

Missing Child Policy

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Rationale

This policy is essential to ensure the safety and well-being of all students. This policy is designed to provide clear guidelines and procedures for the immediate and effective response in the event that a child is reported missing within the school premises or during school-related activities. The rationale for implementing such a policy includes:

- **Swift and Coordinated Response:** Ensures that school staff, administrators, and security personnel are equipped with clear protocols to respond promptly and efficiently to reports of missing children. This includes immediate notification to appropriate authorities and the implementation of search procedures within the school premises.
- **Minimisation of Risks:** Help minimise potential risks and dangers associated with a child being unaccounted for within the school environment. Time is crucial in such situations, and a structured policy aids in swift action to locate and ensure the safety of the missing child.
- **Communication with Parents:** Establish communication procedures with parents or guardians, keeping them informed about the situation and the steps being taken. Open and transparent communication helps alleviate anxiety and fosters trust between the school and parents.
- **Training and Preparedness:** Training school staff and relevant personnel on the appropriate steps to take during such incidents. Regular drills and awareness programs contribute to preparedness and a cohesive response.

This policy is written and should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Trips Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Occasions when a child may go missing.

Staff need to be mindful that a child can go missing at any time of the day. These times and examples of the occasions providing opportunities for a child to go missing are:

- From an indoor lesson - this could occur when a child is allowed to leave the classroom unaccompanied by an adult and fails to return, e.g., to go to the toilet.
- To collect something from his/her bag in the cloakroom, being sent to another class to collect resources.
- Undertaking a task for the teacher such as taking the register to the office.
- From an outdoor lesson - this could occur when the class are outside the building with the children spread out and/or engaged in a variety of activities.
- Travelling about the school - this could occur when the children are spread out and beyond the teacher's direct total supervision e.g. - going to and from the assembly area or outdoors before and after a PE lesson.
- Going to and from the assembly area before and after assembly.
- Going to and from the classroom at the beginning/end of lunch/break times.
- At the start of the school day when children are freely moving about the grounds and building to get to their classroom.
- At break and lunch times.

- At the end of the school day when children and parents are freely moving about.

Procedure upon discovering a child is missing.

It is important that the person discovering a child is missing knows what to do. What action is taken depends on who discovers the child is missing. Therefore, the following action should be taken by the following personnel.

Teaching Assistants and Administration staff are required to:

Immediately notify the Assistant Phase Supervisor and/or class teacher. If the teacher is unavailable for any reason, they must inform the Head of Phase and/or Principal, providing:

- The name of the child (if known) or a description if unknown.
 - Details about the child's last observed activity and location.
 - The duration since they last saw the child.
- Afterward, they should actively participate in any organised search for the child, following the guidance of the class teacher, Head of Phase, and/or Principal.

Break-time duty staff are required to:

Promptly inform the Assistant Phase Supervisor. If the Assistant Phase Supervisor is unavailable, they must notify the Head of Phase and/or Principal, including:

- The name of the child (if known) or a description if unknown.
- Information about the child's last observed activity and location.
- The duration since they last saw the child.

To allow duty staff to remain on duty, the Assistant Phase Supervisor will coordinate with the Head of Phase and/or Principal and actively engage in any organized search for the child.

The Class Teacher is required to:

Promptly organise for another adult, such as support staff or a neighboring teacher, to supervise their class. Subsequently, they will contact the Assistant Phase Supervisor and initiate a search away from the class under their responsibility. They should:

- Conduct a thorough search of the immediate surroundings, including indoors (such as the classroom, checking under tables, work surfaces, and potential hiding spots like cupboards), adjacent work areas, classrooms, and nearby toilets.
- Extend the search outdoors to the immediate area where the child was last seen, examining under bushes, tables, or other potential hiding spots.
- If the initial search proves unsuccessful, the teacher will initiate a broader search of the school buildings and grounds. This may involve exploring public areas in other sections of the school, such as library spaces, toilet areas, corridors, sports

hall, and empty classrooms. The responsibility for this search can be carried out by the teacher or delegated to support staff based on the teacher's understanding of the child, including their emotional and behavioral characteristics.

Throughout this process, continuous supervision of the remaining class is crucial. The class teacher or a member of the support staff must oversee the class, and if suitable, a neighboring teacher may be requested to supervise both their own class and the one affected, allowing the teacher and support staff to focus on the search.

