

DOTTIE TOTS NURSERY SCHOOL

Missing Child Policy and Procedure



Document reference	DT-P-01.5
Document type	Policy and procedure
Revision	A – September 2026
Effective date	24 September 2026
Owner / approver	Leadership and Management Team
Next review	12 months after issue, or sooner following a relevant change

1. Purpose and immediate response

This procedure applies when a child in our care cannot be accounted for on the premises, in a shared area, during a transition or while on an outing. An unexplained absence before the child arrives is managed under DT-P-01.9 Attendance and Absence. Parents and carers are given details of this procedure and can request a copy.

Treat a missing child as an immediate emergency. Alert the Nursery Manager or the senior person in charge and initiate a headcount and search at once. If the child may have left the safe area, is exposed to danger, may have been taken, or is not found immediately, call 999 without waiting for a fixed search period. Another adult continues the search while the caller stays available to police.

2. At the setting

The senior person allocates adults to check all rooms, toilets, sleep spaces, gardens, exits and adjoining areas, while keeping all other children supervised and ratios safe. Check the register, recent handovers and authorised collections; secure exits without obstructing emergency access.

Give police the child's name, description, clothing, last known location and time, relevant health or additional needs, and the site address. Preserve CCTV and entry records if available. Do not delay the call to assemble complete details. Tell the parent or carer promptly, coordinating with police if they advise that contact could affect an active investigation.

3. On an outing or off site

Stop the group, count every child and move the remaining children to a safe supervised position. Alert the venue or transport operator and the Nursery Manager. Allocate a search of the immediate area only where supervision remains safe. Call 999 immediately if the child may have left the supervised area or there is any risk; do not assume the venue has called.

Give police the route, last confirmed sighting, description and any relevant hazards. The setting manager arranges support, parent contact and supervision for children at the setting and on the outing. No adult leaves the remaining children without safe cover.

4. Escalation and notification

Inform the setting DSL and the Company Director / DSO immediately. If harm or a safeguarding concern is suspected, contact children's social care in line with DT-P-01.1; a police call does not replace that referral. For Hampshire referrals, call 0300 555 1384 in office hours or 0300 555 1373 out of hours. Professionals with an urgent child protection enquiry can call 01329 225379. Do not delay calling 999. Follow DT-PR-01.1B to notify Ofsted as soon as reasonably possible and within 14 days when a child leaves the setting or is missing for any period.

When the child is found, check their health and wellbeing, seek medical help if needed, tell police if called, update parents, and arrange a safe handover. Account for all other children. Keep the incident open until the child is confirmed safe, police advice has been followed and the required notification and records are completed.

5. Records, review and prevention

Record times, last sighting, headcounts, search locations, calls, advice, decisions, child outcome, parent communication and staff accounts. Preserve evidence securely, without speculation or discussion in front of children. The manager and DSO review entry/exit, outings, supervision and risk controls; record corrective actions, staff briefing and closure. Follow allegations and LADO procedures if adult conduct is implicated.

6. Related documents and approval checks

DT-P-01.1 Child Protection and Safeguarding; DT-P-01.9 Attendance and Absence; DT-PR-01.1B Ofsted Notifications and Significant Events; outings, premises/security and incident records. EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2026: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Appendix 1 — Staff acknowledgement

I confirm that I have read and understood DT-P-01.5 and will follow its reporting, safeguarding, recording and escalation requirements.

Name	Role	Signature	Date