



Wychwood School

## MISSING PERSONS POLICY

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**Review: January 2021**

**Date of Next Review: January 2022**

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15.5  
and  
15.6

In all cases of unexpected absence, in other words where a child has gone missing, the priority is to find out where the girl is and that she is safe, not in the first instance why she is missing, although these questions are usually linked. All absences at night time should be investigated as quickly as possible as danger is increased. The age of the girl should also be taken into consideration. The number of times a child has been unexpectedly absent should be a factor in all actions and decisions.

The following procedure should be followed. It is important to keep calm, to reassure the other girls and to make brief written notes at each stage. If possible, two members of staff should be present when interviewing girls and parents, one to make clear notes.

1. **Check register, staff room white board and staff room daily diary;** check with all staff, office staff and Gap assistants; check sickroom.
2. **Check school premises:** bedrooms, common rooms, classrooms, cloakrooms and public areas, gardens; other bedrooms; ICT, art and photography; bathrooms and loos.

*30 minutes. Write down when last seen. If a boarder, Housemistresses should be involved immediately.*

3. **Phone the girl's mobile.** There is a list of boarders' mobile numbers in the Staff Room and in the office. If the girl's mobile is on, but not answered, ask a friend to phone the number in staff presence.
4. **Girls:** ask friends; if before 9 p.m. ask all peer group, after 9 p.m. ask close friends or bedroom group. If there is any indication that this may be a serious situation, interview key girls carefully in private.

*45 minutes after alert. Make written notes of all information or supposition.*

**Inform the Head and / or Deputy Head by phone if they are not in school.**

Review calmly all the information gained from staff and girls. If information is obtained that the girl is likely to be in Oxford and not in danger, then see below (A).

5. **Phone parents /guardians:** Explain situation; ask for advice or information; invite to come to school.

*One hour after alert; senior staff should be present and assured that the girl is not inside the school, nor is her whereabouts known to her friends. Make written notes of phone conversation.*

6. **Contact police:** if no information gained from girls; with consent of parents if they are contactable. Night time: 11 p.m. (or one hour after normal locking up or expected time at a weekend).  
In daytime there may be less urgency to contact the police immediately.

***From this point onwards, follow all directions given by police and parents***

- A. If it becomes clear from information given by friends that a girl is out of school but is not in any danger, then staff may take appropriate action to find her. At night, all absence should be regarded as a potentially dangerous situation.  
Possible action: staff to drive to a likely place, with or without the girl's friend;  
phone a parent of a school friend or house staff of another school;  
go to likely pubs in town, North Parade or Summertown;  
patrol Banbury Road and Woodstock Road in a car.

#### **B. Other Boarding situations:**

- late back after "Town" at weekends: involve parents/ guardians if absence is more than 1 hour for LT/ UT; later may be more appropriate for Shell/ Study.
- late back after "weekend" or whole day out: phone girl's mobile and check with friends. Phone parents/guardians if more than an hour late with no explanation. Check news for accidents.
- late at start of term or half term: phone parents or mobile number as girls are usually travelling with them. Be aware that parents may drop boarders at school who then go to meet friends in town.

#### **Return Interviews**

If an extensive search of the School premises (or the surrounding area on a school trip) has been initiated due to a pupil going missing, the member of staff in charge of the pupil at the point at which she went missing will meet with the pupil on her return and consider the following:

- whether the absence was deliberate or if the pupil has broken school rules in which case sanctions may apply
- whether the pupil is distressed about some element of school life and what action may need to be taken to resolve the situation
- whether there are safeguarding concerns, in which case the matter will be referred to the DSL

#### **Pupils who Repeatedly Go Missing**

This is likely to be an indicator of emotional distress or abuse or neglect. Under these circumstances the Senior Pastoral Team and the Designated Safeguarding Lead would be aware of the absences and would be dealing with the parents or guardians and the appropriate authorities such as the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) if necessary.

Pupils who go missing are breaking a major school rule and the usual sanction for this is suspension and/or exclusion depending on the circumstances.

#### **Pupils Missing from Education**

Where a child should be attending school at Wychwood but who is absent, every effort should be made to find her whereabouts from her parents or guardians. If this cannot be ascertained, then the DSL will report the pupil as missing education to the Local Authority. Day-to-day responsibility for administration of the Children Missing Education procedure of Oxford County Council lies with the Pupil Tracking Officer, Alan Blackmore, and he is the person to contact:  
Alan Blackmore  
Pupil Tracking Officer

Social Inclusion Team  
Third Floor,  
County Hall  
New Road  
Oxford OX1 1ND I). 9 Persistent non attendance (including lateness)  
Telephone: 01865 810515 Email: missing.pupils@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The DSL will act according to the statutory guidance Children Missing Education September 2016.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/550416/Children\\_Missing\\_Education\\_-\\_statutory\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf)