

Attendance, Unexplained Absence and Missing Children Policy

Little Lanes Out of School Club

Version	Review	Applies to
October 2026	Within 12 months of adoption	All staff and volunteers

Our commitment

Little Lanes accounts for every child expected at a booked session and acts promptly when a child does not arrive or cannot be located. This policy covers attendance, school handover and children missing during a session. The Club operates on the school site and does not take children on outings.

What parents and carers must do

- Phone or text Cheri directly on 07950 875097 before the booked session if their child will not attend, including when the child is off ill. Give the child's name, session date and reason for absence.
- If collecting directly from the classroom instead of using Little Lanes, notify both Cheri and the school. Telling the school alone does not notify the Club.
- Report changes as soon as possible and keep parent and emergency contact details up to date. If an urgent text has not been acknowledged, phone Cheri to make sure it has been received.

Cheri will ensure absence and collection messages reach the staff responsible for the session before handover and that the register is updated. The session leader will check that messages have been received; staff will not assume an absence is authorised.

Preventing children from going missing

- Check the expected register and absence messages before each session. Record actual arrival, departure and the adult collecting each child.
- Confirm each child by name during school handover and check registers and head counts when moving between classrooms, the canteen, outdoor areas and other parts of the site.
- Maintain active supervision, clear staff responsibilities and safe access arrangements. Head counts support, but do not replace, checking individual children against the register.

When an expected child does not arrive

An unexplained absence is checked immediately. Until the child's whereabouts and safe care are confirmed, staff treat the child as unaccounted for and begin the missing-child response where necessary.

Immediate checks

- Inform the session leader immediately. Check the booking, register and messages received by Cheri for a notified absence or change of collection.
- For after-school sessions, check directly with the class teacher or school office whether the child attended school, remains with school staff or was collected. Establish who last saw the child, where and when.

Breakfast club

- For Reception/EYFS children who do not arrive as expected, staff will check absence messages received by Cheri, then telephone parents or carers if the absence remains unexplained. If they cannot be reached, staff will try emergency contacts and inform the DSL as needed.
- For older children, where there are no immediate welfare concerns, staff may email parents or carers first to ask them to confirm the child's whereabouts and non-attendance. Staff will check for a reply during the session and follow up by telephone if the absence remains unresolved, trying emergency contacts where necessary. An unanswered email does not close the absence check.
- Staff will record contact attempts, responses and action taken. Any indication that a child was already dropped off, is missing or may be unsafe will trigger immediate action under the missing-child procedure.

After-school club

- Staff will promptly check unexplained non-arrival with the teacher or school office and contact parents or carers where the child's safe whereabouts have not been confirmed. If parents cannot be reached, staff will try emergency contacts. These checks must not delay the missing-child response.
- Where the school confirms that the child is safely with school staff, arrange a clear handover. Where the child is confirmed safely with a parent or authorised carer, record the absence and remind the parent of the notification arrangements.

Prolonged absences and patterns of absence

The session leader will bring unexplained, prolonged or concerning patterns of absence to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will consider the child's booked attendance, known reasons, vulnerabilities and family circumstances, and decide what follow-up is needed. There is no fixed number of missed sessions before a safeguarding concern can be raised.

The Club will contact parents and, where necessary, emergency contacts and the school to establish the child's welfare. The DSL will seek advice or refer to Children's Social Care and/or request a police welfare check where concerns warrant it. Call 999 if there is immediate danger.

Ordinary explained absences, such as a notified illness or planned non-attendance, are recorded. They do not automatically mean a child is missing or require a safeguarding referral.

Responsibilities and communication

The session leader coordinates the immediate response and ensures the other children remain supervised. Cheri manages parent absence messages. A DSL oversees safeguarding follow-up. If a manager or DSL is unavailable, staff must take necessary protective action and contact emergency services or Children's Social Care directly without waiting for permission.

This policy is shared with parents and carers. Staff and volunteers read it at induction and after changes, and practise the response through briefings so that they understand their roles.

