



## SOUTH LAKES ACADEMY

# MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE

*(When a child goes missing whilst in the care of school staff)*

<b>Approved by</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Tunde Christie
<b>Position:</b>	Head of Centre
<b>Signed:</b>	<i>Tunde Christie</i>
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# MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES

***(When a child goes missing whilst in the care of school staff)***

In the event of a child going missing whilst in the care of the school staff, the school will put into practice the 'Missing Child Procedures' below. These ensure that a systematic approach to find the child is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the child.

These procedures refer to a pupil who registers at school in the morning or afternoon and then goes missing during the school day (or on an off-site visit) without a satisfactory explanation.

It is vital that emergency contact details for parents are kept up to date and contacts should include at least one person who does not normally live in the household. Wherever possible, if the child has a mobile phone, the details of this number should also be held by the school.

## 1 Definitions

For the purposes of these procedures a child, young person, pupil, or student is referred to as a 'child' or a 'pupil' and they are normally under 18 years of age.

Wherever the term 'parent' is used this includes any person with parental authority over the child concerned e.g., carers, legal guardians etc.

**Whenever the term 'Head teacher' is used this also refers to any Manger with the equivalent responsibility for children**

'Missing' is when a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be the subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

## 2 Is the Pupil at Significant Risk?

A 'pupil missing during schools hours' incident would be prioritised as significant risk where:

- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child is in danger through their own vulnerability. Vulnerability characteristics may include:
  - The age of the child;
  - Child on a plan (Early Help, Child in Need, Looked After or Child Protection Plan, Behaviour Management);
  - A disability and/or special educational needs;
  - Substance misuse;
  - Education health care plan.
- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger;
- There are indications that the child has already come to harm (CSE, grooming, radicalisation etc.).

Other contributory factors should be taken into consideration when determining if the pupil is at significant risk, for example:

- Have there been past concerns about this child and/or family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying?
- Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
- Is there any known history of domestic violence?
- Is there concern about the parent's ability to protect the child from harm?
- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Has the child been a victim of bullying?

- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g., does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g., rites of passage, female genital mutilation or forced marriage planned for the child?

Consideration will be given to the individual circumstances and the child's records e.g., whether the child has never gone missing before or has a record of leaving school without permission.

### **3 Procedures Aimed at Reducing the Risk of a Missing Child**

#### **3.1 Start of the School Day**

- The school should ensure parents are fully aware of the points at which responsibility for the care of their child passes from them to staff and vice versa;
- There are clear procedures for welcoming pupils into the school;
- Teachers are in their classrooms by 9:15;
- Registration is taken at the beginning of the school day and immediately after the pupils' return from lunch in order to ensure that all are accounted for;
- The main building only has a single access entrance via a reception desk. Signage directs all visitors to this entrance. Every visitor to the school is channelled through reception. Even when reception is not manned, reception remains the point to which all enquiries should be directed. Unauthorised visitors will be challenged by staff;
- Reception is a secure area and visitors cannot gain access to other parts of the school without being challenged or at least seen by a member of staff;
- Main entrance doors are fitted with a remote access intercom so that visitors can be introduced prior to being allowed entry. Only authorised visitors are allowed access.
- Parents are expected to report any absence to the school office or to the head of centre who will note the absence in the register.

#### **3.2 During Lesson Time**

- Staff mark registers promptly and accurately – morning and afternoons and return them to the school office, students are also asked to sign in and out throughout the day, though a teacher may do that if on the students' behalf;
- If children leave their classroom to work in other parts of the school, the class teacher must ensure that adequate supervision is maintained at all times and pupils are accounted for on return to the classroom;
- Updated contact information for parents is sought regularly and maintained;
- Behaviour Management Plans are in place for pupils with challenging behaviour including those who may be 'flight risks';

#### **3.3 During Break Times**

- Sufficient numbers of duty staff should be around to supervise the students for the duration of their break;
- If students wish to be taken to the play area all teachers must read and adhere to the relevant risk assessments;
- Key Stage 4 students - we aim to support and promote independence amongst our students and therefore allow them, with parental permission, to be able to go into town to get their lunch or for a break etc. Permission for this will be ascertained during the registration process. The school will discuss and show the risk assessment for this with the parent/carer prior to them granting permission

#### **3.4 End of the School Day**

- Main door is opened at 15:00;
- Children leave by assigned exits and must sign out prior to leaving;
- Those students whose needs require parental or adult supervision must wait for responsible person to collect them;

### 3.5 Off-Site Visits

The school will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that whilst children are on off-site visits, they are appropriately supervised by members of staff, parents, volunteers and others.

- Thorough risk assessments are conducted, and adequate staff/pupil ratios are provided when pupils leave the school premises;
- Permission from parents is obtained generically when pupils first start their school career, for all residential trips, trips abroad and adventurous activities and parents are notified in advance of all off-site visits;
- Mobile telephones are taken on every visit and emergency contact numbers left at school;
- If the off-site visit involves coach travel or travel on public transport, the group will be counted on and off the vehicle with an additional head count before the vehicle moves off;
- At the venue, all children will be given details of where the meeting point is. Regular head counts will be taken when moving from place to place;

### 3.6 After School Clubs

- Thorough risk assessments will be carried out;
- A register of pupils will be taken;
- Consent will be obtained from parents with contact numbers and details of how the children are to get home and with whom.

