



The Academy at
St James
Aspire, Achieve, Believe

The Academy at St James
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Missing Child Policy

The Academy St James

Date: September 2023

Signature: Miss Rebecca Oxley

Position: DSL

Review date: September 2024

Rationale

The Academy at St James takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in its care. This includes taking steps to ensure that the school environment is safe and secure, having systems in place to avoid pupils going missing and having clear procedures identifying what will happen if a child does go missing.

In implementing this policy due consideration to equal opportunities, with regard to race, gender, religion and ability, should be ensured with reference to the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 (as amended) and all other relevant legislation.

Procedures to avoid a child going missing

- Registers are taken at start of each session, morning and afternoon. Any absence that has not been notified to school is followed up by the Attendance Officer (the Attendance Policy gives detail on this)
- Staffing and supervision levels meet requirements for children of different ages.
- Children who have left school early, because of an appointment or through illness, are signed out at the office.
- School security is designed to minimise the risk of a child going missing. All external doors are alarmed, except the main entrance which is supervised by the office staff all day
- In the event that one of the doors alarms goes off, a member of staff will investigate and inform a senior member of staff in the event that it is likely that a child has left the building. (see below)
- Staff are made aware if there are circumstances for a particular child which might increase the potential for them going missing.
- Children are taught about keeping safe as part of the curriculum and through assemblies.

Procedures to be taken in the event of a child going missing

In following these procedures, staff should take into account the age and understanding of the child and the potential risk of accident, injury or harm.

- Ensure that other children are accounted for and under supervision without creating anxiety.
- Make the office aware that a child has gone missing immediately, giving the name, age and class. A member of the office staff should go straight onto Chelwood Drive to check if the child can be seen. Another member of office staff should inform the most senior member of staff available. The Headteacher must be informed immediately by any means.
- Check that the child has not been dismissed early. Identify when the child was last seen and by whom. Establish whether there are any circumstances which may be relevant to the child going missing.
- Undertake a search of the immediate classroom / setting and grounds, extending to a wider search of the school if necessary. After a maximum of 10 minutes, the parents/carers and police should be informed by a senior member of staff.

- Keep an ongoing record of events including the time when the child was noticed missing, when the child was last seen etc. Keep updating the record until the child is found or until the search is handed over to the police.
- Contact parents/carers. Explain what has happened and what staff are doing to locate the child. Ascertain any relevant details. Ask them to supply a recent photograph if the police will be involved in a search.
- Contact the police, giving details of the child and what has been done to locate the child.
- Up until the point that the parents and police have been contacted, staff should continue to search within the school grounds and at the back of school in the 'garden area'. Staff should also look up and down Cross Lane and around the corner of the bushes at the side of the car park.
- If it is known or suspected that the child has deliberately left the grounds in a temper and they are of an age where they are less likely to be at immediate risk on the road, staff should try to keep the child under supervision at a distance rather than following, as this may cause the child to lead a 'chase'. Parents/carers should still be informed and, if necessary, the police.

After the event of a child going missing

- A review of security arrangements, policies and procedures should be undertaken to minimise the risk of a future occurrence. Any necessary adjustments should be made as a matter of urgency.
- If the child has been missing but found before parents/carers and/or the police have been informed, the parent/carer should be notified of the occurrence and review of procedures should also take place.
- A report on the incident should be documented and made available to Ofsted at the time of inspection.
- Children should be reminded of how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they are lost.

Educational visits

- Planning and risk assessments undertaken before the trip should ensure that consideration is given to all aspects of safety and well-being, including the potential for a child going missing. A decision should be made regarding whether school uniform should be worn for the visit.
- Adult/pupil ratios must fulfil minimum requirements for different types of visits and different ages of pupils.
- Before the visit, pupils are briefed on safety issues and advised that if they find themselves apart from the group they should report to a responsible person, for example, a uniformed member of staff, giving their name and the name of the school.
- Regular headcounts are made to check that all children are present.
- Children are organised into groups and group leaders are expected to make sure that their children are accounted for. Any child missing from a group should be reported to the visit leader without delay.

- Toilet breaks should be escorted by an adult, ideally taking the group at the same time.
- In the event of a child going missing, the visit leader should organise an initial check and then raise the alert, contacting school (and the visit provider if appropriate) and local police.
- Procedures at school will follow those described in previous sections.

Children who are not collected at the end of a session

There may be circumstances which result in a parent/carer not arriving on time to collect a child at the end of a session. This does not necessarily present a concern unless it is happening on a regular basis. The following procedures describe the steps taken when a child is not collected at the end of a session.

- Any child who is not collected by ten minutes after the end of a session is taken to the office. The child is reassured that they will be looked after and not to worry.
- Parents/carers are contacted in order of priority for contacts in school records.
- On arrival, the parent/carer is expected to give their reason for late collection and, if necessary, reminded of the time that the session ends.
- If no contact has been made by half an hour after the end of a session, Children's Services will be contacted.
- Records will be kept, logging the child's name, date, time of collection and reason for late collection.
- Persistent late collection will be raised as a potential child protection issue with parent/carer. Where appropriate, the school may seek involvement of other agencies, such as Education Social Work Service, to support issues associated with late collection.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or when legislation changes if that is earlier. It will also be reviewed immediately following an incident where a child goes missing.

MISSING / ABSCONDING CHILD GUIDANCE

Child Absconding from the Premises

If a child is seen leaving the premises without adult / parent / guardian supervision the following actions must be taken immediately:

- Any adult who witnesses the child leaving the premises must make attempts to speak with the child if in close enough range. Establish what the child is doing and encourage them to come back into school.
- If this is not possible the member of staff must not leave the child. Either walk with the child (if the child will allow them to do so safely) but **do not chase them, or follow the child** to establish what they are doing and where they are going.
- If possible make attempts to inform another member of staff about the situation. This may be done by: informing a colleague as they walk past them, telling office staff, making contact by phone if available etc.
- If the child is lost out of sight the procedures stated below for missing children must be followed.

In the case of a child missing / absconding the following procedures must be adopted:

- Any member of staff who notes that a child is missing / has absconded should contact the office and establish if the child has been sent home, agreements have been made e.g. parents have authorised for the child to walk home alone (Y5 / Y6 only).
- If the child has not been sent home the most senior member of staff in school at the time must be informed that the child is missing / has absconded **immediately. The headteacher must be informed immediately by any means.**
- At this point the whole school premises must be thoroughly checked to ensure that the child is not in school. All areas of the school must be checked thoroughly including:
 - a) All classrooms.
 - b) All offices.
 - c) All staff areas e.g. staff room etc.
 - d) All toilets.
 - e) All exterior parts of the building / grounds / playgrounds and all gates checked.

If a child is known to have absconded, the site does not need to be checked immediately (child must have been seen to leave the premises and not returned).

- If a search fails to find the child the most senior member of staff involved must immediately contact the parents and if still not found after ten minutes, the police. The police will want a description of the child, name, date of birth, address, contact phone numbers and an outline of what has happened.
- Members of staff will then take the following actions:
 - a) Gather all information from staff regarding the last time the child was seen in school.
 - b) How the child has managed to exit the site.
 - c) Ensure that all other children are accounted for.
 - d) Speak with friends of the child to establish if they are aware how the child exited the premises and reasons to why they might have left and where they might have gone.

This information may be obtained through delegation to other staff.

- If the Headteacher is not on the premises at this time he / she must be contacted by a senior member of staff immediately.
- Directions made by the police must be followed.
- All other procedures must be decided upon and delegated by the most senior member of staff on site.

Staff must only search the school and grounds. Further searches of the surrounding area must only be done with coordination from the police.