



Missing Child Policy

Formally adopted by the Governing Board of:-	Fairstead Community Primary and Nursery School
On:-	22/06/2023
Date of next review:-	See policy review list

RESPONSIBILITIES

- It is the Headteacher's and Deputy Headteacher's responsibility to make sure all staff understand these procedures and this policy is implemented.
- It is the responsibility of staff to ensure they read the policy and act at all times according to its guidance.
- It is the responsibility of parents and carers to provide up to date accurate contact information and understand the procedures for collecting and dropping off their child. If a parent takes their child out of school during the school day this must be done using the schools InVentory system with a reason given. If there is no medical or other reason given such as an appointment supported by evidence of the appointment then permission must be sought from a member of SLT.

Introduction

The welfare of all children at Fairstead Community primary & Nursery School is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the School has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times.

Missing Children

It should be noted that a missing child could potentially be at risk of abuse or neglect. We are alert to that possibility and will notify all relevant authorities if it is deemed necessary.

Early Years Foundation Stage

The indoors and outdoors premises are safe and secure. The outside play areas are fenced in and the children are supervised at all times. The staff have relevant qualifications and are present in adequate numbers for safe supervision and more staff are available nearby.

There are security systems in place such as locks on external doors and gates. Any adult or member of staff should lock the doors and gates when entering and exiting the Nursery and Early Years area. Parents are given additional information regarding security in their individual new parents meeting. The children are only released into the care of individuals named by the parents. Written permission from parents or a conversation with the class teacher is requested when children are to be picked up by another adult.

EYFS staff follow the guidance given in the whole school Missing Child Policy, see 'actions to be followed by staff' both at school and on an outings (as appropriate). For children not collected on time and for a wandering child, see the procedures stated in the whole school policy.

In addition to whole school Inset training each phase will have separate meetings to review, monitor and evaluate their practice.

We review these policies regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of very young children.

Actions to be followed by Staff if a Child Goes Missing

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions (with a record kept of each action):

- Inform the Headteacher and Deputy Head

- Check the register in order to ensure that all the other children were present.
- Check the pupil records of the missing child for any relevant details that might have a bearing on the situation (e.g. any court orders in place against either parent, the medical condition of the child etc).
- Check with the school office who will consult the electronic signing in/out system to ensure an adult has not collected the child.
- Ask the children in the missing child's class, calmly, if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the child and whether the child was happy or unhappy.
- Occupy all of the other children in their classroom as normal.
- At the same time, arrange for as many staff as possible to carry out a thorough search, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, including cupboards and toilet areas where a child might hide. The school playgrounds and all the school buildings, including The Annexe (school library) must be checked
- Ensure that searchers are equipped with mobile phones or walkie-talkies.
- Note the names of those involved in the search.

If the child is still missing after 15 minutes the following steps would be taken:

- The Headteacher or Deputy Head (or TLR holder if the Head and Deputy is absent) will ring 999 and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion.
- The Headteacher or Deputy Head (or TLR holder if the Head and Deputy is absent) will ring the parent/carer and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion.
- The Headteacher will arrange for staff to further search the rest of the School premises and grounds.
- If the child's home is within walking distance, a member of staff would set out on foot or in a car, to attempt to catch up with him/her and staff will drive along the main roads to check. They will take a mobile phone with them.
- If the child remains missing, the School would inform:
 - The Chair of Governors
- If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. Witnesses would be interviewed and asked to provide written statements. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

Actions to be followed by Staff if a Child goes missing on a school trip

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other children were present.
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity.
- One adult would retrace steps to the last place where the child was seen, the remaining children staying in one place with the other staff. They will be in mobile phone contact with the other staff
- If the child was not located, the remaining children would be taken back to school or the nearest safe place. Arrangements would be made with school.
- Contact the venue Manager and arrange a search if in a building or on a site such as a garden/ castle / visitor centre etc.
- Ring 999 and inform the police
- Ring school and ask the Headteacher or Deputy Head (or TLR holder if the Head and

Deputy is absent) to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Discuss with them whether they should come to the location or wait at the School.

- Contact the venue Manager and arrange a search if in a building or on a site such as a garden/ castle / visitor centre etc.
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care.
- If the child was not quickly found the School would inform:
 - The Chair of Governors
- If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

Actions to be followed by Staff once the Child is found

- The Headteacher or Deputy Head will contact the parents and any emergency services involved.
- Inform all staff involved in the search that the child has been found.
- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child. Counselling may be necessary
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
- The Headteacher or Deputy Head will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident.
- The Headteacher will instigate an investigation (if appropriate involving Social care/ Local Children Safeguarding Board).
- Media queries should be referred to the Headteacher. No comment should be given to a media representative without prior approval of the Headteacher and following guidance from the Local Authorities Media department
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements.
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appears to have happened, [the purpose of the outing], the length of time that the child was missing and how s/he appears to have gone missing, lessons for the future.

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF WHEN FINDING A CHILD UNSUPERVISED IN SCHOOL – 'WANDERING CHILD'

On discovering a child wandering around the School premises without supervision or in suspicious circumstances:

- Ask where they are going/where they are supposed to be.
- If not satisfied with the explanation escort the child to their classroom and explain to the class teacher what has occurred.
- If the child has been out of a learning area without permission record the incident on Scholapak and ensure the class teacher is made aware of this.

