

Missing Child Policy

This policy applies to all pupils in the Infant and Junior School, including the EYFS.

Rationale

The welfare of our girls is paramount. This policy exists in order to establish the procedure in the unlikely event of a girl going missing on the school premises. The safety procedure on outings is outlined in the Educational Visits handbook and taken into consideration by staff when planning and writing risk assessments for individual outings. Through our Supervision Policy and Procedure, Trip Risk Assessment and duty of care the school aims to minimise the risk of children going missing:

Procedure

Girls are registered at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. Any girls arriving after registration has closed must sign in at the offices.

Morning drop-off and Afternoon collection

At Snowdrops, the children are delivered directly into the setting by their parents/carer, signed in and supervised.

At the Infant School, parents wait with their children in the playground until 8.15am when members of staff come on duty. At this time parents can choose to leave their children with the supervision staff or remain until the bell rings at 8.30am. Reception parents then deliver the pupils to the class teacher or the classroom assistant. Year 1 and 2 girls enter the building once the doors open, often greeted by their teacher or an assistant, and make their way to the cloakrooms and then to the classrooms.

In the Junior School, Year 3 – 5 girls line up in the playground at the start of the day, having been with parents or in the Breakfast Club. The girls in Breakfast Club only enter the playground once a member of staff is on duty. Gates are closed at this time and supervision is vigilant. Younger girls who are left in the care of the Breakfast Club supervisor, and who are awaiting transport to the Infant site, are escorted to the minibus by the Breakfast Club supervisor and 6th Form helpers, and delivered to the Infant site, where they are received by a member of staff and escorted to the playground.

Registration is taken by the teacher and any girls not present in school are marked absent. Often there has been previous communication, either directly with the teacher or forwarded by the School Secretaries, accounting for an absence. If this is not the case, these children are left with an unaccounted absence mark and the School Secretaries will follow up with a phone call to the given contact numbers until a reason for absence is ascertained. If for whatever reason no communication is possible the Head is notified and investigation/safeguarding actions will be taken (see below for further detail). An afternoon register is taken by all teachers and the same process is followed.

At the end of the day, Infant girls are only returned to an adult known to be collecting them – if this is someone other than the parent written confirmation of the individual collecting must be received by the school. This happens in the playground. Girls going to either Tea-Time Club or afterschool activities are taken by the teachers/assistants to the hall for registration and then dispersal from there. If a club member is not at the registration, initially there is a search of the school site and discussion with the teacher, and then a phone call to parents to ascertain if the child has been collected without notifying the club/School

Office. Girls in Year 3 upwards exit the buildings, if being collected, and go to their parents who will be waiting at the front of the school. A member of staff is on duty in the playground and will collect any pupils not collected by 4.00pm. Again if someone other than the parent is collecting the child, the parents must notify the school. If not, then the teacher on duty and/or JLT member on duty will ring the parent to have verbal confirmation. Here too, girls going to either Tea-Time Club or afterschool activities are taken by the teachers/assistants to the hall for registration and then dispersal from there. If a club member is not at the registration, initially there is a search of the school site and discussion with the teacher, and then a phone call to parents to ascertain if the child has been collected without notifying the club/School Office.

Break time

Girls are lined up at the end of break times before coming back indoors; giving the opportunity for a head count. Registration is taken in the morning and after lunch.

During the school day

Girls who leave either school site during the day must be signed out in the Office by the adult who is responsible for them – member of staff or parent/carer, and signed back in should they return before the end of the school day.

Procedure if a child is missing

Every care is taken to ensure our children are accounted for at all times. Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. However, in the unlikely event that it is suspected that a child has gone missing the following procedure will be followed:

- Take a register in order to ensure that all the other children are present
- Inform the Head of Infant and Junior School or Designate Safeguarding Lead
- Ask all of the adults and children calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the child
- Occupy all of the other children in their classroom(s) – at no time should other children be left unattended.
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search everywhere within the school, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, washrooms where a child might hide
- Check the doors, gates for signs of entry/exit

If the child is still missing, the following steps would be taken:

- Head of Infant and Junior School to inform Headmistress and then ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the school at once
- Head of Infant and Junior School to notify the Police
- Head of Infant and Junior School would arrange for staff to search the rest of the school premises and grounds
- If the child's home is within walking distance, a member of staff would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with him/her
- The Child Protection Officer would inform the Local Children Safeguarding Board
- The school would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care
- Inform the Chairman of Governors
- The Insurers would be informed
- If the child is injured, when found, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IF A CHILD GOES MISSING ON AN OUTING

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other children were present
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity
- The remaining children would be taken back to school
- Inform the Head of Infant and Junior School by mobile phone
- Head of Infant and Junior School to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the venue/ the school at once
- Contact the venue Manager and arrange a search
- Contact the Police
- The Child Protection Officer would inform the Local Children Safeguarding Board
- The school would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care
- Inform the Chairman of Governors
- The Insurers would be informed
- If the child is injured, when found, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE

Again, a full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF ONCE THE CHILD IS FOUND

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- Head of Infant and Junior School will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident
- Head of Infant and Junior School will promise a full investigation (if appropriate involving Social Services/ Local Children Safeguarding Board)
- Media queries should be referred to the Head of Infant and Junior School/Headmistress
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, [the purpose of the outing – if this occurs during a out of school visit], the length of time that the child was missing and how she appeared to have gone missing, lessons for the future.