HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY - PART 3

MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES

(When a child goes missing whilst in the care of school staff)

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[1]Approval - These procedures should be approved by the Head teacher.
[2]Review frequency - Head teacher free to determine. DfE strongly advise annually.

REVIEW SHEET

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date (if any).

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision/Review
1	Original	Aug 2015
2	Updated to include additional information from Cumbria SCB and to differentiate these procedures from those for Children being Absent from school/First Day Calling Procedures (school's safeguarding response to children missing education)/Children Missing Education.	July 2017
3	Reviewed – links and telephone numbers amended	Oct 2019
4	Updated contact details for Lucie Blackman Trust	March 2022
5	Full review in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022	Sept 2022
6	Review in light of KCSiE 2023 and minor changes to links to KAHub, external websites and local contact numbers.	Sept 2023
7	Reviewed. Minor changes to update references.	Sept 2024
8	Minor changes to improve clarity and updates to references and contact details.	Sept 2025
9	Updated to include transfer of children from wraparound care to school and vice versa and other minor changes following training with the Police missing persons team. Added Appendix A, Quick Brief 'Making a missing persons report to the Police' (applies to both LAs).	Sept 2026

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MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES

(When a child goes missing whilst in the care of school staff)

In the event of a child going missing whilst in the care of the school staff, the school will put into practice the 'Missing Child Procedures' below. These ensure that a systematic approach to find the child is taken and consideration is given to the levels of risk to the child.

These procedures refer to a child who registers at school in the morning or afternoon or who are expected to attend a wraparound care facility/extended school activity (AM or PM) and then goes missing whilst in the care of school staff (or on an off-site visit) without a satisfactory explanation.

We already have procedures for children who fail to register for statutory school sessions, if there are concerns about the level of attendance, reference should be made to the school Attendance Policy and procedures. A separate procedure exists for children who are absent from education including first day calling procedures when a parent fails to inform the school that their child will be absent.

These procedures should **NOT** be confused with the procedures to follow when a child is absent from school / first day calling i.e. children who do not show up for school (school's safeguarding response to children missing education). Further guidance and model first day calling procedures can be found in the KAHSC 'First day calling procedures and emergency contact form'.

Further and additional guidance on children who go missing during the school day can be found on the Cumberland SCP website – Procedure for Schools – Children who go missing throughout the school day.

It is strongly recommended that at least **3** emergency contact details for parents are held and kept up to date. Contacts should include at least one person who does not normally live in the household. Wherever possible, if the child has a mobile phone, the details of this number should also be held by the school.

1. Definitions

For the purposes of these procedures a child, young person, pupil or student is referred to as a 'child' or a 'pupil' and they are normally under 18 years of age.

Wherever the term 'parent' is used this includes any person with parental authority over the child concerned e.g. carers, legal guardians etc.

Wherever the term 'Head teacher' is used this also refers to any Manager with the equivalent responsibility for children.

'Missing' is when a child's whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the child may be the subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

2. Is the child at significant risk?

A 'child missing during school hours' incident would be prioritised as at significant risk where:

- the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child is in danger through their own vulnerability. Vulnerability characteristics may include:
  - the age of the child;
  - child on a plan (Early Help, Child in Need, Cared for or Child Protection Plan, Behaviour Management, Education Health Care Plan);
  - a disability/other health condition and/or special educational needs;
  - substance misuse;
- the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger;
- there are indications that the child has already come to harm (exploitation, grooming, radicalisation etc.);

Other contributory factors should be taken into consideration when determining if the child is at significant risk, for example:

- Have there been past concerns about this child and/or 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 abuse?
- Is there concern about the parent's ability to protect the child from harm?
- 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 or intimidation either face to face or online?
- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g. does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed, anxious or isolated prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g. rites of passage, female genital mutilation or forced marriage planned for the child?

Consideration will be given to the individual circumstances and the child's records e.g. whether the child has gone missing before or has a record of leaving school without permission.

3. Procedures aimed at reducing the risk of a missing child

3.1 Start of the school day

See 3.5 below for wraparound care (am and pm) and extended school activities procedures.

