



Outcomes
First Group

Missing From School Procedure

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Contents

1. Introduction/Guidance	3
2. Definition	3
3. Aim.....	4
4. Reporting procedure	4-5
5. Guidance for staff for pupil leaving site	5-6
6. Educational Visits / Off site activities	6
7. Information required by the police	6-7
8. Pupils returning (including lunch arrangements)	7
9. Missing after school hours.....	7-8
10. Post Incident Actions	8
11. Monitoring Arrangements	8

Supporting Documents

This procedure is supported and underpinned by the other school documents which include:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Person centred behaviour Policy
- Level 1 Pupil Management Plans
- Level 2 Pupil Risk Assessment
- Missing from school (MFS) intervention plan
- Pupil RAG rating

1. INTRODUCTION/ GUIDANCE

Safeguarding and missing from school

This non-statutory document provides guidance on the procedures to be followed in the event of a pupil leaving the school premises without permission. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the latest Acorn Education and Care Safeguarding Policy and the schools Safeguarding and person centred behaviour policies.

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. Children who go missing are potentially at risk of harm, and a significant number, because of their circumstances, may face the risk of sexual, criminal or economic exploitation.

Schools are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children, promote children's welfare and prevent concerns from escalating. It is important all staff (including those who do not work directly with children) recognise the important role they play in protecting children.

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. (KCSIE 2024 – see section 18)

This guidance sets out the procedures for maintaining safety and dealing with the unlikely event of a child going missing off school site promptly and efficiently. The guidance aims to be as comprehensive as possible but will inevitably omit some circumstances. If you are in any doubt about the processes to be followed in a specific circumstance, it is important to speak with the DSL and/or SLT as soon as possible.

This guidance complements the statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care but is distinctively different. It also references processes and strategies when a child goes missing whilst in the care of an education setting.

2. DEFINITION

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'. Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities. The safety strategies will be dependent on school phases (ages) and vulnerability of specific pupils. Broadly, we refer to;

- Missing: anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another; and
- Absent: a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be

The police classification of a person as 'missing' or 'absent' will be based on on-going risk assessment. Note that 'absent' within this definition would not include those defined as 'away from placement without authorisation' above; a child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'missing' or 'absent' under the police definitions.

Acorn Education and Care has categories for absence, including authorised, unauthorised, missing from home and missing from school. The school has preventative strategies, risk assessments, debriefing with children and young people when issues occur and a set procedure for these circumstances.

3. AIM

Belmont School strives to provide a secure and safe environment where pupils want to come and enjoy learning with others. It is always our expectation that pupils choose to comply with policies and procedures whilst on school premises or under direct supervision of staff whilst on educational visits. The school does not operate a full locked door policy and works with pupils building on their desire to attend and progress here.

There are occasions however where pupils choose to leave, of their own accord, the school site or the supervision of staff whilst on off-site activities. This policy is written to detail the procedures to be followed in the eventuality of a pupil leaving site (or off-site activity) without permission.

4. REPORTING PROCEDURE

In the event of a pupil leaving the school grounds the following procedure should be followed:

Secondary Once a pupil has left site this should immediately be reported to:

- A. The admin office (Kelly Walden, Evie Nolan or Emma Savage)
- B. A member of management (ideally Assistant Pastoral Managers - APM's)/Pastoral Lead, or one of DSL/SLT in their absence)

THIS SHOULD BE DONE BY THE MEMBER OF STAFF WHO HAS WITNESSED / HAS BEEN MADE AWARE OF THEM LEAVING

- Reporting to be done in conjunction with the child's individual risk assessment
- Administration staff will then send out an email to the 'Missing From School staff' email group (SLT/APM's/Safeguarding team) informing of details of the missing pupil (s) including the time of departure.
- Name (s) of any missing pupil (initials only) will also be logged on the board in the admin office.

Once a pupil has been reported as having left site without permission the following actions should be taken:

Once established that a pupil is not returning to school, and their whereabouts can no longer be confirmed, the following will occur:

