MISSING CHILD ON SITE POLICY

Acting immediately. Co-ordinating safely.
Protecting every pupil.



RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL

INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

This policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework
and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures and guidance.

RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

OUR COMMITMENT

At Riverside Bridge School, every policy reflects our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and ambitious school community in which every pupil is valued, every voice matters and every family is respected and supported.

Our policies translate our values into consistent practice. They support high expectations, clear responsibilities, effective partnership and informed decision-making, ensuring that the needs, rights, wellbeing and future outcomes of our pupils remain at the heart of our work.

We work collaboratively, act with integrity and continually reflect upon and improve our practice to achieve the best possible outcomes for every pupil.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Our Policy Principles underpin how we work together and guide the decisions and actions we take to support every pupil and their families.



POLICY PURPOSE & FRAMEWORK

Riverside Bridge School policies set out the expectations, responsibilities and approaches that support safe, consistent and high-quality practice across the school. They translate our values, statutory responsibilities and professional expectations into clear guidance for everyday decision-making and practice.

Each policy forms part of the Riverside Bridge School Policy Framework and should be read alongside any related policies, procedures, statutory guidance and school frameworks referenced within the document.

Policies apply to the members of the school community identified within each document, including staff, governors, parents and carers, volunteers, contractors and other professionals where relevant. Everyone is expected to understand and apply the requirements appropriate to their role and to seek further guidance where clarification is required.

CURRICULUM DRIVERS



Our Drivers provide a shared golden thread across curriculum, school life, policy and leadership, helping ensure that our decisions and practice remain focused on the experiences and futures we want for every pupil.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This policy sets out Riverside Bridge School's approach to preventing and responding to incidents where a pupil cannot be located while under the school's supervision. It explains the responsibilities, preventative arrangements and immediate response procedures that support a calm, coordinated and safeguarding-led response.

At Riverside Bridge School, the safety and welfare of pupils is paramount. Many of our pupils have complex special educational needs and disabilities, including communication differences, autism, sensory processing differences, reduced awareness of danger and varying levels of independence. Some pupils may be unable to communicate their whereabouts, recognise hazards or seek help if they become separated from staff.

For this reason, any situation in which a pupil cannot be immediately accounted for must be treated seriously and responded to without delay. Staff must remain calm, maintain the safety and supervision of other pupils and follow the school's agreed response procedure so that searches, communication and escalation are coordinated effectively.

The school will take reasonable steps to reduce the likelihood of missing child incidents through appropriate supervision, individual risk assessment, secure site arrangements, clear transition procedures and proactive planning for pupils identified as being at increased risk of leaving a supervised area.

Where a pupil cannot be located, the response will be proportionate to the pupil's individual circumstances and level of risk. Decisions will take account of factors including age, communication profile, medical needs, known vulnerabilities, independence, previous incidents and any immediate environmental dangers.

Where there is reason to believe that a pupil has left the school site, the incident will immediately be treated as a high-risk safeguarding concern. Emergency services and parents or carers will be contacted without unnecessary delay where required, and staff will continue to support the coordinated response while maintaining the safety of all other pupils.

Once a pupil has been located, their immediate safety, wellbeing and medical needs will be assessed. The incident will be recorded and reviewed so that any learning can be identified, risk assessments and individual plans updated where required, and preventative arrangements strengthened.

This policy is underpinned by safeguarding, professional curiosity, effective communication and partnership with families and external agencies. It should be read alongside the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Risk Assessment Policy, Positive Support Policy and other relevant procedures.

Our responsibilities to pupils and families

Riverside Bridge School will:

- maintain appropriate supervision and secure site arrangements;
- identify pupils who may be at increased risk of leaving a supervised area;
- use individual risk assessment and planning to reduce foreseeable risk;
- ensure staff understand the immediate response procedure;
- act without delay where a pupil cannot be located;
- coordinate searches and communication clearly;
- use dynamic risk assessment to determine the appropriate level of escalation;
- involve parents or carers promptly and appropriately;
- contact emergency services where required;
- maintain the safety and supervision of other pupils throughout an incident;
- record missing child incidents accurately;
- review every incident and identify any learning or changes required;
- update relevant individual plans, risk assessments and school procedures where necessary.

Through these arrangements, Riverside Bridge School aims to minimise the likelihood of pupils becoming missing, respond rapidly and proportionately where incidents occur and ensure that safeguarding remains central throughout.

RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

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APPROVED BY: Governing Board

APPROVED ON: September 2026

REVIEWED DUE ON: September 2027

Section 01

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Defining application. Clarifying response.

Riverside Bridge School is committed to providing a safe, secure and well-supervised environment in which every pupil is protected from harm. The safety and welfare of pupils is the school's highest priority, and all staff share a collective responsibility for ensuring that pupils remain appropriately supervised throughout the school day.

Due to the complex needs of many pupils attending Riverside Bridge School, including communication differences, autism, sensory processing differences, limited awareness of danger and varying levels of independence, any incident where a pupil cannot be immediately located must be treated seriously and responded to without delay. Some pupils may be unable to communicate their whereabouts, recognise hazards or seek assistance if they become separated from staff.

This policy sets out the school's arrangements for preventing missing child incidents and provides a clear, co-ordinated response where a pupil cannot be located whilst under the school's supervision, whether within the school grounds or following an unauthorised departure from the site. It should be read alongside the school's wider Safeguarding and Child Protection, Health and Safety and Positive Support policies.

Section 02

POLICY STATEMENT

Protecting pupils. Responding promptly. Reducing risk.

Riverside Bridge School is committed to maintaining a safe, secure and well-supervised environment in which every pupil is protected from harm. The school recognises that any incident involving a missing child has the potential to place a pupil at significant risk and therefore requires an immediate, co-ordinated and proportionate response.

The school will take all reasonable steps to prevent missing child incidents through effective supervision, robust risk management, secure site arrangements and individualised planning for pupils who may be at increased risk of leaving a supervised area. Where a pupil cannot be located, staff will act immediately in accordance with this policy to ensure a co-ordinated search, timely communication and appropriate escalation based on the individual circumstances and level of risk.

This policy applies whenever a pupil cannot be accounted for whilst under the supervision of Riverside Bridge School staff, including within the school buildings, outdoor learning environments, playgrounds or elsewhere on the school site. It also outlines the school's response where there is reason to believe a pupil has left the school site without authorisation.

The procedures within this policy are underpinned by the principles of safeguarding, professional curiosity, effective communication and partnership with families and external agencies. Following every missing child incident, the school will review the circumstances to identify any learning, strengthen preventative measures and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

This policy has been developed in accordance with current safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition) and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

Section 03

PRINCIPLES

Safeguarding first. Acting quickly. Learning continuously.

The management of a missing child incident at Riverside Bridge School is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Safeguarding First** - The safety and welfare of the pupil is paramount. Every missing child incident will be treated as a potential safeguarding concern until the pupil has been located and their wellbeing confirmed.
- **Immediate and Co-ordinated Response** - All staff must respond promptly when a pupil cannot be located. Searches and communication will be co-ordinated to ensure an efficient, proportionate and organised response.
- **Dynamic Risk Assessment** - Decisions regarding searches, escalation and emergency services will be based on the individual circumstances of the incident, taking account of the pupil's age, communication profile, medical needs, known vulnerabilities, level of independence and any immediate environmental risks.
- **Clear Communication** - Effective communication between staff, Senior Leadership Team, parents/carers and, where appropriate, external agencies is essential to ensure a co-ordinated response and minimise delay.
- **Prevention Through Planning** - The school is committed to reducing the likelihood of missing child incidents through appropriate supervision, individual risk assessment, secure site arrangements and proactive planning for pupils identified as being at increased risk.
- **Learning and Continuous Improvement** - Every missing child incident, regardless of outcome, will be reviewed to identify learning, strengthen procedures and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Section 04

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Sharing responsibility. Coordinating effectively. Maintaining safety.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and the effective management of a missing child incident relies upon a co-ordinated response from all members of the school community. While specific responsibilities vary according to role, all staff are expected to act promptly, follow agreed procedures and work collaboratively to ensure the safe and timely location of any pupil who cannot be accounted for.

The Governing Board is responsible for ensuring that appropriate safeguarding, health and safety, and risk management arrangements are in place to minimise the risk of missing child incidents. Governors provide strategic oversight by monitoring the effectiveness of the school's policies and seeking assurance that appropriate procedures, training and quality assurance processes are embedded across the school.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that effective systems are in place to prevent and respond to missing child incidents. This includes ensuring that staff receive appropriate training, suitable supervision arrangements are maintained, lessons learned from incidents are implemented and the school continues to review and strengthen its safeguarding arrangements.

