



Whole School Policy for:

Missing Child

(Emergency Procedures)

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Betty Hasler, Chair of Governors

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POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy 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 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.

Included in this document:

- Emergency procedures for when a child is discovered to be missing
- Appendix A: Missing Child Policy specific for Nursery
- Appendix B: Procedures for handing over children
- Appendix C: Named additional contacts to collect children other than parents/carers

This policy is written and should be read in conjunction following whole-school policies/documents:

- Health and Safety
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Critical Incident
- When a Child is Not Collected

Occasions when a child may go missing

Staff need to be mindful that a child can go missing at any time of the day. These times and examples of the occasions providing opportunities for a child to go missing are:-

- **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 his/her bag in the cloakroom, being sent to another class or teacher as a punishment, undertaking errands for the teacher such as taking the register to the 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 that make it is easy for a child to wonder away unnoticed. e.g. during games lessons on the playground or field, during other outdoor lessons, (e.g. measuring parts of the building), at the beginning or end of outdoor lessons when children are getting changed or using the toilet, drinking fountains etc.
- **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/end of lunch/break times.
- **Other Times**
These may 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.
 - 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, or a member of the SLT 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 Senior Midday Supervisor or the Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The Class Teacher will:

Conduct a search of the immediate surroundings, i.e.:

- **Indoors** - in the classroom (looking under tables, work surfaces and other possible hiding places such as cupboards), adjacent work areas and classrooms, nearby cloakrooms and toilets.
- **Outdoors** - in the immediate area where the child was last seen including looking under bushes and up trees etc.

[NB: The teacher should quickly arrange for another adult (e.g. support staff or neighbouring teacher) to supervise their class while they conduct any search away from the class for which they are responsible].

If this initial search does not find the child the teacher shall begin a wider search of the school buildings and grounds including searching public areas in other parts of the school e.g. library areas, toilet and cloakroom areas, corridors, hall etc. (it is not necessary at this stage to search classrooms unless they are empty). The task of undertaking this search can be done either by the teacher personally or they can delegate this to a member of the support staff depending on the teacher's knowledge of the child including their emotional and behavioural characteristics. At all times the rest of the class must be supervised by either the class teacher or a member of the support staff. If appropriate a neighbouring teacher can be asked to supervise the class (as well as their own) to enable both the teacher and the support staff to conduct the search.

If this search does not discover the missing child within a reasonable time the teacher must inform the Headteacher (directly or via the school office) of the missing child and the facts surrounding the child's disappearance.

The Headteacher will:

Take charge of the situation. If satisfied that the class is adequately supervised the Headteacher will join the teacher (and support staff if applicable) in searching the school premises for the missing child directing the teacher (and others) where to search (e.g. while he searches externally, the teacher searches internally) Alternatively, the Headteacher may direct the teacher (or support staff) to return to their class in order to continue supervising the class and to be a familiar adult should the missing child return to their classroom. In this situation the Headteacher will continue the search alone or with other available adults.

When the Headteacher is satisfied that the child is not on the premises he will instruct the office staff to contact the child's parents and inform them of the situation and to enquire if the child has returned home. If the child is at home the parents will be informed by telephone of the known facts surrounding the child going missing. If the child is not at home the Headteacher will, in consultation with the parents, begin a search outside of the school premises. If the parents cannot be contacted at home the Headteacher (or other adults as directed by the Headteacher) will begin a search outside of the school's immediate premises. This may include a visit to the child's home if this is near the school. If the child is **not found within 45 minutes** the Head teacher (or other staff if so directed by the Headteacher) will **inform the police** and, as appropriate, social services and the Chairman of Governors of the child's

disappearance. Thereafter the Headteacher will follow the instructions of the police regarding the continuation of the search for the child.

