

Missing Child Policy

Introduction

KCSIE states that governing bodies should ensure there are suitable policies and procedures in place in order for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare. These policies should include appropriate safeguarding arrangements to respond to children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions.

National Minimum Standard 20.6 requires that "*staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy, and any local protocols, in relation to boarders going missing and understand their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for boarders who are missing, including working with police where appropriate*".

Contents of policy

This policy consists of two parts; the first covering a missing child and the second covering the procedure to be followed by the school in the event of a parent failing to collect a child at the appointed time.

Related policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Educational Visits Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Pupil Supervision Policy

Guidance

A: Handbook for the inspection of association independent schools, including residential (boarding) schools and registered early years settings

B: ISI Inspection Framework

C: Keeping Children Safe in Education

D: Working Together to Safeguard Children

E: Signs of Abuse NSPCC fact sheet: www.nspcc.org.uk/signsofabuse

F: Children Missing Education, DfE guidance, September 2016

G: Working together to improve school attendance

Part One: Missing Child Policy

Introduction

The welfare of all pupils at Tring Park School is our paramount responsibility. A child being absent from education, particularly for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including abuse or neglect, child sexual and/or criminal exploitation and county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Every adult who works at the School has been trained to appreciate that they have a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. This includes the importance of effective information sharing to ensure our pupils are safe and receiving suitable education. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child being absent in the future. Where staff have concerns that a child is absent from school for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, or missing from school, this policy should be followed.

Every member of our staff who works with children has read at least Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that all pupils are supervised the whole time that they are in our care.

Information for parents

The School's Pupil Supervision policy describes:

- Arrangements for children arriving at school and leaving the premises at the end of the day.
- Arrangements for supervising children whilst they are in school, including boarders.
- Arrangements for registering pupils 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. Further details of these arrangements are set out in the School's Attendance policy.

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving pupils are set out in the School's Educational Visits policy.

A swipe access system provides security to all of the School's buildings. Fences and gates, also with swipe access, provide security between buildings and around the perimeter of the School site.

These policies are all reviewed annually in order to ensure that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of pupils and read at least Part 1 of KCSIE, or at least Annex A of KCSIE, if their role does not require them to work directly with children.

Action to be followed by staff if a child fails to attend the 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 Principal without delay. The Principal will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

The School admission register, also known as the school roll, contains specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the School, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.

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.

The School also has an attendance register which records pupil attendance. The attendance register is taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion we will record whether each registered pupil is physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Registers are legal records. The School will preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date of entry. Where amendments are made to the registers, the School will ensure the register shows the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date on which the amendment was made, and the name of the person who made the amendment.

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.

Prolonged and persistent absence

Where a pupil has not returned from a period of leave or has had a continuous period of absence, the School, together with the Local Authority, may need to carry out joint reasonable enquiries under regulation 9(1)(h) or (i) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to try to find out where the pupil is.

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.

In addition, the School 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.

The School recognises that children who are absent from education particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. The School's response to persistently absent pupils supports identifying such abuse, and helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing from the School

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing during the School day, we would carry out the following actions:

- Check with the pupil's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check the medical centre
- Check with reception
- Check with houseparents who will check the signing out/in book
- Inform the senior member of staff on duty
- Call the pupil's mobile telephone, if known
- Ask all of the adults and pupils calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the pupil
- Occupy all of the other pupils in their classroom(s)
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search the school grounds
- Check the doors, gates and CCTV records for signs of entry/exit

If a pupil is missing after school hours, at bedtime or in the early hours, or they fail to return from 'leave out' at the appointed time, we would carry out the following actions:

- Check with the pupil's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check with other boarders (if awake) to see if they know their whereabouts
- Carry out a thorough search of the boarding area and immediate surroundings
- Ring the medical centre or nurse on call to see if the pupil has been reported sick
- Call the pupil's mobile telephone
- Consult the senior member of boarding staff on duty in School

- Check exeat forms or any other information

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.

If the pupil is still missing, the following steps would be taken:

- Inform the Principal and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Ring the pupil's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion so far to locate them. If parents are abroad, this step may need to be delayed. All decisions on contact with parents at night should be made by the Principal, as appropriate
- Notify the Police
- Arrange for staff to search the rest of the school premises and grounds
- The DSL would inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) who should liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate. The DSL will check with the LSCB this has happened
- The School would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chair of Governors
- The School's insurers would be informed
- If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

During the course of the investigation into the missing pupil, the School 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.

The School will always consider the wider circumstances around a child going missing from School and whether there are wider safeguarding concerns that may need to be addressed in line with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing on an outing

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other pupils were present
- A staff member would search the immediate vicinity
- Inform the Principal and the DSL by mobile phone
- The remaining pupils would be taken back to school as soon as reasonably practicable
- Ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the venue or the School
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search (where relevant)

- Contact the Police immediately
- The DSL would inform the LSCB
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chair of Governors without delay
- The School's insurers would be informed as soon as reasonably practicable
- If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). If the child is injured and is taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than 15 days after the accident.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child 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 child is found

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
 - Speak to the other pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
 - The Principal will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident
 - The School will undertake a full investigation (if appropriate involving the LSCB)
 - Media queries should be referred to the Principal
 - The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements
 - The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the length of time that the child was missing and how they appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future
 - Consider whether actions need to be taken in line with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy where there are concerns about the welfare of the child.
-

Part Two: Procedures to be followed by staff when a child is not collected on time

If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, the houseparent will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. Where reasonably possible the School will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. If there is no answer, the houseparent will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after in the appropriate day common room or boarding house. If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers and the school is closing, the Principal will contact social services. Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. The School will make a full written report of the incident.

The School will look after the child safely throughout the time that he or she remains under our care, until such a time as they have 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 child's safety. The DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy and procedures.
