

CHILD LOST IN OUR CARE POLICY

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AIMS OF THIS POLICY

- To ensure that robust procedures are in place to minimise the risk of a pupil going missing from school or a school activity.
- To establish safeguards so that a pupil's absence from school (or school activity) is quickly identified.
- To outline a procedure for staff to follow in the event of a pupil being or going missing, including the notification of parents and outside agencies.

OTHER RELEVANT SCHOOL POLICIES

Other School policies that should be read in conjunction with this policy include:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Child Missing from Education (CME)
- Educational Visits Policy
- Nursery Missing Child Policy
- Staff Handbook
- Nursery Lost Child Policy

The policy has regard to the DfE's [Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care](#) (January 2014).

TERMINOLOGY

The police use the terms 'absent' and 'missing'.

- **absent:** a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be;
- **missing:** anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

SAFEGUARDING

A missing child is a child at risk. If a pupil is absent or missing, the Designated Senior Lead (DSL) should always be informed. An incident of a missing pupil is an important

safeguarding concern as a missing child is a child at risk. A pupil may be lost by accident – for example, in a crowded station – or may go missing deliberately (i.e. runaways), for example, due to bullying or abuse. They may go missing from school, from a school trip or from home. A missing child may be drawn into dangerous situations, activities and even exploitation.

PROCEDURES FOR FINDING A MISSING CHILD

The procedure for finding a missing child will vary depending on circumstances. For example, whether the child has gone missing from the school grounds or on a school trip or whether they have gone missing on their journey home from school. What follows is general guidance to apply in various circumstances.

PROCEDURE FOR A PUPIL MISSING FROM SCHOOL DURING THE DAY

When a pupil is noted as absent from where he/she is supposed to be, the first priority will be to conduct a search of the area, particularly likely places they may be. Actions might include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Consult other available staff – particularly the SLT, the child's teacher and the school administration team – and ask whether they know where he/she may be (they may have a legitimate and known reason to be absent for example at a music lesson or intervention group).
- If possible, check iSAMS and any emails from the school office regarding pupil absence (there may be a legitimate and known reason to be absent) and check email records.
- Seek guidance from the Principal, Vice-Principal, DSL or Head of Infant/Juniors, in their absence, another member of the SLT, phoning them if they are off-site.
- Take a register to see whether any other children are absent.
- Search locations, including the toilets, field and other likely areas.
- It may help the search if other children remain in classrooms or located in a central place; this may also make more members of staff available.
- If the pupil remains absent, consult their peers and ask them whether they know where he/she is.
- Contact the parents and explain the situation, ask whether they know where he/she is. (Do so calmly, remembering that they may panic or, alternatively, have collected him from school without notifying staff, in which case they need to be calmly reminded of protocol, ideally by a member of the SLT).
- If the pupil is found, a member of SLT should interview them calmly and investigate their whereabouts and whether he/she was at risk; the child's parents will be informed.
- If, after consulting all available staff, pupils and parents, the pupil is still absent, he/she should be considered missing and the police contacted.

PROCEDURE FOR A PUPIL ABSENT/ MISSING AT COLLECTION TIME

A parent may come to the school to collect their child and find them absent.

The following considerations should be made:

- he/she may be engaged in an on-site activity (check the after-school clubs lists and with the school office) or an off-site activity (check the calendar for sports' events return times; contact the member of staff on the fixture, or ask the School office to do so);
- he/she may have gone to meet at an agreed location or gone with a friend; the pupil may have been confused about that day's collection arrangements;
- if the parents are separated, he/she may have gone home with the other parent;
- he/she may have gone home with another parent as a result of miscommunication among parents.

Once these considerations have been made, the member of staff should adhere to the 'procedure for a pupil absent/missing from school during the school day', above.

PUPILS WHO TRAVEL HOME ALONE

If a pupil, who is travelling home alone, is missing from school or possibly on their journey home, SLT should contact other available staff and pupils for information about when they were last seen and with whom.

