



Welholme
Academy

Missing Child Guidelines and Procedures

September 2022

Mrs N Simpson

Procedure for dealing with a lost or abducted child

Welholme Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and all staff and volunteers share this commitment.

The safety of our children is paramount and we ensure that they are supervised at all times.

These Guidelines and Procedures form part of Welholme Academy and Enquire Learning Trust's existing Safeguarding policies.

Purpose and Aims of this Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy statement is to give all school staff both teaching and non-teaching, a clear understanding of how to respond and who to inform should they discover a child is missing. The aims of this policy statement are to:

- Provide a clear procedure which is understood and effectively implemented by all staff.
- Enable the missing child to be located as quickly as possible and given the appropriate levels of safety and security commensurate with the pupil's age and emotional/ behavioural maturity.

Occasions when a child may go missing from school

Despite ensuring the children are supervised at all times, staff need to be mindful that a child can go missing at any time of the day. These times and examples of the occasions providing opportunities for a child to go missing are:

From an indoor lesson

This could occur when a child is allowed to leave the classroom eg:

- To go to the toilet.
- To collect something from his/her bag in the cloakroom.
- When being sent to another class or teacher.
- To undertake errands.

From an outdoor area

This could occur when the class are outside the building with the children spread out and/or engaged in a variety of activities that make it easy for a child to wander away unnoticed eg:

- During games lessons on the playground or field.
- During other outdoor lessons.
- At the beginning or end of outdoor lessons.
- During end of break times.

Staff need to be vigilant that doors and gates are secured at all times.

Travelling around school

This could occur when the children are spread out and beyond the teacher's direct total supervision
eg:

- Going to and from the hall or outdoors before and after a PE lesson.
- Going to and from the hall before and after assembly.
- Going to and from the classroom at the beginning/end of lunch/break times.
- Movement from lesson to lesson.

Other Times

These include:

- At the start of the school day when children and parents/carers are freely moving about.
- At break and lunch times.
- At the end of the school day when children and parents/carers are freely moving about.
- On outside visits.
- Times when parents/carers are invited into school, eg: concerts, celebration events, Christmas/Summer Fayre.
- After school clubs.

Missing Child from Parental Care

At busy times of the day and during family events at school children occasionally go missing from the care of their parents. In order to try to ensure that the child is found quickly and safely the below procedures will still apply.

Arrangements at the end of After School Clubs

Every After School Club will have a register of children attending. Unless permissions have been obtained in writing to the contrary, all pupils will be passed over to their parents at the end of the club by a member of staff.

Children Walking Unaccompanied

To keep traffic to a minimum outside the school and the immediate area, thus helping to keep it safe for everyone in the community, and to provide the healthiest start and end to the school day for pupils, we recommend that pupils walk to school from home as much as possible, or that parents leave the car at a reasonable distance away and walk from there. Welholme Academy recommends that children are accompanied to and from school by an adult until Year 4. However, legally the decision and responsibility for children walking alone remains with parents/carers and they may make the decision to allow their child to walk unaccompanied when appropriate for the individual child. In order to help children of Year 5 and 6 develop the skills they need to stay safe, both in preparation for secondary school and outside of school, we encourage parents of children from Year 5 onwards to consider allowing them more independence,

depending on the ability of the individual child to cross roads and keep safe, the journey they have to make and their experience in making that journey. It is the parent's choice and responsibility for the school journey and the decision about when your child is ready to walk independently will remain with the parent.

We ensure that all children are supervised at all times but in the unlikely event of a child going missing from school:

The member of staff who discovers the apparent missing child will:

- Alert the rest of the team and the School Office/Principal/Vice-Principal or other senior leader.
- State the name (if known) or a description of the child (if the name is not known).
- State where the child was last seen and what they were doing.
- State how long since they last saw the child and who last saw the child.
- The search will take precedence over all other activities whilst ensuring the safety of all children in school and other staff should join the search under the direction of the senior leader. Staff may need to look at the photo of the child on Bromcom for clarification of what they look like, especially if they are new to school.

When searching for a missing child:

- All inside and outside areas are thoroughly searched, including cupboards, toilets and sheds, ensuring all gates are secured.

If a child has ran away from the school

- Relevant staff will search for the child.
- The School Office will alert the child's parents/carers and inform them of the situation and to check if the child has returned home.
- The School Office will inform the Police and provide all details.
- As soon as the police arrive a member of staff will liaise with them to assist with their search.
- Staff will ensure other children are kept safe and reassured.

Children Seen Running off the Premises

The member of staff witnessing a child running off the premises should:

- Inform the most senior member of staff immediately available.
- As a general rule, and depending on the child, staff should not pursue a child beyond the school boundary but staff will monitor from a distance.

- **DO NOT** run after the child as this may cause the child to run into a dangerous situation. Staff should maintain a watchful eye from a close distance, on the whereabouts of the child and encourage them to return to the building.

