

Missing Child Procedure

Coldstream ELC

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Date: September 2024

Review Dates: January 2026

Our policy aligns with current national guidance, Scottish Borders Council (SBC) policy, and Care Inspectorate expectations, including SIMOA (Scottish Incident Management of Out-of-Area Children) best practice.

Aim

To ensure all children are **kept safe at all times** and that staff understand the **immediate and structured response** if a child goes missing from ELC.

SIMOA posters are displayed in the cloakroom as a visual reminder for staff.

General Principles

1. **Gates and Boundaries:**
 - All staff are responsible for ensuring gates and external doors are **closed and secure** after drop-off.
 2. **Adult-to-Child Ratios:**
 - Ratios must **always be maintained**.
 - Staff **must not leave the room unsupervised** to search for a missing child.
 3. **Preparedness:**
 - Staff should be familiar with the ELC layout, emergency exits, and local surroundings.
 - Children should be counted at **regular intervals**, especially during transitions, outdoor play, and trips.
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Missing Child Procedure

Step 1 – Notification

- If a child is reported missing, **inform the Headteacher immediately**.
- Ensure that staff remain calm and maintain supervision of other children.

Step 2 – Initial Search

- Conduct a **quick, initial check** of the immediate area (classroom, toilets, outdoor space).

- This initial search should be brief and not leave other children unsupervised.

Step 3 – Informing Authorities

- **Headteacher** will contact the **Police** if it is confirmed that a child is missing.
- Once Police are contacted, they usually **take over the search**.

Step 4 – Contacting Parents/Carers

- Parents should be contacted by the Headteacher **once internal and immediate outdoor searches are unsuccessful**.
- Keep communication clear, factual, and calm.

Step 5 – Coordinating the Response

- The Headteacher remains in the **School Office**, coordinating the response.
- Available staff gather to **assist with wider search and information gathering**.

Step 6 – Searching the Building and Grounds

- Each area must be checked **at least twice**, including:
 - Classrooms and cupboards
 - Toilets
 - Outdoor play spaces
- Staff should **report any findings immediately** to the Headteacher.

Step 7 – Widening the Search

- If the child is not found, **extend the search to the surrounding area** while maintaining ratios for remaining children.
- Only staff who can safely supervise the ELC group should leave to assist.

Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher:

- Coordinates the response and search
- Informs parents and Police
- Records all relevant details
- Reports incident to the Care Inspectorate

Early Years Officer (EYO):

- Provides relevant information about the child
- Assists in coordinating staff for the search
- Supports parents during and after the incident

Other Staff Members:

- Remain vigilant for any information
 - Support the search while **maintaining ratios**
 - Ensure remaining children are safe and supervised
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Recording Details

- All information about the incident must be **recorded immediately** and include:
 - Child's name and age
 - Time child was last seen
 - Staff involved in initial search
 - Steps taken to locate the child
 - Police and parent contact details
 - Outcome of incident
 - This record will be stored securely in line with **SBC policy and Data Protection regulations**.
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Post-Incident Review

- After the child is found, a **full review** will be conducted to:
 - Identify how the incident occurred
 - Assess if gates, locks, supervision, or procedures need updating
 - Update staff training if needed
 - **Care Inspectorate** will be informed of the incident following standard reporting procedures.
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Key Principles

- **Stay calm, act quickly, and maintain child safety** at all times.
- **Do not leave children unsupervised** to search.
- **Follow the structured procedure:** notify Headteacher → initial search → contact authorities → widen search → record and review.

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