

MISSING PUPILS POLICY

The welfare of pupils at Leweston is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the School has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times.

A pupil going missing from School is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. The following procedures will help prevent pupils going missing and also help raise concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM, forced marriage, honour-based abuse, CCE (including County Lines) and CSE. A child missing school, particularly repeatedly, can act a warning sign for other concerns including mental health issues and a range of other safeguarding issues.

Procedures for all Pupils

If a member of Leweston staff becomes aware that a pupil may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents what has happened. If this is not possible, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should, together with other relevant staff, assess the child's vulnerability.

From the first day that a child does not attend School and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken:

- A staff member will make contact with the parents (person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home;
- The outcome of the contact should be assessed and if there are any concerns a consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead should take place to consider the child's vulnerability.

In the following circumstances a referral to children's social care and / or the police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime;
- The child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
- The child is subject of Section 47 enquiries;
- The child is looked after;
- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
- There is a history of the family moving frequently;
- There are serious issues of attendance (for example where there have been previous issues and the non-attendance is contrary to an agreed plan).

The answers to further questions could assist a judgement whether or not to inform children's social care and the police:

- In which age range is the child?
- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?

- Has the child been a victim of bullying?
- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk, e.g. does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk, e.g. rites of passage, female genital mutilation or forced marriage planned for the child?
- Has the child got a disability and/or special educational needs?
- Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying, e.g. is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
- Is there any known history of domestic violence?
- Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?

If the answers to any of the points set out above indicates that there are concerns about the child's safety, then a referral should be made to Children's Social Care and the Police on day one.

Step one:

- Contact Dorset Police (24 hour response);
- Any suspicion/evidence of crime must be clearly stated;
- The circumstances and all available information regarding the child and family will be required.

Step two:

- The missing person report will be risk assessed and the local police response team will carry out immediate actions;
- The investigation will be progressed by the police response team, in conjunction with either the local Missing Persons Unit and/or the CID.

Step three:

- The missing person report will generate a notification to the police;
- The police will work with, and refer information to, the responsible children's social care;
- Children's social care, who must be contacted as soon as possible in these circumstances, will also liaise with the Safeguarding and Referral Unit, Dorset Police in order to identify, and act upon, any suspicion of child abuse or child related crime.

Missing Pupils Procedure – Day Pupils

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing pupil is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a pupil is found to be missing, the School would carry out the following actions:

1. Take the register at the start of a lesson, identifying any pupil's absence.
2. If an absence is unexpected or unexplained, immediately report the pupil as missing to the School Receptionist, the Head of Year, or the Head of Prep. They will establish when the pupil was last seen.

3. A search for the pupil will be instigated, checking the Health Centre, The Music School, Libraries, Computer Rooms, a boarder's dormitory, Common Rooms, the Mesh, the sports hall, the EAL Room in the case of an overseas pupil. If the pupil cannot be found within 60 minutes, the matter will be reported to the Deputy Head Pastoral.
4. Those conducting the search will refer to the pupil's classmates for information, if the search proves fruitless. A search will then be made of the grounds.
5. If the pupil cannot be located after the search is completed the Deputy Head Pastoral will inform the Head.
6. After no more than 60 minutes the Head, DH or DHP will instigate a fire drill for the purposes of whole-school registration and continued site search.
7. The pupil's parent(s) will be contacted and informed of the absence. If they can shed no light on their whereabouts, they will be invited to decide on the next steps to be taken in the search.
8. The Head will contact the Police to identify if the Police have any information on the pupil's location (for example, if the pupil has been involved in an accident). Local hospitals should be contacted to find out if the pupil has been admitted.
9. When the pupil is found/returned, parents (and police if involved) to be contacted.
10. Record to be made in *Missing Pupils File*
11. Pastoral follow-up to be planned and put in pupil's file
12. If the pupil is in the UK on a student visa, their disappearance must be reported to the UKBA.
13. Reception will keep a log of all minor incidents when a pupil is missing temporarily from a lesson and report to the Head of Year as appropriate.

Missing Pupils Procedure – Boarders

During the school day staff will follow the Missing Pupils Procedure – Day Pupils for any boarders believed to be missing. During boarding hours, including should a boarder fail to return from a trip off site, in the first instance, the sign in books/sheets will be checked should a pupil not be in their respective House at the correct sign in time/curfew.

