

Missing Child Policy and Procedures

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy applies to all of the schools of the Foundation. It is applicable to all students including those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (**EYFS**) and boarding students. It has been drafted in compliance with Keeping Children Safe In Education (September 2023) (**KCSIE 2023**) and should be read in conjunction with the Foundation's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which is available on the Foundation's website.
- 1.2. This policy applies at all times when a student is, or is intended to be, in the care of the Foundation.
- 1.3. The Foundation expects to be notified by parents or legal guardians of all pupil absences either in advance of the day or at the start of the day they are absent (details of this procedure are in the parent handbook for each school). The School will follow up any unexplained absences as soon as is practicable using the procedures detailed below. Where reasonably possible the School will hold more than one emergency contact for each pupil so that the School has additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.
- 1.4. It is important to distinguish between a pupil's absence from school for an unknown reason (Children Missing from Education) and a pupil's disappearance from a lesson or activity after arrival at school. Please also see the Foundation's Children Missing or Absent from Education Policy for details of the procedures to follow in the event of the former.
- 1.5. The safety and welfare of all of our children at the Foundation is our highest priority. A child being absent from education, for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including abuse or neglect, child sexual and/or criminal exploitation and county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Every adult who works at the Foundation has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. This includes the importance of effective information sharing to ensure our children are safe and receiving suitable education. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child being absent in the future. Where staff have concerns that a child is absent from school for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, or missing from school, this policy should be followed.
- 1.6. Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 and Annex A of KCSIE 2023. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of very young children. Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is subject to an appropriate level of supervision when in our care.
- 1.7. We review this policy and these procedures regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective.

1.8. The Foundation will follow the procedures laid down by our own Local Authority (LA) (which is Cambridgeshire for all schools in the Foundation apart from Dame Bradbury's where Essex is the LA) together with the guidance contained in KCSIE 2023.

2. Student Supervision

2.1. Our Supervision of Pupils Policy, Trips and Visits Policy, Non-collection of a Child Policy, Security Policy and CCTV Policy collectively cover:

- The arrangements for children arriving at school and leaving the premises at the end of the day.
- The arrangements for supervising the children whilst they are in school.
- The arrangements for registering the children in both the morning and afternoon. We take a register of students at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to, or exit from, the building.
- The supervision of the playground.
- The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our youngest children are very clear and we have strict ratios to enable safe off site experiences to occur.
- The procedures to follow in the event of a child not being collected at the end of the school day, or at the end of an authorised activity.

2.2. Please refer to the Foundation's Supervision of Pupils Policy, Trips and Visits Policy, Non-collection of a Child Policy, Security Policy and CCTV Policy for further information.

3. Students going missing in school, including before and after compulsory hours in school

3.1. It is incumbent on the member of staff who is responsible for the supervision of students to initiate these procedures should a student be missing without authorisation. Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing student is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a student was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions:

1. The supervising member of staff should take a register in order to ensure that all the other students in that class or activity are present.
2. Office Staff will follow up instances where a student has been marked absent on the register by checking the InVentry system and home-school transport service records, where appropriate. In the Sixth Form the office staff may also attempt to contact the student directly.
3. 1-11: Check the first aid room and toilets. Contact staff who might previously have taught the pupil that day.
11-18: Contact staff who might previously taught or tutored the student that day, contact the Head of Year, check all lists of trips/fixtures/events out of school, the medical area, toilets, music/speech lessons and contact the counsellors as appropriate.
4. Immediately after the first sweep of the vicinity as above, the Office Staff will inform the relevant Head of School, the senior member of staff on duty, and the Head of Boarding if the student boards.

