Missing Student Procedure

APRIL WELL LIMITED — Company No. 11924473

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Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Xiaoying Chi

(Deputy DSL: n/a – temporarily covered by the DSL)

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This Procedure is publicly available. It may be shared with parents, agents, partner schools and inspectors on request. A copy is shared with all staff and volunteers and any homestays involved in the organisation's arrangements, where applicable.

Document Control

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This document is reviewed annually in October 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 where the student is under their supervision; any applicable Student sponsor duties also remain with the school. 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 may also have duties and its own missing student procedure.

Definitions:

April Well Limited follows the College of Policing missing person definition and the relevant local safeguarding partnership protocols. The term absent below describes an absence where whereabouts and safety have been established; it is not a separate police category for a child whose whereabouts are unknown.

Absent – a child or young person is not where expected, but their whereabouts and safety have been established.
Missing – a person whose whereabouts cannot be established; they remain missing until located and their wellbeing is confirmed.

Supporting Reference Documents:

NSPCC publications
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
Child Sexual Exploitation: Definition and Guide for Practitioners – DfE 2017
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; College of Policing – Missing Persons APP.
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 or missing as defined above. 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. If unavailable, use vetted cover (Emergency Procedure); do not delay police or children's social care referrals. If the DSL is implicated, contact the relevant LADO and police or children's social care directly.

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 DSL or vetted emergency cover 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 – where applicable, contacting the school houseparent, boarding staff or relevant school contact to gather any information about the student's whereabouts.
- 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. These checks and repeat calls must not delay a police report. Call 999 immediately if there is danger; otherwise report promptly on 101 if whereabouts cannot be established. There is no six-hour or 24-hour waiting period.

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 and assess a missing person report 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 may also have safeguarding responsibilities and relevant information about the student. 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. If informing a parent or agent could increase risk or prejudice enquiries, seek police or children's social care advice first and record the decision. This exception applies to notifications throughout this procedure.

All missing person reports are to be reviewed by the Director / DSL as soon as practicable, or by vetted cover if the DSL is unavailable, with immediate reassessment when new information or risk arises and at least 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 without delay 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.
Tell the call handler where the child was last seen and follow their instructions, including any transfer 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). Provide available information and a recent photograph promptly; do not delay reporting to complete this list.

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. Begin the record immediately and submit the initial written record promptly, no later than 24 hours after becoming aware; this deadline does not delay safeguarding action. Keep records secure and share only where necessary and lawful. Self-report to AEGIS significant safeguarding concerns, situations that could appear compromising or be misconstrued, or behaviour below expected standards (6.5.3); notify AEGIS within one working day of complaints or investigations that may damage its reputation, without delaying statutory referrals.

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. Where whereabouts cannot be established or there is any concern for the student's safety, the Incident Lead will contact the police using 101, or 999 if there is immediate risk of harm. The decision and rationale will be recorded.
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 whereabouts or safety can no longer be confirmed, apply the missing child response immediately; do not wait six hours.
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 Lead 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. Police decide whether publicity is necessary and proportionate, considering the child's welfare and consulting parents where appropriate; signed parental consent is not an absolute prerequisite. 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. Notify the police promptly when the child is found and cooperate with their safe and well check. This is distinct from an independent return interview.
2. For children missing from home or care in England, liaise with the relevant local authority so an independent return interview is offered and can take place within 72 hours of return. Follow the relevant local arrangements elsewhere. Offer a supportive conversation after any absence; a DSL conversation does not replace an independent interview.
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. Seek police and medical advice promptly on preserving clothing or other evidence. Do not delay urgent care; examination and any advice about washing must be handled by appropriate professionals with lawful consent or other legal authority. 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 2026, 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. Where the child may meet the CME definition below, also notify the relevant local authority's CME team promptly, including where no school is identified. A missing person response must proceed separately whenever whereabouts are unknown.

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: 21/10/2026

Signed: 

Name: Xiaoying Chi

Role: Director and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Date: 21/10/2026