



HEATHFIELD SCHOOL

Missing Child Policy

Policy Area:	Safeguarding
Relevant Statutory Regulations:	ISSR 2014 - Part 3 Education Act 1996 NMS Part D Standard 8; Part I Standard 20.5 Children Act 2004 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences ("RIDDOR") 2013 DfE: Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014 KCSIE 2025
Key Contact Personnel in School	
Nominated Member of Leadership Staff Responsible for the policy:	Deputy Head
Version:	2025.02
Date updated:	01 June 2025
Date of next review:	01 September 2026

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and/or following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance or procedures.

Introduction

The welfare of all of the pupils at Heathfield School ("the School") is its paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the School is trained to appreciate that they have a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the pupils safe at all times. The School's staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every pupil is supervised the whole time that they are in the School's care.

School policy and procedures, the parent handbook and the School's website document the following:

- The arrangements for handing over pupils at the beginning and end of day, term and any leave from School;
- The qualifications of staff and the arrangements for supervising the pupils whilst they are in the School;
- All pupils are registered by the tutor in the morning and any absence is identified and followed up by the attendance team (see Attendance Procedure). Administrator for Senior Team who acts as the Attendance Officer in conjunction with the Assistant Head (Pastoral & Boarding) and followed up in the case of Boarders by the Houseparent ("HP") and Day Pupil. All pupils are registered in all lessons with teaching staff instructed to email absences@heathfieldschool.net in the event of a pupil being absent from the lesson where the Attendance Team will locate them. Pupils' attendance is also checked at lunchtime as part of the PM Session attendance with the Attendance Team following up on any absences. If a boarder, further registrations occur throughout the extended day including at breakfast and dinner and in the evenings;
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the buildings and grounds; and
- Arrival and Departure arrangements for Day Pupils

Every instance of a pupil's whereabouts being unknown and giving cause for concern varies and the guidelines outlined below are adapted to each situation. The pupil's age, their emotional state and the time of day influence what action to take.

When abduction is suspected, the situation will be referred to the Police immediately as a criminal matter. The School recognises that the Police are more likely to respond if any of the following conditions are obtained:

- Pupil is under the age of 14;
- Pupil is 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; and/or
- Previously disappeared and suffered, or was exposed to, harm whilst missing.

Definitions

Missing is defined for the purposes of police risk assessment as: Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

Absent is defined: a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be. Therefore, it is likely that in most instances a pupil is absent from the place where they are expected.

Procedures to Ensure all Pupils are Present

Parents are responsible for making sure their children come to and are delivered to the School safely. On arrival at the School, all pupils are registered and records are kept on the School's database system. If a pupil is not present, the attendance team will attempt to contact the parents or guardians of the pupil to find out the reason for the absence. The School is required to hold two emergency contact numbers for each pupil, where reasonably possible.

Pupils are also registered before the start of the afternoon session to check that they are still in School.

As well as these formal measures, staff are also expected to complete an Engage register at the start of each lesson and inform the attendance team of any unaccounted for pupils.

Actions to be Followed if a Pupil Goes Missing from the School Grounds during the school day

The School's 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 will carry out the following actions:

