



# Missing Student Procedure

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This Procedure is publicly available. It may be shared with parents, agents, partner schools and inspectors on request.

## Document Control

**Title:** Missing Student Procedure

**Owner:** Xiaoying Chi, Director / DSL

**Approved by:** Xiaoying Chi

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**Status:** Public

**Distribution:** Company website; Student/Parent Handbooks; provided to schools and inspectors on request.

**This document is reviewed annually in December and whenever statutory guidance or**

**AEGIS Standards change.**

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## Statement

This procedure is designed to be implemented in cases where students are believed to be absent or missing and April Well Limited is notified or asked to assist. The purpose of the procedure is to support the safe and prompt location of the student by the safest and fastest means possible.

April Well Limited is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

This procedure is required to ensure that when April Well Limited is made aware that a student appears to be missing in the UK (for example during travel, holidays away from school, or whilst staying with parents or other responsible adults), an appropriate response is made. Our role is to support schools, parents and other agencies so that children are located and returned to an approved safe location as soon as practicable.

The benefits of this procedure are that all reports of missing or absent students received by April Well Limited will be recorded. The procedure provides a model and framework for responding to incidents dependent on the level of risk posed. This procedure is applicable to all staff members who may become involved in the initial stages of a report of a missing child or young person.

April Well Limited will respond appropriately to reports of missing and absent persons. Every report will be risk assessed so that those who are vulnerable or represent a high risk are immediately identified. This process shall be on-going, dynamic and supervised in each case with a focus on locating the young person safely and mitigating any risk posed to them or to others. Where criminality is associated with either the initial disappearance or subsequent harbouring of those who wish to remain absent, this will be reported to the police.

April Well Limited will liaise closely with schools following a report that a student has gone missing. April Well Limited is aware that schools may wish to take the lead in the response as they retain the overall duty of care as the student's sponsor. In these cases, April Well Limited will cooperate fully with the school's requests. The procedure outlined in this document assumes that the guardianship organisation is taking the lead in its own response and support, while recognising that the school holds the primary duty of care.

## Definitions:

April Well Limited adopts distinct definitions to determine whether someone is missing or absent in accordance with the National Police Chiefs Council definitions (issued by ACPO in 2013).

The following definitions are included within the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership protocols:

**Absent** – a child or young person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be and there is no apparent risk.

**Missing** – a child or young person whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

### **Supporting Reference Documents:**

NSPCC publications

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Safeguarding Children and Young People from CSE 2009

Scoping Report on Missing and Abducted Children – CEOP

Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Protocols – Reporting children who go missing from care

Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care – DfE 2014

Children Missing Education: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education/children-missing-education-statutory-guidance-for-local-authorities-and-schools>

## **Procedure:**

This workflow applies when a young person is absent (they are not where they are supposed to be but there is no apparent risk) or when they are missing (unexpected and uncharacteristic absence which causes concern for their safety). It applies when April Well Limited is notified about a student who appears to be missing, including during journeys around the UK, during holidays away from school, or at other times when the student is not under the direct supervision of the school.

The DSL Xiaoying Chi, shall manage any cases of absent or missing children or young people, and as such all reports must be brought to the attention of the DSL.

### **Contact details for the DSL**

Job title	Name	Telephone/ Email
DSL	Xiaoying Chi	Telephone: +44 (0)7930 416543  Email: info@aprilwell.co.uk
April Well Limited 24-hour emergency number (out of hours)	Xiaoying Chi	Telephone: +44 (0)7930 416543  Email: info@aprilwell.co.uk

If a child or young person goes missing out of hours and April Well Limited receives a report then the on duty manager is responsible for ensuring the completion of the initial reasonable enquiries where a student is absent/missing during an event (for example half term, exeat or during a suspension/expulsion) which will include:

- if appropriate, reviewing the flight and transfer details (with communication to the airline and transfer company to confirm transport arrangements for the student)
- texting, emailing and phoning the student (leaving a message if no answer) asking them to make contact with the on duty member of staff and repeating this contact every 30 minutes
- texting, emailing and phoning the house parent to collate any relevant information about the whereabouts of the student – this is only possible if the houseparent is at school.
- texting, emailing and phoning the parent/agent to collate any relevant information about the whereabouts of the student
- review of information held on file which may indicate friends or associates who the student may be with.

