



## Seedlings Nursery & Pre-School

at

**Great Horwood Church of England School**

### **Missing Child Policy**

**September 2025**

**This policy was adopted on: 21 January 2026**

**Date of next review: January 2027**

**Signed:**

*P.M. Shaw*

## Our Vision

**'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.' John 15:5**

At Great Horwood Church of England School, the academic, emotional and spiritual well-being of all individuals is at the heart of all that we do; where everyone is valued. We are a safe, welcoming school within the heart of the village community that aims to provide all our children and adults with the learning opportunities to flourish, be healthy, grow in resilience and realise their full potential; being fully equipped and prepared for a successful future.

Inspired by Christian faith and rooted in the teachings, values and spirituality of the Church of England we embrace our core values of love, perseverance and respect where all individuals learn to value themselves and others.

We are committed to setting high standards of achievement within a caring and nurturing learning environment. We aim to provide opportunities for children to develop a curiosity of learning, a thirst for knowledge through play, and an exploration of the world around them.

## Missing Child Policy

### 1. Policy statement

Seedlings Nursery & Pre-School always prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children, on and off the premises. We maintain robust supervision, registration, entrance/exit and outings procedures to prevent children going missing. If a child is unaccounted for, staff will follow this policy without delay, adhering to statutory requirements under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).

### 2. Legal and statutory framework

- EYFS statutory framework (safeguarding and welfare requirements, supervision, ratios, information and records). Providers must meet EYFS requirements and have due regard to procedures that keep children safe and accounted for.
- KCSIE (all staff responsibilities for safeguarding, immediate action where a child is missing or at risk, information sharing, and leadership oversight via DSL).

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all Seedlings staff, students/trainees, volunteers, and visitors during nursery hours, and off-site visits involving children aged 2–4 years. It covers missing child scenarios on the premises and during outings.

### 4. Definitions

- Missing child: A child whose whereabouts are unknown and cannot be accounted for after a reasonable search and immediate checks.
- Looked-after children and SEND: Considered higher risk, requiring proportionate arrangements (deployment and supervision) in line with EYFS.

## 5. Preventative controls (everyday practice)

### 5.1 Registration and headcounts

- Arrival/Departure registers kept up to date and recorded on Family;
- Real-time attendance maintained in each room;
- Transfer headcounts when children move areas (indoors/outdoors).
- Named key person ensures awareness of each child's plan, risks, and needs.

### 5.2 Supervision and ratios

- Minimum ratios adhered to and exceeded where risk warrants it:
  - 2-year-olds: 1:5
  - 3–4-year-olds: 1:8 (or up to 1:13 where a person with QTS/EYPS/EYTS is present). Staff must be suitably qualified and deployed to maintain sight/hearing supervision appropriate to activity and environment.

### 5.3 Entrances/exits and physical security

- Controlled access; secure perimeter; regular door/gate checks; child-proof latches; visitor sign-in/out at the main school.

### 5.4 Outings

- Off site and local area visits are reported on Evolve.
- Written Event Specific Plan (risk assessment) including: route, venue layout, toilets, water, roads, crowd density, emergency rendezvous points; named lead, staff deployment, headcounts at key points, high-visibility identifiers, contact lists, and first aid.

### 5.5 Information and records

- Up-to-date emergency contact details for at least two contacts; clear attendance/absence procedures; incident/near-miss reporting retained and accessible.

## 6. Immediate procedure: Child missing on the premises

1. Raise the alarm: The discovering staff member alerts the Room Lead and/or Seedlings Manager; stop transitions; initiate a headcount in the immediate group to confirm other children are accounted for.
2. Rapid search (max 5 minutes):
  - a. Seedlings Leader coordinates a systematic search: rooms, toilets, cupboards, behind furniture, garden/outdoor areas, perimeter, car park entrances and in the main school building.
  - b. Doors and gates are checked
3. Escalate if not found swiftly (within 5–10 minutes):
  - a. Inform the Headteacher and school office administrator
  - b. Call 999 and report a missing child; provide description, clothing, last known location/time, risks (medical/SEND).
  - c. Call parents/carers to inform and to confirm any relevant details
4. Secure supervision: Allocate staff to remain with the group; keep children calm; do not discuss details in front of them.

