



# Missing Child Policy

## **Introduction**

The welfare and safety of children is of paramount importance at all times and overrides all other concerns. A missing child should be an extremely rare happening. This policy is designed to put into place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents and police at every appropriate point.

This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with our Safeguarding and Health and Safety Policy. It is a statement of our priorities and a list of procedures and principles to follow as well as a response to legislation. This is a statutory policy.

Relevant legislation: The Children Act 1989, 2004

## **Academy timings and legal responsibilities**

### **Academy Timings:**

Nursery	9-00 am until 12-00 noon	Session 1
	12-00 noon until 3-00 pm	Session 2
Foundation	8-45 am until 3-00 pm	
KS1	8-45 am until 3-10 pm	
KS2	8-45 am until 3-15 pm	

We have a moral responsibility to our children at all times and a legal duty of care between the above times **and 15 minutes before and after the official start and finish times**. This is to allow for a smooth handover. At all times and in all circumstances we remember our duty of care and our responsibility to behave as reasonable and caring parents.

### **To abscond is to 'leave without permission'**

Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

Although the perimeter of the site is fenced, the gates are closed during the school day, we recognise that it is possible to exit these barriers.

A child who is prepared to abscond from school is vulnerable. It is not safe practise to pursue a child absconding as this could lead to unsafe behaviour around the roads. It is for this reason that the staff will adopt a "do not follow" policy when dealing with pupils absconding from the school site.

### **What to do if you suspect a child is missing or has been seen leaving the school site.**

Avoid panic which is in itself a hazard for a large number of reasons.

Think where the child might reasonably be and make sensible investigations including talking to other staff and children in a non- alarmist manner.

Do not spend more than a few minutes doing this before informing the most senior member of staff available who will activate an emergency search. If the child turns up after the member of staff has informed senior staff **do not forget to tell senior staff so as to prevent unnecessary steps being taken**. A written ABC report will be made.

**If a child has left the site then inform the Principal or Safeguard lead immediately. The parents and police must be informed.**

Upon his or her return to school and when the pupil is calm, the pupil will meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed in detail. At this point, a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions. The Principal may consider a fixed term exclusion as a sanction.

### ***On an out of school activity***

As above and then ring the academy to alert senior staff to the problem. If practical, additional staff will be sent to help search for the child. Reorganise the group and activity to free up a member of staff to conduct a search but first of all ensure the security of the other children.

If you run an after school club and a child on your register does not show up, contact the class teacher and/or the parents. Do not take the word of other children that the child was not at school.

### **Steps to be taken by senior staff**

- Ensure all other children are secure and reassured
- Ring the police giving the following information:
  - Where you are
  - A detailed description of the child, including age, sex and as much information about their clothing as possible from head to toe
  - The circumstances of the incident including anything that may have triggered the disappearance, how long the child has been missing, where they were last seen, if there was an argument
  - Who is looking for the child, where are they, do they have a mobile with them and what is the number
- Ring the parents in a non alarmist way giving factual information and inviting them to the school. Keep calling until contact is made – if you cannot do this ensure that a member of the office staff is made responsible.
- Ensure that the incident is documented so far including any conversations and advice from the police
- If possible designate at least one member of staff to search the locality this will normally follow the route the child takes to go home. It is usually wise not to allocate this duty to a member of staff who may feel responsible for the incident
- At all times keep personal feelings under control and do not judge.
- If the child remains missing for a period of several hours it may be necessary to consider contacting the media. Advice can be sought from the police KCC and the Diocesan Board of Education.
- Chair of Governors should be informed as soon as practical
- Once the child is found do not forget to inform parents, staff, police (if they have not found the child) and Chair of Governors
- When the emergency has been concluded instigate an appropriate investigation and take the necessary steps to prevent the incident reoccurring. This may involve activating support measures for staff, parents and children as appropriate and or activating the disciplinary policy if a clear breach of policy has occurred or if a member of staff has fallen short of standards that could reasonably be expected.
- Inform Ofsted of the incident and its outcome in writing.
- Carry out a risk assessment to make sure this does not happen again.

Date of approval by the SLT - November 2017