



Ireby Church of England Primary School

Vision – ‘Created to do good’ – Ephesians 2:10

‘First-day-of-absence’ calling procedure

(The school’s safeguarding response to a child’s unexplained absence from school)

*NOTE: This procedure must **NOT** be confused with the procedure to follow when a child goes missing whilst under the care of school staff. (For that subject please see the school’s ‘Missing Child procedure’.)*

Approved by:¹

Michael John
Head Teacher:

Date: 07/01/2026

Philippa Irving
Chair of Governors:

Date: 07/01/2026

Next review date:² 30/01/2027

¹ This policy requires approval from the Full Governing Body

² This document must be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation/statutory guidance changes.

It is not a requirement for this policy to be published on the school website.

REVIEW SHEET

Each entry in the table below summarises the changes made to this document since the last review.

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
01	New document	13/02/2023
02	Reviewed in light of KAHSC Sept 2023 version v5. Formatting has been changed to ensure clarity regarding when this procedure applies; policy content is unchanged.	31/01/2024
03	Reviewed – no changes required	07/01/2025
04	Reflects V8 of KA policy	07/01/2026

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INTRODUCTION

Nationally, there have been three recent cases which have highlighted the need for robust first-day-of-absence calling procedures and emergency contact forms. These cases emphasise that such procedures are not only important for children who the school may consider 'vulnerable' but are actually important for all children, because the child's absence from school may, in itself, be indicative that they have become vulnerable. The cases also highlight the fact that schools are strongly advised to hold at least 3 emergency contact details including details of someone who does not live in the child's household.

The cases are summarised below for context:

- A mum died from an epileptic seizure while bathing her children aged 3 and 4. The next morning the school phoned home immediately after checking registers, got no answer and so continued ringing through the contact list until they had an answer. A family member went to the house and found mum had died, but the children were safe.
- A dad died from natural causes. Mum was working away from home, and the children were 2 and 4. In the morning mum rang dad, got no answer, but assumed he was doing the school run and continued with her day. The school noted the absence of the 4 year old. They started 'first-day-of-absence calling' 2 hours after registration and rang dad only, leaving a message. They did not ring anyone else on the contact list. They repeated the call to dad at 3.40pm. Mum rang home at the end of her working day, and now worried rang another school mum. Grandmother went to the home and could not gain access because of a key in the lock inside. The Police gained entry at 8pm; the children had been alone with their deceased dad all day.
- A Mum died. School made a call to her when the child was not at school, but the contact list was not used. No further calls were made. A letter was sent to the parent 3 days later. Eventually the house was entered 5 days later. The child, age 6/7, who was non-verbal and had SEN, had also died.

Children who are absent from the school, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so-called 'honour-based' abuse or risk of forced marriage. It is important the school's response to children missing from education supports identifying such abuse and helps prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a cared-for child), where going missing from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

All settings must follow up on absences in a timely manner.

Further information and support, including information schools must provide to the local authority when removing a child from the school roll at standard and non-standard transition points, can be found in the DfE statutory guidance: [Children Missing Education](#) and [Working together to improve school attendance](#). The [EYFS Statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#) provides information for managing and following up absences in settings to which the statutory guidance applies. It is important that staff are aware of their setting's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures.

In order to ensure that schools have appropriate procedures in place which must be shared with staff, below is a model 'first day calling procedure' (School's safeguarding response to children who are absent from school and missing education) along with an example Emergency Contact form which asks for key information. It is recommended that schools review their current procedures and consider adopting these recommendations where appropriate. This is an example emergency contact form that does not need to be used in its entirety if suggested information can be added into current forms/templates/pupil management information systems.

Children placed in Alternative Provision

It is imperative that schools also consider what arrangements have been made when children have been placed in Alternative Provision around Emergency Contacts and First-Day Calling Procedures. In the context of a child being absent without contact from parent please consider the following:

- Who is responsible for following up an absent child?
- Are the Emergency Contacts shared – when/how?
- Would the same first-day calling procedure be followed and by whom?
- Does the school accurately record the attendance of children in Alternative Provision?

It should be noted that these procedures must NOT be confused with the procedures to follow when children go missing whilst under the care of school staff. Further guidance and model missing child procedures can be found on the KAHub. Reference should also be made to the School's Attendance Policy.

FIRST-DAY-OF-ABSENCE CALLING PROCEDURE

The following procedure has been shared with school staff, and will be used to respond to a child's **unexplained** absence from school:

1. Registers saved.
2. Late children checked against registers if recorded separately.
3. Absence calls listened to/attendance emails checked.

4. First day text sent to first name on contact list within half an hour of school start time asking for response.
5. If no response to text start calling first name on contact list within 45 minutes of school start time.
6. Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted.
7. Alert Head teacher that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time.
8. If no reply, send second text and email to first and second contacts on list.
9. Home visit made if possible/appropriate (by school or other agency involved).
10. Contact Police (using the 101 number) and LA Children Missing from Education Officer if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child.

Notes:

- *The above procedure must **NOT** be confused with the procedure to follow when a child goes missing whilst under the care of school staff. (See the school's 'Missing Child procedure').*
- *The School Admission Form which Parents complete for their child includes emergency contact details, and parents are responsible for updating this information, as & when necessary.*
- *The school will retain emergency contact information on the Scholar pack system.*
- *It is imperative that schools also consider what arrangements have been made around Emergency Contacts and first-day-of-absence calling procedures, when children have been placed in Alternative Provision, In the context of a child being absent without contact from parent please consider the following:*
 - *Who is responsible for following up an absent child?*
 - *Are the Emergency Contacts shared – when/how?*
 - *Would the same first-day calling procedure be followed and by whom?*
 - *Does the school accurately record the attendance of children in Alternative Provision?*