



Pitsford School

School Policy Document

Name of Policy: Children Missing from Education

Audience: Public

Date for Next Review: Spring 2023

SLT Member(s) Responsible for Reviewing and Updating the Policy: FMK

Introduction

There are significant child protection implications when the whereabouts of a child is not known. Pitsford School has a duty to locate, track and monitor children on roll to ensure that they are in education, safe and happy.

This policy complements Working Together to Safeguard Children and related statutory guidance and the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulation volumes in respect of Care planning and review.

This guidance has taken account of the DfE Statutory Guidance on 'Children who run away or go missing from home or care', January 2014.

Definitions

Based on the 'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care' (DfE, 2014) the definitions which should be used when working with children, young people and their families are set out as follows:

- Child: anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' and 'young people' are used throughout this guidance to refer to anyone under the age of 18;
- Young runaway: a child who has run away from their home or care placement, or feels they have been forced or lured to leave;
- Missing child: a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers;
- Looked after child: a child who is looked after by a local authority by reason of a care order, or being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989;
- Responsible local authority: the local authority that is responsible for a looked after child's care and care planning;
- Host local authority: the local authority in which a looked after child is placed when placed out of the responsible local authority's area;
- Care leaver: an eligible, relevant or former relevant child as defined by the Children Act 1989;



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- Missing from care: a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts is not known;
- Away from placement without authorisation: a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police;
- Care leavers cover young people from aged 16-24;

Definition of Children Missing Education

For the purpose of the Statutory Guidance on Children Missing Education (2015), children missing education are defined as those who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more without permission may be at risk of becoming 'children missing education'.

Recognition and Response

Enquiries into the circumstances surrounding a child who is missing from school can be effectively supported by schools adopting an admissions procedure which requires a parent/carer to provide documentary evidence of their own and the child's identity and status in the UK, and the address that they are residing at.

If a member of school/educational establishment/college staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents/ carers, what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability.

From the first day that a child does not attend school and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken:

- The School will make contact with the parents/carers (person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home;
- The outcome of the contact should be assessed and if there are any concerns a consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead should take place to consider the child's vulnerability.

In the following circumstances a referral to children's social care and /or the police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime;
- The child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
- The child is subject of s47 enquiries;
- The child is looked after;



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- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
- There is a history of the family moving frequently;
- There are serious issues of attendance.

The answers to further questions could assist a judgement whether or not to inform LA children's social care and the police:

- In which age range is the child?
- 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?
- 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?
- Rites of passage or forced marriage planned for the child?
- Has the child got a disability and/or special educational needs?
- 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?

The length of time that a child remains out of school could, of itself, be an alerting factor of risk of harm to the child. Accordingly if a situation is not resolved within 3 days Designated Safeguarding Lead will discuss with the Headmaster whether or not a referral should be made to the local authority and/or to the police, and the time-frame for that.

Extended leave of absence can be authorised by the head teacher, at which point a return date is set. In these cases the time line for enquiries starts from when the child does not attend school on the expected return date, not from the day the extended leave started.

Notifications and Actions: What are a school's responsibilities when a child is absent?

The school will always assess the child's safeguarding risk at their own address using thresholds and pathways. For example, is there a risk of forced marriage, child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, radicalisation, honour based violence? If the judgement is the child is at risk of harm, contact the police or social care immediately.



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If a student is absent, all schools have a responsibility to contact the parent or carer on the first day of absence and continue to make every effort to locate the student. When the school has identified the child is not in school, the procedures below will be followed:

Day 1 - Phone call

A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent or carer that the child is safe at home.

Response from parent	Next step from school
There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers	Call back. Risk assess after 2 hours
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is safe with them	Ask for reason for absence and record on your school's attendance management system
The person answering is not the parent/carer and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe	The school's designated lead for child protection should be consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned	School to advise the parent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing• Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searching for the child• Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school, in case he/she has sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment• Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing

Day 2 - Follow up phone call

A subsequent telephone call will be made either from the school landline or preferably a mobile phone.

Day 3 – Write/email parents

Write or email to the parent in plain English, asking for contact to be made with the school immediately. Give the parents/carers 3 working days to make contact and if you are aware that English may not be the parent's first language, copy the letter into a language that may be more accessible.

Day 5/6 - Home visit

Arrange a visit to the home address ensuring that risk assessments are in place



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Once these checks are complete (or within 10 days, whichever is earlier)

If the child has not been seen and the parents or carers have not made contact with either, schools must report the child as missing from education using the online form at West Northamptonshire Council.

The case will be referred to one of a CME Tracking Officers who will complete further investigations and feedback to school.

The CME Tracking Officer will notify the school (usually within 10 working days) if the child can be removed from the school roll.

Child missing from school for more than four weeks

Where a student is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the student can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the student is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

Transfer of information when a student changes school

The Education (Student Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (SI 2000/297) (as amended by SI 2001/1212 and SI 2002/1680) governs the transfer of information between schools.

Regulation 10(3) states that 'The head teacher of the student's old school shall send the information within fifteen school days of the student's ceasing to be registered at the school';

However:

Regulation 10 (4) states that 'This regulation does not apply where it is not reasonably practicable for the head teacher of the old school to ascertain the student's new school or where the student was registered at his old school for less than four weeks'.

If the CME team or any other agency becomes aware the child has moved to another school the service should ensure all relevant agencies are informed so that arrangements can be made to forward records from the previous school.