

Missing Children Procedure

Middle Barton Primary School



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Emergency Procedures When a Child is Discovered to be Missing (Policy Statement)

Introduction

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Attendance policy and Safeguarding policy. School attendance is monitored at the start of the day and end of the day via the registration process. Any child not in school and with no notification from a parent / carer as to why, will be followed up with a phone call home. The headteacher is notified of any Pupil Premium children not in school even with notification from home.

Purpose and Aims of this Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy statement is to give all staff, both teaching and non teaching, a clear understanding of how to respond and who to inform should they discover a child is missing. The aims of this policy statement are to:

- provide a clear procedure which is understood and effectively implemented by all staff,
- enable the missing child to be located as quickly as possible and given the appropriate level of safety and security commensurate with the pupil's age and emotional/behavioural maturity.

All staff must be aware of the procedures to be followed if a child goes missing. This can be a very stressful time for all concerned. Every care is taken to ensure that all children are kept safe. Risk assessments are carried out to ensure that the school and setting is as safe as possible and children should never be allowed to leave the premises on their own. It is possible, however, that despite all precautions a child cannot be accounted for and goes missing. This policy is designed to put in place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents and the authorities at every appropriate point.

Preventative Procedures

Systems must be in place to ensure that children do not go missing.

1. All exits are kept closed from 9am – this includes the internal and external gates.
2. Children must be made aware of the boundaries of the school.
3. Children must be supervised at all times and there will be sufficient staff available to ensure this happens.
4. Head counts should take place regularly through the day and particularly when a class has been out of the classroom.
5. Parents/carers must sign their children in and out if they come to or leave school at times other than normal start and finish times.
6. Children will not be allowed to leave the school with anyone other than the authorised persons unless the school has been informed otherwise and that alternative person is identified.
7. Any visitors to school will be signed in and out. This includes any parent remaining on site after 9am. They must be let into the school by a member of staff; also seen off the premises by a member of staff to ensure that no doors are left open and the safety of the children is maintained.

Occasions when a child may go missing

Staff need to be mindful that a child can go missing at any time of the day. These times and examples of the occasions providing opportunities for a child to go missing are:-

a) From an indoor lesson

This could occur when a child is allowed to leave the classroom unaccompanied by an adult and fails to return; e.g. - to go to the toilet, - to collect something from his/her bag in the cloakroom, - being sent to another class or teacher, - undertaking errands for the teacher such as **taking a message** to the office.

b) From an outdoor lesson

This could occur when the class is outside the building with the children spread out and/or engaged in a variety of activities that make it easy for a child to wander away unnoticed. e.g. - during games lessons on the playground or field - during other outdoor lessons, (e.g. measuring parts of the building) - at the beginning or end of outdoor lessons when children are getting changed or using the toilet, etc.

c) Travelling about the school

This could occur when the children are spread out and beyond the teacher's direct total supervision. e.g. - going to and from the hall or outdoors before and after a PE lesson, - going to and from the hall before and after assembly, - going to and from the classroom at the beginning/end of lunch/break times.

d) Other Times

These include:

At the start of the school day when children are freely moving about the grounds and building to get to their cloakroom and classroom.

At break and lunch times.

At the end of the school day when children and parents are freely moving about.

Upon Discovering a child is Missing

It is important that the person discovering a child is missing knows what to do. What action is taken depends on who discovers the child is missing. Therefore, the following action should be taken by the following personnel.

Voluntary helpers will:

Immediately notify the adult leading the class. If this adult is not available for whatever reason they must inform the classroom support staff if there is one, or, if there is not, the nearest available member of staff. They should state the name of the child (if known) or a description of the child (if the child's name is not known to them), what the child was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child as directed by the class teacher or the Headteacher.

Classroom Support Staff will:

Immediately notify the class teacher or adult in charge. If the teacher is not available for whatever reason they must inform the nearest available teacher. They should state the name of the child and what he/she was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child. Thereafter they should assist with any

organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the class as directed by the class teacher or the Headteacher.

Lunchtime supervisors will:

Immediately notify a teacher, or the HT (whoever is found first). They should state the name of the child (if known) or a description of the child (if the child's name is not known to them), what the child was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the children as directed by the Senior Midday Supervisor or the Headteacher.

The Class Teacher will:

Immediately notify the Headteacher or a member of the Senior leadership team. Conduct a search of the immediate surroundings, i.e.: Indoors - in the classroom (looking under tables, work surfaces and other possible hiding places such as cupboards), adjacent work areas and classrooms, nearby cloakrooms and toilets. Outdoors - in the immediate area where the child was last seen including looking under bushes and up trees etc. [NB The teacher should quickly arrange for another adult (e.g. support staff or neighbouring teacher) to supervise their class while they conduct any search away from the class for which they are responsible]. If this initial search does not find the child, the teacher shall begin a wider search of the school buildings and grounds including searching public areas in other parts of the school e.g. library areas, toilet and cloakroom areas, corridors, hall etc. The task of undertaking this search can be done either by the teacher personally or they can delegate this to a member of the support staff depending on the teacher's knowledge of the child including their emotional and behavioural characteristics. At all times the rest of the class must be supervised by either the class teacher or a member of the support staff. If appropriate, a neighbouring teacher can be asked to supervise the class (as well as their own) to enable both the teacher and the support staff to conduct the search.

The Headteacher will:

Take charge of the situation. If satisfied that the class is adequately supervised, the Headteacher will join the teacher (and support staff if applicable) in searching the school premises for the missing child directing the teacher (and others) where to search (e.g. while she searches externally, the teacher searches internally) Alternatively, the Headteacher may direct the teacher (or support staff) to return to their class in order to continue supervising the class and to be a familiar adult, should the missing child return to their classroom. In this situation the Headteacher will continue the search alone or with other available adults. When the Headteacher is satisfied that the child is not on the premises, she will contact the child's parents and inform them of the situation and to enquire if the child has returned home. If the child is at home the parents will be informed by telephone of the known facts surrounding the child going missing. If the child is not at home the Headteacher will, in consultation with the parents, begin a search outside of the school premises. If the parents cannot be contacted at home, the Headteacher (or other adults as directed by the Headteacher) will begin a search outside of the school's immediate premises. This may include a visit to the child's home if this is near the school. If the child is not

found within 30 minutes, the Headteacher (or other staff if so directed by the Headteacher) will inform the police and, as appropriate, social services and the Chair of Governors of the child's disappearance. Thereafter the Headteacher will follow the instructions of the police regarding the continuation of the search for the child.

The Office staff will:

Inform the Headteacher of the missing child and then await further instructions. Communication with the parents will be led by the Headteacher unless directed otherwise by her. If the parents cannot be contacted, the office staff will, if directed to do so by the Headteacher, telephone the police, social services and Chair of Governors to inform them of the missing child and give them such information as they may request. The school staff, including the Headteacher, will then continue the search as directed by the police.

Missing Children Seen Running Off the Premises

If, during the search, the missing child is seen leaving the premises, the member of staff witnessing this must inform the most senior member of staff immediately available or, if none is available, send a message to the office via a reliable messenger without losing sight of the child if possible. As a general rule staff should not pursue a child beyond the school boundary. Instead they should report to the Headteacher where they last saw the child and the direction the child was heading so that this information can be communicated to the parents or police as appropriate. The member of staff should then return to their normal duties unless directed otherwise by the Headteacher. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the member of staff to go beyond the school boundary, e.g. to retrieve a child who has accidentally wandered out of an open gate, or to follow/retrieve a child with special needs who has deliberately left the premises but in doing so does not understand the gravity of their action. Staff are expected to use their professional discretion in deciding whether or not it is appropriate to go beyond the school boundary in pursuance of such children. If a child is followed beyond the school boundary, the member of staff must behave in a manner that is not threatening to the child. They must not run after the child as this may cause the child to run into a dangerous situation, e.g. the child might run into a road without looking out for traffic in an attempt to evade the pursuing, running adult. In exceptional circumstances where a child is known to be liable to run off the premises, the school may prepare and enact contingency search plans involving named staff. When enacting these plans, staff should be mindful not to put themselves or the child at risk.

Investigations

When a missing child has been located and safely returned to school, the child's family or the police, the Headteacher will conduct an investigation into the circumstances of the child going missing. This is in order to identify any factors that need to be addressed by the school or communicated to the parents to prevent a recurrence of the child going missing.