Heath House Prep School

Missing or Lost Child Policy

This policy applies to all children at Heath House, including those within our EYFS. This policy links to the school's Safeguarding Policy, the Supervision of Children Policy, the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Policy, the Children Missing Education Policy and the Staff Code of Conduct Policy.

This policy has regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework applicable from 1 September 2026.

All Heath House pupils are registered at the beginning of the school day during the registration period, and again after lunch. This policy sets out the school's procedures for when a child who has been marked in the attendance register as attending school that day goes missing from their expected location or is lost within/from the school, and when a child goes missing whilst on a school trip or outing.

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'missing/lost child' refers to a pupil who is not in their expected location without either authorisation or explanation when that child has been registered as attending school that day. For the school's policy on children missing from education, please see the Children Missing Education Policy.

On occasions when a staff member identifies a pupil as missing from their expected location, immediate action is required as outlined in the procedures below.

Missing/Lost Child Within/From School Procedure

In the unlikely event of a child going missing within/from the school, the following procedure will be implemented immediately:

- The member of staff who becomes aware the child is missing will immediately inform the Head Teacher/Senior Leadership Team (SLT). They should ascertain when and where the child was last seen;
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or a deputy, will be informed as soon as possible. The DSL will consider whether the circumstances of the child's disappearance give rise to any wider safeguarding concern and whether any further safeguarding action or referral is required;
- The Head Teacher/SLT will delegate staff to ensure the physical and emotional welfare and appropriate supervision of remaining children;
- The Head Teacher/SLT will organise an immediate, thorough search of the school, including all exits and potential hiding places;
- The Head Teacher/SLT will delegate staff to search the area surrounding the school buildings, including routes that the children walk between the school buildings. Staff will take mobile phones with them;

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- When the child is found, reassurance is given, and questions asked to ascertain how the incident occurred;
- A written incident report will be compiled and a review of the incident will be conducted;
- Post-incident risk assessments will be conducted following any incident of this nature so that procedures can be amended to remove or reduce the risk of this reoccurring.

<u>If the search proves negative:</u>

- If the child cannot be located promptly following the initial search, the Head Teacher/SLT will contact the police without delay. Where there is reason to believe that the child is in immediate danger or at immediate risk of harm, 999 will be called. Relevant information will be provided to the police, including:
    - Where you are (address of setting);
    - The next of kin of the child;
    - A detailed description of the child, including age, sex and as much information about their clothing as possible working down from head to toe;
    - The circumstances of the incident, including anything that may have triggered the disappearance, how long the child has been missing, where they were last seen, if there was an argument (older child);
    - Who is looking for the child, where are they, do they have a mobile with them, what is the number?
- The Head Teacher/SLT will ensure that the child's parents are informed without unnecessary delay. The timing of this contact will take account of the circumstances of the incident, any immediate safeguarding considerations and, where relevant, advice from the police;
- Staff will continue appropriate searches while maintaining adequate supervision and safety for the remaining pupils. Once the police are involved, the school will cooperate fully with and follow police directions regarding any continuing search activity;
- The Head Teacher will meet with the police and parents of the child;
- The Head Teacher will then await instructions from the police;
- Any incidents must be recorded in writing as soon as practicably possible, including details of any conversations with the police, and an incident report compiled;
- With incidents of this nature parents, carers, children and staff may require support and reassurance following the traumatic experience, the SLT will provide this;
- Post-incident risk assessments will be conducted following any incident of this nature so that procedures can be amended to remove or reduce the risk of this reoccurring.
- Where the incident involves a child in the school's registered EYFS provision, the Head Teacher and DSL will consider without delay whether the circumstances trigger any notification requirement under the current EYFS statutory framework. Where notification is required, it will be made as soon as reasonably practicable and within the applicable statutory timescale.

Missing/Lost Child from Trip/Outing Procedure

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Regular head counts are carried out on children throughout trips and outings. In the unlikely event of a child becoming detached from the group and going missing whilst on a school trip/outing the following procedure will be implemented immediately:

- The Trip/Outing Lead member of staff will be informed immediately;
- The Head Teacher/SLT and DSL, or a deputy, will be informed as soon as practicable. The DSL will consider whether the circumstances give rise to any wider safeguarding concern and whether any further safeguarding action or referral is required;
- All staff present will be informed and deployed to start an immediate thorough search of the area. Staff will have mobile phones on them as they are on a trip/outing;
- The Trip/Outing Lead will delegate staff to ensure the physical and emotional welfare and appropriate supervision of remaining children;
- If appropriate, the relevant staff/security at the site will also be informed and a description of the child given so that they may assist with the search;
- When the child is found, reassurance is given, and questions asked to ascertain how the incident occurred;
- Once the child is safe, the DSL or Deputy DSL will consider whether the circumstances indicate any safeguarding, welfare, bullying, exploitation or other underlying concern. The child should be given an appropriate opportunity to explain what happened in a calm and age-appropriate manner, and any safeguarding concern identified must be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy;
- A written incident report will be compiled and a review of the incident will be conducted so that procedures can be amended where appropriate.
- Post-incident risk assessments will be conducted following any incident of this nature so that procedures can be amended to remove or reduce the risk of this reoccurring.

