



Missing Child Policy

Document control

Policy title	Missing Child Policy
Policy category	Safeguarding and Pupil Welfare
Policy owner	Joe Hughes, Director of Safeguarding
Senior leader responsible	Deputy Head, Pastoral and Wellbeing
Effective date	1 September 2026
Review cycle	Annual
Next review	September 2027
Version	September 2026 V1
Statutory status	Required by the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework (procedure for a child going missing). Supports compliance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (Part 3, paragraph 14 – proper supervision of pupils) and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
Applies to	Whole School, including the Early Years Foundation Stage
Availability	Published on the School website and available to parents on request, free of charge.

Policy summary

The welfare of every child is our first responsibility, and children are safe when we know where they are. This policy explains how we reduce the risk of a pupil going missing, what every member of staff does if a pupil cannot be accounted for, how and when we escalate to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Head, parents, the police and children's social care, and how we care for the pupil and learn from the incident afterwards. It is a whole-School policy covering the Early Years Foundation Stage and applies on site, off site and on educational visits.

Contents

1. Why this matters.....	3
2. Scope and purpose.....	3
3. Responsibilities.....	3
4. Preventing a child from going missing.....	4
5. If a pupil cannot be accounted for on site.....	4
6. If a pupil insists on leaving the site.....	5
7. If a pupil goes missing on an educational visit or activity away from School.....	5
8. If a pupil is not collected.....	6
9. When the pupil is found.....	6
10. Recording, reporting and learning.....	7
11. Pupils missing from education.....	7
12. Early Years Foundation Stage	8
13. Training.....	8
14. Related School policies and procedures.....	8
15. Legislation, regulation and guidance	9
Appendix A: Missing Child Search Flowchart.....	10
Appendix B: Missing Child – Search Order Checklist.....	11

1. Why this matters

The welfare of every child at Cokethorpe is our first responsibility. Children are safe when they are properly supervised, accurately accounted for and quickly missed if they are not where they should be.

A child who cannot be accounted for may simply have gone to the wrong place. Equally, a child who goes missing — or who is repeatedly or persistently absent from education — may be signalling something more serious. Being missing from school or from education can be a warning sign of abuse or neglect, of child sexual or criminal exploitation including county lines, of mental health difficulties or substance misuse, of radicalisation or travel to conflict zones, or of so-called honour-based abuse, forced marriage or female genital mutilation.

We therefore treat every missing-child incident as both an immediate welfare matter and a potential safeguarding matter, and we respond calmly, quickly and in a way that we can account for afterwards.

2. Scope and purpose

This is a whole-School policy and applies to all pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It applies on the School site, on educational visits and activities away from the site, and to arrangements for pupils being collected at the end of the School day or an activity.

It applies to all staff, to volunteers, and to anyone else working with our pupils on the School's behalf.

The purpose of this policy is to set out:

- how we reduce the risk of a pupil going missing;
- what every member of staff does if a pupil cannot be accounted for;
- how and when we escalate to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Head, parents, the police and the local authority;
- how we care for the pupil and learn from the incident afterwards; and
- how we respond where a pupil is missing from education rather than missing from the site.

3. Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers must know and follow this policy. Every member of staff who works with children reads at least Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and staff whose role does not involve direct work with children read at least Annex A.

The following responsibilities apply:

- The Director of Safeguarding (DSL), Mr Joe Hughes, leads the safeguarding response to any missing-child incident, decides on contact with the police and children's social care, and holds the record of the incident.
- The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL's) support the DSL and act in the DSL's absence. The DDSL in the Prep School, takes the lead on safeguarding in the EYFS.
- The Head is informed of every incident in which a pupil cannot be accounted for after an initial search, deals with all media enquiries, and decides what information is shared with parents, staff and pupils.

- The Head of Prep School leads the response for Prep School and EYFS children and speaks to their parents.
- The senior member of staff on duty takes operational command of the search until relieved by the DSL, the Head of Prep School or the Head.
- The Prep School Office and the Senior School Office act as the central control point for a search, hold the signing in and out records, and maintain the search log.
- The Attendance Officer monitors daily attendance on Involve and iSAMS and escalates unexplained absence in accordance with the Attendance Policy.
- The Estates/Maintenance team assists with the search and reviews exit and gate CCTV when asked to do so. The Director of Safeguarding and Deputy Head, Pastoral and Wellbeing also have access to CCTV for out of hours concerns.
- The Bursar arranges notification of the School's insurers where an incident requires it.
- The Governing Body ensures that this policy is in place, reviewed annually and effective in practice, and the Chair of Governors is informed of any incident in which the police are contacted.

