



Devonshire Primary Academy Missing Child Policy



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Devonshire Primary Academy
Missing Child Policy

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

This policy replaces previous missing child practice.

Devonshire Primary Academy takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in their care remain safe at all times. The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. In the unlikely event that a child is noted to be missing from the school premises, the school puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the most effective resolution of this potentially distressing situation. Many of our school routines and procedures are in place to contribute to the prevention of a child going missing and to ensuring the safety and security of all children at all times.

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.

Occasions when a child may go missing

Staff need to be mindful that a child can go missing at any time of the day. 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 the deck,
- undertaking errands for the teacher such as taking the register to the office.

b) 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 that make it is easy for a child to wander away unnoticed e.g.

- during games lessons on the MUGA
- during other outdoor lessons, (e.g. measuring parts of the building)
- at the beginning or end of outdoor lessons.

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 of the day/end of lunch/break times etc.

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 desk 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:

Notify immediately the class teacher. If the teacher 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 teacher. 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 Head Teacher.

...Classroom Support Staff will:

Notify immediately the class teacher. 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 Head Teacher.

...Lunchtime supervisors will:

Notify immediately a teacher, the DH or 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 Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher.

PROCEDURE FOR IF A CHILD LEAVES THE SETTING UNACCOMPANIED:

Stage One - Search Systematically

- All available staff to immediately check toilets, shared areas, rooms and playground to ensure child is not hiding or locked in anywhere - this should take no longer than 5 minutes.
- One member of staff to then inform the school office and Head Teacher and check whether the child has been signed out for an external appointment or has an internal appointment with a visiting professional (School Nurse/Speech Therapist etc.).
- The Head Teacher will take charge of the situation, or the Deputy Head Teacher in his absence.
- The school office will alert all school staff that a child is missing using the internal intercom. ('All available staff to the yellow area' will be the message). On this alert, all available members of staff will gather in the area outside the school hall (green area) to await further instruction from the Head Teacher.
- Staff will ensure that all other pupils are kept safe and closely supervised throughout the incident.

Stage Two

- After stage one is completed without resolution, school office staff (Alison Goulding) will contact the police and parents/carers with parental responsibility. At this point school will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident. The Head Teacher will liaise with emergency services and parents/carers.
- Staff will call registers in all classes to confirm presence of other pupils when directed by the office via imessage or the intercom system.

Stage Three

- The Head Teacher should communicate the incident to Amanda Quirk (LADO) on 7541 and the Chair of Governors.
- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and placed in the pupil's confidential record.
- The Senior Management Team should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective was the response and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again.

We will ensure that:

- We make regular checks to ensure that if an incident of this sort does happen, we have all the necessary phone numbers at hand – correct, up to date and kept together.
- If the police are called then the Blackpool Safeguarding Children's Board are informed.
 - If the Head Teacher or Chair of Governors is not on the premises, she/he will be informed as soon as possible. Any members of the senior leadership team that are not on the premises will return to school immediately.
- We will provide the following information to Blackpool's Safeguarding Children's Board:

- o What happened?
- o What systems are in place for preventing such occurrences?
- o What we did, at what time and in what order.
- o Who we informed and when.
- o We will cooperate fully in any investigation.
- o Recording

- o We will start to build a record as soon as is possible in the incident log, this will include:
- o The last definite sighting of the child.
- o Any unusual behaviour of the missing child or other children.
- o How many children were on the premises?
- o How many adults were on the premises and who?
- o What steps have been taken and when, by whom.

Dealing with people's reactions

We accept that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry. If the setting shares all policies with parents/carers, the situation will be easier for all because there will be an understanding of working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding. We accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry, threaten legal action or approach the local press. We will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

Responses could include:

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
- That a full investigation is in hand.
- That the LSCB has been informed and will be investigating

Dealing with the media

Distressed parents may contact the local press, or reporters may hear about the incident if the police are involved. It is sensible for one person, usually the Headteacher or Chair of Governors to be the one who speaks for the setting. All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson. The spokesperson for the setting is: Mr Dan Simm – Head Teacher.

When the child is found

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents and others suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember:

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.

After the Incident

- We will review our current procedure.
- We will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.

Procedure for Absconding Children Seen Running off the Premises

If a child chooses to abscond from school by climbing over perimeter fences, the member of staff witnessing this must inform the most senior member of staff immediately available or, if none are

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 Head Teacher 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 Head Teacher.

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 an absconding child has been located and safely returned to school, the child's family or the police, the Head Teacher 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.