During a missing child incident, **a member of the Senior Leadership Team** will co-ordinate the school's response and assume responsibility for managing the incident until it has been resolved. This includes:

- undertaking a dynamic risk assessment;
- co-ordinating searches and allocating search areas;
- maintaining effective communication throughout the incident;
- determining when parents/carers and emergency services should be contacted;
- ensuring appropriate recording, investigation and post-incident review.

Reception staff and the site team play an important operational role in supporting the school's response. Responsibilities may include:

- securing entrances and exits where appropriate;
- assisting with CCTV review;
- providing pupil photographs and relevant information;
- supporting communication with emergency services where required;
- assisting with searches of designated areas.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to maintain appropriate supervision of pupils and remain vigilant at all times. Where a pupil cannot be immediately located, staff must act without delay, follow the procedures outlined within this policy and cooperate fully with the co-ordinated response. Staff are also expected to contribute to any post-incident review to support continuous improvement.

Parents and carers play an important role in supporting the school's preventative arrangements. They are expected to share relevant information regarding any known patterns, triggers or risks that may increase the likelihood of a pupil leaving a supervised area, ensure emergency contact details remain up to date and work in partnership with the school following any incident to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Visitors, volunteers, agency staff and contractors are expected to follow all school safeguarding procedures whilst on site. Where they become aware that a pupil cannot be located, they must immediately inform the nearest member of Riverside Bridge School staff and follow instructions from the Senior Leadership Team. They should not undertake independent searches unless specifically directed to do so.

Section 05

PREVENTING MISSING CHILD INCIDENTS

Identifying risk. Strengthening supervision. Preventing incidents.

Riverside Bridge School recognises that the most effective way of managing missing child incidents is to minimise the likelihood of them occurring. Preventative measures are therefore embedded throughout the school's safeguarding, health and safety, positive support and supervision arrangements. These measures reflect the individual needs of pupils and the specialist nature of the provision.

The school acknowledges that some pupils may be at increased risk of leaving a supervised area due to factors such as autism, communication differences, sensory needs, anxiety, reduced awareness of danger, impulsivity or previous incidents of leaving a supervised area or the school site without agreement. Where appropriate, these risks will be identified through individual planning and managed proactively to reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring.

Section 06

INDIVIDUAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND PREVENTION

Understanding individual risk. Planning proactively. Promoting safe independence.

Individual risk assessment

Where a pupil is identified as being at increased risk of leaving a supervised area, appropriate control measures will be implemented through individual planning. This may include the use of:

- individual risk assessments completed in accordance with the school's Risk Assessment Policy;
- Positive Support and Regulation Plans;
- Individual Healthcare Plans, where relevant;
- additional supervision arrangements;
- environmental adaptations or agreed transition procedures; and
- advice from therapists or other professionals where appropriate.

Control measures will always seek to balance the pupil's safety with the promotion of independence, dignity and Preparation for Adulthood.

Supervision and site security

Effective supervision is a shared responsibility across the school. Staff are expected to maintain appropriate levels of vigilance, particularly during periods of increased movement such as arrivals, departures, transitions, breaktimes and educational activities outside the classroom.

To support pupil safety, Riverside Bridge School maintains secure site arrangements which include controlled access to the school site; secure perimeter fencing and gates; visitor management procedures; CCTV coverage in designated areas; radio communication systems; and agreed supervision arrangements during transitions and outdoor activities.

Staff awareness

All staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and are expected to remain familiar with the individual needs of pupils within their care. Where a pupil presents an increased risk of leaving a supervised area, relevant staff will be informed of the agreed preventative strategies and their responsibilities for maintaining the pupil's safety.

Preventative arrangements will be reviewed whenever there is a significant change in a pupil's needs, following any missing child incident, or where monitoring indicates that existing measures require strengthening.

Section 06

MISSING CHILD RESPONSE PROCEDURE

Acting immediately. Searching systematically. Escalating appropriately.

Any member of staff who becomes aware that a pupil cannot be located must treat the situation seriously and respond immediately. A prompt, calm and co-ordinated response is essential to ensure the pupil is located as quickly and safely as possible while maintaining the supervision of all other pupils.

The response to a missing child incident will follow the staged procedure below. The three- and ten-minute timescales do not prevent earlier escalation where the pupil's individual risk assessment or the circumstances of the incident indicate that immediate action is required.

