



HEATHFIELD SCHOOL

Missing Child Policy

Policy Area:	Safeguarding
Relevant Statutory Regulations:	ISSR 2014 - Part 3 Education Act 1996 NMS Part D Standard 8; Part I Standard 20.5 Children Act 2004 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018: Updated in 2020 Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences ("RIDDOR") 2013 DfE: Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014 KCSIE 2024
Key Contact Personnel in School	
Nominated Member of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy:	Deputy Head (Pastoral and Boarding)
Version:	2024.01
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Date of next review:	01 September 2025

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and/or following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures.

Introduction

The welfare of all of the pupils at Heathfield School ("the School") is its paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the School is trained to appreciate that they have a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the pupils safe at all times. The School's staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every pupil is supervised the whole time that they are in the School's care.

School policy and procedures, the parent handbook and the School's website document the following:

- The arrangements for handing over pupils at the beginning and end of day, term and any leave from School;
- The qualifications of staff and the arrangements for supervising the pupils whilst they are in the School;
- All pupils are registered by the tutor in the morning and any absence is identified and followed up by Administrator for Senior Team who acts as the Attendance Officer in conjunction with the Assistant Head (Pastoral & Boarding) and followed up in the case of Boarders by the Houseparent (“HP”) and Day Pupils by the Head of Year. All pupils are registered in all lessons and their attendance checked at all mealtimes. If a boarder, further registrations occur throughout the evening;
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the buildings and grounds; and
- Arrival and Departure arrangements for Day Pupils

Every instance of a pupil’s whereabouts being unknown and giving cause for concern varies and the guidelines outlined below are adapted to each situation. The pupil’s age, their emotional state and the time of day influence what action to take.

When abduction is suspected, the situation will be referred to the Police immediately as a criminal matter. The School recognises that the Police are more likely to respond if any of the following conditions are obtained:

- Pupil is under the age of 14;
- Pupil is in an emotional or depressed state of mind;
- Unusual behaviour prior to disappearance;
- Pupil needs essential medicine or treatment;
- Suspicion of abduction;
- Suspicion of self-harm/suicide;
- Involvement in a violent confrontation prior to disappearance; and/or
- Previously disappeared and suffered, or was exposed to, harm whilst missing.

Definitions

Missing is defined for the purposes of police risk assessment as: Anyone 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.

Absent is defined: a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be. Therefore, it is likely that in most instances a pupil is absent from the place where they are expected.

Procedures to Ensure all Pupils are Present

Parents are responsible for making sure their children come to and are delivered to the School safely. On arrival at the School, all pupils are registered and records are kept on the School’s database system. If a pupil is not present, staff will attempt to contact the parents or guardians of the pupil to find out the reason for the absence. The School is required to hold two emergency contact numbers for each pupil, where reasonably possible.

Pupils are also registered before the start of the afternoon session to check that they are still in School.

As well as these formal measures, staff are also expected to know their classes well enough to check if pupils are missing or unaccounted for. If they are concerned, they should contact the appropriate School staff.

Actions to be Followed if a Pupil Goes Missing from the School Grounds

The School's procedures are designed to ensure that a missing pupil is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a pupil is found to be missing, the School will carry out the following actions:

If a teacher suspects that a pupil is missing from a lesson or activity, they will contact the Reception immediately and inform the absences email address. A member of Senior Leadership Team ("SLT") will be informed if the pupil is not found or further support is required. All remaining pupils will be kept safe in a secure place with adequate adult supervision, including assistance from other School staff if necessary. A full headcount will be taken by the teacher-in-charge and matched against the register; usually the class teacher or nominated person.

The member of staff who should be responsible for the pupil at the time the pupil is missing will:

- Note the time;
- Check the Health Centre list for all pupils who are ill or out of school;
- Check with the House Parent and Head of Year for planned absences;
- Check the Music/ Tennis lesson timetable that they do not have an arranged additional lesson;
- Have they signed out? Check with Reception to see if the pupil has signed out (at weekends the check is with pupil's Houseparent);
- If the pupil is not on any absence or trip list and has not signed out, notify the Head of Year;
- Establish when the pupil was last seen and where and the time; and
- If the pupil has been signed in at breakfast but is not in tutor-time, the member of staff should alert the Houseparent on duty if it is a Boarder, and the Head of Year if it is a Day pupil. They will then undertake an initial search for them, looking in all common areas, bedrooms and do a call out into toilets.

The Duty Houseparent or Head of Year will:

- Check the pupil's room and relevant common room. Check their room for indications of how they may be dressed, where they might have gone – check desk and waste paper baskets for scribbled notes.
- Follow up with the School Nurse as to whether the pupil is in Health Centre /in bed/out of school with permission.
- Check with close friends to see if they have knowledge of the pupil's whereabouts.
- If the pupil has still not been located the Deputy Head (Pastoral and Boarding) ("DH(P&B)") will be informed or in their absence the on-duty SLT member.
- Phone the pupil's mobile to establish whereabouts.
- If the pupil is not answering their mobile phone, check with close friends to see if they know their whereabouts and if they can locate/contact them; ask them to phone as it can be the case a pupil will pick up the phone for a friend.
- Liaise with the School Administration Office to contact local taxi companies.
- Continue to speak with pupil's close friends. When talking to pupils, it will be stressed that they must help because you are worried about the pupil's safety. It can sometimes be easier to get information if a senior pupil talks to the missing pupil's friends. It is vital to gather an understanding of what the pupil was like when last seen.

