BALLARD

BESPOKE EDUCATION

MISSING AND LOST CHILD POLICY	
Reviewed by:	**Chris Jackson – Deputy Head Pastoral**
Review Date:	**September 2026**
Next Review due:	**September 2027**

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Missing and Lost Child Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the visit's procedures and the exit/entrance procedures, to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

PROCEDURES

Child going missing on the premises

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL must be informed immediately whenever a child is believed to be missing. The DSL will consider whether additional safeguarding referrals are required
- The staff will carry out a thorough search of the building and grounds.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security, whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child cannot be located following an immediate search and there is any concern regarding their safety, age, vulnerability or circumstances, the Police will be contacted without delay. The decision will be made by the Headmaster, DSL or member of the Leadership Team (LT).
- LT talk to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- Consideration should be given to:
  - Age and maturity
  - SEND needs
  - Medical conditions
  - Mental health concerns
  - Known safeguarding concerns
  - Previous missing episodes
  - Weather conditions
  - Proximity to transport routes, roads or water
- The incident is reported directly to the Headmaster (or in his absence a member of LT) who speaks with the parent(s) and the Police.

- The LT and the Headmaster carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all the staff in the room or playground.

- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report.
  - What staff/children were in the group and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in the group.
  - What has taken place in the group since the child went missing?
  - The time it is estimated that the child went missing.

- If the incident warrants a Police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the Police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff.

- Where the circumstances suggest significant harm, exploitation, neglect, criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation or any other safeguarding concern, Children's Social Care will be contacted immediately in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

- The Headmaster will determine whether the incident meets the threshold for reporting under RIDDOR or any other statutory reporting requirement.

- Any notification to regulators will be made in accordance with the school's regulatory reporting requirements.

- The insurance provider is informed.

- This procedure should be read alongside the School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Educational Visits Policy, Attendance Policy and procedures.

Child going missing on an outing

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. Staff should conduct an immediate dynamic risk assessment and search the immediate area while ensuring the supervision of remaining pupils is maintained.

- The School is contacted immediately, and the incident is reported.

- The Headmaster (or in his absence a member of LT) contacts the Police immediately and reports the child as missing.

- Immediately after contacting the Police, the Headmaster (or in his absence a member of LT) contacts the parent, who makes their way to the School or outing venue as agreed with the member of staff. The School is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the School.

- Staff take the remaining children back to the School.

- In an indoor venue, the staff contacts the venue's security that will handle the search and contact the Police if the child is not found.

- The teacher, or designated staff member may be advised by the Police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

- LT, together with the Headmaster (or in his absence another member of the LT), speak with the parent(s).

- LT and the Headmaster carry out a full investigation, taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.

- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report.
  - What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child
  - Name/DOB/any alias
  - Previous addresses
  - Phone numbers/emails/social media details
  - Family details (names/addresses etc.)
  - Contact details for any key worker/social worker
  - List of associates
  - Details of any vulnerability (i.e. learning disabilities, mental health, physical injury or illness, medication)
  - Details of any current concern/issue for the child
  - When the child was last seen in the group/outing
  - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing?
  - The time it is estimated that the child went missing

- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

- If the incident warrants a Police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the Police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

- Any notification to regulators will be made in accordance with the school's regulatory reporting requirements.

- The Headmaster will determine whether the incident meets the threshold for reporting under RIDDOR or any other statutory reporting requirement.

- The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.

- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.

- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger, and they may be afraid. The School will ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

- When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Headmaster. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated.

- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.

- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The LT, together with the Headmaster, will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

- Staff must consult with the Headmaster and refer any Press enquiries to him.

Police Response

- Upon notification, the uniformed Duty Inspector will be responsible for assessing the level of risk and directing the investigation accordingly. Where a child is deemed to be high risk, then a Detective Inspector may take on responsibility.

- The investigation will be appropriate to the level of risk and will be in accordance with the College of Policing Approved Professional Practice Guidance on Missing Children.

- The School will notify the Police ASAP should the child return or be located. The Police, in turn, will ensure the School is notified if they locate the child.

- If the Police locate the child, and there is a need to take the child into Police protection, then the Police will initiate this and take the child into their care. If, however, this immediate risk does not exist, there is an expectation that the child's parent or carer will arrange to collect the child.

- In all cases, when a child returns having been reported missing, Police will send an officer to complete a 'Prevention Interview'. The Police have a responsibility to ensure that the returning person is safe and well. The purpose of the interview is to identify any ongoing risk factors which may contribute to the person going missing again, to check on the child's physical welfare, identify if they are a victim of any offences and to obtain basic details as to where and with whom they have been.

- Return Home Conversations are also offered to children that go missing.

Chris Jackson
Deputy Head Pastoral
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Policy Log:
August 2021 updated (Andy Marshall)
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