



# MISSING CHILD POLICY

Revised: September 2015

This policy applies to all Upper School.

Students safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our 'Missing Child' procedure is followed. The welfare of students in our care is paramount. This very rarely happens, but complacency is a hazard we must avoid at all costs. Students may go missing and EVERY member of staff has equal responsibility in ensuring the safety of the students and knowing where they are.

### **Systems in Place**

- Appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the premises and surrounding site is secure.
- The attendance register is taken at the start of each session, and the number of students attending recorded. It is the responsibility of every member of staff to be aware of how many students are present.
- Students who arrive late must be recorded in the register and those who leave early should be marked out accordingly.
- Staff should maintain extra vigilance with new students. Take extra care to be aware of their whereabouts and ensure they know the boundaries of where they can and cannot go.

### **Procedures**

In the event of a student being found to be 'missing' it is vital that prompt action is taken.

#### **Student going missing on the premises**

- As soon as it is identified that a student is 'missing', the member of staff will alert the Headmaster or the Deputy Headteacher in his absence.
- The register will be checked to make sure no other student has also gone astray.
- The signing out book will be checked at reception.
- Without alarming students, staff will attempt to ascertain from other students the child's last known whereabouts.
- The headmaster will talk to the staff to find out when and where the student was last seen – this will be recorded.

- The Headmaster will designate staff to carry out a thorough search of the building and gardens. This will include:
  - Classrooms, all toilets, offices and the car park
  - The school grounds including recreational areas such as the playing fields and courts
  - Checking all exits for where a student may have been able to leave the premises
- If the student is still missing, the Headmaster will call the police, report the student as missing, then call the parent/carer.
- The Headmaster will immediately carry out an investigation.

### **Student going missing on a school trip**

This describes what to do when staff have taken students out on a visit, leaving the Headmaster and/or other staff back in the school. If the Headmaster accompanies a trip, the Deputy Headteacher will assume the role of Acting Headmaster.

- Once it has been identified that a student is missing, staff on the visit will ask students to stand with them and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other students have gone astray. One staff member will search the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- A member of staff should notify, where possible, a member of staff who works at the place of visit, so that they can assist with the search.
- The Lead Teacher then contacts the school and the incident is recorded.
- The Headmaster will contact the police and will report the student as missing.
- The Headmaster will contact the parent/carer and inform them.
- Staff will take the remaining students back to school.
- The Headmaster immediately carries out an investigation.
- The Lead Teacher or a member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

### **The Investigation**

- Staff should keep calm and not let the other students become anxious or worried.
- The Headmaster, together with a representative from the Senior Leadership Team of the school will speak with the parent/carers.

- The Headmaster will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff who were in the place when the student went missing, or who were on the outing.
- The Lead Teacher will write an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report.
  - What staff/students were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing student.
  - When the student was last seen in the group/outing.
  - A chronological order of what took place since the student went missing.
  - The time it is estimated that the student went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff will co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's social care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, the Independent Schools Inspectorate will be informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.

### **Managing People**

Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.

- The staff will feel worried about the student, especially the key person or the designated staff team-leader responsible for the safety of that student for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the student is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The Headmaster needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated, but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents/carers will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the Headmaster. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader. No matter how understandable the parent/carer's anger may be,

aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.

- The other students are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer students' questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a student is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Headmaster, in conjunction with the Trustees will use their discretion to decide what action to take. Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.
- The necessary organisations will be contacted and all regulatory practises will be followed.