- Contact to be made with parents/carers (agreed between admin team / pastoral managers / safeguarding team who is best placed to do so) and a course of action decided.
- Senior / Pastoral Management will then decide if there is a need to allocate staff to go out into the local area to try and locate the missing pupil (s).
- Reference to the individual's MFS intervention plan/Level 2 Risk Assessment (if applicable) for agreed actions / strategies.
- Where deemed necessary by SLT/DSL, the police will be contacted to report a child missing from the education setting and this log number (Admin team).
- ***NB – Time duration will be on a case by case basis. As a general rule the police should be contacted if the pupil has not returned within 30 minutes and their whereabouts is unknown – unless stipulated differently on their risk plan.***
- For some students who have been identified as high risk, a report will be made to the police immediately and this will be reflected in their MFS intervention plan/ Missing from school RAG rating.
- In terms of reporting missing pupils to the police: This decision will be dependent on factors such as:
 - a. the level of risk posed to or by the pupil
 - b. the amount of time they have been missing
- Attempts may also be made to contact the pupil via mobile phone if known
- Inform a member of the school safeguarding team (via missing group email circular and/or in person should the need be deemed serious enough).
- Contact made to the relevant Children's Social Care team if applicable (Safeguarding team).
- Details of all correspondence to be logged in the appropriate logs (i.e. Sleuth, isams telephone log)
- c. At the request of parents/carers

Administration staff are able to make the phone call to the police but before doing so the member of staff reporting must call into the office **and provide the required pupil information**. This will include the types of questions asked by the police when reporting a missing student and significantly aid administration staff as they log the incident. (Refer to section 7 for fuller details)

Primary - Once a pupil has left site this should immediately be reported to:

- A. The admin office (Christine Foster/Kelly Walden)
- B. A member of management - ideally Pastoral Managers or one of DSL/SLT in their absence)

THIS SHOULD BE DONE BY THE MEMBER OF STAFF WHO HAS WITNESSED / HAS BEEN MADE AWARE OF THEM LEAVING

- Reporting to be done in conjunction with the child's individual risk assessment/ MFS plan
- If staff are unable to see the pupil, then then a report to the Police to be submitted immediately (due to age, need and level of vulnerability).
- Staff are to continue to make attempts to look for the pupil in conjunction with their MFS intervention plan/Level 2 Risk Assessment.
- Absconding log to be updated.

Once a pupil has been reported as having left site without permission the following actions should be taken:

- Once it has been established that a pupil is not returning to school, and their whereabouts can no longer be established, the following will occur:
- A missing reported to the Police immediately
- Contact to be made with parents/carers (as agreed between admin team / pastoral managers who is best placed to do so) and a course of action decided.
- DSL to make contact with Social Worker or external agencies if applicable
- Reference to the individuals MFS intervention plan/Level 2 Risk Assessment (if applicable) for agreed actions / strategies.
- Contact made to the relevant Children's Social Care team if applicable (Safeguarding team).
- Details of all correspondence to be logged in the appropriate logs (i.e. Sleuth, isams telephone log)

Administration staff are able to make the phone call to the police but before doing so the member of staff reporting must call into the office **and provide the required pupil information**. This will include the types of questions asked by the police when reporting a missing student and significantly aid administration staff as they log the incident. (Refer to section 7 for fuller details)

5. GUIDANCE FOR STAFF WHEN DEALING WITH A PUPIL LEAVING SITE

- When a pupil attempts to leave, or is seen leaving the school premises without authorisation, staff should follow the pupil using appropriate de-escalation techniques to support the child to remain in school. This should be done by following the pupil at a safe distance.

- For the safety of all concerned there should, whenever possible, be at least 2 members of staff involved.
- Staff should use their experience and knowledge of a pupil when attempting to dissuade them from exiting school grounds. Staff supporting should make every attempt to persuade the pupil to return to school and discuss any issues.
- Always bear in mind that pupils choosing to leave site may be upset and as such not thinking rationally.
- If physical intervention is deemed necessary staff should follow the established school policies and procedures along with the principles and techniques of their CPI training. Physical intervention to stop a pupil from leaving site should only be used if:
 - the pupil has been identified as one who may place themselves at risk if allowed to leave site
 - there is an immediate risk to staff, pupils, property or the wider public
 - the risk of allowing the pupil to leave site is greater than that of physically intervening
 - it is stated within a pupil's missing from school plan that he must be stopped from leaving the site
- On no occasion should staff ask other pupils to assist in pursuing another student who is leaving site.
- As a general rule staff should not run or chase after pupils. This should only occur if there is an immediate risk of significant harm to the pupil or other people. Active pursuit may encourage the pupil to leave the immediate vicinity and possibly panic putting themselves at greater risk e.g. running down the drive across a busy road
- If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school staff will, providing there is no increased risk to the pupil, themselves or others, conduct a local search following the pupil at a safe distance.
- Senior /Pastoral Management may also direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle taking a mobile phone to contact school
- Staff will be fully supported by the Senior Management when following the procedures outlined in this policy and in using their professional judgement when making attempts to prevent a pupil from leaving site.
- If staff become aware of the potential for a pupil to leave site they should inform the Pastoral Lead and/or respective APM.