5. The relevant senior member of staff will ask adults and students in most recent or neighbouring classes, and in the boarding house where applicable, calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the student. A 'Missing' notice will be distributed via email, with the name of the student, and the date and time of the first notified absence.
6. Call the student's mobile if the number is available if not already done so.
7. Occupy all of the other students in their classroom(s) with a relevant activity supervised by a suitably qualified member of staff.
8. At the same time, the senior member of staff will arrange for one or more adults to search obvious areas within the school, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, basements, bathrooms, stairwells, peri or speech rooms etc. where a student might hide.
9. Check the doors, gates and, where relevant, direct the office staff to submit a request to review the CCTV for signs of entry/exit.

3.2. If the student is still missing after the sweep above, the following steps would be taken by staff, as directed (where appropriate) by the senior member of staff on site:

10. Inform the Head of the School (or Deputy Head or most senior member of staff on site in the absence of the Head) and Head of Boarding if applicable, that the student is still missing; who will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (**DSL**) or, in their absence, any one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (**DDSLs**) within the Foundation. This will be immediate for all students other than for the Sixth Form where the Head of School will assess the situation to determine the likelihood of risk in the early stages.
11. It is accepted that there is a difference to the speed of the next response depending on the age of the student. A dynamic risk assessment will be conducted by the Head of School or senior member of staff to inform speed of escalation. For example, a Sixth Form student who is permitted to be off site outside of lessons will usually be given more time before the next steps are taken. The risk assessment will take account of any pre-existing concerns about the individual that is missing or whether the behaviour appears to be out of character. The risk assessment will also take account of the time of the day and any other apparent risks.
12. The Head of School/Head of Boarding, or their Deputy, will contact the student's parents or other named emergency contact by phone and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Depending on the situation, the parents may be asked to come to the school at once. 11-18+: The parents may be asked for the student's telephone number for the school to contact the student directly or for confirmation that the parents will contact the student directly and let the school know if they are able to make contact.
13. Advise all teachers who are due to teach the student later that day and boarding staff that they must immediately inform the office if the student appears.
14. Arrange for staff to search the rest of the school premises and grounds and for a search of local roads to be initiated, if appropriate.
15. If the student's home is within walking distance, a member of staff may be directed to travel likely route(s) to establish if they are on their way home.
16. The senior member of staff would, at their discretion, in consultation with the parents (where possible), usually not later than two hours of a search commencing, arrange for the

police and Children's Social Care to be informed. The Foundation will co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the Local Authority.

17. Inform the Principal who will decide whether, and at what point, it may be appropriate to inform the Chair of Governors.
18. The Foundation's insurers will be informed.
19. During the course of the investigation into the missing student, the Foundation will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other students and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

3.3. If the student in question is known to be at higher risk, due to individual circumstances, parents will be informed sooner. Staff will continue the search in the areas surrounding the school premises and the senior member of staff will update the DSL or DDSL. If and where judged appropriate by the DSL or DDSL, procedures may be adjusted in light of the assessed level of risk or other factors.

3.4. A full record, in the form of an incident report, will be made by the senior member of staff of all activities taken up to the stage at which the student is found.

3.5. Additional procedures will apply in the case of missing boarding students (see below).

4. Students going missing in school hours when off site

1. An immediate register will be carried out in order to ensure that all the other students on the visit are present.
2. An adult will search the immediate vicinity while the other students remain in a secure location and in the care of the remaining supervisor(s).
3. Inform the relevant Head of School or Senior Leadership Team (SLT) back-at-base contact, the Head of Boarding, where applicable, school's DDSL (if not the Head of School), using a mobile phone.
4. Following discussion with the SLT contact, the Foundation's DSL/school's DDSL and the Group Leader would decide whether the remaining students should stay in the secure location or return to school, accompanied by an appropriate number of staff.
5. Ask adults and students calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the student.
6. Call the student's mobile if the number is available.
7. Ask the Head of School/Head of Boarding/Back at base SLT contact to contact the student's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. If appropriate, parents may be asked to go to the venue or the school. In boarding, due regard will be given to the fact that parents may not be able to attend the venue/school.
8. If possible and appropriate, alert the venue manager or tour operator and arrange a search, providing a description of the student who is missing.
9. The DSL/Head of the School would at their discretion, in consultation with the parents where possible (usually not later than two hours of a search commencing) arrange for the police and Children's Social Care to be informed. The Foundation would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the Local Authority.
10. Inform the Principal and the Principal will decide whether, and at what point, it may be appropriate to inform the Chair of Governors.

