

# Missing Child Policy

## Leehurst Swan School



<b>Approved by:</b>	 Headmaster  Safeguarding Governor	<b>Date:</b> 15/09/2021
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	15/09/2021	
<b>Next review due by:</b>	15/09/2023	

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**This policy applies to the whole school including EYFS, before and after school care facilities; all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to Leehurst Swan School and is available on the school website for parents to access.**

## **1. AIM**

The welfare of children in our care is paramount. Children may go missing and EVERY member of staff has equal responsibility in ensuring the safety of the children and knowing where they are. The aim of this policy is to provide staff with an agreed set of procedures which can be followed in the event that a child goes missing from the school during the school day, before or after school, when on site, or on a school trip. This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Supervision of Pupils Policy and the School's Trips and Visits Policy.

## **2. Missing Definition**

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.

## **3. Is the pupil at significant risk**

A pupil missing during schools hours' incident would be prioritised as significant risk' where:

- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability. Vulnerability characteristics may include;
  - Children on a plan (Early Help, Child in Need, Looked After or Child Protection Plan);
  - A disability 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;

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- There are indications that the child/young person 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 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 violence?
- Is there concern about the parent/carer'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?
- 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 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?

#### **4. Minimising Risk Systems in place to minimise the risk of children going missing**

- Appropriate steps are taken by the Estates Manager and his team to ensure that the premises and surrounding site is secure.
- The attendance register is taken at the start of each day between 08:30 and 08:40. During the school day, it is the responsibility of every member of staff to be aware of how many children are present in their lesson and flag to the main office if a pupil is missing. Children who arrive late must be recorded in the 'Late Signing In' book on the reception desk and those who leave early should be marked out in the 'Signing Out' book on the reception desk accordingly. Teachers of new children should take extra care, during their first half-term, to fully orientate their pupils to ensure they know their way around the school site, including the boundaries of where they can and cannot go.

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- Teachers must always be made aware of the need for supervision of children and the pupils must ensure that they never leave the school site without seeking permission from a member of staff
- Supervision ratios during outdoor breaks, will be to a level where all pupils can be carefully and safely monitored. Staff members carrying out a duty, should be last to leave the playground to ensure no children are left outside of the security gates.

## **5. Procedure in the event that a child goes missing**

If a child is suspected to be missing, it is vital that prompt action is taken and the following steps should be taken.

- The missing child (children) should be identified and the last known whereabouts recorded. The situation should immediately be reported to the School Front Office Team (term-time, 8am – 6.00pm)
- The Front Office Team will check the pupil registers to establish whether the child has been signed out of school. The chances of finding a missing child safely are greatest if the child's absence is noted as soon as possible.
- The Head or, in their absence, the deputy and DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) must be notified by the School Front Office, in person, that a child has been reported missing.
- The member of staff who was responsible for the missing child will arrange for the other children to be satisfactorily supervised. Without alarming them, the children should be asked when they last saw the missing child. Ratios must be maintained.
- The Head or, in their absence, the deputy and DSL will organise a systematic search of the school's buildings and grounds to be carried out, utilising available members of staff not currently supervising children, to see if the child can be located in the surrounding area. The following areas must be included in the search, beginning with higher-risk areas:
  - a. Check all exits for where a child may have been able to leave the premises or site. Any staff member searching off-site should take their mobile so that they can be contacted/contact the school upon locating the missing child.
  - b. Check Key Stage 2 Playground and Top Field.

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- c. Check all toilets, cupboards, changing rooms, kitchen areas etc – where a child might hide.
  - d. Check the main School building, Walker Hall area, Prep Building, Offices above School Reception, Maintenance Area.
  - e. Check Learning Support Area and medical room.
  - f. Check the perimeter outside the school.
- The Head, in consultation with the Estates Manager, may consider carrying out a fire alarm evacuation if it is suspected that the child may be on-site but hiding, as this may draw them out of their hiding place quickly.

**6. In the event of a missing child the Head will arrange to inform:**

- The parents/carers of the child – alarming them as little as possible. If contacted parents should be advised to stay at home in case the child arrives there; be advised that the school is contacting the emergency services and that a member of staff is searching the route the child may take home. Parents should be asked for information of anywhere else the child may head for, e.g. grandparents, other relatives, local park, etc.
- The Police and/or any other emergency services – The police have the resources to conduct a search and speed is important. The Police will be contacted no later than 30 minutes after the child was last seen by an adult.

**7. 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/s; 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;

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- Circumstances or events around going missing with relevant safeguarding information;
- Details of family, friends and associates;
- Contact details of safeguarding lead 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.

#### **8. Procedure if a child goes missing on a school trip**

- If the child goes missing on a school trip, then the Missing Child procedure at the venue should be followed, where one exists.
- If a child goes missing on a school trip, the Group Leader must alert staff at the trip venue and the School Main Office Team.
- The School Main Office should immediately alert the Head or if the Head is unavailable, a member of Leadership Team, in the event of a child going missing on a school trip.
- On any school trip, the Group Leader then assumes the responsibility of main point of contact between the school and the trip venue and is expected to maintain constant telephone contact with the School.

#### **9. Action to be taken once the child is found**

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child.
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
- The Head will contact the relevant parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident.
- The Head will initiate a full investigation and request that the Designated Safeguarding Lead completes an incident report on CPOMS (Child Protection Online Management System).
- The Head will review and amend Risk Assessment documents and relevant policies, as necessary, following the incident.
- Any media queries resulting from the incident should be referred to the Head.

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## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

It is the responsibility of all staff to follow the principles stated in this policy. The Head is responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy on a biennial basis or as required by a change in regulation.

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