

MISSING PUPIL POLICY

Introduction

The safety of all our pupils is our paramount responsibility. A child going missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, including sexual exploitation and so called 'honour based' violence. Every adult who works at the School is trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep pupils safe at all times. This includes the importance of effective information sharing to ensure our children are safe and receiving suitable education. Where staff have concerns that a child is missing from school, this policy should be followed.

Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 and Annex A of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2019)*. Our staffing ratios are generous and are designed to ensure that every pupil is supervised, in ways appropriate to the age of the pupil, throughout the time when the pupil is in our care. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of pupils.

This policy was drawn up having had regard to the Independent School Regulatory Requirements (paragraph 7 and 15), Early Years Statutory Framework (paragraph 3.73), National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (paragraph 20.6) and Department for Education guidance Children Missing Education (September 2016).

Our *Pupil and Parent Handbook* and the document, *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS): Information for Parents* describes:

- the arrangements for pupils arriving at School and leaving the premises at the end of the day
- the qualifications of our staff and the arrangements for supervising the children whilst they are in School
- the arrangements for registering the children in both morning and afternoon. Parents are responsible for notifying the School if their child is absent for any reason. The School will always contact the parent if the child fails to arrive at School without an explanation
- the physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the early years centre
- the supervision of the outdoor play area and the physical barriers that separate it from the rest of the school

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our youngest children are set out in the *Educational Visits Policy*. Both documents are on the parents' section of our website and can be provided to parents on request. We review these policies annually in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective.

Action to be followed by staff if a pupil fails to attend first day of school

All new pupils are placed on the School's admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the School has agreed that the pupil will attend the School. If a child fails to attend on the agreed date, staff must inform the Headmistress without delay. The Headmistress will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Where there are changes affecting the child (including a change of address or school), these will be reflected in the admission register. This will assist the School and external agencies when making enquiries to locate any missing children.

Duty to Report

The School monitors attendance closely and will take action to address poor or irregular attendance.

The School will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the School's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more without permission. The School will liaise with the local authority to agree the understanding of regular absence and reporting intervals.

Where a pupil has been continuously absent without authorisation for a period of not less than 20 school days (and there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unwell or unable to attend because of any unavoidable cause), and the School and local authority have failed, following reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is, the School may delete the pupil's name from the admission register. The School will inform the local authority of such deletion no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

The School also recognises its wider reporting duties following deletions from the admission register, in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, to help identify children who are missing education and/or otherwise at risk of harm.

Actions to be followed by staff if a pupil goes missing from the school

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing pupil is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a pupil were found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions without delay:

Prep School (including EYFS pupils)

- Take a register in order to ensure that all the other pupils were present
- Inform the Head of Nursery and the Head of the Prep School (the latter of whom will inform the Deputy Head (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and the Headmistress.
- Check with the Health Centre
- Check with Reception who will check the signing out/in sheet
- Ask adults and pupils for details of the most recent known whereabouts of the pupil.
- Occupy the other pupils, if possible in the area in which they would usually be occupied.
- As quickly as possible, arrange for one or more adults to search, both inside and out, carefully checking all areas.
- Check the doors, gates and CCTV records for signs of entry/exit.

If the pupil is still missing, the following steps would be taken without delay:

- The member of staff will take advice from the Deputy Head, Head of Prep and the Headmistress.
- The Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head or the Head of the Prep School) will ring the pupil's parents and explain what has happened, and what actions have been taken and will be taken. Ask them to come to the School immediately.
- The Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head or the Head of the Prep School) will notify the Police immediately.
- The Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head or the Head of the Prep School) will arrange for staff to search the rest of the school buildings and grounds.

- If the pupil's home is within walking distance, members of staff will trace the route home, in case the pupil has taken this route.

Further procedures will be followed in accordance with the Crisis Management Plan. (See excerpt from the plan below)

Senior School

Within the school day (8.35 am – 4.00 pm) should a pupil be missing this procedure would be followed:

- The member of staff will telephone Reception (ext 100) or the School Office (ext 200/256) to report the situation and indicate the pupil's last known whereabouts.
- Administrative staff will check the day's absence list, the outings list, the signing-out list and then the various buildings including the Health Centre, the Learning Development, the Performing Arts Building, the Sports Hall and local vicinity etc, with the help of other members of staff.
- Inform the Deputy Head (DSL) and the Headmistress
- The pupil's friends will be asked, and if possible the missing pupil will be telephoned on the pupil's mobile telephone.
- Occupy all other pupils in their classrooms
- Check doors, gates and CCTV for signs of entry/exit

