

# Widford Lodge

PREPARATORY SCHOOL



## **7 g and 14b**

### **Procedure for Absent or Missing Children**

### **and**

### **Non-Collection of Children**

**This policy applies to all pupils at Widford Lodge School including those in the EYFS**

## 1. Overview

Widford Lodge Preparatory School aims at all times to keep children safe and secure whether on school premises or in our charge off site and takes all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of the children.

The children are supervised at all times, whether in the playground before school starts, during break time, meal times, PE and Games lessons, off-site activities or after-school clubs. At the end of the school day or after school activities, the children are only allowed to leave the school premises if their parent or an adult approved by their parents (for EYFS and Pre Prep) or their parent or an adult known to the school (for Prep) has come to collect them.

Children are only allowed to leave the school premises alone if written permission has been given by a parent. If no approved adult is there at normal pick up time, the child will be supervised until they are collected.

When a child is collected from school during the school day whether due to illness or a prearranged appointment, they must always be collected from the office so that an entry can be made in the register to record the fact that they are no longer on the premises. Children are not allowed to leave the school premises on their own during the course of the school day.

It is the responsibility of the member of staff on duty whether teaching or supervising breaks to ensure that the children remain safe. Any visitors to the school are recorded arriving and leaving. Parents who come to school during the school day or after the school day has ended, have to do so through the front of the school or through the gate operated by a member of staff.

## 2. Pupil Absences

As part of the school's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of our pupils, we recognise the importance of acting early to address patterns of absence as well as following up unexplained pupil absences. We always aim to ensure that we have a minimum of two emergency contact numbers for each pupil and actively seek this when children join the school and when parents confirm their contact details annually. This part of the policy should be read in conjunction with our Attendance Policy and the Department for Education's 2024 guidance, Working Together to Improve School Attendance. The following procedure would be followed if a pupil is not at school by 9.15am, until a satisfactory explanation is obtained:

- **09.00-09.15** Registers close at 9am, Office team check attendance register on SIMS  
Check all year groups for non-attendance. Where the attendance is unexplained/not marked in the register, this is followed up immediately by checking the absence information / checking sports fixture and activity/visit lists, checking with the form teacher /Learning Support Assistant; checking for any absence request missing information.
- Where an absence is explained, office staff will enter the reason code into the register, and update the register.
- Where the absence remains unexplained, the office staff will call the parents of the pupil.

- Where no response has been received from the parents or the pupil is inexplicably missing by **09.30**, office staff will raise a concern with the Form Teacher and a member of the SLT and will proceed to call other named contacts on the pupil's SIMS record.
- At **09.45** if no response has been received, office staff will liaise with the Headteacher before calling the police and possibly Social Care.

### 3. Missing Child Procedure

#### 3.1. If it is believed that a child has gone missing from the school premises:

- All children will be taken to a point of safety for a register to be taken to establish which child is missing and to inform all staff that a child is missing.
- A check will be made with the school office to establish whether the child has another commitment e.g. music lesson, school trip or an appointment outside of school and inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Headteacher of the situation.
- All available staff will search the grounds and rooms to ensure the child has not hidden or been locked in anywhere within the school. This should take no longer than 10 minutes.
- The school office will contact the police.
- The Headteacher or a member of the SLT will contact the parent to inform them of the action being taken (unless there are reasons connected with the child's welfare which indicate that this should not be done).
- This phone call will occur no less than 10 minutes after the child's absence was first noted.
- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable. Once resolved, the paperwork will be filed on the incident file and the pupil file.
- Once the emergency has been resolved, an internal investigation will take place and be documented.
- Measures will be put in place to mitigate a recurrence.

#### 3.2. In the event that a child goes missing when on a school trip, the following procedures will be followed:

It is the responsibility of the staff running the trip to ensure that a regular register is taken or head count is made, this will depend on the nature of the trip, the mode of transport used and the location of the trip. The off-site location of all EYFS children is known by the parent at all times and supervision meets and exceeds regulatory teacher:pupil ratios.