6. EDUCATIONAL VISITS / OFF SITE ACTIVITIES

- If a pupil is to go missing the trip leader must follow the procedures laid out above, directing staff to maintain visual contact with the pupil if possible and informing the school immediately. Staff must be mindful to ensure that they do not compromise the remaining members of the group.

- SLT / Office staff will follow the same procedures for informing all relevant parties although this, including informing the police, may be expedited.
- Actions may include sending additional school staff to aid with any search or assist in managing and/or returning (to base) remaining members of the group.
- The trip leader must remain in regular contact with a member of SLT at school.

7. INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE POLICE

The information required by the Police to assist in locating and returning the pupil to a safe environment is as follows:

- The pupils name/s; date of birth; status (for example looked after child); responsible authority; home contact details;
- 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;
- Medical history, additional needs if relevant;
- Time and location last seen;
- Circumstances or events around going missing with relevant safeguarding information;
- Contact details of safeguarding lead and/or named member of SLT if it was after school hours.
- Where possible the school may be able to provide a photograph of the missing person.

NB – Please remember to inform the police as and when the pupil returns to the school site

8. PUPILS RETURNING

Once a pupil has returned to school the following procedure should be followed:

- It is essential that both the school office (KW/EN/CF/ES) and senior manager/respective pastoral manager **are informed immediately. Administrators will inform the Missing from School email group**

- All other relevant parties, previously contacted, will also be notified.
- In the event that pupils do not return before the end of the school day the police will liaise with those who have parental responsibility.

Lunchtime

- Any pupil returning having previously left the site will be provided with a lunch.
- Should a pupil be off site when lunches are being ordered a sandwich/other suitable substitute will be ordered on their behalf.
- Should a pupil arrive on site after the designated lunch hour (e.g. catering staff have closed up and left for the day) school may be unable to provide a lunch. An alternative may be sourced where possible.

9. MISSING AFTER SCHOOL HOURS

Should any pupil fail to return to school in time for their transport home the following measures will remain in place

- Member of SLT to act as named point of contact providing their contact details to the relevant agencies.
- SLT to ensure they have access to ISAMS / Pupil contact details
- Identified SLT member will also co-ordinate a handover of responsibility to those who hold PR and ensure;
 - Ongoing liaison with the police and social services (where applicable)
 - Maintain ongoing communication with parents/carers
 - Arrange for any further staff deployment where possible (e.g. looking in the local area/ last known area sighted)
 - Ensuring, if possible, there is a means of returning the pupil home if and when they should return to site
 - Maintain regular contact with the Head teacher and/or Designated Safeguarding Lead
 - Member of SLT should remain on site as a base contact until pupil returns +/- formal handover to police/parents take place.

10. POST INCIDENT ACTIONS

Following any episode of a pupil leaving site/ going missing there are several actions that may be taken. These include:

- Repair, reflection and debrief – to reinforce and remind pupils of keeping safe and help work through the reasons for absconding
- Short term interventions:
- Reflective Practice

- Clinical Intervention to be implemented
- Update risk assessment to manage health and safety for individual pupils and alter timetable/ activity access accordingly
- Outdoor play ban (primary)

NB Decision regarding short-term interventions to be overseen by Pastoral Lead/ Senior Management in consultation with relevant staff

- Personal Management Plan (PMP) updated if new or developing behaviour/strategies
- Level 2 Risk Assessment implemented/ written if required
- Missing from school Intervention Plan produced for higher risk pupils
- Pupil escorted to and from taxi by staff each day
- In extreme circumstances when a pupil presents either a persistent or higher level of risk to themselves or others by leaving site he may have to be escorted around the site (e.g. from building to building). **This decision should only be made by a member of SLT** who must then convey it to relevant parties (parents/ carers, social worker etc.) gaining written agreement where necessary. The duration for such action will be overseen by members of senior management.
- Pupil returned home (on the grounds of level of risk being presented to either themselves or others) pending meeting with parents/ carers. This decision to be made only by Senior Management.
- Any issues relating to site security to be reported to SLT for analysis and review.

11. MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, unless changing circumstances require an earlier review.

Staff are expected to remain aware of the needs and strategies of pupils through supporting documents such as Level 1 PMP, Level 2 Risk Assessment, Intervention Plans and the School Rag rating for pupils missing from school.

Additionally, strategies and concerns will continue to be discussed via regular team briefings and meetings.



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