

## Missing Pupil Policy

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<b>Reviewed By</b>	JE/CP
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**WYCHWOOD**  
SCHOOL • OXFORD

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The safety and security of the pupils at Wychwood School is paramount. Every care is taken to ensure that pupils are accounted for at appropriate times through the school day. This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* and the *Supervision of Pupils Policy*.

In all cases of unexpected absence/pupil missing the priority is to discover where the pupil is and that they are safe. It is not to find out why, in the first case, they are missing. All night-time absences should be investigated as quickly as possible as the danger is increased, and the age of the pupil should be considered.

### 2. PROCEDURES

#### Normal School Routine

Each pupil who arrives at school is registered between **08:30** and **09:00** during form time. Pupils who are unable to attend registration period must sign in 'in person' at the School reception.

The School office staff will check attendance during period 1 using the registers submitted. The office staff also note absences submitted by parents and in all cases will follow up with the teaching staff as needed. If a pupil arrives outside of the registration window, they are expected to sign in with reception before going to lessons.

Registers are taken during all teaching periods. If a pupil is not present, the teacher or cover teacher will inform the office staff immediately.

#### The Missing Pupil Procedure - on School Site

**Immediately** a pupil is suspected of going missing a member of SLG must be alerted and will co-ordinate appropriate action (see below) to locate the missing pupil.

The following procedure should then be followed:

1. Check iSAMS register, check with all staff, office staff and check sick bay.
2. Check school premises: bedrooms, common rooms, classrooms, cloakrooms, shower room, dining room and public areas, gardens; other bedrooms; ICT, art and photography; bathrooms and toilets.
3. Check with pupil's friends to find out if they have information and phone the pupil's mobile. Boarders' mobile numbers are held on the boarding House telephone. If the

pupil's mobile is on, but not answered, ask a friend to phone the number in staff presence.

4. Send a message to all staff via email to notify them of a potential missing pupil and ask for anyone with knowledge to contact the School reception immediately.
5. Initiate a search involving the estates team and support staff searching specific areas as directed by the co-ordinating member of SLG. This may include a search of the area around the school grounds.
6. If the pupil has not been found **within 45 minutes** the pupil's parents should be contacted and the police are called, if necessary. It may be that a pupil has gone 'missing' but has gone home with someone else at the end of the school day. The school will thereafter liaise with the parents and the police until the pupil is found.

**Please note:** it is important to remain calm, to reassure the other pupils and to make brief written notes at each stage. If possible, two members of staff should be present when interviewing pupils and parents, one to make clear notes. If the missing pupil is a boarder, House Parents should be involved immediately.

### 3. TRIPS

When on excursions away from the school premises, staff implement strategies to ensure the safety and security of the pupils in accordance with the School's Trips Policy. Full risk assessments are carried out.

A list of all the pupils' names, contact details and medical details is carried by the trip leader and the pupils are organised into groups according to the proper staff/pupil ratios for the age of the pupils and the purpose of the trip or activity. For sports fixtures outside of school hours, sports staff inform the office staff who is attending the fixture and registers are updated accordingly. Forms detailing which pupils are attending a trip are received by the office staff who update school registers on iSAMS accordingly.

#### **Missing Persons Procedure - on School Trip**

If a pupil is suspected of going missing the following immediate course of action must be taken:

##### **a. Initiate Search**

Once it has been established that a pupil is missing, the teacher in charge of the trip will ensure that the remaining pupils are supervised safely and instigate a search of the area/building. At the same time, another member of staff is allocated the responsibility of informing a member of SLG by telephone call directly, or to the emergency contact if out of school hours. In turn, office staff will be informed. The pupil's peers/friends may be questioned to see if they have any information about the whereabouts of the missing pupil.

##### **b. Contact Parents and Police**

If the pupil has not been found **within 15 minutes**, the pupil's parents are contacted and

the police are then called if necessary. The teacher in charge will thereafter liaise with the parents and the police and keep the Head informed until the pupil is found.

If the missing pupil procedure must be implemented, a review of the school's arrangements will be carried out and amended where necessary.

### **c. Boarding Situations**

If boarders are late back from signing out (with permission) at weekends, evenings or start of term etc. then the House Parents 30 minutes after expected arrival time should:

- i. Phone pupil's mobile phone and check with their friends.
- ii. Contact parents or guardians if the boarder has been staying away for the weekend as to when they left and when their expected time of arrival should have been (**NB** this should be on documents approved before leaving).
- iii. **If a boarder is late back from an evening out** (with permission) then the House Parent should phone the missing pupil and if there is no answer, speak to the friends in the boarding house for any information they may hold. If concern develops, then after **30 minutes** SLG should be informed after searching the boarding areas and finally the police after **45 minutes**.

## **3. ARRANGEMENTS FOR WHEN A PUPIL IS NOT COLLECTED**

In the event of a pupil not being collected at either the end of the day or after an extra-curricular club has ended, a member of staff will telephone the parents to find out why they are late/have not turned up to collect the pupil. The pupil will then be supervised until such time as they are collected by the parents, or an alternative arrangement is made by the parents.

The school reception is staffed until 5pm each day and it is expected that all pupils who are not signed up for a prep activity will be collected by that time.

Should the parents not be able to collect before 5pm then the pupil should go to prep until they are able to be collected. The member of staff taking prep will ensure the pupil has been safely collected.

In the event that the school cannot contact parents or the emergency contacts; the school will care for a pupil until such time as a parent or carer collects them or until appropriate alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Care, and/or the Police, in order to maintain the pupil's safety

## **4. REPEATED OR SUSPICIOUS ABSENCES**

School registers are monitored by the Form Tutor and the office staff. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) checks for unusual patterns in absences as a potential indicator of a safeguarding issue and will contact home where appropriate.

## **5. PUPILS WHO REPEATEDLY GO MISSING**

This is likely to be an indicator of emotional distress, abuse or neglect. Under these circumstances SLG and the DSL would be aware of the absences and would be dealing with the parents or guardians, and the appropriate authorities such as the Multi-Agency

Safeguarding Hub (MASH) 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.

## **6. RETURN INTERVIEWS**

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

- Whether the absence was deliberate or if the pupil has broken school rules in which case sanctions will apply.
- Whether the pupil was 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. All details about the incident and the action taken will be recorded on CPOMs.

## **7. PUPILS MISSING FROM EDUCATION**

Where a pupil should be attending school, but who is absent, every effort should be made to find their whereabouts from their 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 Pupils Missing Education procedure of Oxford County Council lies with the Pupils Missing Education Service to be contacted at:

Children Missing Education Learner Engagement Service Oxfordshire County Council  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Abbey House Abbey Close  
Abingdon  
OX14 3JD

**Telephone:** 01865 323513

**Email:** [childrenmissingeducation@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:childrenmissingeducation@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **8. USEFUL INFORMATION**

[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#) [August 2024]