



VIVA GYMNASTICS CLUB

Registered Charity Number: 1187339

www.viva-gymnastics.club

MISSING CHILD POLICY

Viva Gymnastics Club takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in their care do not leave a session unaccompanied unless this has been agreed with parents in writing beforehand and the child is at secondary school (primary school children will not be permitted to leave without an adult over the age of 18).

The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. Staff will undertake periodic head counts throughout sessions. In the event that a member of staff is unable to account for a child's whereabouts, the following action will be taken:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person will alert the Head Coach who must establish who last saw the missing child, where and when
- The remaining children will be gathered into one large group, with one/two adults, leaving the remaining adults to search around the gym/site
- Ensure all adults are aware of the situation
- A register will be taken to make sure that no other children have gone astray and the children will be asked if they have seen the child that is missing
- The doors will be checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out
- Seek the cooperation of other users in the building (at John Pounds)
- The Head Coach will carry out an investigation into the incident
- If the child cannot be found, the lead coach will contact the child's parents
- Call the child's parents to warn them that the child may be attempting to get home
- If the parents are unavailable, the setting will use the emergency contact number
- Ensure that, if the child lives within walking distance of the setting, one adult will make the journey on foot in order to catch up with or intercept the child if possible
- Remember that as soon as parents are informed, they will need advice and support

Informing the Police

- If the above steps do not locate the child, the police will be contacted to report the child missing

Informing Other People

We will ensure that:

- We make regular checks to ensure that if an incident of this sort does happen, we have all the necessary phone numbers at hand – correct, up to date and kept together
- The Head Coach will carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all our staff and volunteers who were present
- The Head Coach will speak with the parent(s) and explain the process of the investigation
- The parent(s) may also raise a complaint with Viva Gymnastics Club and British Gymnastics Safeguarding team
- 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. Hilsea viewing area, John Pounds toilets, etc
 - Which staff/children were in the premises and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child
 - When the child was last seen in the premises including the time it is estimated that the child went missing
 - What has taken place in the premises since the child went missing
 - The report is to be countersigned by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.

Viva Gymnastics Club

Unit 8B, Skill Centre, Limberline Spur, Hilsea, PO3 5LF

John Pounds Centre, 23 Queen Street, Portsmouth, PO1 3HN



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- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all our staff cooperate 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, British Gymnastics may be contacted by the parents or carers and including the Head Coach for legal advice
- The insurance provider is informed if required

Managing People

We accept that in such circumstances, powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry, threaten legal action or approach the local press. We will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

- Our staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child during their session. 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. Our Head Coach 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 our staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at all our staff.
- When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom should be our Head Coach and the other another adult member of staff. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against our staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children will also be sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. Our 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 that Viva Gymnastics Club is a safe place.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, our staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time.
- Our Head Coach, Welfare Officer and Trustees will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Our staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

Informing Other Parents

We recognise that other parents may need to be given brief, accurate information if we believe this is in the best interests of the club and parents.

We will ensure that this happens by:

- Calling a short meeting when parents/carers collect children, or
- Talking to parents/carers when they arrive at the next session, or
- Sending a note home with each child.

Updated 10.02.2025

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