Staff must always take a mobile phone as well as a first aid kit. The amount of equipment will vary and be consistent with the venue and the number of children as well as the length of time they will be out. It may be necessary, for example, to take a supply of water and snacks.

If a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not in attendance and responsible for their own child, this procedure is followed:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- One member of staff searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.

- The person in charge is informed, if he/she is not on the outing in the immediate vicinity and makes his/her way to the venue to aid the search and be the point of contact for the police as well as support staff.
- The Headteacher is informed and the incident procedure is instigated.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Headteacher contacts the child's parent who makes his/her way to the school or outing venue as agreed with the Headteacher.
- The staff contact the police using the mobile phone and report the child missing.
- Staff take the remaining children back to school.

### 3.3 The investigation

- The Headteacher carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all staff present at the time, or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member from the trip writes an incident report detailing the event:
  - Which staff/children were in the group or outing;
  - When the child was last seen in the group/outing;
  - What has taken place in the group/outing since then; and
  - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation all staff will co-operate fully.
- In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The issue is reported under RIDDOR and is recorded in the RIDDOR book; the local authority health and safety officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.

## 4. Uncollected Children Policy

Widford Lodge School is committed to safeguarding the welfare of its pupils; our policies and practices encompass the needs of all our children from Pre-School to Form 6 across all aspects of school life including out of school provision. It is the duty of all members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to play an active role in ensuring that each child's needs are met. Widford Lodge School has the highest regard for the safety of the children in our care – from the moment they arrive to the moment that they leave.

- At the end of the school day the children in the Pre-School up to Form 2 are handed over to their parent or nominated responsible adult. Forms 3 – 6 are met by their parents or a known responsible adult in the playground. There is always a member of staff in the playground. If a child is not collected at the expected time they will be taken to Late Stay where they will be supervised by a member of staff.
- The office will try to make contact with the parent, carer or designated adult and use any other emergency contact details available in order to try to find out why the child hasn't been collected and how long it is likely to be before they are collected.

- If the child has still not been collected by 5.30 pm and there has been no contact from the parent, carer or responsible adult it may be necessary to contact the local Social Care Department for advice.
- In the event of Social Care being called and responsibility for the child being passed to a child protection agency, the Headteacher will attempt to contact the parent, carer or designated adult once more and will leave a message if necessary. Furthermore, a note will be left on the front door of the school informing the parent, carer or designated adult of what has happened. The note will reassure them of their child's safety and instruct them to contact the local Social Care department.
- The child will remain in the care of the school until they are collected by the parent, carer or designated adult, or alternatively placed in the care of Social Care.
- Incidents of late collection will be recorded by the Headteacher and discussed with parents/carers at the earliest opportunity.

Please note that this has never happened at Widford Lodge Preparatory School and parents being late is usually due to unexpected circumstances.

This policy is reviewed annually and in the event of an incident involving a child going missing or not being collected.

## **5. Specific EYFS Security Measures**

### 5.1 Security Measures:

- Risk assessments (please see risk assessment file)
- General security
- Register
- Pre school time in and out sheet
- Procedure for absent, uncollected and lost children.
- Pre-School have a password system.
- Reception written permission/authorisation list
- Permission to take photographs.
- Special security measures – ie matrimonial / parental differences
- Staff

### 5.2 General Security:

- The main school front door and side gate leading to the playground are kept locked during the school day and the gate is only opened at drop-off and pick-up times, when a member of staff supervises it. Parents needing to obtain access out of these hours will need to ring the appropriate buzzer located outside the main front door. A member of office staff/preschool staff will then answer the entry phone and if the person is known to the staff or gives the relevant password they are given entry to the main school lobby. They will then need to walk up to the relevant room and ring the bell/knock on the door. The Pre-School door is kept locked at all times, unless there is a fire/fire drill, when the door will be left closed but unlocked.
- All Pre-School staff have a key to the Pre-School.