- The school should ensure parents are fully aware of the points at which responsibility for the care of their child passes from them to staff and vice versa.
- There are clear procedures for welcoming children into the school. The school doors are closed at 8:50am. After this time, children must report to the main school office via the main entrance.
- Teachers are in their classrooms by 8:40am.
- Registration is taken at the beginning of the school day and immediately after the pupils' return from lunch in order to ensure that all are accounted for.
- The main building only has a single access entrance via a reception desk. Signage directs all visitors to this entrance. Every visitor to the school is channelled through reception. Even when reception is not manned, reception remains the point to which all enquiries should be directed. Signage directs all visitors to this entrance. It is impractical to have access control on all other blocks so children will be safeguarded in these other blocks by other methods such as supervision. At lesson changes the entrances to these blocks are supervised. Unauthorised visitors will be challenged by staff.
- Reception is a secure area and visitors cannot gain access to other parts of the school without being challenged or at least seen by a member of staff.
- Main entrance doors are fitted with a remote access intercom and a camera so that visitors can be seen prior to being allowed entry and those who leave the building can be seen.

3.2 During lesson time

- Staff complete electronic registers promptly and accurately – morning and afternoon.
- All staff must ensure that external gates to areas outside the school grounds are secured when children are learning outside and adequate supervision is maintained.
- If children leave their classroom to work in other parts of the school, the class teacher must ensure that adequate supervision is maintained at all times and all children are accounted for on return to the classroom.
- Updated contact information for parents is sought regularly and maintained. A minimum of **3** contacts are required.
- Behaviour Management Plans are in place for children with challenging behaviour including those who may be a 'flight risk'.
- There is a conflict between fire and security in schools and security issues take precedent at our school. The risk of a child escaping or leaving without permission is far greater than the risk of a fire starting.

There are some children in school with challenging behaviour meaning they are a constant and real flight risk.

Generally, these security devices are installed in order to slow down the exit of a child rather than prevent exit altogether.

It is also acceptable for Maglock buttons and break glass boxes to be sited at height for the same reason. Maglocks are hard wired to the fire alarm so disengage when the fire alarm sounds. Where this is the case, this is clearly stated in the school Fire Risk Assessment. Staff need to be mindful of the fact that where there is a power outage which affects the fire alarm, the doors fitted with Maglocks may disengage and result in a security risk.

3.3 During break time

- Sufficient numbers of duty staff should be on the playground before children come out and for the duration of the break.
- All staff must ensure that external gates to areas outside the school grounds are secured when children are playing outside and adequate supervision is maintained.
- Staff patrol all areas of the playground throughout the session and are allocated specific 'sentry' points during break times.
- Mobiles are used by duty staff to enable speedy responses/action.

3.4 End of the school day

See 3.5 below for wraparound care (am and pm) and extended school activities procedures.

- Gates are opened at 3:15pm
- Children leave by assigned exits.
- In KS2, children are escorted to the cloakroom and staff should ensure they leave the building, walk along the footpath and exit the gate in an orderly manner. Staff follow children to the gate.

3.5 Wraparound care (AM and PM) and extended school activities

- Thorough risk assessments will be carried out;
- Consent will be obtained from parents with contact numbers and details of how the children are to get home following the after school wraparound care or extended school activity and, where necessary, with whom.

3.6 Off-site visits

The school will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that whilst children are on off-site visits, they are appropriately supervised by members of staff, parents, volunteers and others.

- Thorough risk assessments are conducted and adequate staff:pupil ratios are provided when children leave the school premises.
- Permission from parents is obtained generically when children first start their school career, for visits which take place during the school day. For residential trips, trips abroad and adventurous activities additional consent will be sought. Parents are notified in advance of all off-site visits.
- Staff mobile telephones are taken on every visit and emergency contact numbers left at school (and, where the visit has been uploaded, on the educational visits online system (KAHSC or Evolve).
- If the off-site visit involves coach travel or travel on public transport, the group will be counted on and off the vehicle with an additional head count before the vehicle moves off.
- At the venue, all children will be given details of where the meeting point is. Regular head counts will be taken when moving from place to place.
- In some circumstances, and where is it deemed appropriate, children will be provided with a card outlining details of the school (name and telephone number) and, where required, the name and telephone number of the accommodation at which the group are staying.
- Where children are given 'free-time' they will be required to stay together in groups of not less than 3.

4. Procedures in the event of child going missing

In the event that a child goes missing and cannot be accounted for, staff will ensure a systematic search is made for the child (both inside and outside of the building) as soon as possible. Parents and authorities are

notified at the appropriate stage, and a high level of care is maintained of other children at the school while the procedures are followed.

