

Children can frequently be missing, only to be found in places where they are not expected to be; alternatively, they can abscond for a variety of reasons. However, CAEA procedure ensures that all missing children are returned under staff supervision as quickly as possible.

This policy has been reviewed with the DSL and alternate, taking into consideration the following document.

‘Safeguarding Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care’ (Sept 2016)
Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board ‘

Definitions of Missing as defined in ‘Safeguarding Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care’

The term ‘missing’ refers to children and young people up to the age of 18 who have run away from their home or care placement, have been forced to leave or whose whereabouts are unknown. (Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board, 2016)

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risk of a child going missing in future. (KCSIE September 2019)

Definitions

- Child: anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- Young runaway: a child who has run away from their home or care placement, or feels they have been forced to leave or lured to leave.
- **Missing child: a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers*.**
- Children in Care: a child who is looked after by a local authority by reason of a care order, or being accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- Missing from care: a child in care, who is not at their placement, or the place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts is not known.
- Away from placement without authorised absence is when a child in care’s whereabouts is known or thought to be known but unconfirmed; they are not missing and may instead be considered as absent without authorisation from their placement.
- Child Abduction: when a child has been abducted or forcibly removed from their place of residence; this is a ‘crime in action’ and should be reported to the police immediately.

Police Definitions:

- **Missing: A child whose whereabouts cannot be established, and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be a subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or others.**
- Absent: A child (person) not at a place they are expected or required to be, when the behaviour is out of character and there is no apparent risk.

* ‘... as of July 2016, Suffolk police are no longer using the term ‘absent’. As a result of this, post July 2016, all children reported missing from home, care or school will be risk assessed and if local/national definition of missing is met, will be classified as a ‘missing child’.

Causes of running away:

- Problems at home – ranging from arguments with parents to long-term abuse or maltreatment.
- Mental health problems.
- Bullying, racial harassment, homophobia.
- Teenage pregnancy.
- Wanting to be near friends or family – especially when a young person is in care and there are problems in contact arrangements with family and friends. **Children in care are three times more likely to go missing than children not in care.**

- Grooming for sexual exploitation – evidence suggests that 90% of children subject to sexual exploitation go missing at some point.
- Forced Marriage - some young people run away because they are at risk of or in a forced marriage. (See guidance on Forced Marriage and Honour- Based Violence.)
- Child Trafficking- young people may go missing when they are being trafficked. (See Guidance on Safeguarding Children from Trafficking.)
- Risk of substance abuse
Or risk of FGM.

(See CAEA Safeguarding Policy)

Prevention:

Every effort is made to ensure the safety of the pupils whilst they are in the School's care. To ensure that all pupils are accounted for at any given time, all children are registered twice a day, at the start of the School day and at lunch. Additionally, boarders are subject to monitoring and supervision after the school day finishes, which is monitored in their daily log book.

The completed registers are returned to the School Office so that the secretary can follow up on any absences and call parents.

If there is a trip off the School premises, it is the responsibility of the staff taking the trip to ensure that a regular register is taken or head count made. This will depend on the nature of the trip, the mode of transport used and the location of the trip. (See Risk Assessments).

Junior pupils are supervised at **all** times, whether in the classrooms before school starts, during break time, meal times, PE or Games lessons. However, Senior students are entitled to 'study periods' during the school day, which in the main are carried out in the library.

If at any time a member of staff observes a pupil absconding they should immediately phone the office or send a staff member or student to the office and then follow and encourage the pupil to return. Try at all times to keep the pupil in sight until support arrives.

If at any time a pupil is thought to be at risk of immediate harm, restraint may be the appropriate option..(see Restraint and Physical Intervention Policy) However, restraint should only be used if the member of staff has an 'honestly held belief' for example: the pupil is threatening to run in front of a car, and the member of staff believes this could occur.

At the end of the School day or after activities, the children are only allowed to leave the School premises if their parent or an adult approved by their parents and previously introduced to the school has come to collect them. (In the case of pupils picked up by the local authority's approved taxi service, the pupil will be escorted by a member of staff to the taxi). If no approved adult is there at normal pick up time, the child will be left in the care of the staff member on duty whilst enquiries are made and until the child is collected.

When a child is collected from School during the School day, whether due to illness or a prearranged appointment, they must ALWAYS be collected from the School Office so that a note may be made in the register to record the fact that they are no longer on premises. Pupils are not allowed to leave the School premises, during the day, unescorted.

It is the responsibility of the member of staff on duty whether teaching or supervising play to ensure that the children remain safe.

Any visitors to the School are recorded arriving and leaving. Parents who come to School during the School day, or after the day has ended, are requested to report immediately to the School office.

There is an intercom/camera system set up at the main gate to the school. Car park gates are closed except from 7:30-8:30 and 17:30-18:30. Main gates are always closed.

Missing Child Procedure:

Procedure 1 - If a child is noted to be missing during school hours:

Staff must check with the School Office immediately as to whether the child has another commitment e.g. music lesson, play rehearsal, School trip, external appointment etc. This can be achieved by either sending another student or member of staff to the office or calling by phone if there is one in the classroom.

The staff member should then inform the Head of School of the situation, and the Head of School will launch an immediate search. The missing child's friends may be consulted if it will not cause unnecessary alarm.

All available staff will check grounds and rooms to ensure the child has not hidden or been locked in anywhere within the boundary. This search should take no longer than 30 minutes. The senior member of staff present arranges for all the other children to be satisfactorily supervised.

If the child is not located, the Head of School or senior person on site/Head of Care or DSL will contact the **police** and **parents**. These phone calls should be implemented no more than 45 minutes after the child's absence was first noted.

**Of course the actual timespan may be adjusted to reflect the age, situation, vulnerability of a given child and the time of day.*

A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon as practicable after the incident and placed in the Missing from Care Book and the child's confidential record.

Procedure 2 – if a boarder is noted to be missing outside of school hours:

All available staff will check grounds and rooms to ensure the child has not hidden or been locked in anywhere within the boundary. This search should take no longer than 30 minutes. The senior member of staff present arranges for all the other children to be satisfactorily supervised.

If the child is not located, the Teacher in Residence or the Head of Care, (who is on site at that time), will contact the police and pupil's parents and the Head of School. These phone calls should be implemented no more than 45 minutes after the child's absence was first noted.

A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and placed in the Missing from Care Book and the child's confidential record.

Suffolk Police: Force Operations Room: 01473 613500

'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care' DfE, September 2016, need to be followed.

The Practitioner Quick Guide Safeguarding Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care. September 2016 (see attached)

This Quick Guide and the full Policy Safeguarding Children who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care must be used together with the Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board Procedures and Guidance found at www.suffolkscb.org.uk and held in the policy file in school.

**The Missing children coordinator can be contacted via: Missing.children@suffolk.gcsx.gov
Holly.boyd-lambley@suffolk.gov.uk (encrypt securely) 01473 260532**

Children and Young Peoples Services:

Customer First 0808 800 4005

Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service 0808 800 400

The Policy should be read alongside the following:

- the Excursion policy
- the Behaviour and Discipline policy
- the Attendance policy
- the Confidentiality policy
- the School's policy on 'Restraint and Physical Intervention / Reasonable Force'
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy