

Missing Children Policy

Ermine Street Church Academy

First approved by Governors	18th October 2023
Policy to be reviewed annually	
Reviewed by Governors	

Introduction

The safety of our pupils is our priority whilst they are in our care at school. This policy sets out our procedures for reducing the risk of children missing education (or are in danger of missing education), as well as our procedures in the unlikely event of a child missing in school.

The school's definition of a child missing education is based on DfE guidance available via the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

'A compulsory school-age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and who is not receiving a suitable education at home'.

Suitable education is defined as: 'efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he/she may have'.

Alternative provision is defined as: 'educational provision arranged by local authorities or schools, and made off-site by a voluntary or private sector provider or by a Pupil Referral Unit'.

The school's definition of a child missing in school is any child whose whereabouts cannot be verified by the adult responsible for him / her.

Responsibilities

- It is the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of this policy, what is expected, the procedures to follow and to ensure that the policy is reviewed on a regular basis.
- It is the responsibility of all staff to read the policy and act at all times according to its guidance.
- Class teachers, or those undertaking the duty of class teacher, are responsible for completing Attendance Registers. They must be completed accurately and promptly according to guidelines. Completed registers must be returned to the school office before 9:00 a.m. and again before 1:30 p.m.
- It is the Office Staff and attendance officer's responsibility to oversee the Attendance Registers and record any absences in on the school's electronic system along with the reason for absence (See our Attendance Policy). If a child is absent from school without a reason provided, it is the Office Staff's responsibility to make contact with the child's parent(s) / carer(s) to verify the absence immediately.
- If the parent / carer cannot be contacted on the first day of an absence from school, the Office Staff will inform the Headteacher. The Office Staff and/or the Headteacher will carry out further investigations to make contact with the parent / carer e.g. phone calls and home visits
- If school fail to make contact with the parent / carer a request for a Children Missing From Education Investigation will be made (within 10 days). If there is Social Care Involvement or Child Protection then the linked Social Worker will be informed immediately.
- It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and Attendance Officer to monitor children's attendance in school. The Local Authority's 'Three Letter System' will be used to work with parents to secure rapid improvement in attendance.
- Updated contact information for parents and carers is sought and maintained by the School Secretary.
- If a member of staff takes a pupil, group or class out of school they are responsible for informing parents and staff at the school office.
- It is the responsibility of parents to inform the School Office either by email, telephone, note, or in person as soon as they know their child will be absent from school. They should also ensure that they provide correct and updated contact information on a regular basis and know the procedures for handover of their child at the beginning and end of sessions.
- If a parent / carer takes a pupil out of school during the day, they must sign them out at the School Office, providing a reason for the absence. The School Office Staff then updates the school's electronic register with this information.
- It is the responsibility of Governors to ensure they are aware of the school's procedures and to challenge / support the school in its review of this policy.
- It is the responsibility of any adult leading an afterschool club to complete the register provided.

Procedures Aimed at Reducing Risk of a Missing Pupil

Start of the school day:

- The school doors are opened at 8.35 a.m. by members of staff.
- Parents are responsible for their children until their children enter the school building for the start of the school day at 8.40 a.m., unless they are booked into Breakfast Club, or any other before school provision. Children should therefore not arrive at school until the school gates open at 8.30 a.m., at which time they should go straight in to their classrooms, where their class teachers will assume responsibility for them.
- There are clear procedures for welcoming pupils into school. Teachers are in their classrooms from 8:35 a.m.
- Class teachers, or those undertaking the duty of class teacher, complete Attendance Registers. They must be completed accurately and promptly according to guidelines and returned to the school office before 9:00 a.m.
- The School Office Staff and Attendance officer oversee the Attendance Registers and record any absences in on the school's electronic system along with the reason for absence. If a child is absent from school without a reason provided, the School Secretary makes contact with the child's parent(s) / carer(s) to verify the absence immediately.
- If the parent / carer cannot be contacted on the first day of an absence from school, the School Office Staff will inform the Headteacher. The School Office Staff and/or the Headteacher will carry out further investigations to make contact with the parent / carer e.g. phone calls and home visits.
- If school fail to make contact with the parent / carer a request for a Children Missing From Education Investigation will be made (within 10 days). If there is Social Care Involvement or Child Protection then the linked Social Worker will be informed immediately.
- The school doors are closed at 8:45 a.m. and all external gates locked by the member of staff responsible. Before locking the gates, the member of staff will undertake a thorough 'sweep' the playground to ensure all children are in session.
- • After 8:45 a.m. pupils report to the main school office via the main entrance, where they must be signed in by a responsible adult.

During learning time:

- Staff must ensure that the external gates to any outside area are closed when pupils are playing outside.
- If pupils leave the classroom to work in other parts of the school, the class teacher must ensure that adequate supervision is maintained at all times and all pupils are accounted for on return to the classroom.

- If a parent / carer takes a pupil out of school during the day, they must sign them out at the School Office, providing a reason for the absence. The School Office Staff then updates the school's electronic register with this information.

During Break times:

- Duty staff should be on the playground before pupils come out.
- External gates remain closed. Staff patrol all areas in the playground throughout the play session.

