



# **PATTERDALE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY - PART 3**

# **MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES**

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



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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. Further guidance and model procedures can be found in the KAHSC 'Emergency Contact and First Day Calling Procedures' accessed at:

<https://www.kymallanhsc.co.uk/document/downloaddocument/9132>.

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 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 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 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 violence?
- 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?
- 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?

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.

## Procedures Aimed at Reducing the Risk of a Missing Child

### 3.1 Start of the School Day:

- The school should ensure parents/carers are fully aware of the points at which responsibility for the care of their child passes from staff to them and vice versa;
- There are clear procedures for welcoming pupils into the School. The school doors are closed at 9a.m. After this time, pupils must report to the main school office via the main entrance;
- Teachers are in their classrooms by 8.50a.m
- 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;
- 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 keypad lock so visitors can be seen prior to being allowed entry. Only authorised visitors are allowed access.

### 3.2 During Lesson Time:

- Staff mark registers promptly and accurately – morning and afternoons and hold them in the classroom;
- 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 ;
- All staff must ensure that external gates to any outside area are closed when children are playing outside;
- If children leave their classroom security 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/carers is sought regularly and maintained;
- Behaviour Management Plans are in place for pupils with challenging behaviour including those who may be 'flight risks';
- There is a conflict between fire and security in schools and security issues take precedent at our School as there are some children in school with challenging behaviour meaning they are a constant and real

flight risk. It is acceptable to secure internal or external exit doors with very simple cabin hooks, sliding bolts or basic door chains at height in the event that a child tries to leave the building without permission or authorisation as the risk of a child escaping is far greater than the risk of a fire starting. It is also acceptable for Maglock buttons and break glass boxes to be sited at height for the same reason. Children are never left unsupervised so there is always an adult available to unhook bolts/hooks/chains and worse-case scenario, a child could easily use a chair to reach the hook/bolt/chain. Maglocks are hard wired to the fire alarm so disengage when the fire alarm sounds. Where this is the case, this is clearly stated in the school Fire Risk Assessment. Generally, these security devices are installed in order to slow down the exit of a child rather than prevent exit altogether. (not currently applicable, but may be in the future);

### **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.
- The use of walkie-talkies/mobile phones by duty staff will be considered to enable speedy responses/action.

### **3.4 End of the School Day:**

- Doors are opened at 3.30p.m.
- Children leave by assigned exits;
- Children in Foundation Stage and Years 1/2 are collected by their parent/carer from infant classroom door. Staff call the children when they see the parent/carer;
- In KS2, children are escorted into the playground to await collection by authorised adults.

### **Non-Collection of Pupils:**

- Children who are not collected go to the classroom/office to wait with their teacher or another suitable member of staff;
- 15 minutes after non-collection at the normal time telephone the parent/carer emergency contact numbers in hierarchical order;
- If no response from parent/carer emergency contact numbers after a number of attempts have been made:
  - 30 minutes after non-collection at the normal time contact the Police and explain that a child has not been collected;
  - 1 hour after non-collection at normal time we will contact Cumbria Safeguarding Hub (Tel: 0333 240 1727) and ask for advice;
- Throughout this time and prior to contacting either the Police or the Safeguarding Hub, continuous attempts must be made to contact the normal emergency contact numbers provided by the parent/carer.

### **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 all residential trips, trips abroad and adventurous activities and parents are notified in advance of all off-site visits;
- Mobile telephones are taken on every visit and emergency contact numbers left at school (and on-line with Kym Allan Health & Safety Consultants Ltd.) for Level 2 trips
- 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;
- In some circumstances, and where it is deemed appropriate, children will be provided with a card which indicates the school name and the name and telephone number of the accommodation at which they are staying;
- Where children are given 'free-time' they will be required to stay together in groups of not less than 3.

### **3.6 After School Clubs:**

- Thorough risk assessments will be carried out;
- A register of pupils should be taken;
- Consent should be obtained from parents with contact numbers and details of how the children are to get home and with whom.

## **4. Procedures in the Event of Child Going Missing**

In the event that a child is lost, staff will ensure a search is made for the child as soon as possible, parents and authorities are notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care is maintained to 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 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:

- Keep calm;
- The following lists held in the classroom/ school office will be checked:
  - Attendance Registers;
  - Off Site Visit Records;
  - Lists of those attending other schools e.g. transition activities.
- If child has registered and the teacher suspects that a child is missing from a lesson or activity, raise the alarm by contacting the Head teacher or nearest member of SMT and the school office 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;
- Designated Safeguarding Lead 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 SMT) will make a search of the premises and outdoor areas. All indoor rooms to be checked systematically first followed by outdoor play areas, 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/carers will be contacted using emergency contact details provided. Encourage them 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/SMT will alert the Police (999) (refer to Section 5)), Cumbria Safeguarding Hub on Tel: 0333 2401727 and our Health & Safety Services Provider: Kym Allan Health and Safety Consultants Ltd
- 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 be contactable by the school at any time 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 that there is a missing child and take their advice;
- The Visit Leader will alert the school who will contact the parents/carers via the emergency contact details;
- If the pupil remains unaccounted for for more than 15 minutes maximum, the police will be informed and their advice taken;
- The school will contact the Health & Safety Services Provider: Kym Allan 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/carers.

##### **2.1.1 When a Child goes Missing Abroad**

- Follow the trips related missing child procedure (above) as far as it applies in a foreign country e.g. how you will go about looking for them initially and who you will contact, if anyone, when searching begins.
- Report appropriately during or after the initial search to every local amenity or authority who can help look/widen the search e.g. security at a mall, the station public announcer to put out a message etc.
- Contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 020 7008 1500 and ask for the Consular Directorate. The Foreign Office will appoint a caseworker if appropriate and contact the British Embassy in the country concerned.

- Contact the school in the UK at the point the child is still missing and the procedure says they must be told. The school Emergency or Critical Incident & Response Plan should then swing into action. It will be for **school** to contact the UK police either for the area where the missing child lives, or the school's own local police station, and ask them to inform the UK National Central Bureau of Interpol. If necessary, Interpol can then make contact with the relevant foreign police, although they will usually do so only if they consider the missing person to be at risk of harm.
- The Lucie Blackman Trust can also provide help and support tailored to your situation. It is open 24 hours a day and can be contacted on Tel: 020 7047 5060.
- The information the Police will want is in the FCO guide (see below) - name, DOB, passport details, what they are wearing, where they were last seen etc.
- The leader should be focussed on searching and informing local authorities or the UK embassy (if there is one at all; there is only one of these per country, usually in the capital and it has the UK ambassador in it) or UK consulate (very similar to an embassy but lower ranking as it doesn't have the ambassador in it - there might be several of these or none of these, and they can be slow at some tasks because they just pass it on to the embassy).
- If a child has gone missing whilst you are visiting another European Union country, you should contact both the UK police and the police local to where you are staying abroad. You can also call the hotline number 116000 which can put you in contact with a charity in the country you are calling from which deals with missing children. This number does not operate throughout the whole of Europe, but should operate in Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. It also applies in the UK.

**FCO Missing Person Guide:**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/584036/Missing\\_Persons\\_web\\_130117.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584036/Missing_Persons_web_130117.pdf)

**The Lucie Blackman Trust Charity advice:** <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/downloads/what-if-someone-goes-missing-abroad>

## 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 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.

Where a pupil has a known risk of being missing, a risk assessment (Behaviour Management Plan) for the pupil will be written and put in to place.