- Where might they have gone? What emotional state did they appear to be in? Has anything upset them recently? Did they speak to anyone about leaving?
- DH(P&B) to be kept informed of progress. If the pupil is still not found the Headmistress will be informed.

The DH(P&B) will:

- Notify the Headmistress and relevant SLT member.
- Search all areas of the School with house staff on duty (as required).
- If pupil believed to be on site, sound the fire alarm to see if the evacuation encourages their reappearance.
- If the pupil has still not been located within 30 minutes, contact parents to see if they know the pupil's whereabouts and/or report the pupil missing and explain what steps have been taken and next steps.
- If the pupils is still missing the Police will be informed by the DH(P&B)

At this point:

- The Senior member of staff on site will follow the advice given by the Police.
- The Headmistress will inform the Chair of Governors.
- The Insurers will be informed by the Bursar.
- If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE by the Nursing staff.

Once the pupil is found, prior to reintegration, they and, if appropriate, their parents will be spoken to by either the DH(P&B) or Headmistress to discuss the reason for the absence.

The decision will be made at that meeting as to whether the pupil is fit to return immediately to the School or if further action may be needed to deal with the issue which initiated this sudden departure. Help will be offered to the pupil, depending on the circumstance of her absence.

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

Actions to be followed in the case of a Pupil missing during boarding hours (16:00 to 08:00)

Parents will be notified within 30 minutes if the pupil is deemed to be missing and the Police will be notified within the hour.

Actions taken to locate the pupil will include:

- Check the log books, sign in/out books and emails in case absence can be explained;
- Check with House Staff, Health Centre and Graduates and other duty staff to see if they know anything;
- See if any pupils know of their (possible) whereabouts;
- Check Engage, SOCS and meal registers to ascertain know last sighting;
- Check the pupil's room for indications of how they may be dressed, where they might have gone – check desk and waste paper baskets for scribbled notes;
- Ring the missing pupil's mobile (it might be best to ask another pupil to phone on your behalf as the missing pupil may be more likely to pick up) ;
- Inform the Headmistress &/or the DH(P&B) if they are not already aware;
- Contact parents/guardians/siblings;
- Contact taxi companies used by the School; and
- Contact the IT Manager to review CCTV footage.

- Contact the station managers of Ascot and Martins Heron train stations (if considered appropriate).
- Sound the fire alarm, to start a fire evacuation drill, which will assemble the School and might result in an appearance of the missing pupil.

Other people who will be contacted for information include:

- Their friends
- Others in their year group and pupils on their corridor
- Pupils in other year groups who are known friends. When talking to pupils it is important to stress that they must help because you are worried about the pupil's safety. It can sometimes be easier to get information if a senior pupil talks to the missing pupil's friends.
- Chaplain and members of staff they are friendly with
- Boyfriends/girlfriends and other non-Heathfield friends

Questions to be asked in the search for the missing pupil include:

- Have they signed out?
- Is there a School activity or event that they might be on?
- Have they been ill or injured and gone to Health Centre?
- When were they last seen?
- Who was with them?
- Where might they have gone?
- What emotional state did they appear to be in?
- Has anything upset them recently?
- Did they speak to anyone about leaving?
- Who are their main friends at School?
- Do they have a mobile phone and what is the number?
- Do they have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Is there any reason to believe they might have been abducted? (e.g. family custody dispute; very wealthy/prominent parents)

If the pupil may have gone home, then try to make contact; if no reply, the Police may be willing to call at the home address.

If the pupil has still not been located, the DH(P&B) will alert the Headmistress and is to contact parents to see if they know pupil's whereabouts and/or report the pupil missing and explain what steps have been taken and next steps.

If the pupil's whereabouts are still unknown DH(P&B) to contact the Police and Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Partnership. The School would cooperate fully with any Police advice/investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care.

- The Headmistress to inform the Chairman of Governors.
- The Insurers would be informed by the Bursar.
- If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

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

Actions to be Followed in the Case of a Pupil Missing During an Educational Visit/Trip

When on an educational visit outside the School environment staff will ensure they take precautions to ensure the safety of all pupils in accordance with the School's Educational and Co-curricular Trips and Visits Policy and refer to the individual Risk Assessment prepared for that trip. Staff also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Staff should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation. Parents will be notified within 30 minutes if the pupil is deemed to be missing and the Police will be notified within the hour.

