

## HOLMWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL



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SCHOOL

# Missing Child Policy

This policy applies to all pupils in the school, including in the EYFS

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**Contents**

Procedures	3
Lost at school	3
Lost whilst off-site (including on sports fixtures)	4
Pupil removed from school premises by unapproved adult	4
Following up an incident	4

## Procedures

The welfare of pupils is paramount. The school endeavours to ensure that no child goes missing and has measures in place to minimise the likelihood of this happening and take the necessary action, should the situation arise.

- Formal registration is taken in the morning at 8.25am for the Pre-Prep and Prep School and again between 1pm and 2pm Pre-Prep and at 1.40pm for the Prep school prior to afternoon sessions.
- The staff maintain the appropriate high level of supervision throughout the day and are aware of the location of the children in their care at all times.
- When on excursions outside the school premises, staff implement strategies to maximise the safety and security of the children in accordance with the school's Health & Safety Policy and Educational Visits Policy.
- Staff undertake regular roll calls and head counts.

The above measures ensure that situations where a child could be lost are very limited. These are:

- Where a child wanders off on an off-site visit
- Where a child goes out of a door or gate left open on the school site
- Where a child is taken from the school site by an unapproved adult

The school has rigorous procedures for pursuing unexplained absences, including the aim to contact parents by 10.00am if a child has not arrived in school and the reason for absence is not known. This should ensure that staff become aware at the earliest opportunity of any child who may have gone missing on the way to school. In these circumstances, this policy will be followed.

- The school office will contact the parent of a child who is not in school without prior agreement or authorisation. We aim to achieve this by 10.00am.
- If we cannot contact the parent(s), emergency contact numbers will be used to try to ascertain the whereabouts of the child.
- Where no contact is possible, other known contacts will be sought, emails will be double-checked for notification of absence, and relevant staff will be asked for any information they may have pertaining to a child's unexplained or unplanned absence.
- If the above does not bear fruit, the Headmaster and the DSL will be alerted to discuss next steps.
- Where circumstances raise a concern, the school will consider visiting the family home, contacting the local police or the Essex Children & Families Hub on 0345 603 7627.

School policies relating to health and safety and welfare, if strictly adhered to, should prevent any of the above occurring. However, should a child become lost, the following action will be taken:

## Lost at school

**In EYFS**, alert the Head of Phase immediately, and also the Headmaster or Deputy Head, who will make enquiries of relevant members of staff as to when the child was last seen and where, to eliminate any misunderstanding. A member of school office staff will check the signing out book to establish whether the child has been legitimately collected from school.

### **In Years 1 to 8 the following actions should be taken:**

- Alert the Headmaster or Deputy Head immediately, even where this happens outside of normal school hours.
- Initially, the following obvious areas should be contacted by the front office staff and/or senior staff on hand: music school, library, surgery, toilets, changing rooms, squash club.
- Staff conducting a search of the site should have a mobile phone with them.

### **In Boarding the following actions must be taken:**

- Alert the Headmaster, or the Deputy Head in his absence, immediately, even where this happens outside of normal school hours.
- Initially, the following obvious areas should be contacted by the boarding staff and/or senior staff on hand: library, surgery, toilets, changing rooms, dining room, bedrooms, squash club.
- Staff conducting a search of the site should have a mobile phone with them.

Staff must be vigilant in respect of the safety of the other children with regard to supervision and security.

- Ensuring that the remaining children are sufficiently supervised and secure, a member of staff should be sent to search each of the following zones using the coloured 'Zone Cards' (a set is located in the Finance Office near the fire alarm) keeping a calm manner and maintaining contact via mobile phone:
  - Zone 1 - Outer perimeter (Sunken Lawn, Colts, Barbours Piece and Main Field, Pre Prep Car park)
  - Zone 2 - Reception building, Music School, North Lodge, Holm Lodge, Old DT building, maintenance shed, staff car park (old tennis courts)
  - Zone 3 - Main building, Jubilee Hall, Talbot Room and yard
  - Zone 4 - Squash club, Stable Block, Garden Block and Library Block
  - Zone 5 - Swimming Pool, Changing Rooms, Art Room and Pre Prep building
- If necessary, a fire alarm may be sounded to account for the whereabouts of all pupils.
- It is important to ask other children if they know of any plans the missing child may have had or if they know of any place to which the child may be going. It is equally important not to worry the children so any questioning should be handled sensitively.
- Any member of staff may be required to assist in the search for the missing child and cover may need to be arranged so that the tutor/class teacher can join the search.

