

Missing Child Policy – Day and Boarding Students

Introduction

The welfare of all of our students at Padworth College 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 College 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 College, this policy should be followed.

Every member of our staff who works with children has read at least Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2021). 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).

Information for Parents

Our student supervision policy describes:

- The arrangements for children arriving at College 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 College
- The arrangements for registering the children in both morning and afternoon. For day students we take a register of students at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. Parents are responsible for notifying the College if their child is absent for any reason. The College will always contact the parent if the child fails to arrive at College without an explanation.
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the building

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our students are set out in a detailed policy document: 'Educational Visits for Students'. 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 students and read at least Part 1 of KCSIE 2021 [or at least Annex A of KCSIE, if their role does not require them to work directly with children].

	Page 1 of 5	
Updated		December 2021
Review	Reviewed By:LA	
Next Review Due		December 2022

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

All new students are placed on the College's admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the College has agreed that the student will attend the College. If a child fails to attend on the agreed date, staff must inform the Principal / Deputy Principal (DSL and DDSL) without delay. The Principal / Deputy Principal will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. Where there are changes affecting the child (including a change of address or College), these will be reflected in the admission register. This will assist the College and external agencies when making enquiries to locate any missing children.

Duty to Report

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

The College will inform the local authority of any student who fails to attend College regularly, or has been absent without the College's permission for a continuous period of 10 College days or more without permission^[1].

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

The College 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 College

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:

- Check with the student's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check the medical room
- Check with reception who will check the signing out/in book
- Inform the senior member of staff on duty
- Call the student's mobile telephone
- Ask all of the adults and students calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the student
- Occupy all of the other students in their classrooms
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search the College grounds
- Check the doors, gates [and CCTV records] for signs of entry/exit

	Page 2 of 5	
Updated		December 2021
Review	Reviewed By:LA	
Next Review Due		December 2022

If a boarding student is missing after College hours, at bedtime or in the early hours, or they fail to return from 'leave out' at the appointed time, we would carry out the following actions:

- Check with the student's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check with other boarders (if awake) to see if they know their whereabouts
- Carry out a thorough search of the boarding area and immediate surroundings
- Check the medical room or contact the boarding team to see if the student has been reported sick
- Call the student's mobile telephone
- Consult the senior member of boarding staff on duty in College (see duty rota)
- Check leave out forms or any other information before contacting the senior member of staff on duty who will then deal with the matter if there is not a suitable explanation.

A record is kept by the College of any instances in which a student is missing from College without satisfactory permission and documentation, including the action taken and the student's explanation.

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If the student is still missing, the following steps would be taken:

- Inform the Principal of the College and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or in their absence the Deputy Principal (DDSL).
- The Principal of College will ring the student's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the College at once if they are local residents.
- The Principal of the College would notify the Police
- The Principal of the College would arrange for staff to search the rest of the College premises and grounds
- If the student's home is within walking distance, a member of staff may be asked to check if the student 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 College's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)
- The College would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority.
- Inform the Directors of the College
- The College's insurers would be informed
- If the student is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

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

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

	Page 3 of 5	
Updated		December 2021
Review	Reviewed By:LA	
Next Review Due		December 2022

The College will always consider the wider circumstances around a child going missing from College and whether there are wider safeguarding concerns that may need to be addressed in line with the College's Child Protection and Safeguarding 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 students were present
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity
- Inform the Principal of the College by mobile phone
- The remaining students would be taken back to College as soon as reasonably practicable
- The Principal of the College will contact the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the College at once if they are in the UK
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search
- Contact the Police immediately
- The DSL would inform the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) and the LADO
- The College would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Directors without delay
- The College's insurers would be informed as soon as reasonably practicable. If the child is injured, A report would be made under RIDDOR 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 College 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 students to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- The Principal of the College 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 Principal of the College will promise a full investigation (if appropriate Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) and the LADO).
- Media queries should be referred to the Principal (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 College's Child Protection and safeguarding policy where there are concerns about the welfare of the child.

	Page 4 of 5	
Updated		December 2021
Review	Reviewed By:LA	
Next Review Due		December 2022

Part Two: Procedures to be followed by staff when a child is not collected on time

If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, we will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. The College will hold more than one emergency contact number for each student. If there is no answer, the Principal will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after. If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers within a [one hour period/ when the premises are closing], the Principal will contact the Social Care Duty Officer on [telephone number]. Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. The College will make a full written report of the incident.

The College 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 College's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from College 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 College's child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures detailed in its staff code of conduct and child protection and safeguarding policies.

^[1] Colleges should agree local authority (West Berkshire) the intervals in which they will inform local authorities of the details of students who are regularly absent from College or have missed 10 College days or more without permission

^[2] Colleges should agree with their local authority the intervals in which they will inform local authorities of the details of students who are regularly absent from College or have missed 10 College days or more without permission

	Page 5 of 5	
Updated		December 2021
Review	Reviewed By:LA	
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