1. If a teacher suspects that a pupil is missing from a lesson or activity, they will contact the absences email address.
2. The admin team, along with the member of staff on roaming duty will note the time and check the pupil is not in any of the following locations;
 - Check the Health Centre list for all pupils who are ill or out of school;
 - With the Head of Year, Tutor or SENDCo
 - Check with the House Parent and Head of Year for planned absences or if the pupil it is in the boarding area when the boarding houses are open;
 - Check the Music/ Tennis lesson timetable that they do not have an arranged additional lesson;
 - Check with Reception to see if the pupil has signed out
 - If the pupil is not on any absence or trip list and has not signed out, notify the Head of Year;
 - Establish when the pupil was last seen and where and the time.
3. If the pupil still remains unaccounted for, check with friends/classmates who may know their whereabouts.
4. Should the pupil not be found at this stage then a member of SLT must lead the search of the classroom and buildings. Staff must remember to look in all rooms, including changing rooms, toilets, cupboards and small spaces checking each room and then informing the SLT which rooms have been checked.
5. If the pupil still remains unaccounted for ring their mobile phone. You will have to ask their friends for the mobile number. On occasions, it might be better to ask a friend to ring or text the missing pupil.
6. If the pupil remains unaccounted for, the Head or if unavailable, the member of SLT deputising for them, must be informed.
7. If the pupil still remains unaccounted for, sound the fire alarm, register pupils and check buildings and site.
8. The Head or Deputy Head should inform the parents of the pupil if they have not been accounted for within 30min.
9. If the pupil still remains unaccounted for, SLT will coordinate a further search of the wider School and Grounds with members of staff working in pairs.
10. The Head or Deputy Head should liaise with Systems regarding the checking of security cameras for the two exit gates within the designated timeframe after the student was last seen in School to see if they have left site.
11. The Head or Deputy Head will inform the local Police of the situation if they have not been accounted for after 1 hour. Parents and Police would be asked to meet at the School and be given up to date details of the search so far.*
12. Pictures of pupils are stored on the School's Engage database and should be printed off, to enable the Police and other services to have a clear description of the pupil.
13. If the pupil has still not been found, continue to search the School and surrounding area, and keep providing feedback to the agencies involved as to what is happening, until the pupil is found.

14. The key stages of the incident must be recorded by SLT and statements taken from the staff involved. An enquiry will initially be held, and disciplinary action may result from the findings.
15. Other staff/parents who came to School around the time the pupil went missing may have initial information and should be approached.
16. Any enquiries from representatives of the press should be directed to the Head. No comment should be given by any other person.
17. Once the pupil has been found, a full investigation will take place and all information recorded, and a full account of the findings given to those involved. If appropriate this may result in procedures being adjusted. The decision will be made at that meeting as to whether the pupil is fit to return immediately to the School or if further action may be needed to deal with the issue which initiated this sudden departure. Help will be offered to the pupil, depending on the circumstance of her absence.

*At this point:

- The Senior member of staff on site will follow the advice given by the Police.
- The Head will inform the Chair of the Court of Governors.
- The Insurers will be informed by the Bursar.
- If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE by the Nursing staff.

Actions to be followed in the case of a Pupil missing during boarding hours (16:00 to 08:00 weekdays and at any time during the weekend)

If a boarding assistant/house parent suspects that a pupil is missing from an activity or registration/check in time, they will;

- Check the log books, sign in/out books and emails in case absence can be explained
- Text the boarding group to check they are not accounted for in another house/area of the school
- See if any pupils know of their (possible) whereabouts;
- Check Engage, SOCS and meal registers to ascertain know last sighting;
- Ring the missing pupil's mobile (it might be best to ask another pupil to phone on your behalf as the missing pupil may be more likely to pick up) ;

If they are not accounted for the boarding assistant should inform the senior house parents on duty and the SLT on duty.

1. Should the pupil not be found at this stage then a member of SLT must lead the search of the classroom and buildings. Staff must remember to look in all rooms, including changing rooms, boarding rooms, toilets, cupboards and small spaces checking each room and then informing the SLT which rooms have been checked.
2. If the pupil still remains unaccounted for, sound the fire alarm, register pupils and check buildings and site.
3. The SLT member should inform the parents of the pupil if they have not been accounted for within 30min.
4. If the pupil still remains unaccounted for, SLT will coordinate a further search of the wider School and Grounds with members of staff working in pairs. The SLT member will contact the IT Manager to review CCTV footage and the taxi companies used by the School.

