Little Acorns Montessori

Ascot | Bracknell | Crowthorne

Missing / Lost Child Policy

1. Document Control

Version	Date	Review Date	Author
1.0	June 2026	June 2027	Jonathan Duffy - Director

> *This policy must be reviewed annually or immediately following any relevant incident, change in legislation, or updated statutory guidance.*

2. Policy Statement

Little Acorns Montessori is committed to the safety and welfare of every child in its care. The security of children on the premises, during outings, and during drop-off and collection is our highest priority. Every member of staff shares collective responsibility for ensuring no child is ever left unsupervised or unaccounted for.

In the unlikely event that a child cannot be located, this policy sets out the immediate actions staff must take. Our procedures are designed to ensure a prompt, calm, and co-ordinated response that prioritises the child's safety and meets all statutory obligations.

3. Statutory Framework and Related Guidance

This policy fulfils the obligations of Little Acorns Montessori under the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2025, effective 1 September 2025) — Section 3: Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements, in particular paragraphs relating to: safeguarding policies and procedures; safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment; and the duty to notify Ofsted of serious incidents.
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE, 2026) — statutory guidance on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, information-sharing obligations, and the shared responsibility of all organisations working with children.
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 — the overarching legislative framework for child welfare and protection in England.
- Childcare Act 2006 — Section 40 requires all registered early years providers to comply with EYFS welfare requirements; Section 39(1)(b) gives legal force to safeguarding and welfare regulations.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage (Welfare Requirements) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- Annex C — Criteria for Effective Safeguarding Training (EYFS Statutory Framework, 2025) — sets out the mandatory content and criteria that all safeguarding training for

early years practitioners must meet. All staff at Little Acorns Montessori must complete training meeting the Annex C criteria, renewed every two years.

- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) — relevant where the incident results in a dangerous occurrence reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) — governing the recording and storage of incident information.

> *This policy must be read alongside Little Acorns Montessori's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Outings and Trips Policy, Arrivals and Departures Policy, and Attendance Policy.*

4. Prevention — Reducing the Risk

The best safeguard against a child going missing is rigorous daily practice. Staff must:

- Conduct a register check at the start of every session and ensure that children are signed in and out accurately. .
- Maintain EYFS-compliant staff-to-child ratios at all times.
- Ensure all external doors and gates are secured at all times during session hours and are checked as part of the daily opening procedure.
- Challenge any unfamiliar adult on the premises politely but immediately.
- Operate a robust and documented password-protected collection system for all children.
- Brief all supply, bank, and new staff on exit and security procedures before they begin a session.
- Conduct and record an annual premises security risk assessment, reviewed following any incident.
- Ensure that a minimum of two emergency contact numbers are held for every child, and where possible more than two, in line with the EYFS 2025 requirement. Emergency contact details must be verified as current at least termly.
- Monitor attendance patterns in line with the setting's Attendance Policy. Unexplained absences or patterns of concern must be escalated promptly and, where a child cannot be contacted, treated as a potential safeguarding matter in line with EYFS 2025 requirements. This policy must be read alongside the setting's Attendance Policy.

5. Key Contacts

The following contacts must be known to all staff and clearly displayed in the staff room:

Role	Name	Contact
Designated Officer / Nominated Individual	Jonathan Duffy	All Campuses
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Elaine Eastham (Manager)	Ascot Campus

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Agata Payne (Manager)	Bracknell Campus
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Emma Gray (Manager)	Crowthorne Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Jessica McGrath/Katy Cooley (Deputy Manager)	Ascot Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Joanne Broughton (Deputy Manager)	Bracknell Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Martine Loveridge (Deputy Manager)	Crowthorne Campus
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	Kira King	Crowthorne Campus (in the absence of Emma and Martine)
Bracknell Forest Children's Social Care (MASH)	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	01344 352005
Bracknell Forest Children's Social Care — Out of Hours	Emergency Duty Team	01344 351999
Thames Valley Police	Emergency	999
Thames Valley Police	Non-emergency	101
Ofsted	Serious incident notification	0300 123 1231
Insurance Provider	Morton Michel	PGP2022083

6. Procedures — Child Missing on the Premises

If a child is noticed to be missing during a session on-site, staff must follow these steps in order:

Step 1 — Immediate Alert

- The member of staff who first notices the child is missing must immediately alert the Nursery Manager or, in their absence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Staff must not conduct a solo search or leave other children unsupervised.

Step 2 — Secure the Setting

- The Manager or DSL must immediately instruct all external exits to be secured and supervised.
- A register check must be conducted at once to confirm the identity of the missing child and to verify no other child is unaccounted for.
- All doors, gates, and access points must be physically checked to identify any potential security breach.

