



Missing Child Policy

This version: October 2019

Updated by: The Headmaster

Policy statement

Children's safety throughout Nursery, Pre Prep and Prep School is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises (during the day)

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the staff member alerts the Headmaster or most senior member of staff present.
- The Headmaster will ensure a thorough search of the buildings and grounds is conducted immediately, allocating colleagues to search specific areas and to report back, while ensuring the safety of other children
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- If the child is not found after 20 minutes, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The Headmaster talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Headmaster contacts the Chair of Governors and reports the incident. The Chairperson, and Headmaster carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately or ensure another Governor does so.

Boarding Child going missing

- Actions may vary depending on at what stage of the evening/night the boarder is observed to be missing, but the general principle of ensuring the safety and minimising the anxiety of the other children should be maintained while ensuring the missing boarder is located.
- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the Headmaster should be alerted
- The Headmaster will ensure a thorough search of the buildings and grounds is conducted immediately, allocating colleagues to search specific areas and to report back, while ensuring the safety of other children
- The boarding register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The Headmaster talks to the Boarding House Parent (and visiting tutor and Gap students if appropriate) to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The Headmaster contacts the Chair of Governors and reports the incident. The Chairperson, and Headmaster carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately or ensure another Governor does so.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Headmaster and/or other staff back in the School. If the Headmaster has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand quietly and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity and only returns to any other likely place where the child might be if they are sure that the other children are not at risk. After five minutes, the following is set into action:
- The Headmaster is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The Headmaster contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The Headmaster contacts the parent.
- Staff take the remaining children back to the school.

- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The Headmaster contacts the Chair of Governors and The Chairperson and Headmaster carry out an investigation and the former may come to the setting immediately or ensure another Governor does so.
- The Headmaster, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Headmaster together with the Chair of Governors, or another member of the Board, speaks to the parent(s).
- The chairperson and Board of Governors, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The staff member who led the trip writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the report.
 - Which staff/children were in the group/outing
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child was last seen.
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements by the Bursar; the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the staff responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Headmaster needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the Headmaster. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Headmaster and the other should be the Chairperson of the board of governors or representative. No matter how understandable the parent’s anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children’s questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Headmaster or chairperson will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice and with the **express permission of the Headmaster.**

This Policy has been reviewed and approved on behalf of the Governing Body

Signed

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Author	Headmaster
Policy initiated	June 2009

Latest Review	October 2019
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References	