



"Inspiring a love of lifelong learning"

Missing / Lost Child Policy

Policy date: October 2020

Review date: October 2021

In line with school COVID-19 risk assessment

Learning at Charville is underpinned by our Core Values

Respect

Independence

Self-belief

Honesty

Caring

Determination

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1. Scope

This policy is to support all staff in the event of a missing child and outlines our procedures.

2. Procedure to minimise the risk of a child going missing on the premises

- A register must be taken at the beginning of each session
- The register and the number of children must be updated when a child arrives late or goes home early
- In line with our COVID-19 risk assessment drop off and collection times are extended in order to support social distancing. These are subject to change based on our weekly review or our risk assessment. Gates are locked and unlocked by staff assigned to them as per the duty rota.

3. Procedures in the event that a child is thought to be missing:

- Staff will remain calm and not convey anxieties
- Establish the identity of the child
- Check with other staff and check whether the child has been collected early / seen in school or taken elsewhere on site
- Maintain the safety of the other children
- Report the incident to the Head teacher and provide a full description
- Make a thorough search of the areas where the child could be including: the toilets, cloakroom, outside areas and in the other classrooms
- A thorough search of the whole site will take place
- Following the thorough search we would sound the fire alarm and evacuate in the attempt that if the child is hiding, they would know to evacuate
- The Head teacher (or Deputy/Assistant Head Teachers) will contact the parent/carer and the police/other agencies
- The Head teacher will be responsible for informing the Governors
- If a child exits school and leaves the site staff will not follow but will watch from a safe distance near the site, where possible. The Headteacher or Deputy Head will contact police (999) and parents/carers and note the time.

4. For Looked After Children the Missing Persons Guidance for Children in Care must be followed

Pgs 22 – 26 of the DfE Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care) are attached for information

5. Procedures to minimise the risk of a child going missing on an outing/visit

- Prior to the visit/trip a pre-visit should take place if it is the first time the school has visited the site, if no teacher in the year group has been on this trip before or the year group has not been on the trip within two years. The risk assessment will be signed by the Headteacher
- Any children who have 1:1 support will be identified on the risk assessment.

6. Procedures in the event that a child is thought to go missing on an outing/visit

- An assessment should be made of the likely level of risk. For example:
 - Is the area unfamiliar?
 - Is the child alone?
 - The age and knowledge of the child
 - Whether the area be potentially high risk e.g. on the coast, city centre;
 - Whether the area is contained e.g. a theme park
- Inform the manager/person in charge of the location/attraction/venue
- Undertake a search of the immediate area
- Ensure the safety of other group members. Divide the staff available between those who will attend to the rest of the group, and those who will search, if appropriate, for the missing person
- Inform the police and the Headteacher
- The senior leaders on school site will then be responsible for informing relatives and social worker (if relevant).

When a looked after child goes missing

66. Whenever a child runs away from a placement, the foster carer or the manager on duty in their children's home is responsible for ensuring that the following individuals and agencies are informed within the timescales set out in the local RMFHC protocol:

- the local police;
- the authority responsible for the child's placement – if they have not already been notified prior to the police being informed; and
- parents and any other person with parental responsibility, unless it is not reasonably practicable or to do so would be inconsistent with the child's welfare.

Please see the accompanying document, *Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from care: Flowchart to accompany the statutory guidance*.

When a looked after child is found

67. The responsible authority should ensure that plans are in place to respond promptly once the child is located. Care staff should inform the child's social worker and the independent reviewing officer that the child has returned. If the child is located but

⁹ Department for Education: [Joint protocol: children's homes - procedure for disclosing names and addresses \(2013\)](#)

professionals are unable to establish meaningful contact, then the responsible authority should contact the police and consider the appropriate action to take.

68. When the child has been located, the responsible local authority should review whether the child's placement remains appropriate. The decision should be informed by discussions with the child and carers where appropriate. The outcomes and reasons for the decision should be recorded.

69. An independent return interview should be offered when a missing looked after child is found. Where possible, the child should be given the opportunity to talk before they return to their placement. The person conducting the interview should usually be independent of the child's placement and of the responsible local authority. An exception maybe where a child has a strong relationship with a carer or social worker and has expressed a preference to talk to them, rather than an independent person, about the reasons they went missing. The child should be offered the option of speaking to an independent representative or advocate. When a looked after child is placed in a host authority, the responsible authority should ensure the independent review interview takes place, working closely with the host authority.

70. Children's home staff or foster carers should continue to offer warm and consistent care when a child returns, and running away should not be viewed as behaviour that needs to be punished. The need for safe and reliable care may be particularly significant for a child who faces pressure to run away from their placement as a result of circumstances beyond the control of their carers. In these circumstances, it will be even more important that the child's care and placement plans are kept up-to-date and include a strategy to reduce the pressure on the child to run away.

Data on looked after children who go missing or are away from placement without authorisation

71. Looked after children who go missing, or who are away from placement without authorisation, can be at increased risk of sexual or other forms of exploitation or of involvement in drugs, gangs, criminal activity or trafficking. Particular attention should be paid to repeat episodes. Data on these episodes should be analysed regularly in order to map problems and patterns. Regular reports on this data should be provided to council members and the LSCB.

72. Data for children missing or away from placement without authorisation should be reported to the Department for Education by the responsible authority through their annual data returns on looked after children.

Looked after children who may have been trafficked from abroad

73. Some looked after children are unaccompanied asylum seeking children or other migrant children. Some of this group may have been trafficked into the UK and may remain under the influence of their traffickers even while they are looked after. Trafficked children are at high risk of going missing, with most going missing within one week of becoming looked after and many within 48 hours. Unaccompanied migrant or asylum seeking children who go missing immediately after becoming looked after should be treated as potential victims of trafficking.

74. The assessment of need to inform the care plan will be particularly critical in these circumstances and should be done immediately as the window for intervention is very narrow. The assessment must seek to establish:

- relevant details about the child's background before they came to the UK;
- an understanding of the reasons why the child came to the UK; and
- an analysis of the child's vulnerability to remaining under the influence of traffickers.

75. In conducting this assessment, it will be necessary for the local authority to work in close co-operation with the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) and immigration staff familiar with patterns of trafficking into the UK. Immigration staff who specialise in trafficking issues should be able to advise on whether information about the individual child suggests that they fit the profile of a potentially trafficked child.

76. Provision may need to be made for the child to be in a safe place before any assessment takes place and for the possibility that they may not be able to disclose full information about their circumstances immediately. The location of the child should not be divulged to any enquirers until their identity and relationship with the child has been established, if necessary with the help of police and immigration services. In these situations the roles and responsibilities of care providers must be fully understood and recorded in the placement plan. Proportionate safety measures that keep the child safe and take into account their best interests should also be put in place to safeguard the child from going missing from care or from being re-trafficked.

77. It is essential that the local authority continues to share information with the police and immigration staff, concerning potential crimes against the child, the risk to other children, or other relevant immigration matters.

78. 'Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked'¹⁰ contains practical guidance for agencies which are likely to encounter, or have referred to them, children

¹⁰ HM Government: [Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked: practice guidance \(2011\)](#)

and young people who may have been trafficked. Where it is suspected that a child has been trafficked, they should be referred by the local authority into the UK's victim identification framework, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The Trafficked Children Toolkit¹¹, developed by the London Safeguarding Children Board, has been made available to all local authorities to help professionals assess the needs of these children and to refer them to the NRM.

79. NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre provides specialist advice and information to professionals who have concerns that a child may have been trafficked. Phone 0808 800 5000 Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm; email help@nspcc.org.uk; or web http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/ctail/ctail_wda84886.html

Checklist for local authorities

This is a short checklist that local authorities may find helpful to refer to the relevant paragraph in the guidance.

Checklist	Paragraph
Do you have a lead manager in place with strategic responsibility for children who run away or go missing?	13-14
Do you have a Runaway and Missing From Home and Care Protocol (RMFHC Protocol)?	15, 16, 20
Do you have a clear definition of a child who has run away?	10, 11-12, 20
Does your LSCB have in place systems to monitor prevalence of and the responses to children who go missing, including gathering data from LSCB members and other local stakeholders in order to understand trends and patterns?	15, 20, 49, 71
Do you have effective working relationships with your local police force?	16, 20, 23-27, 66
Do you have effective partnerships with the voluntary sector, relevant specialist services and information about national level resources, eg. helplines for missing children?	18, 22, 79
Do you have clear procedures in place to offer return interviews when a missing child is found?	31-39, 69
Do you have support services in place for children and their families?	22, 40-41
Do you have a strategy to prevent children from running away and to deal with repeat runaways?	20, 45-47, 52-54