## 4 Procedures in the Event of Child Going Missing

In the event that a child is lost, staff will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as possible, parents and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care is maintained to other pupils at the school while the procedures are followed.

Where a child is thought to have been abducted the Head teacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead will **immediately** call the police using 999.

### 4.1 In case of absence

In the event of a student not arriving at school and no contact has been made by parents to explain the absence:

- Allow 15 minutes for late arrival of agreed time
- Contact parents/guardian/carer's using contact details by phone
- If there is no answer, contact the secondary emergency contact details (or any other emergency contacts)
- If neither party replied continue to call numbers each hour until receiving a satisfactory response from guardians
- If no response from any of the contacts or no satisfactory explanation given by 3pm at the latest, then contact Cumbria Safeguarding Hub on 03332401727

### 4.2 During the normal school day

In the event of a member of staff fearing that a child has gone missing while at school:

- Keep calm;
- If child has registered and the teacher suspects that a child is missing from a lesson or activity, raise the alarm by informing the Head teacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (if not one and the same) immediately;
- Staff will use professional judgement and risk assess the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the pupils' whereabouts before notifying the Police. Timeliness should be on a case by case basis;
- Designated Safeguarding Lead should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability (refer to Section 3);
- Class teacher will ensure that remaining pupils are safe and properly supervised. This may necessitate doubling up for a short time;

- Two members of staff (usually at least member of SMT) will make a search of the premises and outdoor areas. All indoor rooms to be checked systematically first followed by outdoor play areas, car park and adjacent road(s). This will be undertaken as quickly as possible;
- Whilst the initial search is made, the person in charge will make enquiries of all adults in the school to establish the last sighting and time, clothes that the child was wearing, and the possible mental state of the child (happy, upset etc.);
- Where appropriate, check with the pupil's known friends to establish whether or not they are aware of his/her whereabouts;
- If the child has not been found after 10 minutes from the initial report of them as missing, parents will be contacted using emergency contact details provided and staff will try to contact the pupil via their mobile telephone if known (if applicable). Encourage parents to keep calm and enquire as to whether the child has returned home or might be making his/her way home. Ask the parent to come to the school using the normal route that the child would take and to walk if appropriate. Ask them to bring a recent photograph of their child;
- Organise a wider search of the area surrounding the school. Mobile phones should be used in order to effectively communicate with the school;
- If the child is not found during the initial search (after 15 minutes) the Head teacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead will alert the Police (999) (refer to Section 5), Cumbria Safeguarding Hub on Tel: 0333 2401727 and our Health & Safety Services Provider: Kym Allan Safeguarding, Health and Safety Consultants Ltd.;
- If the parent arrives at the setting and their child is still missing, ask the parent to return home in the event that their child has managed to make his/her way home by an alternative route. Ask them to remain at home and to contact others who the child may have gone to visit. The parent must remain contactable by the school at any time in the event that the child is found;
- Telephone lines should remain as free as possible so that messages are not delayed. It may be possible to plug a separate handset into the fax line temporarily to help the short-term situation.

#### **4.3 Off-Site Visits**

- If a child is lost at a venue, all other pupils will be required to remain with their visit leader and assemble at a pre-determined meeting point until the child is located;
- A head count will be taken to confirm all those who are present. Supervising adults will be asked when the child was last seen and what clothes he/she was wearing. All adults will be asked to look for the child as they proceed with the visit.
- The Visit Leader will appoint a responsible adult from the group to conduct a search of the immediate area and to alert anyone else who may be able to assist, keeping in contact with the Visit Leader via mobile phone;
- A member of staff or other responsible adult will remain at the meeting point in the event that the missing pupil turns up there;
- The Visit Leader will alert officials at the venue (if applicable) that there is a missing child and take their advice;
- The Visit Leader will alert the school who will contact the parents via the emergency contact details;
- If the pupil remains unaccounted for more than 15 minutes maximum, the local police will be informed, and their advice taken;
- The school will contact their Health & Safety Services Provider: Kym Allan Safeguarding, Health & Safety Consultants Ltd.;
- If by the end of the visit, if the child is still missing, arrangements will be made for a member of staff or other responsible adult to remain at the venue or vicinity until the child is located. This will be in conjunction with the local Police, the school setting and the parents;
- The school will at this point notify Cumbria Safeguarding Hub on Tel: 0333 2401727.

## 5 Notifying the Police

The information required by the Police to assist in locating and returning the pupil to a safe environment is as follows:

- The pupil's name, date of birth, status (for example looked after child), responsible authority;
- Where and when they went missing;
- Previous missing episodes and where they went;
- Who, if anyone, they went missing with;
- What the child was wearing plus any belongings they had with them such as bags, phone etc.; include mobile number;
- Description and recent photo;
- Medical history, if relevant;
- Time and location last seen;
- Circumstances or events around going missing with relevant safeguarding information;
- Details of family, friends and associates;
- Contact details of safeguarding lead if it was after school hours.

Whilst the search is ongoing, the school will continue to liaise with the Police and act in accordance with Police instructions.

Option 1 – if the child returns before the police have arrived then the Police must be informed, and own school procedures need to be followed.

Option 2 - if the child returns to school of their own volition, then the Police must be informed, and own school procedures need to be followed.

Option 3 - if the Police locate the child and bring them back to the school the Police will conduct the safe and well interview and the school will follow School procedure.

Where a pupil has a known risk of being missing, a risk assessment (Behaviour Management Plan) for the pupil will be written and put in to place.