NORMAN STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY - PART 3

MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES

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

REVIEW SHEET

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date (if any).

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
1	Original	August 2015
2	Updated to include additional information from Cumbria SCB and to differentiate these procedures from those for Children being Absent from school/First Day Calling Procedures (school's safeguarding response to children missing education)/Children Missing Education.	July 2017
3	Reviewed – links and telephone numbers amended	October 2019
4	Updated contact details for Lucie Blackman Trust	March 2022
5	Full review in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022	September 2022

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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.

We already have procedures for pupils who fail to register, if there are concerns about the level of attendance the Enforcement Guidance should be used. A separate procedure exists for Children Missing Education. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a child missing education as a child who is not on a school roll and has been out of education for more than 4 school weeks. The term Children Missing from Education (CME) therefore refers to all children of compulsory school age who are neither registered at a school nor educated otherwise (i.e. home educated or privately educated). Similarly, these procedures should **NOT** be confused with the procedures to follow when children are absent from school / first day calling i.e. children who do not show up for school (school's safeguarding response to children missing education). Further guidance and model procedures can be found in the KAHSC '[First day calling procedures and emergency contact form'](#).

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.

Wherever the term 'Head teacher' is used this also refers to any Manager 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 school 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/other health condition 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 abuse?
- 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 or intimidation either face to face or online?
- 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 or isolated 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. The school doors are closed at 8.55. After this time, pupils must report to the main school office via the main entrance.
- Teachers are in their classrooms by 8.40.
- 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 . Signage directs all visitors to this entrance. 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 and a camera so that visitors can be seen prior to being allowed entry. Only authorised visitors are allowed access.

3.2 During lesson time

- Staff complete registers promptly and accurately – morning and afternoons and return them to the school office electronically.
- All staff must ensure that external gates to areas outside the school grounds are secured when children are learning outside and adequate supervision is maintained.
- 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 a 'flight risk'.
- Maglocks are hard wired to the fire alarm so disengage when the fire alarm sounds.

3.3 During break times

- Sufficient numbers of duty staff should be on the playground before children come out and for the duration of the break.
- All staff must ensure that external gates to areas outside the school grounds are secured when children are playing outside and adequate supervision is maintained.
- Staff patrol all areas of the playground throughout the session and are allocated specific 'sentry' points during break times.

3.4   End of the school day

- Gates are opened at 3.10.
- Children leave by assigned exits.
- Children in Foundation Stage and Year 1are collected by their parent from the classroom door. Staff call the children when they see the parent or nominated alternative adult and hand the child over.
- In years 2 to 6 children are collected from the playground by their nominated adult.
- Children in years 5 and 6 are permitted to walk home if written parental consent has been received.

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 visits which take place during the school day. For residential trips, trips abroad and adventurous activities additional consent will be sought. Parents are notified in advance of all off-site visits.
- Staff mobile telephones are taken on every visit and emergency contact numbers left at school (and, where the visit has been uploaded, on the educational visits online system (KAHSC or Evolve).
- 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.
- In some circumstances, and where is it deemed appropriate, children will be provided with a card outlining details of the school (name and telephone number) and, where required, the name and telephone number of the accommodation at which the group are staying.
- Where children are given 'free-time' they will be required to stay together in groups of not less than 3.

3.6   Wraparound care and clubs

- Thorough risk assessments will be carried out;
- A register of those attending each session will be taken;
- Consent will be obtained from parents with contact numbers and details of how the children are to get home and, where necessary, with whom.

4.   Procedures in the event of child going missing

In the event that a child goes missing and cannot be accounted for, staff will ensure a systematic search is made for the child (both inside and outside of the building) as soon as possible. Parents and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care is maintained of 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 (DSL) will **immediately** call the Police using 999.

4.1   During the normal school day

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

- Remain calm.
- The following lists held in the school office will be checked:

  - Attendance registers;
  - Off-site register/late book;
  - Off-site visit records;
  - Music lesson lists;
  - Lists of those attending other schools e.g. transition activities or alternative provision.

- 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 DSL (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;
- DSL 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 SLT) will make a search of the premises and outdoor areas. All indoor rooms to be checked systematically first followed by outdoor play areas, grounds (including those generally marked 'out of bounds'), 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/DSL 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. (01228 210152); the Corporate Health & Safety Team (01228 221616).
- 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 all times 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.

4.2 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 goes missing out of normal school hours, the Visit Leader will contact the parents directly.
- 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 DSL 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 implemented.