- If the child refuses to go to their correct classroom inform the Deputy Head or Headteacher immediately.

If a pupil absconds from school

There are occasions when pupils may leave the school grounds without permission for a variety of reasons, e.g. they have been teased and/or bullied; they are angry and upset, or the reason may be hard to identify. Whatever the circumstances the following points should be considered:

- If a child is seen to leave the school grounds without permission staff must not run after them, nor should they ask any other child or groups of children to pursue them.
Experience shows that this often exacerbates the situation since it is often the case that a pupil will go no further than outside the school gates and after a short period of time will return of his/her own volition. Active pursuit may encourage the child to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic and possibly put themselves at risk by, for example, running onto a busy road. Every effort, however, should be made to keep visual contact if this is possible.

If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to him/herself or other people, staff should adhere to the Positive Handling Policy (this does not mean that staff should chase after a child in order to hold him/her) and individual risk assessments.

- There may be occasions when a pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school and it is felt to be appropriate by the members of staff dealing with the situation to engage in a local search. If the pupil, upon seeing the staff, continues to run away then active pursuit must not be undertaken since this course of action could also cause the pupil to panic and put him/herself at further risk.
- On all occasions whenever a pupil(s) absconds from school then this should be reported to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) immediately and it will be for them to decide the course of action to be undertaken. In making his/her decision, they will take into account a number of factors:
 - Is the pupil outside the school grounds but still within the immediate vicinity of the school and not showing signs of venturing any further?

In this circumstance the SLT member may decide to do nothing except to monitor the pupil's whereabouts on a regular basis in the expectation that the pupil will eventually return to school of their own volition. If the pupil persists in remaining outside the immediate school grounds then the SLT (or a trusted adult) may eventually decide to approach the pupil to see if the pupil can be persuaded to return to school. Obviously if the pupil, upon the approach of that member of staff, starts to walk further away, then this approach must be abandoned at that time.

Experience shows that in the majority of cases when a pupil remains in the immediate vicinity of the school then he/she will normally return in due course.

- Is the pupil(s) no longer visible and has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds?

In this circumstance the SLT will need to make a decision as to how to take matters further which will have to take into account:

- the age of the pupil(s);
- how vulnerable he/she is;
- the time of day and how long the child has been off site;
- the prevailing weather conditions;
- the nature of the incident which led to the pupil absconding; and
- the pupil's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes.

Having taken such factors into account the SLT member will initiate the following course of action:

- Nominate a team of staff tasked with dealing with the absconding procedures;
- Check that the pupil has not returned to school;
- Ensure the pupil's parents/carers are informed that their son/daughter has absconded;
- If after reviewing the incident and there is no further notification of the pupil's whereabouts, the SLT will report the pupil as missing to the Police and notify the Local Education Authority of their actions;
- Record the details on the relevant systems in which relevant members of staff will be required to outline the nature of any incident (if known) which led to the pupil absconding and a pupil profile (dress, appearance, discerning features) and the SLT dealing with the matter should log the steps that they have taken until the matter is finally resolved.

Pupil returns from absconding

If the pupil returns of their own volition, after having followed the above steps, then the parents/carers and the Police will need to be informed as soon as possible of the pupil's return to school.

Upon their return to school the pupil must be seen by the SLT or Pastoral Manager so that the reasons for the absconson may be discussed in detail and a restorative conversation can take place. This may need to happen at a later point if the child needs time to deescalate and may need to be accompanied by visual aids. At that point a decision will need to be taken as to whether it is appropriate or not for the pupil to receive any further consequences, in line with behaviour policy and individual support plans.

In all circumstances of absconding, parents/carers will be informed unless the SLT recognise, through consultation with the Designated Member of Staff for Safeguarding, that this would lead to risk of harm.

All incidents of absconding must be recorded on the relevant systems and should trigger a review of policy and individual risk assessments.

PROCEDURES TO REDUCE RISK OF A MISSING PUPIL

- Gates and doors are open at 8.35am for children to enter the school
- All gates are closed at 8.45 am
- All registers must be completed on Scholarpak by 9.05 am and 1.05 pm and fireboxes updated at this point.
- Office staff promptly follow up any absences recorded on SIMS registers
- Staff should complete a headcount in the classroom after morning break time
- The site manager must lock and unlock the school gates at the agreed times
- If pupils leave the classroom to work in other areas of school the class teacher and TA must ensure adequate supervision is maintained at all times and pupils are accounted for on return to the classroom

BREAKFAST CLUB

- A register is completed every morning as pupils enter the breakfast club.
- Regular headcounts of pupils happen during breakfast club.
- If a child is missing, the staff will follow the procedures set out in the section - **Actions to be followed by Staff if a Child Goes Missing**

AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS

- A register must be taken at the beginning of the after school club
- All details of the club should be logged in the office e.g. register, start and finish times and provider
- If a child is not at the club, the school office must be informed immediately
- If a child goes missing from a club then staff will follow the procedures set out in- **Actions to be followed by Staff if a Child Goes Missing.**
- Permission slips for clubs must state whether a child is being collected by an adult at the end of the club or returning home on their own.
- On evenings that fall inside of the day light saving hours all children must be collected by an appropriate adult unless express permission has been given by the headteacher
- An adult from school must be available to dismiss the after school club at the main entrance cross-checking children collected /leaving with the register