<u>If the search proves negative:</u>

- If the child cannot be located promptly following the initial search, the Trip/Outing Lead will inform the Head Teacher/SLT via the School Office and contact the police without delay. Where there is reason to believe that the child is in immediate danger or at immediate risk of harm, 999 will be called. Relevant information will be provided to the police, including:
    - Where you are (address of setting);
    - The next of kin of the child;
    - A detailed description of the child, including age, sex and as much information about their clothing as possible working down from head to toe;
    - The circumstances of the incident, including anything that may have triggered the disappearance, how long the child has been missing, where they were last seen, if there was an argument (older child);
    - Who is looking for the child, where are they, do they have a mobile with them, what is the number?

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- The Head Teacher/SLT will ensure that the child's parents are informed without unnecessary delay. The timing of this contact will take account of the circumstances of the incident, any immediate safeguarding considerations and, where relevant, advice from the police;
- If the whole school is on an outing, all contact details will be taken on the trip by the person in charge;
- Staff from the school will be sent to assist the safe return of the other children where appropriate;
- Staff will continue appropriate searches while maintaining the safety and adequate supervision of the remaining pupils. Staff must not place themselves or other pupils at risk while searching. Once the police are involved, the Trip/Outing Lead and other staff will cooperate fully with and follow police directions regarding any continuing search activity;
- Where appropriate, and taking account of police advice, staffing levels and the safety of the remaining pupils, a member of staff will remain at the location to liaise with the police and the child's parents while arrangements are made for the other pupils;
- Any incidents must be recorded in writing as soon as practicably possible, including details of any conversations with the police, and an incident report compiled;
- With incidents of this nature parents, carers, children and staff may require support and reassurance following the traumatic experience, management will provide this;
- Post-incident risk assessments will be conducted following any incident of this nature so that procedures can be amended to remove or reduce the risk of this reoccurring.
- Where the incident relates to the school's registered early years provision, the school will consider whether notification to Ofsted is required under the EYFS statutory framework and applicable Ofsted notification requirements. Where notification is required, this will be made as soon as reasonably practicable and within the required timescale.

Communicating with the Missing/Found Child

- Both the physical and emotional welfare of the missing/found child are paramount and must be considered;
- On finding the missing child, staff should communicate clearly, calmly, and offer reassurance to the child;
- Consider that the child maybe injured or unwilling to return to the school, or school group if on a trip/outing;
- Work as a team with colleagues: once the physical welfare of the child has been ensured, call the school for guidance, assistance and back-up;
- If physical intervention is considered necessary to protect the child or another person from harm, staff must act in accordance with the school's Physical Intervention/Restraint Policy and Staff Code of Conduct. Any intervention must be lawful, reasonable, proportionate and no more restrictive than necessary in the circumstances. Any required recording, reporting and post-incident procedures must be followed.

Communicating with Staff and Children

- The Head Teacher/SLT will provide clear instructions to staff and coordinate communication about the incident in a calm and professional manner;
- Staff must avoid speculation or discussion of confidential information and should communicate with pupils in an age-appropriate way that does not cause unnecessary alarm;

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- The physical and emotional welfare of the missing/found child and the safety and appropriate supervision of all other pupils will remain paramount throughout;
- Following the incident, appropriate support will be offered to affected pupils and staff, and the SLT will review the circumstances, procedures and any relevant risk assessments to identify lessons and reduce the risk of recurrence.

Communicating with Parents and Members of the Public

- Communication with the parents of the missing/found child will normally be coordinated by the Head Teacher/SLT or another designated member of staff;
- The Head Teacher/SLT will communicate sensitively with the parents of the missing child/found child;
- Staff should refrain from talking to parents of pupils or members of the public about the incident;
- Staff should refer all questions from parents of children at the school or members of the public to the Head Teacher/SLT via the School Office.

Internal use only

Last reviewed	September 2026
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