Immediate response

Where a pupil cannot be immediately located, the member of staff who has responsibility for the pupil will:

- remain calm and immediately check the area where the pupil was last seen;
- ask nearby staff whether they have seen the pupil;
- ensure the supervision of the remaining pupils is maintained; and
- nominate one member of staff, where appropriate, to carry out an immediate search of the surrounding area.

This initial search should be completed **within three minutes** of the pupil being identified as missing.

Escalation to Senior Leadership Team

If the pupil has not been located within **three minutes**, the incident must immediately be escalated to the Senior Leadership Team via the school radio system.

The radio message should clearly state: **"[Class name] - [Pupil's name] is missing."**

The member of the Senior Leadership Team responding to the incident will assume responsibility for co-ordinating the search and undertaking an immediate dynamic risk assessment based upon the pupil's individual needs and the circumstances of the incident.

Co-ordinated search

Once the incident has been escalated, the Search Lead will co-ordinate a systematic search of the school site. This will normally include:

- allocating designated search areas to available staff;
- reviewing CCTV footage where available;
- securing entrances and exits where appropriate;
- pausing non-essential radio traffic;

- suspending non-essential pupil movement across the site where appropriate;
- pausing school tours and directing visitors to a safe location;
- maintaining communication with staff throughout the search.

Reception will support the response by providing a current photograph of the pupil where required and assisting with communication.

Search priorities

Searches should be systematic and proportionate to the circumstances of the incident. Particular attention should be given to areas where pupils may reasonably be located, including:

- classrooms and intervention rooms;
- toilets and changing facilities;
- sensory rooms and quiet spaces;
- storage areas and cupboards;
- corridors and stairwells;
- playgrounds and outdoor learning areas;
- dining and sports facilities;
- any other area identified through the dynamic risk assessment.

Staff must report completed search areas to the Search Lead before moving to another designated area.

Escalation to emergency services

If the pupil has not been located **within ten minutes**, or sooner where the dynamic risk assessment indicates an immediate risk to the pupil's safety, the Search Lead will contact the police and notify the pupil's parents or carers.

Immediate escalation may be required where there is reason to believe that the pupil has:

- left the school site;
- entered an area of significant danger;
- a medical condition that places them at increased risk;
- communication needs that prevent them from seeking help;

- any other vulnerability requiring an urgent emergency response.

Throughout the incident, the Search Lead will continue to review the level of risk and adjust the school's response as new information becomes available.

Section 07

IF A CHILD LEAVES SCHOOL SITE

Recognising high risk. Escalating immediately. Protecting safety.

Where there is reason to believe that a pupil has left the school site, or the dynamic risk assessment indicates that this is likely, the incident will immediately be treated as a high-risk safeguarding concern.

The safety of the pupil remains the overriding priority, and all actions must be directed by the Senior Leadership Team member co-ordinating the incident.

The Search Lead will ensure that:

- the police are contacted immediately where the pupil is believed to have left the site and the circumstances indicate an immediate safeguarding risk, or otherwise in accordance with the dynamic risk assessment.;
- parents or carers are informed without unnecessary delay;
- relevant information, including a recent photograph, clothing description, communication needs, medical information and known risks, is made available to the emergency services;
- staff continue to assist the police and maintain effective communication until the incident is resolved;
- the safety and supervision of all remaining pupils continues to be maintained.

Staff must not place themselves or others at unnecessary risk by pursuing a pupil beyond the school site unless this forms part of an agreed risk assessment or is necessary to prevent an immediate risk of serious harm. Any actions taken must always prioritise personal safety while maintaining visual contact where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Where the pupil is transported to another location by the emergency services or requires medical assessment, the school will ensure that parents or carers are kept informed and that appropriate staff remain available to provide relevant information and support.

Section 08

AFTER THE INCIDENT

Checking wellbeing. Recording accurately. Learning from incidents

Once the pupil has been located, the immediate priority is to ensure their safety, wellbeing and any medical needs are appropriately assessed. Where appropriate, first aid should be administered in accordance with the school's First Aid Policy. Staff should provide reassurance, remain calm and support the pupil in returning safely to their usual environment wherever appropriate.

The Senior Leadership Team member co-ordinating the incident will ensure that:

- the pupil's immediate welfare is assessed, including whether first aid or medical attention is required;
- parents or carers are informed of the outcome of the incident if they have not already been contacted;
- all staff involved are informed that the incident has concluded;
- the incident is accurately recorded and, where safeguarding concerns are identified, recorded on Sleuth in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Records should include, where practicable, the time the pupil was first identified as missing, key actions taken, times of escalation, agencies contacted, the time the pupil was located and any immediate welfare checks undertaken;
- normal school routines are resumed safely once appropriate.