Step 3 — Thorough Search

- A systematic, thorough search of all rooms, outdoor areas, toilets, storage spaces, and outbuildings must begin immediately, led by the Manager or DSL.
- Sufficient staff must remain with the remaining children throughout; ratios must not be compromised.

- The time the child was last seen, their last known location, and who last supervised them must be established and recorded immediately.

Step 4 — Contact Police and Parents

- If the child is not located within a few minutes of the search commencing, the Manager or DSL must call 999 immediately.
- The police must be given: the child's full name, date of birth, physical description, clothing, last known location, and time last seen.
- The child's parent or primary carer must be contacted without delay.
- Staff must not speculate about what has happened when speaking with the parent and must remain calm and factual.

Step 5 — Notify Senior Leadership and Owner

- The Manager or DSL must immediately notify the owner/director/chair of the management committee.
- The owner/director must attend the setting as soon as practicable to support the investigation.

Step 6 — Co-operate with Authorities

- Staff must co-operate fully with the police at all times, including preserving the scene and providing statements as requested.
- Staff must not discuss the incident on social media or with the press. All media enquiries must be directed to the owner/director.

7. Procedures — Child Missing on an Outing

When children attend an off-site outing, additional procedures apply. Before any outing, the setting must complete a risk assessment and ensure staff carry emergency contact details and a list of all children attending.

Step 1 — Immediate Response

- As soon as a child is noticed to be missing, the supervising member of staff must alert all other staff on the outing immediately.
- All remaining children must be asked to stand with their designated key person or assigned adult and must not be left unattended.
- A full headcount must be conducted immediately to confirm no other child is unaccounted for.

Step 2 — Search the Immediate Area

- One member of staff should search the immediate vicinity. Staff must not extend the search beyond a safe distance or leave the group.
- If the outing is at an indoor venue (e.g. a farm park, soft play centre, or museum), venue security staff must be contacted immediately and asked to implement their missing child procedure.

Step 3 — Notify Manager and Police

- The Manager or DSL must be contacted immediately by mobile phone, whether or not they are present on the outing.
- If the child is not located within a few minutes, the manager must call 999. If the manager is not reachable, the most senior member of staff on the outing must call 999 directly.
- The incident must be recorded in writing at the point it occurs.

Step 4 — Contact Parents

- The Manager or DSL must contact the child's parent or primary carer as soon as the police have been called.

Step 5 — Return Remaining Children

- The remaining children must be returned to the nursery as soon as is safely practicable, with sufficient supervising adults.
- At least one senior member of staff should remain at the venue until the police have arrived and have confirmed they are taking responsibility for the search, or until the child has been found.

Step 6 — Notify Senior Leadership

- The Manager or DSL must notify the owner/director/chair immediately.
- The owner/director must attend the setting to lead the investigation upon return.

IMPORTANT: If a child cannot be found immediately, Police and Ofsted must be notified without delay.

8. Investigation Procedure

Once immediate child safety has been addressed, a full internal investigation must be carried out. The investigation is the responsibility of the owner/director in partnership with the management committee (where applicable).

8.1 Immediate Actions

- All staff involved must be asked to write their own factual account of events as soon as possible and before they discuss the incident with colleagues. Statements must be signed, dated, and timed.
- The Manager or DSL must take written statements from all staff present in the room or on the outing.
- The owner/director must speak with the parents privately, with a management representative present.
- Staff must remain calm and must not apportion blame. The Manager or DSL must ensure all children present remain settled and are not distressed.

8.2 Incident Report — Required Content

The DSL or key person must complete a formal incident report. The report must include:

- The full name, date of birth, and key person of the child concerned.
- The date, time, and location of the incident.
- The names of all staff present and the designated responsible staff member.
- The time and circumstances the child was last seen and by whom.
- A chronological record of all actions taken, including exact times.
- Details of all contacts made (police, parent, Ofsted, Local Safeguarding Partners) and when.
- The time and manner in which the child was found or returned (if applicable).
- A conclusion on how the breach of security occurred.
- Any immediate actions taken to prevent recurrence.

9. Statutory Reporting Obligations

Staff must share relevant information with statutory agencies promptly and without undue delay. In line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2026), the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent information sharing where the purpose is to keep a child safe. Concerns about data protection must not be used as a reason to delay or withhold information from the police, MASH, or other safeguarding partners.

The following notifications are mandatory and must not be delayed:

Police (999): Must be called if the child cannot be located within a few minutes of the search commencing.

Parents / Carers: Must be notified as soon as the police have been called, or sooner if it is safe to do so.

