

Missing Child Policy

This Policy applies to the whole school and is published to staff and parents

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Introduction

Longridge Towers School is a 3 – 19 years school. Whilst understanding that in legal terms, in Scotland a young person is deemed an adult at 16 and in England an adult at 18, the following policy aids the School in the managing of appropriate behaviour and its duties in safeguarding all members of the School community. Therefore, for the purpose of clarity, the term pupil in this context encompasses those who are registered to attend classes regardless of age and legal status as an adult. We expect all pupils to abide by our school rules and policies, irrespective of their age.

At Longridge Towers School, the welfare of all our children is our paramount responsibility. A child going missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, including child sexual and/or criminal exploitation and county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called ‘honour’-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Every adult who works at the School has been trained to appreciate that they have a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. This includes the importance of effective information sharing to ensure our children are safe and receiving suitable education. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence

of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Where staff have concerns that a child is missing from school, this policy should be followed.

Every member of our staff who works directly with children has read at least Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that they are in our care.

This policy was drawn up having had regard to the Independent School Regulatory Requirements (paragraph 7 and 15) and Department for Education guidance Children Missing Education (September 2016, updated August 2024).

Information for Parents

Our pupil supervision policy describes:

- The arrangements for children arriving at school and leaving the premises at the end of the day
- The qualifications of our staff and the arrangements for supervising the children whilst they are in school
- The arrangements for registering the children in both morning and afternoon. For day pupils we take a register of pupils at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and for every taught lesson in the Senior School. Parents are responsible for notifying the School if their child is absent for any reason. The School will always contact the parent if the child fails to arrive at school without an explanation.
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the building
- The supervision of the playground

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our pupils are set out in a detailed policy document: 'Educational Visits for Pupils'. This document is on our website and can be provided to parents on request.

We review all our policies regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of pupils and read at least Part 1 of KCSIE, or at least Annex A of KCSIE, if their role does not require them to work directly with children.

Action to be followed by staff if a child fails to attend first day of school

All new pupils are placed on the School's admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the School has agreed that the pupil will attend the School. If a child fails to attend on the agreed date, staff must inform Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay. The DSL will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Where there are changes affecting the child (including a change of address or school), these will be reflected in the admission register. This will assist the School and external agencies when making enquiries to locate any missing children.

Duty to report

The School monitors attendance closely and will take action to address poor or irregular attendance.

The School will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

Where a pupil has been continuously absent without authorisation for a period of not less than 20 school days (and there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unwell or unable to attend because of any unavoidable cause), and the School and local authority have failed, following reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is, the School may delete the pupil's name from the admission register. The School will inform the local authority of such deletion no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

The School also recognises its wider reporting duties following deletions from the admission register, in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, to help identify children who are missing education and/or otherwise at risk of harm.

Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing from the school

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions without delay, to be coordinated by the Headmaster's PA and/or reception team:

- Check registers and note the time
- Check for signing out/in or at the office in Stobo
- Ask the pupil's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check the medical centre, music lessons, PE department
- Inform a member of the Senior Leadership Team or another senior member of staff
- Call the pupil's mobile telephone if they have one
- Ask all the adults and pupils calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the pupil
- Occupy all of the other pupils in their classroom(s)
- At the same time, arrange for a search of the school building and grounds (see Appendix A below)

A record is kept by the school of any instances in which a pupil is missing from school without satisfactory reason, permission and/or documentation, including the action taken and the pupil's explanation.