Any member of staff, or any other adult with genuine concerns for a child or young person's safety, may report them as absent or missing to the police.

Following a risk assessment, the receiving police force will record a report of absent or missing where there are grounds to do so. In cases of missing children or young people, the police will work cooperatively with Children's Social Care staff during any enquiry.

The incident lead is responsible for ensuring the school is informed of any report made to the police of an absent or missing child or young person, as the school retains the overall duty of care. The school should be updated with any developments as they should know the whereabouts of the student at all times, especially those on visas. [The school may decide to take the lead in the incident and will have their own missing child procedure. Where this is the case, the guardianship organisation should take direction from the member of school staff leading the response.]

The incident lead is responsible for ensuring that the parents/agent are informed of any report made to the police of an absent or missing child or young person. The parents/agent should be regularly updated (recommended a minimum of every 4 hours) with any developments. This is to ensure that they are fully informed as to the situation involving their son or daughter.

All missing person reports are to be reviewed by the Director / DSL as soon as practicable, with subsequent on-going daily review until the incident is resolved.

#### **Process and Response – report of a missing child**

1. A child or young person who falls into the 'Missing' Category must be reported to the police as soon as possible by telephoning 101 for a non-emergency report or 999 for an emergency response i.e. information received that a child or young person is in immediate danger of harm.

**YOU WILL NEED TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE TRANSFERRED TO THE FORCE RELEVANT TO THE AREA THE CHILD IS MISSING/ABSENT FROM.**

**IF CALLING 999 YOU WILL NEED TO TELL THE CALL HANDLER TO STAY ON THE LINE WHILE YOU ARE TRANSFERRED TO THE RELEVANT FORCE.**

If the report to the police is not made by the DSL, then the reporter must inform the DSL of the situation as soon as possible.

2. The DSL will ensure that the following information is gathered for the initial report to the police:

- Name, date of birth and nationality of the child or young person;
- The specific concern for the child or young person;
- Whether they are likely to be subjected to crime, a victim of abuse or at risk of sexual exploitation;
- Whether the child or young person is likely to attempt suicide;
- Whether the child or young person is likely to pose a danger to other people;
- What actions have been completed so far to locate the child or young person;
- A description of the child or young person, including their build, hair, clothing and glasses;
- Details of when the child or young person was last seen and with whom;
- Personal details of the child or young person (including any medical conditions or ailments);
- Any previous history of absconding/absenteeism and circumstances of where found;
- The circumstances under which the child or young person is absent;
- Any factors which increase the risk to the child or young person;
- Address of the student's last known location (for example, school boarding house or parental home).

Information that may be needed later to extend investigations if the young person is not located:

- A recent photograph (if available);
- Family addresses and contact telephone numbers;
- Known associates, telephone numbers and addresses frequented;
- The names and addresses of the child or young person's GP and dentist;
- The circumstances under which the child or young person is absent;
- Any factors which increase the risk to the child or young person;
- School and House Parent addresses and contact details;
- Details of any travel and accommodation plans authorised by the overseas parents;
- Details of any social media accounts that may be open to the public.

3. The incident must be recorded as an incident report file with regular updates being added until the matter has been resolved. If a police report has been made, the police incident reference number must be recorded. A record of all emails should be included in the incident report file.

4. Following the report to the police, the parents, the agent (if applicable) and the school must be informed and requested to contact the Incident Lead without delay if the child or young person makes contact.