4. Preventing a child from going missing

Our arrangements are designed so that a pupil who is not where they should be is noticed quickly.

- Registers are taken twice each day – at morning registration and during the afternoon session – and recorded on Involve. Registration is a legal record and must be completed promptly and accurately.
- Pupils sign out at the Senior School Office, and Prep School children are signed out at the Reception in the Mansion House, before leaving the site during the School day.
- Registers are taken on every educational visit and activity away from the site, at departure, at agreed points during the visit and before return.
- Prep School and EYFS children are supervised at all times, and staff remain alert to children who separate from a group.
- Visitors and contractors are recorded in and out and wear a visitor lanyard at all times while on site, so that unauthorised adults are readily identified.
- Parents must tell the School promptly of any change to their contact details. Wherever reasonably possible we hold more than one emergency contact number for every pupil.

Further detail on registration, absence codes and attendance monitoring is set out in the Attendance Policy. Site access arrangements are set out in the Access, Security and Visitors Policy.

5. If a pupil cannot be accounted for on site

Speed and organisation matter more than anything else. The aim is to find the pupil and return them to safe supervision as quickly as possible, while keeping every other pupil safe and calm. If after an initial search of the immediate location surrounding the pupil's expected location does not find the pupil, and the child's class teacher/tutor and Head of Year/Head of Prep is unable to confirm an alternative location, the following actions should take place:

Immediate actions

1. Inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the relevant School Office (Prep School Office or Senior School Office) without delay. That Office becomes the central control point for the search.

2. The Prep School Secretary or Senior School Administrator will organise a search using the Missing Child – Search Order Checklist, allocating members of staff to specific areas, and records in the search log which area was searched, by whom and at what time. Staff must enter each room, and must check spaces where a child could hide or be shut in, including cupboards, washrooms, changing rooms and outbuildings.
3. Meanwhile a register of the group is taken to confirm that every other pupil is present, and keep those pupils occupied and supervised.
4. Signing out records are checked as well as the register for that pupil on Involve.

Escalation

If the pupil has not been found within fifteen minutes, or at any earlier point if there is reason to believe that the pupil has left the site or is at immediate risk, staff must:

- inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Head of Prep School (for a Prep School or EYFS child) and the Head immediately;
- contact the police, and contact the pupil's parents, explaining what has happened and what steps are under way, and asking them to come to the School;
- circulate an all-staff email and Teams message including a photograph of the pupil, so that every adult on site is looking for them;
- ask the Estates/Maintenance team to review the exit CCTV;
- extend the search to the whole site and grounds; and

The DSL will decide whether a referral to Oxfordshire children's social care is required, will make that referral where it is, and will follow it up. Where the police are involved, they will be given a clear description of the pupil and shown a recent photograph.

Throughout the search, staff who are not searching maintain as normal a routine as possible for all other pupils. Any adult who finds a missing pupil must bring them directly to the relevant School Office and inform the control point at once.

6. If a pupil insists on leaving the site

Our first aim is always to keep the pupil safe and to persuade them to remain on site, using calm de-escalation.

If a pupil leaves, or is about to leave, the site and cannot be persuaded to stay:

- the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately and will contact the pupil's parents;
- where it is safe to do so, and where enough staff remain to supervise other pupils, a member of staff carrying a mobile telephone should follow at a distance and keep the pupil in sight, reporting their position to the control point. Staff must not put themselves, the pupil or others at risk, and must not attempt to physically restrain a pupil other than in accordance with the Restrictive Intervention (including the use of reasonable force) Policy;
- the Estates/Maintenance team is informed and asked to assist; and
- the DSL or the Head will contact the police where the pupil is at risk, is off site without permission, or cannot be kept in sight.

7. If a pupil goes missing on an educational visit or activity away from School

The visit leader takes charge of the immediate response and keeps the rest of the group safe.