The Office staff will:

Inform the Headteacher of the missing child and then await further instructions. They will not take part in the search but will instead contact the child's parents when instructed by the Headteacher to do so and inform them of the situation and enquire if the child has returned home. They will then hand communication with the parents over to the Headteacher unless directed otherwise by the Headteacher. If the parents cannot be contacted the office staff will, if directed to do so by the Headteacher, telephone the police, social services and Chairman of the school governors to inform them of the missing child and giving them such information as they may request. The school staff, including the Headteacher, will then continue the search as directed by the police and the office staff will continue to try to contact the child's parents.

Missing Children Seen Running Off the Premises

If, during the search, the missing child is seen leaving the premises, the member of staff witnessing this must inform the most senior member of staff immediately available or, if none is 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 a missing child has been located and safely returned to school, the child's family or the police, the Head of School 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.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body at least every two years.

Appendix A: Missing Child Policy for Nursery

At Orchards C of E Primary and Nursery School we aim to provide a safe and secure learning environment for children.

In order to do this we:

- Have a secure entry system whereby entry is by the use of a tag issued by the school office to those permitted access. Parents ring the doorbell for access by a member of staff. There are electronic doors to Nursery.
- At the beginning and end of sessions a member of staff is at the door to ensure parents close the door as they leave and children do not follow them out.
- At the end of events where parents/carers attend, a member of staff stands at the door to ensure a child does not leave without their parent/carer.
- The garden area is secure with padlocked gates and the fire exit gate has a bolt high on the gate. At least one member of staff is in the outdoor area at all times and children are not allowed to climb on the boundary fencing. Exits will be checked at least daily and more frequently if grounds men are working in the area.
- Children are always accompanied when they leave the Nursery area. The adult taking them must inform another member of staff how many they are taking and who they are taking.
- A register is taken and the number of children present is displayed in the Nursery and children are counted out and in the area. Children who arrive or leave during the session are written on the board as a plus or minus and their name. Children participating in activities around the School have an appropriate number of adults with them according to the size, age and development of the children within the group.
- On trips outside school children will be in appropriate size groups with two adults. They are responsible for counting children frequently especially when arriving and leaving areas. All children wear a label stating which school they belong to and the mobile telephone number of the group leader.

Procedures when a child is missing in school

If a child is identified as missing or an exit is left open or unlocked then the following procedure will be followed:

- All children called together, adults checking toilets, garden, etc. and register taken.
- If a child is missing the children will be kept together in one area with at least two staff while others thoroughly search the Nursery area. The school office and head teacher will be contacted.
- If the child is not found on the school premises then the police and parent will be contacted.
- Procedures put in place by the police will be followed thereafter.
- Staff will identify how the child went missing and put in place immediately temporary and then permanent measures to avoid it happening again. The risk assessment of the Nursery in terms of security will be reviewed.

Procedures when a child is missing on a school trip

- Children will be assigned to adults and be their responsibility during the trip. Children only swap groups at the direction of the group leader. Children should be sent/accompanied back to their assigned groups if they wander to another when looking at attractions.
- One adult to stand with the group while the other adult looks around the immediate area and where the group has just come from.
- If the child cannot be found then adult must ring the group leader who will inform the venue staff and the other groups from the school.
- If the child cannot be found within the venue the police and the school will be contacted. The school will inform parents.
- Procedures put in place by the police will be followed thereafter.

All procedures, risk assessments and policies will be reviewed in the case of an incident occurring.

Appendix B: Procedures for handing over children

At Orchards CE Primary and Nursery School we aim to provide a safe and secure environment for the children. Children will only be handed over to a responsible adult whose name has been given to the School/Nursery staff. Where applicable, older children with written consent from their main carer will be allowed to walk home on their own. In some extenuating circumstances, older children may be allowed to collect their younger siblings at the end of the day; this will be after a lengthy discussion with the parents/carers and at the discretion of the school based on the needs of all children involved.

Sharing procedures with parents/carers:

In the Early Years, the procedures for handing over children will be discussed with parents/carers on the home visit or first meeting with parents. For children in KS1/KS2 this information will be shared with parents during their induction meeting with a member of staff.

