FAIRFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES

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

At the time of publishing the following roles were held:	
Designated Safeguarding Lead	**Mrs. C. Evans**
Headteacher	**Mr. J. Gale**
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s)	**Mr. J. Gale, Mrs. S. Little, Mrs. S. Johnston and Mrs. L. Fisher**
Designated Teacher for looked-after or previously looked-after children	**Mrs. C. Evans**
Designated Mental Health Lead (not statutory)	**Mr. J. Gale**
Governor with Safeguarding responsibility	**Mrs. C. Jones**

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
1	Original	August 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	October 2019
4	Updated contact details for Lucie Blackman Trust	March 2022
5	Full review in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022	September 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 person's report to the Police' (applies to both LAs).	April 2026
	Reviewed – no changes.	Sept 2026

CONTENTS

1. Definitions 1

2. Is the pupil at significant risk? 1

3. Procedures aimed at reducing the risk of a missing child 2

3.1 Start of the school day 2

3.2 During lesson time 2

3.3 During break time 3

3.4 End of the school day 3

3.5 Off-site visits 3

3.6 Wraparound Care and Clubs 4

4. Procedures in the event of child going missing 4

4.1 During the normal school day 4

4.2 Off-site visits 5

5. Notifying the police 5

6. Appendix A: 7

This page is intentionally blank for printing purposes

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 pupil 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 pupils who fail to register 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.

The Department for Education (DfE) defines a child missing education as a child who is not on a school roll and has been out of education for more than 4 school weeks. The term Children Missing from Education (CME) therefore refers to all children of compulsory school age who are neither registered at a school nor educated otherwise (i.e. home educated or privately educated). Similarly, these procedures should **NOT** be confused with the procedures to follow when children are 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 'Headteacher' is used this also refers to any Manager with the equivalent responsibility for children.

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

2. Is the pupil at significant risk?

A 'pupil missing during school hours' incident would be prioritised as 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, Looked After or Child Protection Plan, Behaviour Management, Education Health Care Plan);
  - a disability/other health condition (including mental health) 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 pupil 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 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 never 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

- 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 pupils into the school. Teachers stand at their classroom doors and the Headteacher and/or Deputy Headteacher are on gate duty before and after school. The school doors are closed at 9am. After this time, pupils must report to the main school office via the main entrance.
- Teachers are in their classrooms by 8.30am.
- 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.
- As a multi-block school, the Key Stage 2 building has a reception desk and access control. Signage directs all visitors to these entrances. It is impractical to have access control on the other blocks so pupils will be safeguarded in that building by other methods, including supervision and coded doors and gates. At lesson changes/assembly times the entrances to these buildings are supervised and there is an escorting pupils' policy in place. Unauthorised visitors will be challenged by staff.
- The main entrance 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 full floored windows so that visitors can be seen prior to being allowed entry. Only authorised visitors are allowed access. All visitors are signed in via our Inventry system and must display their visitor specific lanyard, containing their photographic ID at all times when on the school premises.

3.2 During lesson time

- Staff complete electronic registers promptly and accurately, morning and afternoon, using ScholarPack.
- 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 pupils are accounted for on return to the classroom.
- Updated contact information for parents is sought regularly and maintained. A minimum of **3** contacts is required.
- Behaviour Management Plans are in place for pupils 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 as there are some children in school with challenging behaviour meaning they are a constant and real flight risk.
  It is acceptable to secure internal or external exit doors with very simple cabin hooks, sliding bolts or basic door chains at height in the event that a child tries to leave the building without permission or authorisation as the risk of a child escaping is far greater than the risk of a fire starting. Children are never left unsupervised so there is always an adult available to unhook bolts/hooks/chains and worse-case scenario, a child could easily use a chair to reach the hook/bolt/chain. Generally, these security devices are installed in order to slow down the exit of a child rather than prevent exit altogether.

3.3 During break time

- Sufficient numbers of duty staff are on the playground before children come out and for the duration of the break (See Appendix A).
- 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 have designated areas to observe and patrol to ensure all areas of the playground are manned throughout the session; they are allocated specific 'sentry' points during break times (See Appendix A).
- The use of two-way radios by lunchtime staff is in place and all middays complete a full handover with the class teacher. Additionally, when collecting their radio, each midday supervisor makes note of the number of pupils they have in their class before their duty (this information is located on the Fire Safety Board, next to the KS2 Admin office).

3.4 End of the school day

- Gates are opened at 3pm.
- Children leave by assigned exits.
- Children in Foundation Stage, Years 1/2/3/4 are collected by their parent from their classroom's external door. Staff call the children when they see the parent or nominated alternative adult and hand the child over.
- In Upper KS2, children are escorted to the front of the building where staff ensure the children leave the site, walk along the footpath and exit the gates in an orderly manner.
- Written permission from a parent is sought to confirm if a child is to walk home at the end of the school day.
- Children (all primary school ages) who are expected to leave the school and travel home on official home to school transport are escorted to the appropriate vehicle by staff.

3.5 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 pupils 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 all visits and emergency contact numbers are 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 it is 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, within adult sight.

3.6 Wraparound Care and Clubs

- Thorough risk assessments will be carried out.
- A register of those attending each session will be taken.
- Consent will be obtained from parents with contact numbers and details of how the children are to get home and, where necessary, with whom.
- All facilitators of after school clubs have a specific safeguarding file which contains the register, health information of the pupils attending, an adult safeguarding leaflet and they always carry a radio for communication with a senior member of staff.
- All children will be signed-out once handed over to a parent/ guardian and where a child has permission to walk/cycle independently, this will be noted on the register.
- If any children are failed to be collected, they will remain with two members of staff whilst emergency contacts are called.

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 pupils at the school while the procedures are followed.

Where a child is thought to have been abducted the Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL- Mrs. C. Evans) 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:
  - Attendance registers, including late marks via Inventry;
  - Off-site register;
  - Off-site visit records;
  - Music lesson lists;
  - 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 DSL immediately.
- Staff will use professional judgement and risk assess the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the pupils' whereabouts before notifying the Police. Timeliness should be on a case-by-case basis;
- The DSL should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability (refer to Section 3).
- The class teacher will ensure that remaining pupils are safe and properly supervised. This may necessitate doubling up for a short time.
- Two members of staff (usually at least one 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. 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/two-way radios 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 DSL 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: Kym Allan Safeguarding, Health and Safety Consultants Ltd. (01228 210152)
- 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 pupils will be required to remain with their 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 pupil 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 pupil goes missing out of normal school hours, the Visit Leader will contact the parents directly.
- If the pupil 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: Kym Allan Safeguarding, Health & Safety Consultants Ltd.
- If by the end of the visit, 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

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 (if known).
- 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 pupil will be written and implemented.

6. Appendix A

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

This page is intentionally blank for printing purposes