

# **Avon House School**

## **Missing Child Policy**

### **(Whole School including EYFS)**



**CELEBRATING & SUPPORTING  
EVERY CHILD**

**Prepared: September 2018**

**To be reviewed: May 26**

<b>Review date:</b>	May 25			
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	JL			

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. Part of that responsibility requires us to know at all times, as far as is reasonable, the whereabouts of our pupils. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

We therefore have systems in place:

- For parents to advise us that their child will be absent from school
- For staff to register pupils' presence or absence at any form registration, lesson, games session, activity or education visit to determine who is on or off site
- For office staff to sign in or out of school if they have permission to arrive late or leave early

## **Procedures**

### **Parental notification of pupil absence from school (See Absence Policy and Procedures)**

- For planned absence, such as for a medical or other appointment, parents should ask permission in advance by writing to or emailing the school office.
- For unplanned absence, for example in the case of illness, parents should contact the school office by email or telephone.
- If a pupil arrives in school after 8.30am or leaves before 3.30pm (Pre-Prep) or 3.40pm (Prep Department) for whatever reason, they must sign in or out at the school office.
- Accurate recording on iSAMS (online registration portal) is essential within the context of this policy but also in the case of fire.

### **Child going missing on the premises**

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing the key person/staff alerts the Head Teacher.
- The Head Teacher will instigate a thorough search of the buildings, playgrounds and The Woodford Wells Club.
- Staff will communicate as a search is carried out using the walkie talkie system
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The Head Teacher talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.

## **Extra -Curricular Clubs and Tea Timers**

For clubs and out of hours care taking place before or after school the member of staff running the activity takes a register of those present and is responsible for these pupils in the case of an emergency or evacuation. It is the responsibility of the staff member taking the club to take and register all pupils not collected at the designated time into Tea Timers to wait for collection by their parents if they have not been collected by 4.30 pm. They must also take any pupils to Tea Timers if they are booked in for tea. *Pupils must not be left alone for any reason nor allowed to return unaccompanied.*

## **Child going missing on an outing**

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the Head Teacher and/or other staff back in the school. If the Head Teacher has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.

The Head Teacher is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.

The Head Teacher contacts the police and reports the child as missing.

The Head Teacher contacts the parent, who makes their way to the school or outing venue as agreed with the Head Teacher. The school is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the school.

Staff take the remaining children back to the school.

In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.

The Head Teacher, or designated staff member, may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

## **The investigation**

Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.

The Head Teacher will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.

The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:

- The date and time of the report.
- What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
- When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
- What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
- The time it is estimated that the child went missing.

A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.

If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Social services may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.

The insurance provider is informed.

### **Managing people**

Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.

The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases. Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. The SLT need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.

The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.

The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.

In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Chair of Governors will use their discretion to decide what action to take.

Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

### **Missing child in education (see [Children Missing in Education policy](#))**

In accordance with our register policy if a child is missing from school without notification and we cannot communicate with the parents, the child will be reported as missing to the local education authority. This will also apply where a pupil leaves Avon House and a destination school has not been disclosed.

Reviewed September 2018 AC

Reviewed July 2019 AC

Reviewed August 2020 AC

Reviewed August 2021 AC

Reviewed August 2022 AC

Reviewed August 2023 AC

Reviewed August 2024 JL