Where a child is thought to have been abducted the Head teacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will **immediately** call the Police using 999.

4.1 During the normal school day

Where there is information to suggest the child is at immediate risk of harm, the Police should be contacted immediately.

In the event of a member of staff fearing that a child has gone missing while at school:

- Remain calm.
- The following lists held in the school office will be checked:
  - Texts, emails and voice mail for those who may have not arrived at school prior to registration;
  - Attendance registers;
  - Off-site register/late book;
  - Off-site visit records;
  - Lists of those attending other schools e.g. transition activities or alternative provision.
- If child has registered and the teacher suspects that a child is missing from a lesson or activity, raise the alarm by informing the Head teacher and DSL (if not one and the same) immediately.
- Staff will use professional judgement and risk assess the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the child's whereabouts before notifying the Police. Timeliness should be on a case-by-case basis;
- Head teacher should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability (refer to Section 3).
- The class teacher will ensure that remaining children are safe and properly supervised. This may necessitate doubling up for a short time.
- Two members of staff (usually at least member of SLT) will make a search of the premises and outdoor areas. All indoor rooms to be checked systematically first followed by outdoor play areas, grounds (including those generally marked 'out of bounds'), car park and adjacent road(s). This will be undertaken as quickly as possible.
- Whilst the initial search is made, the person in charge will make enquiries of all adults in the school to establish the last sighting and time, clothes that the child was wearing, and the possible mental state of the child (happy, upset etc.).
- Where appropriate, check with the child's known friends to establish whether or not they are aware of his/her whereabouts.
- If the child has not been found after 10 minutes from the initial report of them as missing, parents will be contacted using emergency contact details provided and staff will try to contact the child via their mobile telephone if known (if applicable). Encourage parents to keep calm and enquire as to whether the child has returned home or might be making his/her way home. Ask the parents:
  - if there may be a reason for the child to have left school;
  - if there are any known locations the child may frequent or any associates that the child may have left to be with, and with whom parents could make reasonable enquiries;
  - to travel the child's usual route to school to establish whether they may be making their way home. (this may not be appropriate or necessary if the child travels to school via arranged or public transport).
  - to bring a recent photograph of their child.
- Organise a wider search of the area surrounding the school. Mobile phones should be used in order to effectively communicate with the school.
- If the child is not found during the initial search and completion of reasonable actions by both school and parents, the Head teacher will alert the Police (101) (refer to Section 5), Cumberland Children Advice and Support Service (CASS) on Tel: 0333 240 1727 and our Health & Safety Services Provider, the LA Health & Safety Team (Cumberland - 01228 221616/0300 3733730 (out-of-office).
- If the parent arrives at the setting and their child is still missing, ask the parent to return home in the event that their child has managed to make his/her way home by an alternative route. Ask them to

remain at home and to contact others who the child may have gone to visit. The parent must remain contactable by the school at all times in the event that the child is found;
- Telephone lines should remain as free as possible so that messages are not delayed. An independent mobile phone may be used for this purpose.

4.2 Off-site visits

- If a child is lost or thought to be missing at a venue, all other children will be required to remain with their group/visit leader and assemble at a pre-determined meeting point until the child is located.
- A head count will be taken to confirm all those who are present. Supervising adults will be asked when the child was last seen and what clothes he/she was wearing. All adults will be asked to look for the child as they proceed with the visit.
- The Visit Leader will appoint a responsible adult from the group to conduct a search of the immediate area and to alert anyone else who may be able to assist, keeping in contact with the Visit Leader via mobile phone.
- A member of staff or other responsible adult will remain at the meeting point in the event that the missing child turns up there.
- The Visit Leader will alert officials at the venue (if applicable) that there is a missing child and take their advice.
- The Visit Leader will alert the school who will contact the parents via the emergency contact details. If the child goes missing out of normal school hours, the Visit Leader will contact the parents directly.
- If the child remains unaccounted for more than 15 minutes maximum, the local Police will be informed and their advice taken;
- The school will contact their Health & Safety Services Provider: the LA Health & Safety Team;
- If by the end of the visit, if the child is still missing, arrangements will be made for a member of staff or other responsible adult to remain at the venue or vicinity until the child is located. This will be in conjunction with the local Police, the school setting and the parents;
- The school will at this point notify the Cumberland Children Advice and Support Service (CASS) on Tel: 0333 240 1727.