5. The SLT member will inform the Head/Deputy Head who will call the local Police of the situation if they have not been accounted for after 1 hour. Where possible, Parents and Police would be asked to meet at the School and be given up to date details of the search so far. Boarders parents should be kept abreast of all information as promptly as possible if they can-not attend site*
6. Pictures of pupils are stored on the School's Engage database and should be printed off, to enable the Police and other services to have a clear description of the pupil.
7. If the pupil has still not been found, continue to search the School and surrounding area, and keep providing feedback to the agencies involved as to what is happening, until the pupil is found.
8. The key stages of the incident must be recorded by SLT and statements taken from the staff involved. An enquiry will initially be held, and disciplinary action may result from the findings.
9. Other staff/parents who came to School around the time the pupil went missing may have initial information and should be approached.
10. Any enquiries from representatives of the press should be directed to the Head. No comment should be given by any other person.
11. Once the pupil has been found, a full investigation will take place and all information recorded, and a full account of the findings given to those involved. If appropriate this may result in procedures being adjusted. The decision will be made at that meeting as to whether the pupil is fit to return immediately to the School or if further action may be needed to deal with the issue which initiated this sudden departure. Help will be offered to the pupil, depending on the circumstance of her absence.

*At this point:

- The Senior member of staff on site will follow the advice given by the Police.
- The Head will inform the Chair of the Court of Governors.
- The Insurers will be informed by the Bursar.
- If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE by the Nursing staff.

Additional information

Questions to be asked in the search for the missing pupil include:

- Have they signed out?
- Is there a School activity or event that they might be on?
- Have they been ill or injured and gone to Health Centre?
- When were they last seen?
- Who was with them?
- Where might they have gone?
- What emotional state did they appear to be in?
- Has anything upset them recently?
- Did they speak to anyone about leaving?
- Who are their main friends at School?
- Do they have a mobile phone and what is the number?
- Do they have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Is there any reason to believe they might have been abducted? (e.g. family custody dispute; very wealthy/prominent parents)

If the pupil may have gone home, then try to make contact; if no reply, the Police may be willing to call at the home address.

Actions to be Followed in the Case of a Pupil Missing During an Educational Visit/Trip

When on an educational visit outside the School environment staff will ensure they take precautions to ensure the safety of all pupils in accordance with the School's Educational and Co-curricular Trips and Visits Policy and refer to the individual Risk Assessment prepared for that trip. Staff also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Staff should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation. Parents will be notified within 30 minutes if the pupil is deemed to be missing and the Police will be notified within the hour.

If a pupil goes missing on a trip the following action will be taken:

- 1) If a pupil cannot be accounted for it is important that staff retrace their movements and inform the member of staff in charge of the trip that a pupil is potentially missing.
- 2) Should the pupil not be found at this stage, the member of staff in charge of the trip must lead the search of the immediate area.
- 3) If the pupil still remains unaccounted for, check with their friends and, if applicable, then ring their mobile phone. If you do not have their number, then ask their friends for the correct number to ring. On occasions, it might be better to ask a friend to ring or text the missing pupil.
- 4) At this point the offsite facility/location staff must also be informed so that they can follow their set procedure for searching for a missing pupil.
- 5) If the pupil remains unaccounted for, the Head, the DSL or a member of SLT must be informed.
- 6) The member of staff in charge of the trip must liaise with the facility/location manager in order to inform the Police.
- 7) The Head/Deputy Head should inform the parents/guardian of the pupil of the situation. Parents/guardians would be asked to meet at the School and be given up to date details of the search so far.
- 8) The Head/Deputy Head or a member of SLT will drive to the offsite facility/location if nearby to continue with the search and will provide a photograph of the missing pupil. This can be sent via email if the offsite location is at some distance.
- 9) The other pupils will return to School as soon as practical.
- 10) If the pupil has still not been found, continue to search the facility/location and surrounding area, and keep providing feedback to the agencies involved as to what is happening, until the pupil is found.
- 11) The key stages of the incident must be recorded by SLT and statements taken from the staff involved. An enquiry will initially be held, and disciplinary action may result from the findings.
- 12) Any enquiries from representatives of the press should be directed to the Head. No comment should be given by any other person.
- 13) Once the pupil has been found, a full investigation will take place and all information recorded, and a full account of the findings given to those involved. If appropriate this may result in procedures being adjusted. The decision will be made at that meeting as to whether the pupil is fit to return immediately to the School or if further action may be needed to deal with the issue which initiated this sudden departure. Help will be offered to the pupil, depending on the circumstance of her absence.