At the end of the school day:

- The gates are opened at 3:05pm by the designated member of staff.
- Pupils leave by assigned exits.
- Pupils are collected by their parent / carer from the area outside their classroom doors. Staff release the children onto the playground when they see the parent / carer.
- In Year 5/6, providing pupils have written permission to leave school independently, staff should ensure pupils leave the building in an orderly manner.
- Children who are not collected go to the main office to wait with a member of staff while their parents / carers are contacted.

Educational visits

- Thorough risk assessments and adequate staff / pupil ratios (at least following national guidance and often in excess of this) are provided when pupils leave the school premises. Permission from parents is obtained generically for local area visits within walking distance on admission and once again specifically for each trip outside of walking distance.
- Mobile telephones are taken on every visit and mobile contact numbers left at school.

After School Clubs

- Thorough risk assessments are in place.
- A register of pupils is taken at the beginning of each session and missing pupils accounted for.
- Consent forms are obtained from parents with contact numbers and details of how the pupils are to go home and who with.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing in / from school:

Staff will follow the emergency lost child procedure outlined in Appendix 1

Children missing in education

- As outlined above, it is the School Office Staff and Attendance Officer responsibility to oversee the Attendance Registers and record any absences in on the school's electronic system along with the reason for absence. If a child is absent from school without a reason provided, it is the

School Office Staff's responsibility to make contact with the child's parent(s) / carer(s) to verify the absence immediately.

- If the parent / carer cannot be contacted on the first day of an absence from school, the School Office Staff will inform the Headteacher. The School Office Staff and/or the Headteacher will carry out further investigations to make contact with the parent / carer e.g. phone calls and home visit.
- If school fail to make contact with the parent / carer a request for a Children Missing From Education Investigation will be made (within 10 days). If there is Social Care Involvement or Child Protection then the linked Social Worker will be informed immediately.
- The school will then liaise with the school's Local Authority Attendance Office in accordance with the Local Authority's procedure.

Appendix 1: Emergency Lost Child Procedure

1. Raising the alarm and supporting the parent / carer – class teacher / TA / support staff

- **Do not delay – as soon** as you are aware that a child is missing, go to the office and ask office staff / management team to initiate the lost child procedure.
- Ask the parent / carer to wait in the classroom (if present) or a member of staff (if parent not present) while you raise the alarm, in case the child returns to the classroom.
- Return to the classroom and gather information from the parent / carer (if present) or pupils / staff, using relevant questions on the Information Collection Sheet (Appendix 2).

2a. Initiating the lost child procedure within the school day/ when all staff are present- office staff / senior leadership team

- SLT member:
 - Begin alerting staff (beginning in the entrance, then moving round the school), stating clearly, '**Lost Child Procedure – followed by the name and age of the child.**' Return to the office.
 - **Office Staff member:** check the gates are locked, look for any disturbances to the perimeter fencing and return to the office.

2b. Implementing the lost child procedure within the school day/ when all staff are present – all alerted staff:

- Go directly to your assigned area.
- Make a thorough search of your assigned area first inside, then outside (closing doors behind you, calling the child's name)
- Once you have made a thorough search of the area, return to the office for next instructions.

3a. Initiating the lost child procedure outside of school hours / when staffing is significantly reduced - office staff / senior leadership team

- **Leadership team / office staff member:**

For the first 4 members of staff you meet:

- Ask the first to stand 'lookout' at the main school entrance, with visibility of the main entrance and exit points to the school
- Ask the second to stand 'lookout' at the main rear EYFS gate school entrance

- Ask the third to stand 'lookout' at the main side KS2 gate school entrance
- Ask the fourth to return to the office until you have finished initiating the procedure, in case any relevant phone calls come in
- Thereafter, assign staff areas of the school as you meet staff.
- Once all staff are alerted, return to the office in case anyone tries to contact the school

3b. Implementing the lost child procedure – all alerted staff

- Go directly to your assigned area.
- Make a thorough search of your assigned area first inside, then outside (closing doors behind you, calling the child's name)
- Once you have made a thorough search of the area, return to the office for next instructions.

4. If the child has not been found in school after the initial search

- Head teacher / Senior Leadership team member to accompany parent on usual route home
- Office staff – call any friends / relatives from the list collected by Class Teacher / TA not yet contacted

If the child has not been found after 10 minutes from the initial report of them as missing, the police will be notified by the senior leadership team and parents notified. When contacting parents / carers, staff will ask them to bring with them a recent photograph of their child.

Appendix Two - Lost Child Procedure: Information Collection Sheet

Class teacher / TA to complete with parent / carer in the classroom

- Is there any friend / parent / relative / child minder the child regularly goes home with? Could they have got confused / got the wrong evening? Can we contact them now?

Name:

Number:

Name:

Number:

- Is there anyone at home we can contact? Or any neighbours who could check with, in case the child has gone home? Can we contact them now?

Name:

Number:

Name:

Number:

- Is there anyone who usually walks / drives the same route home?

Name:

Number:

Name:

Number:

- Is there anyone the child likes to play with after school?

Name:

Number:

Name:

Number:

- Is there a favourite place the child likes to go / play outside school?
- Is there any other information that could help?

If the parent / carer has a mobile phone, he / she may wish to text / phone those numbers immediately, otherwise, this sheet can be returned to the office for calls to be made by office staff.