As soon as a Houseparent becomes aware of an unexplained absence, the following procedure will be followed:

1. Houseparents will attempt to ring the pupil to ascertain their whereabouts.
2. Internal enquiries will be carried out. The Houseparent will speak to the pupil's friends and other members of staff to build a picture of the student's recent movements to help locate the student. Guidance on appropriate questions to ask is set out below. If appropriate, the Houseparent will arrange a search of the premises.
3. Whole-House / full-boarder registration called by Houseparent. Report made to Director of Boarding

4. If the pupil cannot be located within 60 minutes, the Houseparent / Director of Boarding will report the absence to the Deputy Head Pastoral and the Head who will decide whether or not the parents or the Police should be informed.
5. If the pupil cannot be located within a further 60 minutes, the Director of Boarding will contact the Police to identify if the Police have any information on the pupil's location (for example, if the pupil has been involved in an accident). Local hospitals should be contacted to find out if the pupil has been admitted.
6. If these enquiries do not yield additional information about the pupil, the Police should be officially informed that the pupil is missing.
7. If the pupil's parents have not been previously contacted, they should be informed that the pupil is missing. The School should discuss any further steps taken with them.
8. If the Police take over responsibility for the search for the pupil, all relevant information about the pupil will be passed to them.
9. If the Head is not on site, he should be advised that the pupil is missing and kept updated.
10. Once the incident is resolved, a full written account of the incident must be produced by the Houseparent on the same day and sent to the Deputy Head Pastoral.
11. Once the incident is resolved, the Head and the staff team will review relevant policies, procedures and risk assessments and implement any necessary changes.
12. In all cases, questions to be asked:
 - a. When were they last seen?
 - b. Who were they with?
 - c. Where might they have gone?
 - d. Have they signed out?
 - e. Is there a School activity that they might be on?
 - f. Have they been ill or injured?
 - g. What emotional state did they appear to be in?
 - h. Has anything upset them recently?
 - i. Did they speak to anyone about leaving?
 - j. Who are their main friends at School?
 - k. Do they have a mobile phone and what is the number?
 - l. Is there any reason to believe they might have been abducted? (e.g. family custody dispute; very wealthy/prominent parents.)

Other action to consider taking

- Check their room for indications of how they are dressed, where they might have gone.
- Check their desk and waste paper bins for scribbled notes.
- Ring their mobile (if they have one).

Police Response

The Police treat all missing person reports as serious. Each risk is assessed and the following are trigger factors to be considered:

- Pupil in an emotional or depressed state of mind;

- Unusual behaviour prior to disappearance;
- Pupil needs essential medicine or treatment;
- Suspicion of abduction;
- Suspicion of self-harm/suicide;
- Involvement in a violent confrontation prior to disappearance;
- Previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm whilst missing.

Where a pupil is a Foreign National and has been granted temporary access to the UK for education, the Home Office will be informed in the event of the pupil going missing.

Record Keeping

The School will keep a full written record of any incident of a missing pupil including:

- the pupil's name
- relevant dates and times (e.g. when it was first noticed that the boarder was missing)
- the action taken to find the pupil
- whether the Police or Social Services were involved
- outcome or resolution of the incident
- any reasons given by the pupil for being missing
- any concerns or complaints about the handling of the incident
- a record of the staff involved

A full written record of the incident will be kept on the pupil's file.

Review

This policy shall be reviewed every year (or sooner) by the Head and the Deputy Head Pastoral. Any updates will be made as necessary, taking into account any incidents that have occurred that indicate that there may be a problem with supervision, pupil support or security at the School, and any issues raised by individual members of staff, parents and pupils.

Missing Pupils in the Prep School

Form/Subject Teacher should:

- Check the register to ensure that the child has arrived at school.
- Check the immediate vicinity including the cloakrooms, toilets, play areas where the child might normally expect to be found.
- In the case of children in Nursery/Reception, the check will need to be carried out by an adult. In the case of an older child, such checking of areas may be carried out by classmates dispatched for this purpose.
- Check with the school secretary who will, in turn, check with the Health Centre.

When the initial checks have been made and the child has not been found, the following procedure should be followed:

- Notify the Head of the Prep or Deputy Head Pastoral at Senior School in her absence
- Initiate a wider search of the buildings and campus using school assistants who may be requisitioned from other classes for the purpose.

- Check:
 - Grounds, including areas already checked
 - All Prep buildings and Health Centre including areas already checked
 - With all other teachers and groups, including after school groups (may involve a visit to all weather pitch, swimming pool, sports hall, etc, appropriate to the time of day)

Keep the Head of the Prep informed of progress.

In most cases the child will have been found by following the above procedures. IF THE CHILD HAS NOT BEEN FOUND – despite all efforts:

- The Head must be informed
- The Head of the Prep will undertake the following action:
 - Inform the Senior School so that their buildings may be searched
 - Inform the maintenance team so that the ground and maintenance areas may be checked
 - Contact the parents to ascertain that the child has not been collected, if this is a possibility

If these actions prove futile, the Head of the Prep or Head of the Senior School in her absence, will:

- Notify the parent/s
- Notify the Police

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