



# Missing Child Policy



*Encourage, Guide, Support, Celebrate*

**Date Approved:** Autumn 2023

**Review Date:** Autumn 2025

## Introduction

The School has a statutory duty of care to all its pupils to provide a safe environment and to ensure their health, safety and welfare at all times.

## Aims

- To ensure the safety of all pupils
- To ensure that we are able to find any child that goes missing either in School or on an activity outside School as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- To communicate effectively and to an appropriate timescale with everyone concerned.
- To follow up incidents and to review procedures accordingly.

## Procedure for an Incident

In the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child's whereabouts, the following action will be taken:

### Stage One - Search systematically

- All available staff to immediately check toilets, shared areas, rooms and playground or other areas if off site to ensure child is not hiding or locked in anywhere.
- One member of staff to immediately inform school office and Headteacher and check whether the child has been signed out for an external appointment or has an internal appointment with a visiting professional (School Nurse/Speech Therapist etc) and then collect register.
- One member of staff to gather class and call the register to confirm that one named child is missing.
- Staff will ensure that all other pupils are kept safe and closely supervised throughout incident.

### Stage Two

- After stage one is completed without resolution (no more than 10 minutes), school office staff will contact the police and parents/carers with parental responsibility.
- Where a child has left the building of their own accord, key staff will leave the premises in an attempt to find the child and return them to school.
- Staff will attempt to facilitate the safe return of the child including physical restraint if the child is deemed to be in danger.
- School will liaise at all times during the incident with the Police. Once the Police arrive, school will support them and hand over the responsibility for the child to them. The Police will then lead the response to this incident.
- Staff will call registers in all classes to confirm presence of other pupils.

### Stage Three

- The Headteacher should communicate the incident to the appropriate Local Authority Office and the Chair of Governors.

- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and placed in the pupil's confidential record (CPOMs).
- The Senior Management Team should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective was response and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again.

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.
- If the police are called then the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board are also informed.
- If the Headteacher or Chair of Governors is not on the premises, she/he will be informed as soon as possible.

We will provide the following information to the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board:

- What happened?
- What systems are in place for preventing such occurrences?
- What we did, at what time and in what order.
- Who we informed and when.
- We will cooperate fully in any investigation.

## **Recording**

We will start to build a record as soon as is possible in the incident log, this will include:

- The last definite sighting of the child.
- Any unusual behaviour of the missing child or other children.
- How many children were on the premises?
- How many adults were on the premises and who?
- What steps have been taken and when, by whom.

## **Dealing with people's reactions**

We accept that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry. If the setting shares all policies with parents/carers, the situation will be easier for all because there will be an understanding of working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding.

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.

Responses could include:

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
- That a full investigation is in hand.
- That the LSCB/Ofsted has been informed and will be investigating.

## **Dealing with the media**

Distressed parents may contact the local press, or reporters may hear about the incident if the police are involved. It is sensible for one person, usually the Headteacher or Chair of Governors to be the one who speaks for the setting.

All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson. The spokesperson for the setting is the Headteacher.

## **When the child is found**

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents and others suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember:

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.

### **After the Incident**

- We will review our current procedure.
- We will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.