- The Pre-School has a back door leading out from the playroom onto a balcony from where a gate leads to our fire escape staircase into the playground. This exit's door handles are positioned above the reach of children.
- The Reception is surrounded by a fenced off secured play area with a 1m 30cm high fence.
- The Reception gate is kept closed and parents/staff/children are reminded to close the gate after themselves.

### 5.3 Register

All EYFS children are signed in on arrival.

If someone other than a parent is collecting a Pre-school child the password system is used (see below).

Reception children arriving before 8.30am are taken to Early Birds in the Pre School by the Pre School team in the autumn and spring terms. They are signed in and they will also be asked who will be collecting them and at what time, and if they will be going to Late Stay. In the summer term, Reception children sign in at their classroom on arrival and do not join clubs until the summer term.

### 5.4 Time in and out sheet

The Pre-school key workers may take their children on an activity (within the school grounds). A 'Time In and Out' sheet will be completed by the member of staff and attached to the staff diary. This states who is going, where and at what time.

### 5.5 Procedure for children who are absent, not collected or lost

#### **Absent children**

Parents are asked to inform the school if their child is absent for any reason. Any known absences such as holidays are then marked in the Pre-School diary or in the school register for Reception. For Reception children, the absence procedure detailed above in the main body of this policy would be followed.

- If we have not heard from the parent of an absent Pre School child/ren by 10.00am on the first day of their absence, we would telephone the parent at home to see where/how the child is and find out the reason for their absence.
- If the parent is unavailable we would leave a message asking them to contact the school.
- If the child/ren continue(s) to be absent without reason and we have not heard from the parent by 11am we would telephone other emergency numbers provided by the parent. Staff are aware of the importance of following up absence and would take prompt action, including telephoning the Police.

#### **In the event of a child not being collected:**

When confirming a child's attendance at school, the parents are sent an induction pack. This asks for home, mobile, work and emergency telephone numbers, a list of persons allowed to collect their child/ren and for Pre-School, an individual password.

- The Pre-School day finishes at 12pm, 3.10pm or 4.15pm. Reception finish at 3.15pm and have a late stay facility until 5.30pm. We have a 15 minutes' grace period to allow for traffic and other delays.

- After this grace period we would look up the child/ren's emergency numbers which are kept in the Pre-School/main school office. A member of staff would try and contact the child/ren's parents by phoning the numbers they have provided.
- If the parents are unable to be contacted, we would then try the other emergency numbers provided.
- We would then reassure the child until the point at which they were collected.
- In the unlikely event of us being unable to contact any person named on the child/ren's emergency list, we would first contact the Headteacher, and then the Proprietor. Following this we may contact Social Care. The child/ren would continue to be cared for by a member of staff.

### **Lost children**

The children within the Pre-School do not necessarily attend every day or all day. We keep attendance sheets displayed for the staff in several places within the Pre-School clearly showing which children are in on which days and which sessions. Pre-School children are signed in when they arrive and when they leave (with a time). Reception take the register in the morning and after lunch.

- In the unlikely event of a child/ren becoming lost or missing, our first step would be to check with all staff that the child/ren in question have not been picked up early and double check the daily attendance sheet and register.
- We would then ask the members of staff last with the child/ren what time they last saw them and where they were. A search of the premises would then be undertaken and all exit doors double checked.
- In the unlikely event of us being unable to locate the child/ren we would immediately inform the Headteacher, contact the parents and continue the search. If the child/ren had still not been found after all checks had been completed the police would be contacted immediately.
- The school's incident procedure would be followed and the incident documented and followed up.

### 5.6 Password System:

When a child joins the Pre-School, the parent is given a security form to complete including providing us with a password known to the staff and anyone authorised to collect their child.

- Parents are asked to let a member of staff know if somebody different to themselves is collecting their child and the name of the child/ren.
- Anyone other than the parent collecting a child/ren, will be asked for the child/ren's password before allowing them entry to the Pre-School.
- If the person is unaware of the password, we would immediately contact the parent to ask for authorisation to let their child leave before allowing the person concerned entry to the Pre-School.
- If the parent cannot be contacted then the child will remain in the Pre-School until such time as we can contact them.