1. Carry out an immediate head count and register to confirm that every other pupil is present, and keep the group together and supervised.
2. Send an adult to search the immediate vicinity, and contact the venue manager or centre staff so that the venue's own missing-person procedure can be started.
3. Contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead and, for a Prep School or EYFS child, the Head of Prep School, by mobile telephone, and contact the relevant School Office.
4. Contact the police immediately where the pupil is not quickly located.
5. The DSL, Head of Prep School or Head will contact the pupil's parents to explain what has happened and what steps are under way, and to agree whether they should come to the venue or to the School.
6. Arrange for the remaining pupils to return to School as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so.
7. The DSL will consider a referral to Oxfordshire children's social care and will make the referral where one is required.

When the pupil is found, staff inform the relevant School Office immediately and the DSL, Head or Head of Prep School will contact the parents to reassure them.

8. If a pupil is not collected

A pupil who has not been collected must never be left unsupervised, and must never be sent to wait alone.

1. The pupil is supervised by a member of staff, who informs the Prep School Office or Senior School Office.
2. If the pupil has not been collected within thirty minutes of the agreed time, the Office telephones the parents' home and mobile numbers to confirm that they are on their way and to obtain an estimated time of arrival.
3. If there is no answer, the Office works through the other emergency contacts held for the pupil.
4. If there has been no contact with a parent, carer or emergency contact within one hour, or by the time the premises close, the Head of Prep School (for Prep School and EYFS children) or the Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact Oxfordshire MASH for advice and will act on that advice. If it is out of hours the MASH Emergency Duty Team (EDT) should be contacted.
5. The pupil remains safely supervised by the School until they are collected by a parent, carer or authorised adult, or until alternative arrangements have been agreed with children's social care and, where appropriate, the police.

The School makes a written record of every such incident. The DSL keeps a record of occasions when a pupil is not collected, or is collected late without a satisfactory explanation, and of any repeated pattern. Where this raises concerns about a child's welfare, the DSL will respond under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Where the School holds information about who may and may not collect a child, staff will act in accordance with the Separated Parent Policy.

9. When the pupil is found

Finding the pupil is the beginning of our response, not the end of it.

- Talk to the pupil, care for them and, where needed, comfort and reassure them. Arrange a medical check through the Medical Centre if there is any possibility of injury or distress.

- The Head, or the Head of Prep School for a Prep School or EYFS child, speaks to the parents, gives a full account of what happened and agrees any follow-up.
- Speak with other pupils, at a level appropriate to their age, so that they understand why they should stay with the group and not leave the site.
- The DSL considers, with the pupil, why they went missing, and whether there are wider safeguarding concerns to be addressed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Where the pupil has been injured, and particularly where they were taken directly from the scene to hospital for treatment, the Bursar considers whether a report is required to the Health and Safety Executive under RIDDOR, and makes any required report within the applicable timescale.

10. Recording, reporting and learning

Every incident in which a pupil cannot be accounted for is recorded, whatever the outcome. We keep records so that we can account for our actions, identify patterns and improve our practice.

- The search log kept by the control point is retained as part of the incident record.
- A full written incident report is completed and held by the DSL, covering: the time and place; the number of staff and pupils present; when and where the pupil was last seen; what appears to have happened; the purpose of the visit or activity, where relevant; how long the pupil was missing; how they came to be missing; the actions taken and by whom; and the lessons identified.
- Everyone involved provides a written statement.
- The Head is informed in every case. The Chair of Governors is informed without delay in any case in which the police were contacted.
- The Bursar notifies the School's insurers where an incident requires it.
- The Head decides what information is given to other parents, to staff and to pupils. All media enquiries are referred to the Head and must not be answered by any other member of staff.
- The DSL and the Head review the incident, and this policy and the associated procedures are amended where the review identifies an improvement.
- The School records any instance in which a pupil is absent from School without satisfactory permission or documentation, together with the action taken and the pupil's explanation.

11. Pupils missing from education

A pupil can be missing from education without ever having gone missing from the site. Prolonged or repeated absence can be an important warning sign, and we act on it.

- Every new pupil is placed on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which it has been agreed that they will attend. If a pupil does not attend on the agreed date, staff must inform the DSL without delay, and the DSL will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.
- The admission register and the attendance register are maintained in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, and every entry is preserved for six years from the date of the entry. Amendments show the original entry, the amended entry, the reason, the date and the name of the person who made the amendment.
- Where a pupil is absent without explanation, the Attendance Officer makes contact with the parents on the day, using all contact details held. Unexplained absence is escalated to the Attendance Champion.