If a child is missing

Act immediately if a child disappears during a session or school handover, or an expected child remains unaccounted for after immediate checks. There is no fixed 10-minute waiting period before contacting the police.

1 Raise the alarm and protect the group

Tell the session leader and all relevant staff. Check the register and account for every other child. Allocate staff to supervise the group continuously and keep children calm. Do not leave children unattended or send children to search.

2 Contact the police without delay

Call 999 immediately if the missing child is young, vulnerable to harm or in immediate danger, or abduction is suspected. Do not wait for a search to finish or for parental permission. For a missing-person report that is not an emergency, contact police on 101 promptly and follow their advice.

3 Organise a coordinated search

While police contact is being made, available staff check the last known location, rooms, toilets, hiding places, outdoor areas and exits. Ask school staff for assistance. Search surrounding areas only where safe and without compromising supervision of the other children. Keep track of who is searching and where.

4 Inform parents and share information

Contact parents or carers promptly alongside the emergency response, unless police or safeguarding advice indicates this could increase risk. Give police the child's name, age, description, clothing, last known location and time, relevant medical or additional needs, and checks already made. Supply a recent photograph if available through authorised records.

5 Coordinate and record

The session leader or nominated adult remains the point of contact for police, school and parents. Follow police instructions, record the timeline and continue appropriate searches. Preserve relevant registers, messages and any available CCTV through the school. Do not publish the child's details or photograph on social media.

When the child is found

Check the child's welfare, provide reassurance and arrange first aid or medical help if needed. Inform police, parents, the school and searching staff promptly so the search can stop. Listen calmly to the child without blame or repeated questioning. Record any account in their own words and refer any safeguarding concern to a DSL.

Keep the other children supported and supervised throughout. The manager will arrange appropriate support for the child, family and staff and review what happened.

Recording and follow up

The session leader will ensure a factual record is completed in the Incident Log as soon as possible. It will include:

- the child's details, date, session and time the concern was identified; the last confirmed sighting and who was responsible for handover or supervision
- the checks, searches, calls and decisions made, with times and the names of those involved
- when, where and by whom the child was found or their safe whereabouts confirmed; the child's condition and any treatment
- contacts with parents, police, the school, Children's Social Care and Ofsted, including reference numbers, advice and follow-up actions.

Safeguarding concerns must also be reported directly to a DSL and recorded and stored in line with the Safeguarding Policy. Restricted safeguarding information must not be included in a routine parent-visible record. Staff must not delay reporting because they cannot access the recording system.

Ofsted and other agencies

The registered provider will notify Ofsted of a child leaving the setting or being missing from the Club's care for any period, and other notifiable significant events, as soon as reasonably possible and no later than 14 days. This does not depend on whether police or Children's Social Care attended. A routine non-arrival resolved by confirming the child is safely elsewhere is not automatically an Ofsted-notifiable incident.

The DSL will make any necessary child-protection referral. Concerns about staff conduct will be handled under the Safeguarding Policy, including LADO referral where appropriate. The manager will review the incident, identify causes and implement changes to supervision, handover, risk assessments or training.

Key contacts

Contact	Details
Cheri for absence notifications	07950 875097 — phone or text
Police	999 emergency / 101 non-emergency
Hertfordshire Children's Social Care	0300 123 4043, including urgent out-of-hours support
Ofsted	0300 123 1231; use the online serious incident reporting service for notifications

Policy approval and review

This policy replaces the previous Missing Child Procedure. It will be reviewed within 12 months of adoption, and sooner after an incident, a change in guidance or a change in Club or school arrangements.

Approved by: _Megan Garratt_____ Date adopted: _____October 2026_____

Signature: _____MG_____ Next review: ____October 2027_____

References and related policies

EYFS group and school-based framework (2026), paragraphs 3.11–3.12; Ofsted significant-event guidance and serious incident reporting; Police.uk missing-person guidance; Hertfordshire child-protection referral procedures. Read alongside Safeguarding, Arrivals and Departures, Uncollected Children and Emergency Evacuation.