Children handed over from their classrooms:

Children will remain seated, either on their chairs or on the carpet. There will be an adult on the door with a second adult nearby where applicable e.g. Nursery and Reception. Children will be called to the door when their parent/carer arrives. If children run to the door before their name is called they will be sent back to their seat.

Children handed over from the playground (front or back):

Some classes hand over children at the end of the day from their nearest playground; this is because their classrooms do not have an appropriate external door from which to release. Children will be lead out of the door, in a line, by their teacher. The teacher will hand over each child in turn when they see their parent/carer. If children run to their parent/carer before their name is called they will be asked to come back.

Named additional contacts:

Parents/carers will be asked to give names of people allowed to collect their children during home visits (EYFS) and during induction (new arrivals in KS1/KS2); in addition, there will be at least one time during the year when a form will be sent home with children so that parents/carers can update this information (see Appendix C). Parents may add or take names off the register whenever they choose; if there are any changes it is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the school as soon as possible. **Only those listed will be able to collect the child.**

Adults unfamiliar to school:

If an unfamiliar adult comes to collect the children they will be asked to write their name down and it will be checked against the list given. If a person arriving to collect is not registered to collect then the parents/carers will be contacted. The parents/carers **MUST** be phoned from the school telephone using the phone number given on registration. If another phone number is given by the collector or the work place has to be contacted then name, address, and DOB of the children will be checked to confirm it is the parent/carer.

If a child is being collected by someone other than the usual adult the parent/carer should contact the school as soon as possible to inform the full name of the person collecting the child. **The school will not hand over a child until they have contacted the parent/carer and have received confirmation the child can be handed over to the unregistered adult.**

Safeguarding concerns:

If someone comes to collect a child is a minor, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or deemed to be unfit to look after the child in any other way then a Designated Person for Child Protection (Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, or Family Support Worker) will be consulted immediately for advice and a referral to Child Services may commence. The incident will be logged on a 'Logging Concern' form.

Additionally, there may be an occasion where the school has been advised by Child Services to 'hold' a child; this means that the school is duty bound to keep the child in their care and are not allowed to release to any adult who comes to collect. In these circumstances, a member of the school staff will

inform the collecting adult they have been advised to 'hold' a child by Child Services and that the adult should wait in the main reception area until Child Services has contacted the school or the parents/carers directly.

Collecting during the day/session:

There may be times when children need to be collected early, e.g. medical appointment. The school will follow the same procedures, listed above. **Only those persons registered will be able to collect the child.** It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform the school, where practically appropriate, that the child will be collected early, the reason, and the full name of the person collecting.

Children not collected:

If a child is not collected on time the parents/carers will be contacted in the first instance. If contact cannot be made then the school will follow the 'When a Child is Not Collected' policy.

Persons who are not allowed to collect children:

If there is a court order stating that a parent/carer cannot have access or only has limited access to the child(ren) then a copy of the order must be shown to staff and a photocopy will be kept with the list of adults allowed to collect. Otherwise all persons with parental responsibility will be assumed to be able to collect the child(ren).

Queries/concerns:

Parents/carers who have any questions or concerns about the procedures for handing over children, should speak with the child's class teacher in the first instance. If there are further concerns the parent should then follow the normal procedure for escalating a concern as outlined in our complaints/concerns policy and procedures.

Appendix C: Named additional contacts to collect children other than parents

 **ORCHARDS** **Named additional contacts to collect children other than parents/carers**

Name of child.....Class.....

1st contact.....Relationship to child.....

2nd contact.....Relationship to child.....

3rd contact.....Relationship to child.....

I give permission for any of the above persons to collect my child unless informed otherwise.

(Tick to confirm)

Year 5/6 children: I give permission for my child to walk home on his/her own.

Signed.....Date.....

 **ORCHARDS** **Named additional contacts to collect children other than parents/carers**

Name of child.....Class.....

1st contact.....Relationship to child.....

2nd contact.....Relationship to child.....

3rd contact.....Relationship to child.....

I give permission for any of the above persons to collect my child unless informed otherwise.

(Tick to confirm)

Year 5/6 children: I give permission for my child to walk home on his/her own.

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