5. Notify DSL (or deputy DSL) immediately to manage safeguarding actions, information sharing, and liaison with police/LA as required.

## **7. Immediate procedure: Child missing on an outing**

1. Stop and count: Group gathers; designated adults keep children within sight and hearing; conduct headcount; one staff member undertakes a quick visual sweep of the immediate vicinity.
2. Escalate without delay:
  - a. Lead practitioner contacts police (999) and provides details/venue.
  - b. Contact parents/carers to inform and agree next steps.
3. Manage the group: If advised by police or risk assessment, return remaining children to the setting with sufficient staff, while Leader (or designated staff) remains at venue to liaise.
4. Inform DSL for safeguarding coordination and records.

## **8. Post-incident actions and investigation**

### **8.1 Immediate safeguarding and welfare**

- Reassure the child and group; support parents/carers sensitively; consider trauma-informed communication.
- DSL to assess whether concerns meet threshold for LADO consultation or Children's Social Care referral.

### **8.2 Internal investigation (led by Headteacher/Setting Leader and DSL)**

- Obtain factual written statements from all involved staff (time/date, location, supervision arrangements, last seen point, actions taken, outcome).
- Review supervision, deployment, environment/security controls, and outing risk assessment; identify root causes and corrective actions.

### **8.3 Notifications**

- Consider whether the incident should be reported to Ofsted: Submit a serious incident/significant event notification within 14 days via the online service; do so as soon as possible in practice.
- Seedlings Nursery is exempt from registering as a childcare provider with Ofsted. [Registering and inspecting school-based provision - GOV.UK](#)
- Insurer: Inform the insurance provider in line with policy conditions.
- Local safeguarding partners: Follow local procedures where required (DSL to lead).

### **8.4 Records**

- Complete an incident report (facts only) on Smartlog, attach risk assessments, registers, and post-incident reviews; store securely, accessible for inspection.

### **8.5 Staff support and management**

- Provide support/counselling if needed; maintain fairness and confidentiality; address any disciplinary matters per HR procedures and safeguarding standards.

## 9. Communications

- With parents/carers: Clear, honest updates during and after the incident; offer meeting with Setting Leader/DSL to explain findings, actions, and support..
- With media: No staff member speaks to the press. Refer all enquiries to the Headteacher/Setting Leader; take advice before any external statement.

## 10. Links to other policies and guidance

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy (DSL role, referrals, LADO, information sharing).
- Attendance/Child Absences Procedure (follow-up on prolonged or unexplained absence; additional emergency contacts).
- Outings/Educational Visits Policy (risk assessment; supervision and ratios).
- Supervision and Staff:Child Ratios Policy (deployment, qualifications, cover).
- Health & Safety, Security and Access, Whistleblowing (EYFS strengthened safeguarding requirements).

## 11. Roles and responsibilities (Seedlings)

- Headteacher/Seedlings Manager: Overall responsibility; ensures EYFS compliance, resourcing, staff training, investigation oversight, Ofsted notification.
- DSL/Deputy DSL: Leads safeguarding response; coordinates with police/LA/LADO; ensures accurate records and information sharing.
- Room Leads/Key Persons: Maintain registers/headcounts; supervise children; initiate immediate search and alert procedures.
- All Staff/Volunteers: Know and follow this policy; maintain vigilant supervision; escalate concerns immediately.

## 12. Training and awareness

All staff (including students/trainees included in ratios) receive induction and regular refresher on missing child procedures, supervision standards, outings risk assessment. Training is recorded and reviewed annually.

## 13. Monitoring and review

- After any incident/near miss, the Headteacher, Seedlings Manager and DSL will review controls and update risk assessments and procedures.
- Formal review: Annually (or sooner following guidance updates) by the Headteacher/DSL; approved by leadership and shared with staff and parents.

## Appendix A: Quick-reference flow (on premises)

1. **Alert** → Room Lead/Setting Leader
2. **Headcount & immediate search (≤5 minutes)**
3. **Not found?** → Call 999, call parents, inform DSL
4. **Supervise remaining children**
5. **Record, investigate**

## **Appendix B: Quick-reference flow (outing)**

- 1. Stop, gather, headcount**
- 2. Quick local sweep**
- 3. Call 999, inform parents, DSL**
- 4. Return group if advised; remain to liaise**
- 5. Record, investigate**