*The School would cooperate fully with any Police advice/investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care and will follow their guidance where applicable. At this stage;

- The Head will inform the Chair of the Court of Governors.
- The Insurers will be informed by the Bursar.

If the pupil is injured, a report will be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

Action to be Followed After the Pupil is Found

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the pupil.
- Speak to the other pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing and to ensure they are safe and secure.
- Media queries should be referred to the Head, no comments should be made by any other parties.
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements.
- If disciplinary action is required this must involve consultation with the Head. Ensure all parents and relevant parties know that the pupil has been found. A timeline report should be written up about what happened, how the situation was managed and the outcome.
- The report should be detailed covering time, place, numbers of staff and pupils, when the pupil was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the pupil was missing and how she appeared to have gone missing, lessons for the future.
- The Head will review the reasons for the event happening and make any necessary amendments to School procedures.

Action to Take When a Pupil is Not Collected from School

- The member of staff responsible for the pupil at the time of leaving will phone parents/ guardian to ascertain what time the designated adult will be at School.
- Member of staff to stay in School with pupil until collected by designated adult (or delegate to a residential member of staff with seniority).
- Member of staff to hand pupil over to designated adult.
- If no-one is available to collect the pupil a member of SLT will be informed.
- The member of SLT will contact parents/guardians to explain the seriousness of the issue and that should no collection time be agreed the School would have to contact the Local Safeguarding Team.
- During term-time, the member of SLT could offer a place in boarding to the student, subject to availability; parents would be billed for the room and for any supplies used including toiletries.
- If a pick up time is agreed the SLT will wait with the pupil until handed over to designated adult.
- If a time is not agreed the SLT will inform the Head and contact the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Partnership (01344 352005).
- The School will follow the advice of the Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Partnership.

When a Day Pupil Does Not Arrive at School

The Attendance Officer should after the closing of the registers at 8.15am be alerted to any pupils missing. Before 9am, absences emails will be checked and if no clarity of the pupil's whereabouts is obtained:

- Contact home to check the student's whereabouts and alert HoY if parents are uncontactable.
- Ask friends of pupil whether they know or have made contact with the pupil. Ask them to call if necessary.
- Continue to make attempts to contact emergency contacts and relevant guardians.
- Inform Deputy Head if still unable to contact and firmly ascertain the pupils' whereabouts.
- If recurrent absence, consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Pupil Goes Missing from Home

When a child goes missing or runs away they are at risk. Safeguarding children therefore includes protecting them from this risk. Local authorities are responsible for protecting children whether they go missing from their family home, however, the School will offer its full support in assisting enquiries to find the pupil.

- The lead person in local authority or police will speak with the DSL and discuss the instances surrounding the pupil going missing.
- The School will co-operate allowing access to pupils within the pupil's friendship group, aiming to access as much information as possible.
- If the parents decide to allow the press to appeal for the whereabouts of the pupil, the DSL will inform all staff and ensure that the guidelines on speaking to the press are expressed.
- The Head will manage all communications on behalf of the School.
- The Head will inform the Chair of the Court of Governors.
- The Insurers will be informed by the Bursar.
- Director of Marketing and Admissions will be informed, and in liaison with the Head a decision will be made as to when to inform the Parent body.
- Safe and well checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported as missing has been found. Their purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.
- Repeatedly going missing should not be viewed as a normal pattern of behaviour. For example, repeat episodes of a child going missing can indicate sexual exploitation.
- If a child has run away two or more times, local authorities should ensure a discussion is held, either with the child, their family or both, to offer further support and guidance. Actions following earlier incidents will be reviewed and alternative strategies considered.

Follow Up

When the pupil returns to Heathfield it is vital that the pupil is given appropriate support. This may involve the Pastoral Support team (Deputy Head, Head of Year, Houseparent, Tutor and School Counsellor). If disciplinary action is required this must involve consultation with the Head. Ensure all parents and relevant parties know that the pupil has been found. A timeline report will be written up about what happened, how the situation was managed and the outcome.

Related Policies

- Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Educational and Co-Curricular Trips and Visits Policy
- RIDDOR Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Safeguarding and Protecting the Welfare of Pupils Policy