Where appropriate, the school will undertake a review of the incident to understand the circumstances, identify contributory factors and determine whether any additional measures are required to reduce the likelihood of recurrence. This review may include consideration of:

- supervision arrangements;
- environmental factors;
- communication regulation, environmental or situational triggers;
- staffing deployment;
- existing risk assessments or Positive Support and Regulation Plans;
- any lessons identified through staff debrief or CCTV review.

Where the review identifies additional risks or changing needs, relevant documentation, including risk assessments, Positive Support and Regulation Plans or other individual support plans, will be updated accordingly. Parents or carers will be involved in this process where appropriate to ensure that future preventative strategies are developed collaboratively. Where the pupil has a medical condition, consideration should also be given to whether their Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) or Emergency Healthcare Plan (EHP) was followed appropriately and whether any amendments are required.

Any safeguarding concerns identified during or following the incident will be managed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, including referral to external agencies where required.

Section 09

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Reviewing incidents. Identifying patterns. Strengthening practice.

Riverside Bridge School is committed to continuously reviewing and improving its arrangements for preventing and responding to missing child incidents.

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through routine safeguarding oversight, incident reviews and quality assurance processes to ensure that procedures remain effective, proportionate and reflective of the needs of the pupils attending the school.

The school will monitor patterns and trends arising from missing child incidents to identify opportunities to strengthen supervision, risk management, staff training and operational procedures. Learning from incidents will be used to inform future risk assessments, policy development and wider school improvement where appropriate.

Any missing child incident will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team to identify learning, evaluate the effectiveness of the school's response and determine whether any changes are required to policies, procedures, staffing arrangements or individual pupil plans.

The Governing Board will receive appropriate assurance regarding missing child incidents, including incident trends, lessons learned, audit findings, policy compliance and actions implemented to reduce future risk. Significant safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required, following significant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding practice or following a serious incident where lessons learnt indicate that amendments are necessary.

Section 10

RELATED POLICIES & FRAMEWORKS

Connecting practice. Strengthening consistency.

This policy should be read alongside the following Riverside Bridge School policies and frameworks:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Positive Support Policy
- Medical Needs, Medication and Allergy Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Lockdown Policy
- Visitors Policy

APPENDIX

RIVERSIDE BRIDGE SCHOOL
INSPIRE, EMPOWER, ACHIEVE

Missing Child on Site
Quick Response Guide

A calm, prompt and co-ordinated response keeps everyone safe.

1 Pupil cannot be located

- Remain calm.
- Check the immediate area.
- Ask nearby staff.
- Ensure the remaining pupils continue to be supervised.

Complete this initial search within **3 minutes.**

2 Escalate to SLT

If the pupil has not been located after 3 minutes:

- Contact SLT immediately using the school radio.
- State clearly: "[Class] – [Pupil's Name] is missing."
- SLT assumes responsibility for co-ordinating the response.
- Dynamic risk assessment begins.

3 Co-ordinated search

SLT will co-ordinate a systematic search by:

- allocating search areas;
- reviewing CCTV where available;
- securing exits where appropriate;
- pausing non-essential movement around the site;
- preparing the pupil photograph and relevant information.

4 Pupil located?

YES

- Complete welfare check.
- Inform parents/carers.
- Record the incident.
- Review risk assessments where required.
- Resume normal activities safely.

OR

NO

Proceed immediately to Stage 5.

5 Escalate to Police

If the pupil has not been located within 10 minutes, or sooner where the dynamic risk assessment identifies an immediate risk:

- Contact Police.
- Inform parents/carers.
- Continue co-ordinated search.
- Follow police guidance.

10 minutes (OR SOONER IF HIGH RISK)

6 After the incident

- Confirm the pupil's welfare.
- Complete all records.
- Inform relevant staff.
- Review the incident.
- Update risk assessments and support plans where required.
- Share learning with staff.

REMEMBER

- Every missing child incident is a safeguarding concern.
- 3 minutes Escalate to SLT.
- 10 minutes Contact Police (or sooner if the risk assessment indicates).
- Always maintain supervision of remaining pupils.
- Record, review and learn from every incident.

Inspiring communication, empowering independence, achieving brighter futures.