If the pupil is still missing, follow the procedures outlined above for the Prep School

Procedure during boarding hours

- Staff will check the house signing-out book, Out of School Visits form and diary.
- Staff will check with other staff and search buildings and grounds.
- The pupil's friends will be asked and if possible the pupil will be telephoned on the pupil's mobile phone.
- If the pupil is not located, the Senior Housemistress and the Head of Boarding will be informed who will then deal with the matter if there is not a suitable explanation
- After another search, staff will inform the Headmistress or, if that is not possible, then another member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- The Housemistress, in consultation with the Headmistress (or, on her behalf, another member of the Senior Leadership Team), will inform parents, guardians if appropriate and the Police.
- A Plan of Action will be prepared in accordance with the procedures of the Crisis Management Plan.

If the pupil is still missing, follow the procedures outlined above for the Prep School.

A record is kept by the School of any instances in which a pupil is missing from school without satisfactory permission and documentation, including the action taken and the pupil's explanation.

During the course of the investigation into the missing pupil, the School, in consultation with the LADO, will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the pupil was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

Actions to be followed by staff if a pupil goes missing on an educational visit

- An immediate head count will be carried out in order to ensure that all the other children are present.
- A member of staff will search the immediate vicinity.
- The remaining pupils will be kept occupied until arrangements are in place to return them to School
- The Headmistress (or, if necessary, another member of the Senior Leadership Team) will be informed immediately by mobile telephone.
- The Deputy Head, in consultation with the Headmistress (or, on her behalf, another member of the Senior Leadership Team), will inform parents guardians, if appropriate, and the Police
- The member of staff leading the outing should liaise with the venue manager and arrange a search.
- Further procedures will be followed in accordance with the Crisis Management Plan (see excerpt from the plan below)

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

Actions to be followed by staff once the pupil is found

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the pupil.
- Speak to the other pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
- The Deputy Head will speak with the parents to report the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the Education Safeguarding Advisory Team (ESAT) or the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub if necessary), and she will then record in writing in a letter to the parents an account of the incident and a record of the meeting with the parents.
- The Deputy Head will carry out a full investigation, involving, if appropriate, the Police and Education Safeguarding Advisory Team (ESAT).
- Media queries should be referred to the Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head, or, failing that, another member of the Senior Leadership Team) (after discussion with the ESAT if appropriate).
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements.
- The written report of the incident will record details of time, place, members of staff and pupils, when the pupil was last seen, the circumstances in which the pupil went missing, an outline of what was understood to have happened, the purpose of the educational visit (if appropriate), the length of time during which the pupil was missing and an initial explanation of how the pupil appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future.
- All relevant procedures will be reviewed in the light of the incident.

Procedures to be followed by staff when a pupil is not collected on time

If a pupil is not collected within 30 minutes of the agreed collection time, and no message has been received, the contact numbers for the parent or carers will be called. If there is no answer, the School will begin to call the emergency numbers for this pupil. If the difficulty arises out of main school hours a senior member of staff on duty will take responsibility, or delegate this task. While the pupil remains on site, the pupil will be safely looked after and, if appropriate, taken to supper with the boarders and later to one of the Boarding Houses.

If there is no response from the parents or carers within a reasonable time (one hour), the Deputy Head or Head of Boarding will be contacted and Social Care and the Police contacted also if

appropriate. Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the pupil and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police.

Parents are asked to remember that we shall undertake to look after the pupil safely throughout the time that the pupil remains in our care, until such a time as s/he has been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate, alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police in order to prioritise the pupil's safety. The School's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a pupil from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the pupil's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the School's safeguarding policy and procedures.

A full written report will be made of the incident.

Missing Pupil Procedure (from Crisis Management Plan)

- Were a pupil to go missing and efforts to locate the pupil prove unsuccessful, then the Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head, or, failing that, another member of the Senior Leadership Team) will inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board and LADO without delay
- The school will cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any Local Safeguarding Children Board investigation.
- The Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head, or, failing that, another member of the Senior Leadership Team) will inform the Chairman of Governors.
- The Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head, or, failing that, another member of the Senior Leadership Team) will inform ISI/Ofsted.
- The Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head, or, failing that, another member of the Senior Leadership Team) will inform the School's insurers.
- If the pupil is located but found injured, then a report would be made to the Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head, or, failing that, another member of the Senior Leadership Team) and the Bursar, and the Bursar will then inform the Health and Safety Executive.

A full record of all activities taken up to the point at which the pupil is found will be made for the incident report. Procedures will all be reviewed in the light of the incident.

Please see also the Missing Pupils' Statement in the *Induction Handbook for Housestaff*.