#### **Process and Response – report of an absent child**

1. If a child or young person is considered to fall within the definition of absent, the decision to record the child as such, together with the evidence supporting that decision must be recorded. The absence of a child or young person must be recorded in the Student File as an 'incident'.
2. Details of children or young people who are absent should still be notified to the police (using the non-emergency telephone number 101 or the emergency telephone number 999) in order that a record of the child or young person's absence can be made, an agreement can be reached on what needs to be done, review times and on-going actions. Although there is an expectation that April Well Limited should continue to make reasonable enquiries to locate the child or young person, the police may also initiate some enquiries as appropriate.
3. The Incident Lead (usually the DSL) will notify the school and parents/agent of the incident. The school and parents/agent should regularly update the Incident Lead with any contact they may have had from the student, or any other information received. All updates provided to the school and parents/agent must be recorded in the incident record.
4. April Well Limited staff will constantly review the circumstances in the light of any enquiries made or information received and inform the police of any developments by telephoning 101, quoting the reference number and providing the new information received. If the period of absence continues for six hours, consideration should be given as to whether the child should still be regarded as absent, or whether they should now be considered as missing. Six hours should be regarded as the maximum period before reconsideration, and in many cases a shorter period would be more appropriate.
5. Any case of an absent child or young person which causes significant concern, or gives rise to the suspicion of harm, should be brought to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Leads without delay and should be reviewed with a view to the possibility that this is a missing child or young person.

### **Informing the media**

The Police are responsible for advising the media regarding children or young people who are reported as missing. The decision to publicise these matters will always be made in consultation with the parents who have to give their signed consent before the media are able to circulate the details. As such, no member of April Well Limited should release any details to the media and must refer any contact from them directly to the relevant force's Media Relations Office.

### **The Return**

1. The police are responsible for ensuring that the child or young person reported missing has returned safe and well and has an opportunity to disclose any relevant issues in the return interview.
2. Where a child or young person has been reported as absent to the police, they will not be given a return interview. In such cases, a member of April Well Limited staff (usually the DSL) will conduct the return interview to allow the child or young person an opportunity to talk to someone about their absence.
3. Where an allegation of any form of child abuse is made or becomes evident, child protection procedures must be implemented, and immediate contact must be made with the police child protection team and the Local Authority Child Protection Service where the child is living.
4. If there is any suggestion that the child has been a victim or perpetrator of crime, consideration

must be given to securing evidence by police including by forensic examination. This should also include securing clothing and delaying washing/bathing in relevant cases. Staff must remember that all necessary permissions must be obtained from the child or young person's parents and/or those with parental responsibility. The priority is to recognise that the welfare of the child or young person is paramount, and careful consideration must be given to the potential effects of such procedures on the child or young person.

5. Any persons informed of the child or young person's absence should be advised of the child or young person's return without delay including the school and parent/agent.
6. For a child or young person who has been reported as absent or missing on two or more occasions, April Well Limited will decide in consultation with others, whether a formal review of the guardianship is required.

### **Children who are absent from education**

As explained in Keeping Children Safe in Education, all staff and other adults supporting students should be aware that children going missing from education, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include 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. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Should April Well Limited become aware that a student we support appears to be missing from education, we will notify the school or college that the student attends immediately.

*Children Missing Education* (2025) is statutory guidance that sets out key principles to enable local authorities in England to implement their legal duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, children missing education (CME).

*Children Missing Education* explains that:

'Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school.'

'Regardless of their circumstances, the law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to their:

- age
- ability
- aptitude
- any special educational needs they may have

This may include suitable education through regular attendance at school, alternative provision or otherwise (for example, EHE).

CME are at significant risk of underachieving, having poorer health outcomes, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) later in life.

No single individual at a school, local authority or related service can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action to help in the identification and support of CME.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all individuals involved in identifying and supporting CME should make sure their approach is child centred.'

### **Review**

We are committed to reviewing our procedure and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on: 04/12/2025

Signed:



Name: *Xiaoying Chi*

Role: Director and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Date: 04/12/2025