

Child Missing Policy



<i>Policy Ratified on</i>	<i>15/07/23</i> <i>Online via GovernorHub</i>
<i>Signed Chair of Governors</i>	<i>Angela Wrighton</i>
<i>Signed Headteacher</i>	<i>Sarah Young</i>

Child Missing Policy

Philosophy

Sidestrand Hall School has a statutory and moral duty to ensure that all pupils are kept safe and protected whilst boarding at the school.

Aim

Sidestrand Hall School aims to ensure that all pupils remain safe and supported during their time at school. Putting safety measures in place where reasonably practical to prevent school pupils from going missing from school, leaving the school site, getting lost during activities in the community or being abducted. Pupils who go missing are protected in accordance with written guidance and responded to positively on return.

Strategies

Prevention of an incident arising;

The school staff team share the responsibility for keeping pupils at the school safe. A clear understanding and vigilant implementation of the school's procedures is essential in promoting safe practice. Staff strive to build positive and trusting relationships with pupils, ensuring they can feel safe with both staff and the environment. Staff adequately supervise the pupils in line with a staffing ratio to the needs identified to individuals and classes. A risk management plan will be completed as appropriate, if a child has a history of going missing or a potential risk has been identified by family/carer/professional/previous school placement. Pupils are encouraged to talk about problems or concerns with staff. Staff will report issues or concerns to the designated safeguarding lead in line with the schools safeguarding policy.

Management of an incident should a pupil go missing;

Staff should raise concern immediately if they suspect a pupil may be missing. Staff are to follow written procedures identifying the actions to be taken when a pupil is missing. Staff are to take immediate action to obtain information about the whereabouts of a missing pupil, to ensure the welfare and safety of that child. A copy of the pupil's details and a current photo is available for each pupil. . The children are made aware that, if they go missing they will be welcomed back on their return.

Staff are responsible for informing a senior member of staff on site of a pupil being missing. When notified they will decide whether to mobilise additional staff and at what point in time to involve the local Police for assistance. The senior member of staff decides at what point it is necessary to notify parents/carers and in the case of the individual being Looked After Child their case allocated to the Social Worker/Children's Services Emergency Duty Team out of hours (if applicable). If the senior member of staff is not the Head teacher they will notify the Head Teacher of the current situation.

Staff are aware that children may go missing for many reasons, this may include;
Children who go missing due to abuse or neglect from home or to go somewhere they want to be.

Children may have been coerced to go missing by someone else.

There are particular concerns about links between children going missing and the risks of sexual exploitation.

Missing children may also be vulnerable to criminal exploitation being exposed to violent crime, knife crime, gang exploitation, drug selling and drug and alcohol abuse/misuse and being involved in county lines.

The communication difficulties of our children make them even more vulnerable as they may have limited understanding of risks posed by others.

Evidence suggests that distance from home, family and friends is a key factor for Looked After Children going missing and could also be a factor influencing boarding pupils.

Recording

Staff record incidents of a child going missing in the Child Missing Record and on scholar pack under incidents. Entries detail the circumstances of the incident, all actions taken by staff, the circumstances of the pupils return, any reason given by the pupil for being missing and any action taken in the light of those reasons. The child's risk Management Plan will be updated to reflect this. Staff to complete the Herbert Protocol-Missing person information sheet which should be submitted to the Police. A Herbert protocol should be completed if the young person has a history of missing/absconding.

Looked After Children

In the event of a pupil who is classed as a Looked after Child the same procedures are followed, with the awareness of the child's legal status (e.g. voluntary care, or care order). The child's placing authority is to be informed via the allocated case Social Worker/Norfolk Children's Services out of hours Emergency Duty Team Social Worker Tel: 0344 800 8020. On the return to the school, the child is to be seen as soon as possible by his/her Social Worker or person independent of the school to consider the reasons for the child going missing. Any reason given for the going missing is considered in relation to the child's placement and authority care plan.

Children placed with the Local Authority under Section 20, 38 or 31 of the Children's Act 1989 are referred to as Looked After Children.

Norfolk Children's Services regard a child as missing when a person responsible for them does not know where they are.

The Police categories for a child being missing are as follows;

Missing – A child is regarded as missing when their whereabouts cannot be established and the circumstances are out of character or the context suggest the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

Absent – A child is absent if they are not at a place they are expected or required to be.

Absconder – This is when a child or young person who is wanted for an offence, or who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the Criminal Justice Process (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions or residence or Anti-Social Behaviour Injunctions) or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings. They will be considered as a 'wanted person', but there may also be the risk factors for them as a missing child.

Please note the differences between the Police and Children's Services definitions. It is important to note that regardless of definition, social work teams (including Looked after Children teams) should continue to treat the child as missing and therefore vulnerable until they are identified as safe and well. They should continue to take any action necessary to safeguard the child active to them.

Associated Documents

Safeguarding Policy

Behaviour Policy

Police Involvement Policy

'Whistle-blowing' by Staff Policy

Looked After Children Policy

Educational Visits Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Associated Guidance and Legislation

Residential Special School National Minimum Standards

Standard - 20.9 Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy, and any local protocols, in relation to children going missing, and understand their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with the police where appropriate. The school's procedures are compatible with the local runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the school follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority. Staff must keep written records of absent and missing episodes.

