



# Hope View School

## **Safeguarding: Lost or Missing Children Policy**

September 2018

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## KEY FACTS

- ◆ This policy enables schools to deal promptly and professionally in a “worst case scenario” of a lost or missing child.
- ◆ It emphasises the responsibility for attendance, registers and keeping children safe.
- ◆ It requires schools to demonstrate collection and handover arrangements specific to the school.
- ◆ Procedures to follow should a child go missing or become lost.
- ◆ An Incident Report must be completed.
- ◆ With regards to children who become lost or missing, relevant policies and procedures will be reviewed.

### 1 Purpose

- 1.1. It is essential that Hope View School and all members of staff ensure that positive steps are taken to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The safety and welfare of all of our children at school is our paramount responsibility. Any child going missing from education or learning is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, particularly on repeat occasions.
- 1.2. The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures, Whistleblowing Policy, Staff Disciplinary Procedure and any other relevant school policy or procedure.
- 1.3. All staff and volunteers understand what to do in the unlikely event that a child were to be lost or go missing either from the school building, site or during an off-site visit.
- 1.4. It is the Headteacher’s responsibility to ensure that this policy is understood and followed.
- 1.5. It is the responsibility of all staff to read the policy and to act at all times accordingly.

### 2 Introduction

- 2.1. This policy has been adopted in respect of any child who goes missing from our premises or wanders off from our care, even if they remain on site.
- 2.2. This policy will be used in respect of all cases in which it is found that a child is lost or missing. It should be read in conjunction with our policy and procedure for uncollected children (late collection) and the school Safeguarding Policy including managing allegations of abuse against staff and other adults.
- 2.3. At all times we will treat very seriously any evidence which shows that any member of staff has behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for definition of harm).
- 2.4. Any consequent disciplinary matter against staff will follow our separate disciplinary procedure. Hope View School recognises that it is possible for staff and volunteers to behave in a way that might cause harm to children and takes seriously any allegation received. Such allegations should be referred immediately to the Head Teacher who will first contact the

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Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) function) to agree further action to be taken in respect of the child and staff member.

- 2.5. Due consideration will be given by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as to whether referral may be made to children's social care. For example, where the child is in need of protection, early help or in need of other support.
- 2.6. Staff are responsible for completing the attendance registers, including signing pupils in and out of school for any offsite activities, rewards or sanctions. The register must be completed accurately and promptly. The law requires schools to have an attendance register which is compliant with the Regulations.

### 3 Steps to Keep Children Safe

- 3.1. Our procedures will always be managed with common sense and sound judgement. If a member of staff takes a child out of school they are responsible for gaining permission from the Senior leadership and if necessary the parents. A record in the school office will be made to sign individuals out and back in again.
- 3.2. We will only release children into the care of individuals who have been notified to us by the parent/carer(s) in advance, and we must ensure that children do not leave the premises unsupervised. We must take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised persons entering the premises, and have an agreed procedure for checking the identity of visitors.
- 3.3. At all times, parents can be assured that all children remain within a safe environment of our school/setting, including attendance to any outings or while on Forest School sessions offsite. We ensure that proper precautions are taken to prevent children going missing.
- 3.4. If any child is found to leave the premises without permission of the school and parents, they will be deemed to have broken the school's code of conduct and the application of appropriate and proportionate sanctions will be considered by the senior leadership team accordingly.
- 3.5. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure they provide correct and updated information on a timely basis and know the procedures for handover of their child.
- 3.6. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher, to ensure that all staff are aware of the school's procedures and that they will provide challenge and support to the school in the review of this policy.
- 3.7. A register will be taken of each child's attendance. As a minimum, any unexplained absences will be reported immediately to the school office and to the SENCO by a member of staff so that swift and immediate action will be taken. In the absence of the SENCO from the premises at the time, the designated member of the Senior Leadership team will always assume such responsibility. In the case of incidents occurring while children are learning outside the classroom on Forest School or school visits, the Forest School Leader or visit leader will assume such responsibility, as agreed with the Senior Leadership team on behalf of the Headteacher.
- 3.8. No child leaves our supervision and care without an appropriate adult. In order to achieve this aim, we operate the following procedures at our school:

Children are supervised at all times; visitors are recorded arriving and leaving following the school signing in procedure.

