



Saint Jérôme
Church of England
Bilingual School

Missing Child Policy

Policy created:	September 2026: did not previously exist as a standalone document
Date of next review:	September 2027
Review cycle:	Annually, and following any incident to which this policy applied.
Linked policies:	Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Educational Visits Procedures, Attendance Policy, Early Years Foundation Stage Policy, Health, Safety and Security Policy.

Version history

Date	Version	Summary of changes
September 2026	V1	New policy, written from scratch: no procedure existed anywhere for a child going missing during the school day, at collection time, or on an educational visit, distinct from 'children missing from education' (long-term non-attendance), already covered in our Attendance Policy.

Headteacher:

Kate Schutte

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(Kate Schutte)

Co-Chairs of Governors: Approved by Governors on 17th September 2026

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(Vas Lappas and Edward Stowell)

1. Introduction

Saint Jérôme Church of England Bilingual School takes the safety of every pupil in our care extremely seriously, and takes every reasonable precaution to ensure that no child leaves a lesson, session, or the school site unaccompanied and unaccounted for.

This policy sets out what we do in the unlikely event that a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established, whether during the normal school day, at collection time, or on an educational visit. It applies to every pupil, including those in our EYFS setting.

This policy is separate from, and should not be confused with, our Attendance Policy, which covers a child who has not come into school at all, sometimes called a child missing from education. This policy covers a child who is missing after having been in our care that day.

The College of Policing's definition of a missing person applies: anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered missing until located and their safety confirmed. Children are always treated as being at risk of harm if their whereabouts cannot be established, however briefly, and this policy is applied without delay.

2. Prevention

We minimise the risk of a pupil going missing through:

- Accurate registration at the start of both morning and afternoon sessions, in line with our Attendance Policy
- A clear system for staff to account for every pupil when moving between lessons, at breaks and lunchtimes, and when returning to the classroom from another part of the school
- Staff supervising the playground and patrolling zoned areas at breaks and lunchtimes, with senior leaders available at drop-off and collection times
- External gates kept locked once the school day has begun, and staff on the gate at drop-off and collection times
- A clear system for visitors to sign in and out of the building, in line with our Health, Safety and Security Policy
- Up-to-date emergency contact details held for every pupil
- Clear expectations, communicated to parents and carers, of when responsibility for a child passes from parent to school, and back again, at drop-off and collection.

Recognising the Signs Before a Child Goes Missing

Staff are encouraged to recognise the early signs that a pupil may be about to leave a lesson, group or the site without permission, sometimes called going into 'flight', rather than relying only on responding once a child is already missing. This includes a pupil becoming visibly distressed, withdrawn or agitated, heading toward an exit or gate, or a pupil with a known history of leaving becoming unsettled. Where a member of staff notices these signs, they should seek support from a colleague and keep the pupil in sight, rather than wait to see whether the pupil actually leaves before acting.

3. If a Child Goes Missing on the School Site

If a member of staff believes a pupil cannot be accounted for during the school day:

- The member of staff who first notices immediately informs the Headteacher, or the most senior member of staff on site
- The senior member of staff leading the response checks the most likely locations first, including toilets, cloakrooms, the medical room, and any area the pupil was last known to be heading towards
- Other staff are alerted so a wider, coordinated search of the building and grounds can begin without delay, while keeping other pupils safe and adequately supervised throughout
- A member of staff checks the attendance register and asks other pupils, calmly and without causing alarm, when and where the child was last seen
- If the child is not found within 10 minutes of the search beginning, the Headteacher informs the child's parents or carers
- If the child is not found, or is believed to have left the site, the police are called immediately; this should not be delayed until the 10 minutes above have elapsed if there is a specific reason to believe the child has left the site, for example if they were seen going through a gate

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead is informed and kept updated throughout, given the safeguarding implications of any child whose whereabouts are unknown.
- The Co-Chairs of Governors are informed as soon as practicable once the immediate search and safety response is underway, not only after the incident has concluded.

When calling the police, staff provide the child's name, description, what they were wearing, when and where they were last seen, and any other relevant information, such as a known association with a particular place or person.

4. If a Child Is Not Collected

Where a pupil is not collected at the end of the school day, or from a club or activity, and no message has been received from a parent or carer:

- The pupil remains with a member of staff at all times; they are never left alone or sent to wait unsupervised
- Staff attempt to contact the parents or carers, then the emergency contacts held on file
- If no contact can be made within a reasonable time, the Headteacher is informed
- If, after all reasonable attempts, no parent, carer or emergency contact can be reached, the Headteacher may contact the local authority's children's social care team or the police for advice, in line with our safeguarding duties.

A pattern of late collection is addressed directly with the family, and may itself be considered under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy if it raises wider welfare concerns.

5. If a Child Goes Missing on an Educational Visit

This section should be read alongside our Educational Visits Procedures. Every visit leader carries out a headcount at regular intervals throughout a visit, and always before leaving one location for another.

If a pupil is found to be missing on a visit:

- The visit leader immediately ensures the rest of the group is safe, adequately supervised, and accounted for, before anyone begins searching
- Available staff and adult helpers search the immediate area, working with venue staff where applicable, who should be alerted straight away
- If the child is not found within 5 minutes, the visit leader contacts the school, who will inform the Headteacher
- The Headteacher informs the child's parents or carers, and the police, if the child remains missing
- The Headteacher informs the Co-Chairs of Governors as soon as practicable, alongside the actions above, not only once the visit has ended
- The visit continues, where safe and appropriate to do so, for the remaining pupils, under the care of another member of staff, while the visit leader or a nominated deputy focuses on locating the missing child.

6. Early Years Foundation Stage

This policy applies in full to our EYFS setting. In addition, where an incident involves a child missing from our EYFS provision, we notify Ofsted within 14 days, in line with our duties under the EYFS statutory framework. See also our Early Years Foundation Stage Policy.

7. After the Event

Once the child has been found safe, or the incident has otherwise been resolved:

- The Headteacher speaks with the child's parents or carers to discuss what happened
- A written record is made without delay, covering the time, place, staff and pupils present, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, how long the child was missing, and how the incident was resolved
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead considers whether the incident raises any wider safeguarding concern requiring further action under our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

- The Headteacher reviews the incident with relevant staff to identify any lessons for the future, and reports to the Governing Body
- Where appropriate, and without causing alarm, staff speak with other pupils who were present to help them understand what happened and why leaving a group or session unaccompanied is not safe.

Any enquiries from the press are directed to the Headteacher; staff do not speak to the media directly. See also our Positive Communication Policy.