- Where a pupil is absent without the School's permission, or is missing from education, for a continuous period of ten school days, this is treated as a safeguarding concern and the DSL informs the local authority.
- Where a pupil has not returned from a period of leave, or has had a continuous period of absence, the School and the local authority may need to carry out joint reasonable enquiries under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to establish where the pupil is.
- Where a pupil has been continuously absent without authorisation for at least twenty school days, there are no reasonable grounds to believe that they are unwell or unable to attend for an unavoidable cause, and the School and the local authority have not been able to establish where the pupil is following reasonable enquiry, the School may delete the pupil's name from the admission register and will inform the local authority no later than the point of deletion.
- The School recognises its wider duty to notify the local authority of deletions from the admission register, so that children missing education and children otherwise at risk of harm can be identified.

Further detail is set out in the Attendance Policy and in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Where the School sponsors a pupil under the immigration rules, reporting duties to UK Visas and Immigration also apply.

12. Early Years Foundation Stage

This policy applies in full to children in the EYFS, and the following additional arrangements apply to our youngest children.

- EYFS children are supervised at all times, and staffing arrangements are designed so that every child is accounted for throughout the session.
- A search for an EYFS child begins immediately and includes every space in which a small child could hide or be shut in, both inside and outside, together with an immediate check of doors, gates and CCTV.
- The Head of Prep School, who is the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead with responsibility for the EYFS, is informed immediately, alongside the DSL.
- Parents and carers of EYFS children are told how to find this policy, and it is made available to them, in accordance with the requirement in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework that the procedure for a child going missing at, or away from, the setting is included in the information provided to parents and carers.
- Enhanced supervision arrangements apply to outings involving EYFS children, and a risk assessment is completed for every such outing in accordance with the Risk Assessment Policy.

13. Training

This policy forms part of safeguarding induction for all new staff and volunteers, and is revisited in whole-staff safeguarding training. Staff who lead educational visits receive specific briefing on the procedure for a pupil going missing away from the site. The procedure is tested periodically so that we know it works in practice.

14. Related School policies and procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following School policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Attendance Policy
- Access, Security and Visitors Policy
- CCTV Policy
- Staff Behaviour Policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Prevention of Bullying Policy
- Restrictive Intervention (including the use of reasonable force) Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Separated Parent Policy
- EYFS Intimate Care Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Privacy Notice
- Educational Visits Policy