PROCEDURE FOR A PUPIL MISSING FROM AN OFF-SITE SCHOOL ACTIVITY / EDUCATIONAL VISIT

This procedure should be followed where a pupil is missing from a school activity away from the school premises (e.g. on an educational visit or school sporting event).

- The group leader assembles the pupils and carries out a head count (are any other pupils missing?).
- A quick check of the immediate vicinity is carried out by a staff member.
- Make contact with the venue's staff and/ or security and ask what their procedures are for a missing child, including contacting the police.
- Inform SLT, who may, if plausible, come to the location of the trip and/or handle communications with the Principal and parents.
- Contact the parents and, if possible, ask them to come to the venue.
- Return the remaining children to school or a safe place.
- Contact the police and report the child as missing.
- Contact the Principal and ask them to liaise with the Chair of Governors.

WHEN THE PUPIL IS FOUND

This procedure should be followed:

- all parties involved in the search should be notified (including parents, school staff, police);
- if possible, two members of staff should talk to the pupil;
- remain calm and do not express shock, dismay, anger or any other strong emotions;
- remember that the pupil may be unaware of the panic he/she has caused; alternatively, he/she may have been through a distressing experience and be in need of support (e.g. from staff, parents, school counsellor, independent listener or external agencies such as the NSPCC);
- the rest of the group are reassured by the staff;
- safety guidance is issued to the group to avoid a recurrence;
- the events should be recorded, particularly any residual concerns that may have some future relevance.

IF A CHILD IS STILL MISSING AFTER A SEARCH

The Principal, Vice-Principal, DSL should contact the police and carry out a risk assessment.

CONTACTING THE POLICE

If the pupil remains missing, then the Principal and Chair of Governors should be informed. The police should be informed at this stage: failure to contact them may prove costly.

The following information should be made available:

- the pupil's name, age and date of birth;
- an up-to-date photograph;
- a physical description: height, appearance, clothes, distinguishing features;
- any disability, learning difficulty or SEN;
- the pupil's home address and telephone number;
- any relevant context (e.g. comments made by the pupil that may indicate state of mind/ whereabouts);
- any suspicion/evidence of crime or wrongdoing.

If the pupil is found after the police have been notified, it is important to tell the police.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A member of SLT should make a risk assessment, taking into account:

- possible threat factors: time of day; darkness; weather conditions; nature of the locality;
- extent of time missing/ lateness (whether an absent pupil is considered missing);

- individual circumstances: age, judgement, known personal, pastoral or disciplinary issues; mood and/ or communications prior to going missing; any track record;
- whether there are any safeguarding concerns relating to the pupil that need to be discussed with the pupil's local authority;
- any reassurances/likelihood as to their whereabouts;
- any parental indication of concern.

AFTER THE INCIDENT

The following should take place:

- the Principal or Vice-Principal meets with the group leader and the pupil's parents to establish the facts of the incident;
- if appropriate, a short email will be sent to the other parents of pupils on the trip summarising the events and the school's response;
- liability should not be discussed until the incident has been fully investigated by the school and, if appropriate, Social Services.
- staff and parents should be asked to refer any enquiries they have or any enquiries from the media, about the incident, to the Principal.

FORMAL INVESTIGATION:

A formal investigation will take place as follows:

- the Chair of Governors will appoint a full investigation;
- the group leader and other accompanying staff will be asked for an incident report detailing: a timeline of events; the staff and pupils involved; what they knew or heard about the missing child's whereabouts (e.g. last sighting, estimated time that the pupil went missing);
- a conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened;
- the police may carry out their own investigation, with which staff must cooperate. The Chair of Governors may ask the police to share their findings with him for the purpose of the school's own investigation and disciplinary procedures, if appropriate;
- Social Services may investigate the incident if it has safeguarding implications;
- if the child came to harm, the incident should be reported to the Guernsey Health and Safety Executive (online form [here](#)), and recorded in the incident book;
- the school's insurance company should be informed.