If the child cannot be found within fifteen minutes then the police and parents must be informed. Only in the absence of the Headmaster or Deputy Head should any other member of staff make these calls. If the search moves to this level, the Critical Incident Policy procedure should be invoked. Meanwhile the office will make available a photograph of the child (from database) and their description. Continue to search, opening up the area, keeping in touch via mobile phone. The child must be comforted and reassured when found. The headmaster will consider calling a fire drill to see if the pupil who is not accounted for arrives

at the roll call point.

- In a genuine case of a missing child having left the school site, a full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for an incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

### **Lost whilst off-site (including on sports fixtures)**

If a child is lost on an outing, the member of staff noticing the child missing should alert other members of the party and carry out a roll call/headcount.

1. A member of staff (or the whole group if appropriate) should retrace their movements to the last place that the child was seen.
2. Another member of staff should alert the management/security services of the organisation being visited and the Headmaster as well as the School office to let them know the situation.
3. Depending on the location of the visit/outing, the remaining children would be localised in the immediate area, held on the coach or taken back to the place of residence pending further instructions.
4. Children on the visit should be asked for any relevant information if appropriate.
5. If the child is not found after fifteen minutes the police will be called and the School/Headmaster will alert the parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the school, if possible, at once.
6. Staff will cooperate with the police and take any action as directed by them.
7. All media queries should be referred to the Headmaster.
8. The Designated Safeguarding Lead would inform the Local Children Safeguarding Board.
9. The school would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care.
10. The Headmaster should inform the Chairman of the Board of Directors.
11. A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report (covering time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how s/he appeared to have gone missing, lessons for the future.) which will be given to the Headmaster/Deputy Head and EVC upon return. The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.
12. Once a child has been located, talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child.

### **Pupil removed from school premises by unapproved adult**

No child is allowed to leave the school site with an adult other than a parent without permission being received from a parent either by telephone or email. This rule must be rigorously enforced. In cases where a parent is legally denied access to their child all staff must be informed in writing of the circumstances together with a photo of the child and, if possible, the parent. There is a sign out alert list kept with the sign out folder for children in the Prep school. If a child is seen (or believed) to be taken from the school site by an unapproved adult, the police and parents will be immediately informed.

### **Measures in place to ensure a child does not go missing include:**

- Information to staff about challenging unknown persons on the premises
- Requirement for all visitors to register on arrival with the office, present evidence of identity on their first visit and obtain a visitor's badge
- Boundary security regularly checked by health and safety and maintenance teams.
- Supervision of children at all times

- Sufficient staff to maintain ratios appropriate to the venue and the nature of the activity being undertaken
- Collection and non-collection policy for children
  - If a child is not collected within 15 minutes of the agreed collection time, we will call the contact numbers for the parent or carer. If there is no answer, the member of staff on duty will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child.
  - During this time, the child will be safely looked after.
  - If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers when the premises are closing, the member of staff on duty will either contact the Headmaster who will make emergency arrangements for the child as necessary, or inform the Housemistress (if boarding is active) who will look after the child until such a time as the child is collected. The Housemistress would contact the Headmaster in the event of the child remaining uncollected for a period of more than an hour. Where appropriate we will make a full written report of the incident.
- Rigorous risk assessments for trips

### **Following up an incident**

When the situation has been resolved the Headmaster and SLT will review the reasons for it happening. This will include:

- Reviewing the incident with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Assessing the effectiveness of risk assessment procedures.
- Taking written statements from and interviewing staff involved.
- Collecting information from any other relevant adult witnesses, including officials from the venue where a child has gone missing off-site.
- Discussion, as appropriate with pupils.
- Informing Bellevue Head Office to discuss the review and agree any further action.
- If the incident requires reporting to Ofsted, in respect of RIDDOR or any other official body, such action will be taken.
- The incident and effectiveness of subsequent action taken will be reviewed at the next Health and Safety Committee meeting.

SLT will issue advice to staff and pupils and implement any necessary measures to ensure that it does not happen again.

### **Related Documents:**

Information for Parents of EYFS Children describes  
Educational Visits for EYFS Children

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