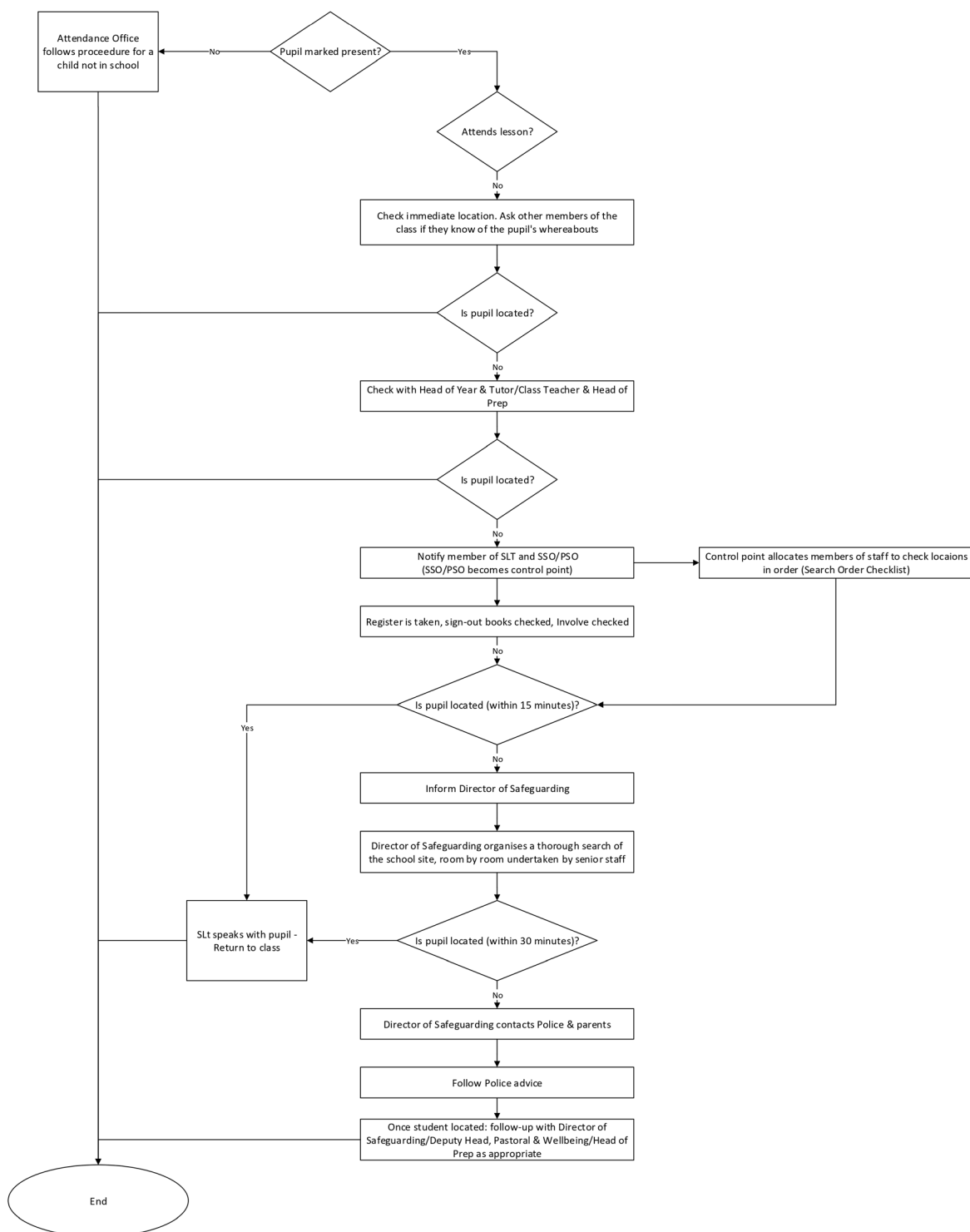
15. Legislation, regulation and guidance

This policy has been prepared having regard to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE statutory guidance; the 2026 edition takes effect on 1 September 2026): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (DfE, last updated 8 September 2025): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>
- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE statutory guidance, published 6 May 2022, last updated 9 July 2026; applies to independent schools): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>
- Working together to safeguard children (DfE statutory guidance)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education Act 1996, section 436A (duty to identify children missing education)
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR): <https://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/>
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency procedures: <https://www.oscp.org.uk/>

References are to the current version of each document. Where a version or edition is material, it is stated.

Appendix A: Missing Child Search Flowchart



Appendix B: Missing Child – Search Order Checklist

Locations should be checked in the order listed, moving outward from the child's last known location.

Order	Location	Details		Staff Member Assigned	Time checked
1	Immediate location	Classroom or activity space where the child was last seen or was scheduled to be.			
2	Toilets and changing rooms	Check those nearest to the last known location first.			
3	Cloakrooms, lockers, and personal storage	Check whether bags and coats are still present – this indicates whether the child has left the site.			
4	Other timetabled locations	Library, LS rooms, Medical Centre, Hector's House, Wellbeing Hub			
5	Sports facilities and grounds	Sports hall gym, sports fields, pavilion.			
6	Outdoor school grounds	Fields, woodland area			
7	Car parks and vehicle access points	Mansion car park, main car park			
8	School perimeter and gates	Check whether gates were open or unsupervised; review CCTV and access logs if available. Maintenance team to position themselves on the two exit points and conduct a perimeter search			
9	Room by room check of the whole school site	Check all classrooms, offices and cupboards, corridors, dining hall and other communal areas	Mansion House:		
			Exams Office, Art & textiles, Medical Centre, Staff Common Room, Gym, Wellbeing, Bus		
			Round House, Visitor Toilets, Attendance, HR, Bursar/Bursary, Learning Support, Pre-Prep, Laundry, Head of Year Office, Drama Studio and IT		

			Senior School Office, DT, Sixth Form Centre & Kitchens, Library, Changing Pavilion, Old Pavilion		
			Upper Quad classrooms – MFL, History, English, Geog etc		
			Science Building, Sports Hall, Shed, Costume Store, Tennis courts, Woods		