If a pupil goes missing on a trip the following action will be taken:

- The Trip Leader will take an immediate head count to ensure that all other pupils are present.
- Lead member of staff will (or instruct another member of staff to) call the pupil's mobile.
- If the pupil is not answering their mobile phone, the Trip Leader will check with close friends to see if they know the whereabouts of the missing pupil and if they can locate/contact them.
- If pupil is still missing the lead member of staff will instruct a search of the immediate vicinity.
- If the pupil is still not found the remaining pupils will be taken back to the School where appropriate or to the base in which the trip is whilst the lead member of staff will remain in situ. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for this to be delegated to another, suitable experienced, member of staff.
- At this point the Lead member of staff will inform the DH(P&B) (or the DSL) by mobile phone. If uncontactable then the Duty SLT member.
- DH(P&B) (or Duty SLT member) to inform the Headmistress.
- Lead member of staff (or designate) to contact the venue manager and arrange a wider search, if appropriate.
- If the pupil has still not been located, the DH(P&B) is to contact parents to see if they know the pupil's whereabouts and/or report the pupil missing and explain what steps have been taken and next steps.
- If the pupil's whereabouts are still unknown DH(P&B) to contact the Police and Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Partnership.
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police advice/investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care.
- The Headmistress will inform the Chair of Governors.
- The Insurers will be informed by the Bursar.
- If the pupil is injured, a report will be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

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

Action to be Followed After the Pupil is Found

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the pupil.
- Speak to the other pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing and to ensure they are safe and secure.
- Media queries should be referred to the Director of Marketing and Admissions, who will liaise with the Headmistress.
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements.
- If disciplinary action is required this must involve consultation with the Headmistress. Ensure all parents and relevant parties know that the pupil has been found. A timeline report should be written up about what happened, how the situation was managed and the outcome.

- The report should be detailed covering time, place, numbers of staff and pupils, when the pupil was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the pupil was missing and how she appeared to have gone missing, lessons for the future.
- The Headmistress will review the reasons for the event happening and make any necessary amendments to School procedures.

Action to Take When a Pupil is Not Collected from School

- The member of staff responsible for the pupil at the time of leaving will phone parents/ guardian to ascertain what time the designated adult will be at School.
- Member of staff to stay in School with pupil until collected by designated adult (or delegate to a residential member of staff with seniority).
- Member of staff to hand pupil over to designated adult.
- If no-one is available to collect the pupil a member of SLT will be informed.
- The member of SLT will contact parents/guardians to explain the seriousness of the issue and that should no collection time be agreed the School would have to contact the Local Safeguarding Team.
- If a pick up time is agreed the SLT will wait with the pupil until handed over to designated adult.
- If a time is not agreed the ST will inform the Headmistress and contact the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Partnership (01344 352005).
- The School will follow the advice of the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Partnership.

When a Day Pupil Does Not Arrive at School

The Attendance Officer should after the closing of the registers at 8.20am be alerted to any pupils missing. Before 9am, absences emails will be checked and if no clarity of the pupil's whereabouts is obtained:

- Follow up with the School Nurse as to whether the pupil is in the Medical Centre/in bed/out of School with permission, and with pupil's Head of Year ("HoY") to see if they have knowledge of the pupil's whereabouts.
- Phone home to check the pupil's whereabouts and alert HoY if parents are uncontactable.
- Ask friends of pupil whether they know or have made contact with the pupil. Ask them to call if necessary.
- Continue to make attempts to contact emergency contacts and relevant guardians.
- Inform DH(P&B) if still unable to contact and firmly ascertain the pupils' whereabouts.
- If recurrent absence, consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Pupil Goes Missing from Home

When a child goes missing or runs away they are at risk. Safeguarding children therefore includes protecting them from this risk. Local authorities are responsible for protecting children whether they go missing from their family home, however, the School will offer its full support in assisting enquiries to find the pupil.

- The lead person in local authority or police will speak with the DSL and discuss the instances surrounding the pupil going missing.
- The School will co-operate allowing access to pupils within the pupil's friendship group, aiming to access as much information as possible.
- If the parents decide to allow the press to appeal for the whereabouts of the pupil, the DSL will inform all staff and ensure that the guidelines on speaking to the press are expressed.
- The Headmistress will manage all communications on behalf of the School.

- The Headmistress will inform the Chair of Governors.
- The Insurers will be informed by the Bursar.
- Director of Marketing and Admissions will be informed, and decision made over when to inform the Parent body.
- Safe and well checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported as missing has been found. Their purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them
- Repeatedly going missing should not be viewed as a normal pattern of behaviour. For example, repeat episodes of a child going missing can indicate sexual exploitation.
- If a child has run away two or more times, local authorities should ensure a discussion is held, either with the child, their family or both, to offer further support and guidance. Actions following earlier incidents will be reviewed and alternative strategies considered.

Follow Up

When the pupil returns to Heathfield it is vital that the pupil is given appropriate support. This may involve the Pastoral Support team (DH(P&B), HoY, HP, Tutor). If disciplinary action is required this must involve consultation with the Headmistress. Ensure all parents and relevant parties know that the pupil has been found. A timeline report will be written up about what happened, how the situation was managed and the outcome.

Related Policies

- Attendance Policy
- Children Missing from Education Policy
- Educational and Co-Curricular Trips and Visits Policy
- RIDDOR Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy