

# Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School



Catholic  
Primary School  
Congleton  
A Voluntary Academy

## Missing Child Policy

Policy Schedule	Date	Signed
Approved by the Governing Body:	1.2.2024	Head of School: Greg Merrick Chair of Governors: Val Bridge
To be reviewed:	February 2027	

# MISSING CHILD POLICY

Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School recognises the responsibility for the safety and welfare of its pupils and is aware of the responsibilities regarding child safety; including what to do if a child goes missing from school/setting supervision. This policy sets out the procedures that should be followed if this happens.

## Aims and Vision

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

## Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of the Head teacher to allocate the roles to specific members of staff should a child go missing e.g. Head teacher, DSL, Office Staff, Site Staff, Class teacher, Pastoral lead etc.

## Occasions when a child may go missing

- **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 outside of the classroom, being sent to another class or teacher or undertaking errands for the teacher such as visiting the school office.
- **From an outdoor lesson.**  
This could occur when the class are outside the building with the children spread out and/or engaged in a variety of activities which mean that it is 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 or at the beginning or end of outdoor lessons when children are getting changed or using the toilet, using drinking fountains etc.
- **Travelling about/around 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 or going to and from the classroom at the beginning/end of lunch/break times.

- **Other Times.**

These occasions 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 or at the end of the school day when children and parents are freely moving about.

## Response

- The person discovering a child is missing should immediately alert the Head teacher /Deputy Head teacher and Business Manager, stating the last known location of the child.
- All exits should be secured. The Business Manager should instruct staff to monitor school's main reception and prevent any person from leaving the building. (Even if an adult leaving the building does not have the missing child with them, it is important they remain as they may have information to help locate the child).
- Register all pupils as quickly as possible. If the child has been noticed as missing during a break, a fire drill procedure should be used to identify if there are any other children missing.
- Site staff and specified classroom staff should instigate a controlled search, starting at the last known location. This should be carried out systematically and include all buildings and grounds. Care should be taken to prevent panic.
- The child's parents / carers should be contacted by the identified member of staff to see if the child has returned home. The conversation should be carefully managed. If the parent / carer cannot be reached then emergency contacts should be used to try and make contact.
- A member of staff should be sent out to trace the child's route home to see if they can be found. Staff should be contactable at all times e.g. with school mobile phone.
- If the child is not located, the identified member of staff should inform the police on 101 or 999 and provide information about what the child is wearing, and a physical description. The decision of how urgently or if to contact the police will be influenced by their age / emotional maturity/ behavioural concerns / vulnerabilities e.g. CSE concerns / possible truancy etc.
- The Head teacher should commence a critical incident log and accurately record all actions / relevant, factual information. Ensuring that times and dates are recorded.
- If the child is not located, or is known to have been abducted, the Head teacher should alert the Local Authority Director of Education and the Schools Chair of Governors.
- No press briefing should take place unless directed by the police and with the input from Cheshire East Communications and Media Relations Office (Phone: 01270 686577). Social media should be monitored, and staff should be reminded not to respond to anything on social media sites.

- The Head teacher should hold a staff briefing, when possible, to advise of the current situation, ensuring staff are aware of information sharing protocols.
- Under the direction of the Head teacher, all staff should work with multi-agency partners to ensure parents / carers, and family members are supported whilst the matter is resolved.
- **Post event:** The Head teacher should arrange an emergency Governing Body meeting to review the school's critical incident paperwork and safeguarding arrangements.

## School trips

- If a child goes missing on a school outing or visit, the teacher in charge should ensure the safety of the remaining children, at least one member of staff should stay with them. The group leader should make a professional judgement at the time with respect to the size of the pupil group, the needs of the pupils, time of day etc.
- One or more adults should immediately start to search for the child.
- The group leader should immediately contact school to alert them.
- If the child is not found within 5 minutes, the group leader must contact the police by telephoning 999, with a description of the child.
- The group leader should alert school that the police have been called and school will arrange to contact parents / carers, after which the procedures in **response** are followed.

## Children who run

- If a child runs away from school and is in the eye line of an adult the adult should inform another member of staff. They should call after the child and try to encourage them to return. Care should be taken not to alarm the child and cause them to run further away
- The member of staff will do everything possible to maintain sight of the child after informing another member of staff of the situation
- A child should not be physically restrained or grabbed, unless they are in immediate danger of hurting themselves or putting themselves in a dangerous situation e.g. running into the road

## Review

- When a missing child has been located and safely returned, the Head teacher will conduct an investigation into the circumstances of the child going missing. This will identify any factors which need to be addressed by the school or communicated to the parents to prevent a recurrence of the child going missing.
- The risk assessment for the child should be reviewed and amended accordingly.
- It may also be necessary to contact the police if any information is found about where the child has been and with whom (consider Child Sexual Exploitation / Criminal Exploitation etc.) and refer to the school's safeguarding policy.

## Procedures to reduce risk

In order to reduce the risk of a missing pupil, the following procedures are completed routinely:

- Clear procedures for welcoming pupils to school.
- Registers are marked promptly and accurately at the start of morning and afternoon sessions.
- External gates are closed and locked when children are on the premises.
- If pupils leave a classroom to work elsewhere the class teacher must ensure that adequate supervision is maintained at all times and all pupils are accounted for on return to the classroom.
- Updated contact information for parents and carers is sought and maintained.
- Staff patrol all areas of the playground throughout break times.
- Senior Leadership Team members are available at lunchtime to support midday assistants.

# Appendix 1

## Missing Child Incident Form

(To be completed as soon as possible after the event has been resolved)

<b>Date of Incident</b>	
<b>Location of Incident</b>	
<b>Child (ren) involved</b>	
<b>Supervising Adults at time of incident</b>	
<b>Details of incident</b> Please include details of how long the child was missing; who was involved in the search; whether the police, parents/carers, and/or ChECS informed, how the incident was resolved etc.	
<b>Suggestions to improve procedures</b>	
<b>Report Completed by:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

# Appendix 2

*(Taken from Pan Cheshire Missing from Home Protocol 2017-2019)*

In line with the College of Policing guidance, with effect from 1st June 2017, Cheshire Police have adopted a risk based approach to managing incidents where children or young people go missing.

## Definition of 'missing'

**'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.'** All reports of missing people sit within a continuum of risk from 'no apparent risk (absent)' through to high-risk cases that require immediate, intensive action.

### Risk Assessment and Response

