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TIME

Missing Child Policy

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Contents

1. Introduction3

2. PART ONE: Missing Child Policy.....3

3. Information for Parents3

4. Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing from the school4

5. Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing on an outing4

6. Actions to be followed by staff once the child is found5

7. Actions to be followed if a child who travels independently does not arrive home5

8. Duty to report5

9. PART TWO: Procedures to be followed by staff when a child is not collected on time.....5

10. Monitoring.....6

1. Introduction

The ISI Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements (Sept 2020) states that:

'Schools should have procedures in place to identify and respond to children who go missing, particularly on repeat occasions, and mention these in their policy. Schools should hold more than one emergency contact number for each student, 'where reasonably possible'. Schools should ensure they have more than one emergency contact number, where reasonably possible, for students with fewer than two parents.'

The model policy consists of two parts, the first covering a missing child and the second covering the procedure to be followed by the school in the event of a parent failing to collect a child at the appointed time.

References:

A: ISI Handbook for the Inspection of Schools, The Regulatory Requirements

B: Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE guidance, Sept 2022:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

C: Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfE guidance, July 2018 (updated July 22):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2> Signs of

Abuse NSPCC fact sheet: www.nspcc.org.uk/signsofabuse

2. PART ONE: Missing Child Policy

The welfare of all our children at This Is My Education school is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that he or she is in our care.

3. Information for Parents

Our student supervision policy describes:

- The arrangements for children arriving at school and leaving the premises at the end of the day
- The qualifications of our staff and the arrangements for supervising the children whilst they are in school
- The arrangements for registering the children in both morning and afternoon. For day students we take a register of students at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Parents are responsible for notifying the school if their child is absent for any reason. The school will always contact the parent if the child fails to arrive at school without an explanation.
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the building
- The supervision of the outdoor space and the physical barriers that separate it from the rest of the school

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our students are set out in a detailed policy document: 'Educational Visits for Students'. This document is on our website and can be provided to parents on request. We review all our policies regularly in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of students and read Part 1 of the DfE's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance.

4. Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing from the school

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions during the working day:

- Check with the student's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check with SLT to see if they have an extra-curricular event
- Check the First Aid Room
- Check with reception who will check the signing out/in book
- Inform the SLT
- Ask all of the adults and students calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the student
- Occupy all of the other students in their classroom(s)
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search the school grounds
- Check the doors, gates for signs of entry/exit

A record is kept by the school of any instances in which a student is missing from school without satisfactory permission and documentation, including the action taken and the student's explanation. If the student is still missing, the following steps would be taken:

- Inform the Head of the school and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Ask the Head to ring the student's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the school at once
- The DSL would notify the Police
- The Head would arrange for staff to search the rest of the school premises and grounds
- If the student's home is within walking distance, a member of staff would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with him.
- The DSL would inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the school's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- The school would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority.
- Inform the Chair of Governors
- The school's insurers would be informed
- If the student is injured a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

During the course of the investigation into the missing student, the school, in consultation with the LADO/Police, will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other students and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the student was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

5. Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing on an outing

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other students were present
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity
- Inform the Head and the DSL by mobile phone
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search
- Contact the Police
- The remaining students would be taken back to school

- Ask the Head/DSL to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the venue/ the school at once
- The DSL would inform the LSCB
- The school would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chair of Governors
- The school's insurers would be informed
- If the child is injured a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these would be adjusted.

6. Actions to be followed by staff once the child is found

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- Speak to the other students to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- The Head of School will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the LSCB if necessary)
- The Head School will promise a full investigation (if appropriate involving the LSCB)
- Media queries should be referred to the Head (after discussion with the LSCB if appropriate)
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how s/he appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future.

7. Actions to be followed if a child who travels independently does not arrive home

- HOE (or DH if HOE not available) to be informed
- SLT staff and reception staff to liaise carefully with the parent (or emergency contact if parent not available) regarding details of movements – check if he was marked on/off school bus if applicable
- Identify the last time the child was seen – location and time and by whom
- Speak to the child's friends – did he mention going anywhere other than home? Has there been a miscommunication? Did he go to a friend's house?
- If he has a mobile phone, call his number
- If he walked home, an available member of staff should trace that route by foot/by vehicle asap
- If the child has not made it home within a reasonable period of time beyond the time they were expected to arrive, the police should be informed.

8. Duty to report

The school will inform the local authority of any student who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

9. PART TWO: Procedures to be followed by staff when a child is not collected on time

If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, we will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. If there is no answer, the Teacher/Senior Teacher on duty will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child.

During this time, the child will be safely looked after.

If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers within a one-hour period when the premises are closing, the Head or Senior Teacher on Duty will contact the Social Care Duty Officer on 020 8547 5008. Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. We will make a full written report of the incident.

We undertake to look after the child safely throughout the time that he or she remains under our care, until such a time as he has been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate, alternative car arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety. The school's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the school's child protection policy and procedures detailed in its staff behaviour and child protection policy.

10. Monitoring

Parents attention will be drawn to the existence of this policy and procedure in the school's staff behaviour and child protection and crisis management policy. These policies link between this policy and policies on staff behaviour and child protection, all of which apply to the whole school.

The policy will be kept under regular review and updated bi-annually by the Headteacher or when necessary to keep pace with changes to DfE and ISI guidance.

RELATED POLICIES:

- > Child Protection Policy
- > Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- > Educational Visits Policy
- > Attendance Policy
- > Child Missing Education Policy