In exceptional circumstances where a child is known to be liable to run off the school premises, the school may prepare and enact contingency plans involving named staff. This would form part of the vulnerable child's risk assessment.

Children going missing from an outside visit

- If a child manages to run off the member of staff responsible will give the rest of their group to another member of school staff.
- The adults should remain calm and reassure the children.
- The members of staff will pursue the child whilst in sight. If they lose sight of the child they will use their mobile phone to contact the Police and inform the person leading the visit who will contact the Office Staff at the School.
- If in an area with their own security systems (eg, a shopping centre), alert them to the loss.
- The School Office will contact the parents/carers.

If a child goes missing at lunchtimes

Staff will inform the Principal, Vice Principal and class teacher. They will pass on where and when the child was last seen and how long ago since the child was seen. They will then assist in the organised search for the child or supervise the rest of the children as directed by the Senior Midday Supervisor or Principal/Vice Principal. If appropriate the rest of the children will be brought into school and returned to their classes whilst the search is carried out.

Children who are abducted from school premises

If a child is seen to be taken from the school premises by an unauthorised adult:

- Inform the most senior member of staff immediately available.
- Inform the Designated Lead for Safeguarding/Deputy Designated Lead for Safeguarding or member of the Pastoral Team who will know if the child is subject to a Child Protection plan or is being supported by outside agencies/services. They will contact Children's Services immediately.
- Staff should provide senior leaders with a description of the person taking the child and any witnesses to the abduction. CCTV will be looked at if appropriate.
- Investigate the incident with those involved. Senior Leaders should be informed in which direction the child was taken, by whom, and the time of the abduction.
- Check the child's family contacts.

- The School Office will contact the parents/carers and confirm the named adult who was responsible for collecting the child and a description.
- Alert the police and children's services if appropriate.
- Under the direction of the Senior Leaders school staff will commence a search of the school grounds and surrounding area.
- The incident and outcome should be recorded on CPOMS by relevant staff.

In the event of an attempted abduction of a child being reported:

- Reassure the person reporting the incident and keep them calm.
- Inform a Senior member of staff.
- Staff to talk to the person making the report and record the details - time, date etc.
- Pass on the information to parents/carers and police.
- Put procedures in place to ensure adults are extra vigilant at vulnerable times eg home time.
- A sensitive letter will be sent out to all parents/carers to be extra vigilant in light of the incident.
- The incident and outcome should be recorded on CPOMS by relevant staff.

In the event that a missing child is Subject to a Child Protection Plan

The member of staff who discovers the missing child will follow the procedures set out above. The Designated Lead for Safeguarding/Deputy Designated Lead for Safeguarding or member of the Pastoral Team will know if the child is subject to a Child Protection plan or is being supported by outside agencies/services. They will:

- Contact Children's Services and speak to a Social Worker, immediately.
- If the Social Worker is unavailable, a member of the Pastoral Team will contact the Principal Social Worker (PSW).
- If the PSW is unavailable, a member of the Pastoral Team will contact the Duty Team.
- The Child Protection lead will then inform the Core Group members.
- The incident and outcome should be recorded on CPOMS by relevant staff.

Investigations

When a missing child has been located and safely returned to school/home the Principal will conduct an investigation into the circumstances of the child going missing. This is in order to identify any factors that need to be addressed by the school or communicated to the parents/carers to prevent a recurrence of the child going missing.

- Involved staff will write a report, signed and dated onto CPOMS.
- Ongoing risk assessments will be carried out and an immediate review.

- Children's Services will become involved if appropriate to the incident.

Attendance Monitoring

School monitors a child's attendance very carefully. Any first day absence is followed up by a call to home to check where the child is if the parent/carer has not already called to inform school first. If a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan the child's absence is passed onto Children's Services for their information and monitoring purposes. Any continual/persistent absences will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer.

A child should only leave school during the day with parents/carers who have given a justified reason or shown an appointment card. A child will not be allowed to leave school with anyone that school do not know. Parents/carers should inform school if they are sending an authorised alternative person to collect their child. The child should be signed out at the office giving the date, time and reasons why the child is leaving early.

For more information about monitoring attendance at Welholme please see the school's Attendance Policy at www.welholmeacademy.com

Children Missing in Education

A child will become 'Missing in Education' if they have not been in school or school have not been able to contact the family for 20 sessions (10 days). School will make all reasonable enquiries to locate the child. If the child is unable to be found then schools must inform the School Admissions and Children Missing Education Team.

If school are aware that a child is leaving, staff will request forwarding address and school from the parents/carers.

Communications with the media

Under no circumstances should any member of staff discuss any incidents with any form of media. It should also be encouraged that parents/carers and the child/children concerned also refrain from any discussions with the media as well.

Any media enquiries should be referred to The Principal and Enquire Learning Trust.

All staff are aware of and follow The Enquire Learning Trust and Welholme Academy's Safeguarding Children Policy and the guidelines and procedures will be followed where needed.

These guidelines and procedures will be amended as needed.

By: N. Simpson

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