection and Non-Collection of Children Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Educational Visits/Outings Risk Assessment Procedures
- Emergency and Critical Incident Procedures
- Staff Code of Conduct

15. Relevant Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers, current from September 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, where applicable to the setting.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Relevant local safeguarding partnership procedures and emergency service guidance.

Brabyns Nursery is committed to ensuring that children are safe, appropriately supervised and protected from harm. Any concern that a child may be missing will be treated seriously and acted upon immediately.