4.2.1 When a child goes missing abroad

- Follow the off-site visits related missing child procedure (above) as far as it applies in a foreign country e.g. how you will go about looking for them initially and who you will contact, if anyone, when searching begins.
- Report appropriately during or after the initial search to every local amenity or authority who can help look/widen the search e.g. security at a mall, the station public announcer to put out a message etc.
- Contact the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office on +44 (0)20 7008 5000 and ask for the Consular team. The Foreign Office will appoint a caseworker if appropriate and contact the British Embassy in the country concerned.
- Contact the school in the UK at the point the child is still missing and the procedure says they must be told. The school Emergency or Critical Incident & Response Plan should then swing into action. It will be for **school** to contact the UK Police either for the area where the missing child lives, or the school's own local Police station, and ask them to inform the UK National Central Bureau of Interpol. If necessary, Interpol can then contact the relevant foreign Police, although they will usually do so only if they consider the missing person to be at risk of harm.
- The Lucie Blackman Trust can also provide help and support tailored to your situation. It is open 24 hours a day and can be contacted on Tel: 01983 718802 - select option 9. When calling from outside the UK remember to add +44 and remove the first Zero.
- The information the Police will want is in the FCO Missing Person Guide - name, DOB, passport details, what they are wearing, where they were last seen etc.
- The leader should be focussed on searching and informing local authorities or the UK Embassy (if there is one at all; there is only one of these per Country, usually in the capital and it has the UK Ambassador in it) or UK Consulate (very similar to an Embassy but lower ranking as it doesn't have the Ambassador in it - there might be several of these or none of these, and they can be slow at some tasks because they just pass it on to the Embassy).

- If a child has gone missing whilst you are visiting a European country, you should contact both the UK Police and the Police local to where you are staying abroad. You can also call the 'Missing Children Europe' hotline on 116 000 which can put you in contact with a charity in the Country you are calling from which deals with missing children. This number operates in over 30 countries across Europe. It also applies in the UK.
- Processes for reporting a missing person in the Country they have gone missing will vary depending on the Country. E.g., they may not accept a missing person report until a certain amount of time has passed nor accept a report in English. The school may have to arrange and pay for a translation service.

5. Notifying the Police

Appendix A provides a brief guide to assist with decision making on considering making a missing persons report to the Police.

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

- The child's name, date of birth, status (for example cared for child), responsible authority.
- 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 and recent photo.
- Medical history, if relevant.
- Time and location last seen.
- Circumstances or events around going missing with relevant safeguarding information.
- What actions have been taken so far in an attempt to locate the child.
- Details of family, friends and associates.
- Contact details of DSL if it was after school hours.

Whilst the search is ongoing, the school will continue to liaise with the Police and act in accordance with Police instructions.

Option 1 – if the child returns before the Police have arrived then the Police must be informed and own school procedures need to be followed.

Option 2 - if the child returns to school of their own volition, then the Police must be informed and own school procedures need to be followed.

Option 3 - if the Police locate the child and bring them back to the school the Police will conduct the safe and well interview and the school will follow School procedure.

Where a child has a known risk of being missing, a risk assessment (Behaviour Management Plan) for the child will be written and implemented.

QuickBrief

MAKING A MISSING PERSONS REPORT TO THE POLICE

This information is provided as guidance; to assist with decision making on considering making a missing persons report to the Police.

1. **Where there is information to suggest an individual is at immediate risk of harm, the police should be contacted immediately.**

2. **Where there are no immediate concerns, reasonable actions should be undertaken, in an attempt to locate that individual, prior to making a report to Police.**

3. **Where reasonable actions have been undertaken and the person has not been located, there may be a requirement for Police intervention. In these circumstances, the Police should be contacted.**

4. **As part of a call to Police all information should be shared regarding the individual and the concerns identified, together with details of actions already taken.**

5. **Where a Police intervention is required, a Police response will be initiated. Please note that there will be occasions where a Police response will not be initiated straight away. Further reasonable enquiries for completion by the caller may be identified during the risk assessment process conducted by Police.**

Cumberland Safeguarding Children Partnership

Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership

Cumbria Constabulary