If the pupil is still missing, the following steps would be taken, or the Emergency Plan protocols will be put into place:

- Inform the Co-Heads of the Junior/ Head of Senior School and the DSL
- DSL or Head / Co-Heads would ring the pupil's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the School at once
- The DSL, Co-Heads of the Junior Department and or Head or Deputy Head of Senior School would notify the Police
- The Co-Heads of the Junior Department / Deputy Head Senior School would arrange for staff to search the rest of the school premises and grounds, or continue the search in place
- If the pupil's home is within walking distance, a member of staff may be asked to check if the pupil has gone home and would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with him/her
- The DSL would inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the School's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- The School would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Head or Director of Finance would inform the Chair of Governors
- Director of Finance would inform the School's insurers
- If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

During the course of the investigation into the missing pupil, the School, in consultation with the LADO, will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the pupil was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

The School will always consider the wider circumstances around a child going missing from School and whether there are wider safeguarding concerns that may need to be addressed in line with the School's Child Protection policy.

Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing on an outing

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other pupils were present
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity
- Inform the designated trip contact and the DSL by mobile phone

- The remaining pupils would be taken back to school as soon as reasonably practicable
- Ask School to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the venue/ the School at once
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search (where relevant)
- Contact the Police immediately
- The DSL would inform the LSCB and the School's LADO
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chair of Governors without delay
- The School's insurers would be informed as soon as reasonably practicable. If the child is injured, A report would be made under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Deaths and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). If the child is injured and is taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than 15 days of the accident.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these would be adjusted.

Actions to be followed by staff once the child is found

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- Speak to the other pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- The Co-Heads of the Junior/ Head of Senior School will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the LADO if necessary)
- The Co-Heads of the Junior/ Head of Senior School will promise a full investigation (if appropriate involving the LSCB)
- Media queries should be referred to the Headmaster (after discussion with the LADO if appropriate)
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, [the purpose of the outing], the length of time that the child was missing and how s/he appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future.
- Consider whether actions need to be taken in line with the School's Child Protection policy where there are concerns about the welfare of the child.

Uncollected Child Guidelines

If a child is not collected at the end of the school day, we follow the following procedures:

- Parents/carers are contacted at home or at work.
- If this is unsuccessful, the adults who are authorised by the parents to collect their child from the setting and whose telephone numbers are recorded on the Registration Forms are contacted.
- All reasonable attempts are made to contact the parents or nominated carers.
- The pupil does not leave the premises with anyone other than those named on the Registration Forms or in their file.
- A member of the SLT or a nominated member of school staff will take responsibility for the pupil until appropriate arrangements can be made for a satisfactory handover to an agreed responsible adult. Staff required to escort children home in their own car should ask a second member of staff to accompany them.

The School will look after the child safely throughout the time that they remain under our care, until such a time as the child has been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate, alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety. The School's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with

in accordance with the School's child protection policy and procedures detailed in its staff behaviour and child protection policies.

Boarding pupils (outside of the normal school day)

House Parents should carry out a thorough search of the Boarding House.

They should attempt to contact the boarder by mobile phone.

If the boarder is still unaccounted for, the Senior House Parent should be informed if not already aware.

Any boarder who may have knowledge of the most recent movements of the person unaccounted for should be interviewed, and the following information ascertained if possible: last known location; clothes; any money they had available; any issues or problems which might have precipitated a disappearance.

The buildings and grounds should be searched, where feasible according to the aforementioned procedure.

House Parents should contact the police, the Head Teacher, the parents/UK guardian of the boarder concerned and the DSL.

Once the boarder has been located, arrangements should be made for their return to the Boarding House if appropriate.

A full review should be carried out and appropriate actions put in place, with copies of the review sent to the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head Teacher, the Head of Pastoral and the DSL. An additional copy should be held in the Boarding Office Missing Person File.

Child Missing in Education

The School acknowledges that children who go missing in education may be subject to abuse and/or child sexual exploitation. Equally, no abuse as such may be involved, but numerous or prolonged absences will have a detrimental effect on the education of the child. It is recognised that Form Tutors and the teaching staff are in the best position to raise initial concerns about such absences. The School will therefore ensure that:

- Form Tutors maintain appropriate records of attendance as a matter of statutory duty.
- Contact is made by a member of staff from the Senior or Junior School Office on the first day of the absence when no contact has been initiated from home and the School's a.m. registration has been completed;
- The situation is flagged with the DSL and concerns are raised by the Form Tutor with parents/carers when absence is either prolonged or a series of shorter, sporadic periods to ensure that appropriate support may be made in order that reasons for such absences can be established, and appropriate support strategies put in place;
- Where appropriate, concerns will be discussed with the Child Missing from Education contacts (For pupils' resident in England: Angela Cunningham 01670 622800; for pupils resident in Scotland: 01835 884000) and their advice sought. The School will report a pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent from school without the School's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more;
- The local authority is notified when a pupil's name is about to be removed from the school admission register and also when a pupil's name is about to be added to the School register, in accordance with the Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance September 2016.

Appendix 1

Missing Child Procedure & Search Areas

Reception informed by phone in person (not a voice message or email) or sends a pupil with a message if not available contact Headmaster's PA or Deputy Head Senior School if PA unavailable.

Reception will complete the following actions:

- Record time informed
- Check registers
- Check sign out book
- Check music lesson
- Check with Matron
- Check PE department
- Once Receptionist has checked all this, she will inform Headmaster's PA who will coordinate the search and inform the Deputy Head
- An Initial check of the building will commence – use radios in Reception
- Areas to check first would include – Toilets, basement corridor, library, and boarding

Building check:

Look first in toilets, changing rooms, basement, library (mezzanine), and boarding.

Then a full building search would begin- if more than 15 minutes have passed since the child was reported missing a full ground search including all buildings should commence as per the areas below using the site search map as a guide (Headmaster's PA will allocate the areas to available staff).

Stobo & Jerningham buildings will go through the check procedures above and initial search of their building before informing Reception.

Full Search Areas

Radios kept in Reception

- A** Jerningham building staff will search their building
- B** Stobo staff will search their building
- C** Main building staff will search their building and any other buildings, such as Meadow House, CDT and Sports Hall
- D** Sports staff will search their building – if the sport staff team are all on the pitches someone from search area 7 will search it.

Area 1 - The drive and front field including the dip and wooded area at the bottom check the end of the drive and look both ways up and down the main road.

Area 2 - The woods behind Jerningham and the 6th form car park and the road down to the old art block

Area 3 - Meadow house and the grounds around it and up the path up to the CDT building

Area 4 - Walk around the exterior of Jerningham, Stobo and the main building checking the playgrounds and courtyard area

Area 5 - The CDT building, maintenance workshop area and up to and including the staff car park.

Area 6 - The Sports Hall exterior and the surrounding area including the Astro, front lawn, pond, and the hockey field area.

Area 7 - The old swimming pool area including the portacabins and the path down to the walled garden and (the sports hall if no sport staff present in the building)

Area 8 - The walled garden and surrounding areas and then along the path through the woods to the cottage and onto the Murton Road check up and down the road both ways.

Area 9 - The woods from the 6th Form car park to level with the Stobo building.

Area 10 - From Level with Stobo down to the walled garden

Area 11 - The woods from level with Stobo down to the sports hall and across to the walled garden

Search Coordinator – Headmaster's PA

Search Staff to contact if available

- Bursar
 - Deputy Head
 - Site Manager
 - Bursar's PA
 - Headmaster's PA
 - Marketing Manager
 - IT Manager
 - IT Assistant
 - Cleaning Team
 - Catering Team
 - Matron
 - Maintenance Team
 - Any other staff available
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- All search staff should search in pairs and carry their mobile phone so they can report back or call 999 if required.
 - Radios given to key search staff
 - The order of the search areas given out will depend on where the child has gone missing from e.g., senior, or junior department.
 - A photo of the missing child will be emailed to the search staff.
 - Search times will be restricted to 15 minutes after the initial search period- after this time the Headmaster will make the decision on the next steps.
 - The Headmaster will also make the decision as to when the police are informed (in his absence the next person in line that's available would make the decision).
 - An air horn will alert searchers if the child has been found.