11. The Foundation's insurers will be informed.
12. During the course of the investigation into the missing student, the Foundation will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other students and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the student was found will be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these will be adjusted.

5. When the child is found

1. Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the student.
2. Speak to and reassure the other students to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
3. The Head of School/Head of Boarding will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if necessary).
4. The Head of School/Head of Boarding will direct a full investigation (if appropriate involving the MASH), conducted by a senior member of staff.
5. Media queries should be referred to the Marketing team in consultation with the Principal (after discussion with the LADO if appropriate).
6. The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements.
7. An incident report should be completed, covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the student was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how and why they appeared to have gone missing, as well as any lessons learned for the future.
8. Consideration should be given to any residual risk of the child going missing again and a risk management plan agreed with the DSL, and discussed with the student and their parents.

6. Procedures for boarding and other residential situations such as trips

6.1. Procedure if a student is not spoken to /seen during the welfare checks (boarding) or at check-in points (trips):

Students are unable to enter or leave the boarding houses between the last welfare check in the evening and the first welfare check in the morning due to restrictions on their ID cards. For further details on the timing of welfare checks, please see the Supervision of Pupils Policy.

1. Boarding house staff/trip staff will check the boarding house/accommodation (other student rooms, bathrooms and common areas), continue to phone the student's mobile/send a text and check with other students particularly those students who are known to be a friend of the missing student.
2. Boarding house staff/trip staff will phone the other boarding house/expedition staff to ask them to check their house and also ask the students.
3. If the student has not answered their phone or has not returned to the accommodation the Head of Boarding/SLT back-at-base contact will assess the situation and contact the DSL for advice and a decision made as to contacting the police/social care.

6.2. Procedure if a student does not arrive back for evening curfew in boarding or on a trip (Years 7 upwards):

The boarding house staff or trip leader will contact any student who is not in the house/accommodation 30 minutes before the curfew to find out where they are and remind them about the curfew. If a student does not arrive for the curfew then:

1. Boarding house staff/trip leaders will check the boarding house/accommodation (other student rooms, bathrooms and common areas), phone the student's mobile every 10 minutes/send a text and check with other students particularly those students who are known to be friends of the missing student.
2. If the student is not back 30 minutes after curfew, boarding house staff/the trip leader will telephone the Head of Boarding/SLT contact.
3. The Head of Boarding/SLT contact in the case of trips and visits will contact the parent/guardian not more than 1 hour after curfew.
4. If the student has still not returned an hour after curfew and parent/guardian is unable to contact the student, the Head of Boarding/SLT contact will reassess the situation and seek advice from the DSL and a decision made as to contact the police and/or social care.

6.3. Procedure if a student does not return after an overnight stay including holidays (boarding only):

The boarding house staff check the return date/time for each student and will make contact with the student:

1. If they are returning from overseas within an hour of scheduled arrival in the UK, boarding staff will contact the student. If no reply they will check for delays.
2. If a student does not arrive in the boarding house within 1 hour after they are due to return, boarding house staff will ring the Head of Boarding who will contact the parents/guardians.
3. If the student has still not returned 2 hours after they were due to return and contact hasn't been made by boarding house staff or parent/guardian, boarding house staff will call the Head of Boarding again who will reassess the situation and seek advice from the DSL.
4. If concerns continue the Head of Boarding/DSL will contact the police for advice.

7. Related Policies

- Children Missing or Absent from Education Policy
- Code of Conduct for All Staff Working With Young People
- Non-collection of Child Policy
- Staff Induction Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Supervision of Pupils Policy and Procedures
- Trips and Visits Policy and Procedures

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