

## Delivery & Collection of Children and Lost Children

All parents must complete an admission form before their child starts at The Ark giving two/three emergency contact telephone numbers and the names of people allowed to collect their child/ren, which must be kept up to date. Parents/carers must sign the register on delivery and collection every time and must notify the staff if someone different is to collect. Staff will ask all unknown people to verify their identity before allowing children to leave with them. Children will not be allowed to leave the premises with anyone who is unauthorised. The parent will be contacted by telephone if any unauthorised person attempts to collect a child and if any aggression is displayed on refusal by The Ark staff to release a child, the police will be called.

If it is deemed unsafe for a child(ren) to be taken away from The Ark (e.g. parent/carer under the influence of alcohol, unstable state of mind), then contact will, in the first instance, be made with the next person on the contact list. If this is unsuccessful, contact will be made with the police and social services. (See also Parental Agreement re Late Collection fees)

### **Relationship breakdown of parents / guardians**

The Ark has a clearly defined procedure, which is followed in the event of the relationship between a child's parents or guardians breaking down.

- Unless there is a court order, of which The Ark must have a copy, preventing one parent's contact to the child we are unable to legally deny access.
- Should a parent of concern ask to access their child, we will contact the first parent to come to The Ark as soon as possible, explaining this procedure and asking the second parent to wait.
- If there is concern about violent or aggressive behaviour from either parent we will seek advice from the police and follow their recommendations.

It is essential that children be collected promptly after each session. In the unlikely event that a parent is more than a quarter of an hour late, all contact telephone numbers will be tried. In the case of no response the Manager may contact Social Services' Out of Hours Service (01202 228866).

Updating information on the registration form: it is essential this important information is kept up to date, (as stated in the Parental Agreement).

Therefore Parents must inform The Ark in writing immediately of any important changes to:-  
• domestic arrangements which could affect collection of the child e.g. a court order in respect of the residence of the child or who the child is able to have contact with.  
• parental responsibility agreement  
• home/ work addresses and telephone numbers

## Lost Children Policy

### **Lost Children Procedure**

Children's safety is The Ark's highest priority, both on and off the premises. The security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, The Ark's missing child procedure is followed.

## **Procedures:**

### **Child going missing from the premises**

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the manager will be informed.
- The register will be checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden.
- Doors and gates will be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, the manager will call the police immediately and report the child as missing. If it is suspected that the child may have been abducted, the police are informed of this.
- The parent(s) are then called and informed.
- A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing will be given to the police.
- The manager will talk to staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and will record this.
- The manager will contact the chairperson to report the incident. The chairperson will carry out an investigation as soon as possible.

### **Child going missing on an outing**

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff members on the outing ask children to stand with their designated carer and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member will search the immediate vicinity, but will not search beyond that.
- The senior staff member on the outing will contact the police to report that child as missing.
- The manager will be contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident will be recorded.
- The manager will contact the parent(s).
- The Ark's staff will take the remaining children back to the mini bus or setting as soon as possible.
- Depending on the advice of the police, the senior member of staff, or the manager where applicable, should remain at the site where the child went missing and wait for the police to arrive.
- A recent photo and a description of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The manager will contact the chairperson to report the incident. The chairperson will carry out an investigation as soon as possible.
- Staff will keep calm and will not let the other children become anxious or worried.

## **The investigation**

- Ofsted will be informed as soon as possible and kept up-to-date with the investigation.
- The chairperson will carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all the staff and volunteers who were present.
- The manager, together with a representative of our committee will speak with the parent(s) and will explain the process of the investigation.
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with The Ark and/or Ofsted.  
Each member of staff present will write an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the incident.
  - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
  - Which staff/children were in The Ark, or on the outing, and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in The Ark, or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
  - What has taken place in The Ark or on the outing since the child went missing.
- The report will be counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
- A conclusion will be 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 and parents. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted will be advised.
- The insurance provider will be informed.

## **Managing people**

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- Staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer 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. The manager will ensure that any staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the manager and the other should be the chairperson or another representative of the management committee. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff will not be tolerated, and the police will be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be 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.

- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- The Ark's staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press and The Ark's confidentiality policy must be adhered to at all times.