Statutory guidance on Children who run away or go missing from home or care

Flowchart showing roles and responsibilities when a child goes missing from care

Norfolk Safeguarding Children's Partnership Procedures

Child Missing Procedures

Staff are to take immediate action to obtain information about the whereabouts of a missing pupil, to ensure the welfare and safety of the pupil.

When first missed or believed to have left the school site.

Upon suspecting a pupil has gone missing from site, staff members will report immediately to the senior member of staff on duty. A brief explanation will be given of why they believe the pupil has gone missing.

Within the first 5 minutes, a full site search will be undertaken. This should be extensive and include 'hiding holes'. It is very important this is done calmly and without fuss. Other pupils may not be used in the on-site search.

Where possible, staff will be dispatched in a vehicle to check local roads.

If at any point the pupil is located off-site by staff in a vehicle, and it is unsafe to put the pupil in the vehicle, then staff should continue to follow and keep the pupil in sight. The school should be called at the earliest opportunity so that Police can be kept updated as to the child's whereabouts. Options at this point are:-

Continue to follow

Continue to follow and try to persuade to return to the vehicle

Call Police for support /help in supporting the Young Person to return.

If pupil is a boarder the search should include pupil's room for evidence of things taken / intentions.

The senior member of staff will make a decision as to when the police should be notified based on the pupil's level of vulnerability and the particular circumstances surrounding the pupil going missing.

After a maximum of 30-minutes of searching police should be called.

Contact the child's parents/carers to inform them of the situation. Requesting parents/carers to contact the school if the pupil should contact them.

Contact Head Teacher/Deputy Head teacher to inform of pupil missing.

Looked After Children - contact the case Social Worker/Team or if out of office hours Norfolk Children's Services Emergency Duty Team (tel:0344 800 8020).

The following procedure for contacting the police (Procedure has been agreed and checked by PC Joey Mezzetti local beat manager)

Phone police - This procedure will be led by the police and may vary slightly depending on their assessment of the risk.

Give your name and the school.

State vulnerability of child (age, cognitive ability) and any specific risk that the Police need to be made aware of.

Give a description of the child.

Ascertain and record details of the Police Officer dealing with the incident and share this with the school Office and Head teacher/Deputy Head teacher or their representative.

Where last seen and direction heading. Previous missing circumstances of missing if any. Herbert protocol missing person information sheet in place?

Name, address, date of birth of pupil.

State if parents have been contacted and were spoken to.

Agree for police to come to the school to collect further description, photo and anything else the police may require.

Agree with the police to keep in contact for updates if the pupil returns either home or to the school.

Police may wish to come and take a statement of the incident that caused the pupil to leave.

Once a pupil has been found and subject to the decision of the Police, the pupil will be returned to parents or school as appropriate.

Head teacher/Deputy Head to be kept constantly updated throughout this process.

While the pupil is missing and after the pupil is returned, the school will decide which member of staff will support the family alongside any other external agency as appropriate.

Details of what assessment needs to be carried out during and following the incident. In particular any assessments made under S17 and S47 of the Children's Act 1989 and how to share this information.

Safe and wellbeing checks are followed up by Police and other agencies. Details of any pertinent information will be recorded on CPoms.

Missing Child/Young Person Detained by Police:-

If missing pupil is found/detained by the Police, then a confidential preliminary discussion will take place between the most appropriate officer, at the appropriate place and the pupil, the purpose of which will be to ascertain why they went missing

If the pupil indicates that they are being abused, then the duty inspector will inform the duty social worker and child protection procedures will commence in line with LSCP (Local Safeguarding Children Partnership) guidelines.

If there appears no cause for concern, the young person will be returned to their place of residence.

On collection or return of the missing pupil.

Once located the pupil should be returned to the school safely accompanied by, wherever possible a staff member familiar to them.

The return of the child must be handled with sensitivity. Food, drink, time to relax should be offered before the incident is investigated further.

Staff to inform parents/carers or Social Worker/Emergency Duty Team in respect to Looked After Children at the earliest opportunity that the pupil has been located and is safe.

Staff to inform the Police at the earliest opportunity that the pupil has been located and is safe. The Police will need to visit to carry out a safe and well check on the pupil.

A staff member of the pupil's choice will be available. In a safe place, the staff will listen and ascertain the reasons for the boarding pupil going missing.

Where it is not possible to obtain the reasons from the boarding pupil, staff will explore the antecedents to the incident in an objective manner, in an attempt to establish the reasons for the pupil's actions.

All possible appropriate actions will be taken to safeguard the pupil's welfare.

Times of actions and decisions should be noted as accurately as possible.

Any report from the pupil that they were missing because of abuse at the school must be referred immediately by the school to the Local Authority Designated Officer. The school will take appropriate steps to protect the pupil and others as necessary.

A meeting and/or telephone conversation with the boarding pupil and their parents/carers will be arranged to discuss the incident. At this meeting and/or telephone conversation, a plan of safeguarding measures will be placed into action to reduce the risk of a repeated missing incident.

Placement plans and risk assessments will need reviewing to include strategies to minimise future risks of repeated missing incidents.

There is no fixed sanction relating to missing children incidents. Each case will be viewed individually.

Staff will record the incident of the child going missing in the Child Missing Record and place a copy of the incident record into that child's individual school/Residential file.