In the event that the initial searches do not locate the missing child within a reasonable timeframe, the teacher must promptly inform the Head of Phase and/or Principal about the situation, directly or through the school office, providing details about the child's disappearance.

The Head of Phase or Principal is required to:

Assume control of the situation. If satisfied with the class's adequate supervision, the Head of Phase and/or Principal will join the teacher (and support staff if applicable) in searching the school premises for the missing child. The Head of Phase and/or Principal will direct the teacher (and others) on where to search (e.g., while they search externally, the teacher searches internally). Alternatively, the Head of Phase and/or Principal may instruct the teacher (or support staff) to return to their class to maintain supervision, serving as a familiar adult if the missing child returns to their classroom. In this scenario, the Head of Phase and/or Principal will continue the search alone or with available adults.

When the Head of Phase and/or Principal is confident that the child is not on the premises, they will instruct the office staff to contact the child's parents, informing them of the situation and inquiring if the child has returned home. If the child is at home, the parents will be informed by telephone of the known facts surrounding the child's disappearance.

If the child is not at home, the Head of Phase and/or Principal will, in consultation with the parents, initiate a search outside the school premises.

If the parents cannot be reached at home, the Head of Phase and/or Principal (or other adults as directed by the Head of Phase) will begin a search outside the school's immediate premises. If the child is not found within 45 minutes, the Head of Phase and/or Principal (or other staff if directed by the Head of Phase) will inform the police and, as appropriate, the BEAM General Manager of the child's disappearance.

Subsequently, the Head of Phase or Principal will adhere to the instructions provided by the police regarding the continuation of the search for the child.

Procedure for Teachers in Case of a Missing Child on a School Trip

Immediate Action:

- Notify the designated trip leader and accompanying staff immediately, and share any

relevant information about the child's last known location, appearance, and activities.

- Conduct a quick headcount to ensure the accuracy of the situation.

Search Immediate Area:

- Assign additional staff to supervise the remaining students while the search is ongoing.
- Initiate a search of the immediate surroundings, including checking nearby facilities, restrooms, and other potential hiding spots.
- Alert other accompanying staff to assist in the initial search efforts.

Contact School:

- Notify the school immediately about the missing child, providing details of the incident.
- Designate a staff member to stay in communication with the school while the search is ongoing.

Maintain Communication:

- Ensure continuous communication among teachers, trip leaders, and accompanying staff.
- Exchange information about search progress and any updates on the missing child.

Involve Local Authorities:

- If the child is not found within a reasonable timeframe, contact local police and provide them with all relevant information.
- Cooperate fully with law enforcement during their investigation.

Support Students:

- Reassure and support the other students on the trip, keeping them informed without causing unnecessary panic.

Contact Parents:

- Inform the parents of the missing child promptly, providing them with accurate and detailed information.
- Cooperate with parents and keep them updated on the progress of the search.

Document the Incident:

- Document the details of the incident, including the time, location, actions taken, and any communication with authorities, parents, or school staff.

Review and Debrief:

- Conduct a thorough review and debriefing session after the incident, assessing the effectiveness of the response and identifying areas for improvement.
- Implement any necessary changes to the missing child policy based on the lessons learned.

Record Keeping

After a missing child situation in a school or during a trip, meticulous record-keeping becomes imperative to ensure a comprehensive and well-documented response. The school staff involved should diligently record the details of the incident, including the time and location where the child was last seen, the initial actions taken, and any subsequent steps in the search process. Communication logs with authorities, parents, and school staff should be maintained, documenting the information shared and received. Additionally, records should capture the involvement of law enforcement, the coordination of search efforts, and any updates provided to concerned parties. The documentation serves as a vital resource for reviewing the incident, conducting debriefing sessions, and implementing improvements to the missing child policy. Precise record-keeping not only aids in maintaining transparency and accountability but also contributes to the ongoing enhancement of safety protocols within the school community.

Investigations

When a missing child has been located and safely returned to school, the child's family or the police, the principal will investigate the circumstances of the child going missing. This is in order to identify any factors that need to be addressed by the school or communicated to the parents to prevent a recurrence of the child going missing.