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To prevent a child going missing, a points register is checked during lessons. A list of participants on outings will be taken to act as a register. A list will also be left in the school office signing out book. Children are signed out from the signing out book by staff for Forest School, when leaving site or for any extra curricular activity.

Children are made aware of all boundaries around the school and will be given safe boundaries for school trips and Forest School sessions (for Forest School they must remain within sight and sound of group). The perimeter of the setting is fenced. The Playgrounds are fenced and gated. There is security access to the main entrances. All rooms that are out of bounds are kept locked, restricting access to adults only.

If a child were found to be missing from a site, the following procedures would be followed:

1)

- Staff inform the Senior Leadership team, the SENCO, and Assistant Head, Deputy Head or Headteacher immediately.
- Call the register to check and establish which child is missing.
- Staff will check grounds and rooms to ensure the child has not hidden or been locked in anywhere within the boundary.
- Other classes or groups are to be contacted to check the child has not joined another group after an outing if appropriate.
- The Headteacher or their representative will contact the police and the parents/carers.

2)

- If a child insists on leaving the premises with the knowledge of the staff and cannot be persuaded by the staff to stay on site, parents/carers will be contacted immediately.
- If appropriate, and enough staff are available to enable one member of staff to leave the school setting with a mobile phone, they will follow and observe as to where the child is going.
- If there are not enough staff to leave the site to observe the child, or in circumstances that may escalate dangerous behaviour from the child, the Senior Leadership team may decide the child is unsafe to follow and call the police 999.

3)

- If a child is found to be missing while on an outing the trip organiser should contact the Senior Leadership team immediately.
- Keep the rest of the group together and check the register again.
- The accompanying staff and the children should look in the area for the child while waiting for the Senior Leadership team to advise them.
- The Senior Leadership team will follow procedure 1 and keep the trip organiser informed.

3.9. Permission from parents is obtained for any educational visits which are deemed as part of the school curriculum, or specifically for any other visit.

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- 3.10. Mobile phones are taken on every school visit, Forest School sessions and the contact numbers are left at the school office. When pupils are permitted to take mobile phones on trips they are instructed to contact the responsible teacher in the event of any unexpected incident or undesirable behaviour in the first instance before contacting their parents directly. This is because it is the school's responsibility to safeguard the pupil's health, safety and well-being while they are in the care of the school staff.
  - 3.11. While staff are supervising children off-site, the Educational Visits and Learning Outside the Classroom Policy will apply at all times.
  - 3.12. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity in accordance with the school's practice in maintaining confidentiality and our obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

#### 4 Procedures following a Child Reported Missing or Lost

- 4.1. If a teacher suspects that a child is missing from a lesson or activity, they will contact the nearest member of SLT and school office immediately.
- 4.2. All remaining children will be kept safe in a secure place with adequate adult supervision, including assistance from other school staff if necessary.
- 4.3. A full headcount will be taken by the teacher-in-charge and matched against the register; usually the class teacher or nominated person.
- 4.4. A senior member of staff will make a thorough search of the building and/or site and immediate surroundings including storage areas and toilets. A thorough check of all exits will be made, to ensure all gates/doors are locked and there is no other way a pupil could have left the site. If something is discovered, the SLT member must be immediately informed.
- 4.5. The following list held in the school office will be checked: attendance register, off site signing out book, and information on pupils collected from school early.
- 4.6. If the child is not found after this initial search and/or approximately 10 minutes from the initial report of them deemed missing, including where a child is found wandering or at risk of being lost or missing. The designated safeguarding officer in school will be notified immediately and they will ensure that the parents are informed. The Headteacher, or SLT member in the absence of the Head, will decide at which point the police will be called.
- 4.7. All relevant emergency contacts for children will be used to inform parent/carer(s) accordingly. However, until such time as the child is safely returned to the care of the parent/carer(s), the Headteacher remains responsible for the care and welfare of the child, including off-site.
- 4.8. As soon as is practicable, an Incident Report will be completed by the relevant staff and sent to the SENCO who will pass on to the Headteacher. A note will also be made on the school's attendance register accordingly.
- 4.9. Near misses will also be recorded and reported to the Senior Leadership team and SENCO. The situation will be reviewed and steps will be taken to avoid any repeat incident, communication with parents and actions to be taken following the risk assessment process to mitigate future risk. Any relevant policies and procedures must be reviewed.

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- 4.10. All incidents will be reported to the Senior Leadership team and Head Teacher, for the attention of our insurers, as appropriate. Staff must try to remember and write down a description of what the child was wearing and any distinguishing features.
  - 4.11. If a missing child has any special medical or learning needs then these need to be noted to be disclosed to the police or other agencies.
  - 4.12. A thorough search of the premises should continue until the child is found. When offsite the group will remain with in adult supervision and upon discussion with the Senior Leadership team a member of staff may search the local area if deemed appropriate. The Group/Party will not leave a site or area while a child is missing unless under direct guidance from the Senior Leadership team, police or emergency services.

## 5 Following the Incident

- 5.1. It is in everyone's interest to resolve what has happened as quickly as possible, consistent with a fair and thorough investigation.
- 5.2. The written findings of the investigation must be reported by the Headteacher within 24 hours of the occurrence of the incident.
- 5.3. Local authority children's social care should also be informed of any missing child, and our usual local authority safeguarding and child protection arrangements followed.
- 5.4. All relevant policies and procedures will immediately be reviewed and revisions presented formally to the Headteacher for approval within 5 working days.
- 5.5. The parent/carer(s) will be involved at all times.
- 5.6. Following receipt of our investigative report, the Headteacher will report the conclusions as to the next steps to further safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the care of the school to the Board of Governors and any other relevant agencies.
- 5.7. Where the parent/carer(s) remain concerned despite reassurances informally by the school, they may choose to use the school's complaints procedure accordingly.

## 6 Procedures following a Child Missing from an Off Site Location

- 6.1. The visit leader must ensure the safety of remaining pupils. The group must remain in adult supervision.
- 6.2. One or more adults should immediately start to search for the child.
- 6.3. If the child is not found within 5 minutes, the visit leader must then contact Senior Leadership team and consider contacting the police by telephoning 999 (within the UK or similar equivalent number if overseas).
- 6.4. The Senior Leadership team should alert the school office, or in the case of out-of-hours, the nominated school contact for the trip, that the police have been contacted. The school will make arrangements to notify the parents accordingly. The remaining procedures outlined above in sections 4 and 5 will then be followed.

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## 7 Monitoring & Evaluation

- 7.1. This policy and our procedures will be reviewed annually and more frequently following a near miss or missing child incident. Compliance with this policy is reported formally to the Safeguarding Governor with the Head reporting any changes including management actions accordingly.
- 7.2. If, as a parent, you are not happy with the way that you or your child is treated by any member of staff you should consider raising your concern with the Headteacher. You may find it helpful to refer to our formal complaints procedure for guidance. This procedure emphasises the importance of resolving any concerns informally and at the earliest possible opportunity. We expect our parents to share any concerns informally with us so that we can continuously improve the quality of education at our school.
- 7.3. Our school's leadership team ensure that we monitor the quality and compliance of our accident and incident reports at our compliance committee meetings. The Headteacher ensures that staff are sufficiently trained and experienced to be compliant at all times; particularly during school trips and visits.
- 7.4. Hope View School and its Staff including The Headteacher are overseen by the Safeguarding Governor who will maintain an overview of the effectiveness of this policy and local school practice in this regard, providing appropriate governance scrutiny and challenge.

### **Related Policies:**

**Behaviour and Discipline Policy**

**Sanction and Reward Policy**

**Complaints Policy**

**Child Protection Policy**

**Policy Review Date: September 2023**

**Responsible Person: Mrs C Lorne**