Ofsted: Must be notified of the incident as soon as reasonably practicable and in any case no later than 14 days after the incident occurs. Telephone: 0300 123 1231. Notification can also be made using the online Notification of Early Years Provision Incident form on the Ofsted website. A written summary must follow. Failure to notify Ofsted of a significant event without reasonable excuse constitutes a breach of the EYFS statutory framework.

Bracknell Forest Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): The DSL must consider whether the circumstances give rise to a child protection concern and must contact the MASH (01344 352005) if this is the case or if there is any doubt. The MASH can also be contacted by email at mash@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

Local Safeguarding Partners (LSP): The owner/director must consider whether the incident meets the threshold for a referral to the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB) in accordance with local procedures.

RIDDOR (HSE): If the incident constitutes a dangerous occurrence as defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013, a report must be made to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The HSE RIDDOR online reporting portal should be used.

Insurance Provider: The nursery's insurance provider must be informed as soon as is practicable.

Disciplinary action: If disciplinary action is initiated as a result of the incident, Ofsted must be kept informed throughout the process.

10. Recording and Record Retention

- All incident reports and written staff statements must be stored securely in the nursery's confidential safeguarding files.
- Records must be retained for a minimum of three years from the date of the incident, or until the child reaches the age of 25 (whichever is later), in accordance with data retention guidance for children's services.
- Records must be stored in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Access is restricted to the DSL, Manager, owner/director, and (where required) relevant external agencies.
- Digital records must be password-protected. Paper records must be held in a locked cabinet.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 All Staff

- Must know and follow this policy.
- Must maintain vigilance and report any security concern to the Manager or DSL immediately.
- Must follow the step-by-step procedures set out in this policy without deviation.
- Must not discuss the incident externally, including on social media.
- Must ensure children are signed in and signed out by an authorised adult at every session.

11.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Leads the response on-site and co-ordinates staff actions during an incident.
- Is responsible for contacting the police, parents, Ofsted, and the MASH as appropriate.
- Oversees the collection of written statements and completes or supervises completion of the incident report.
- Attends any subsequent investigation meetings and co-operates with external agencies.

11.3 Deputy DSL

- Assumes the responsibilities of the DSL in their absence.
- Supports the DSL during incidents where their capacity is stretched.

11.4 Nursery Manager

- Assumes operational responsibility for implementing this policy on a day-to-day basis.
- Ensures all staff receive induction training on this policy and that regular refresher training is conducted.
- Maintains the premises security risk assessment and ensures all access controls are functional.

11.5 Owner / Director

- Attends the setting as soon as practicable following a serious incident.
- Leads the formal investigation and takes overall responsibility for the outcome.
- Notifies Ofsted, the LSP, and the insurance provider as required.
- Reviews and updates this policy following any incident.

11.6 Parents and Carers

- Must help ensure their child is signed in and signed out by an authorised adult at every session.
- Must keep the nursery updated with current emergency contact numbers at all times.
- Must inform the nursery of any change to collection arrangements in advance and in writing.
- Must co-operate with any police or children's social care investigation as requested.

12. Staff Training

- All new staff must receive induction training on this policy before they work unsupervised with children.
- All staff must receive refresher training on this policy at least annually, or following any incident or relevant change in legislation.
- All staff must complete safeguarding training that meets the criteria set out in Annex C of the EYFS Statutory Framework (2025). This training must be renewed every two years as a mandatory minimum. The DSL and Deputy DSL must, in addition, complete the enhanced DSL-specific training set out in Annex C Part 3. The setting must consider whether any staff require annual refresher training within any two-year period, particularly following a safeguarding incident or change in local procedures.
- Training records must be kept in each staff member's personnel file.
- The setting's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy must detail how safeguarding training is delivered and how practitioners are supported to put their training into practice, in line with EYFS 2025 requirements.

13. Post-Incident Review and Policy Update

- Following any incident in which a child goes missing, the owner/director must conduct a formal post-incident review within five working days of the conclusion of any police investigation or within five working days of the incident, whichever is sooner.
- The review must consider: what happened, what the root cause was, whether procedures were followed, whether procedures need to be updated, and what additional measures are required.
- The findings of the review must be recorded in writing and shared with all staff.
- This policy must be updated where any gap or deficiency in the procedure is identified.

14. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Nursery Manager and DSL, or sooner in the event of:

- Any incident in which a child goes missing or cannot be immediately accounted for.

- Any change to relevant legislation, statutory guidance, or Ofsted inspection frameworks.
- Any guidance from the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Board (BFSB).
- Publication of a new edition of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* or any other relevant statutory guidance.

Review is recorded in the Document Control table (Section 1). Staff are informed of any changes to this policy and asked to sign to confirm they have read and understood the updated version.

15. Policy Sign Off

Policy Author	Jonathan Duffy

Date	June 2026