

ATTAIN ACADEMY PARTNERSHIP



Lost Child and Missing Child Policy

For

Bocking Primary School



March 2025

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LOST CHILD AND MISSING CHILD POLICY

The school's Lost Child and Missing Child Policy is applicable to all pupils in the school including those within EYFS (Reception class and Nursery). This policy should be read in conjunction with the trust's health, safety and welfare policy.

1. Introduction

The welfare of our pupils is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the academy has been trained to appreciate that they have a primary responsibility for keeping all of the children safe at all times, whether on academy premises or in their charge off site.

The purpose of this policy is to give all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, a clear understanding of how to respond and who to inform should they discover a child is missing.

In the event that a child is lost during school hours, the academy will ensure that a search is made for the child as soon as possible. The parents and authorities will be notified at the appropriate stage. A high level of care for the other children at the academy will be maintained while the procedures are being followed.

There are a limited number of situations where a child could be lost, and these are:

- Where a child escapes from the academy grounds,
- Where a child wanders off on an outing;
- Where a child is unaccounted for on the premises e.g. in the toilets, visiting lost property;
- Where a child is unaccounted for in an emergency e.g. Fire;
- Non-attendance of school without authorisation;
- Non-arrival of a child at their designated new academy

2. Roles

It is important that the person discovering a child is missing knows what to do. What action is taken depends on who discovers the child is missing. For the personnel below the following action should be taken:

- 2.1 Voluntary Helpers: Notify class teacher immediately. If the teacher is not available they must inform the classroom support staff if present, or if not, the nearest available teacher. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child as directed by the class teacher or the Head of School.
- 2.2 Classroom Support Staff: Notify class teacher immediately. If the teacher is not available they must inform the nearest available teacher. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the class as directed by the class teacher or the Head of School

- 2.3 Lunchtime supervisors: Notify a teacher, the Head of School or assistant headteacher immediately (whoever is found first). Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the children as directed by the Senior Midday Supervisor or Head of School or assistant headteacher
- 2.4 Class Teachers: Notify Head of School or the assistant headteacher if child is not located after a reasonable amount of time but not exceeding 10 minutes.
- 2.5 Head of School (or assistant headteacher in their absence): Takes charge of the situation.
- 2.6 Office Staff: Notify Head of School of missing child, or in their absence, the assistant headteacher, and where directed to do so contact the child's parents.

3. Procedures

3.1 Procedures to be taken by staff if a child fails to attend first day of school

All new pupils are placed on the academy's admission register by the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed that the pupil will attend the academy. If the child fails to attend on the agreed date, staff must inform the Head of School, who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or, in their absence the assistant headteacher (Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead) or the administration team, without delay. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider notifying the Local Authority at the earliest opportunity. Where there are changes affecting the child (including a change of address or school), these will be reflected in the admission register. This will assist the school and external agencies when making enquiries to locate any missing children.

3.2 Procedures to be taken by staff if a child is missing in education

A child missing in education is defined by the Department of Education as a child of compulsory school age who is not on the school roll, nor being educated otherwise, and who has been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time.

When the academy is notified by a parent that their child will be attending a different provision, the academy's administration team will contact the designated school on the first day on which the child is due to start to confirm their attendance. Where their attendance is confirmed, the child will be removed from our academy roll and their CTF file transferred.

However, if the child fails to attend on the agreed date, the Head of School, or in their absence the assistant headteacher, will be informed without delay and procedures for unauthorised absence will be followed.

If the academy is expecting a child to attend on an agreed date but the child fails to attend, the safeguarding team will be informed, and safeguarding procedures will be followed in addition to liaison with the previous setting.

3.3 Procedure to be taken if a child is absent without authorisation

- The office will ask the class teacher if the child has arrived
- If absent, the office will ring the child's home, then other contact numbers if appropriate
- If no answer is obtained the office will inform the Head of School, assistant headteacher.
- The Head of School or attendance officer will follow up the absence according to family circumstances and history.

3.4 Procedure to be taken by staff when a child is not collected on time:

1. If a child is not collected within 15 minutes of the agreed collection time, the contact numbers for the parent or carers will be called.
2. If there is no answer, a member of staff will begin to call the emergency contact phone numbers for the child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after at the academy.
3. If there is no response from the parents/carers or emergency contacts and 4 pm (or 15 minutes after the agreed collection for the after-school club), the Head of School or assistant headteacher will be informed.
4. If there is still no response then no later than 5.00pm, the Head of School will contact the Social Care duty officer on 0345 606 1212 and treat the matter as a safeguarding issue. Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. The Head of School will continue to liaise with them until the situation is resolved.
5. A full written report is to be made.
6. The academy will ensure the child is looked after throughout the time he/she remains in our care.
7. Under no circumstances should staff take the pupil home with them.
8. Discretion should be used with the above procedures in exceptional circumstances such as major disasters or unexpected early closures.

The office clock will be used to determine the times.

The aim of this procedure is to ensure all children are collected on time. The reason for this is twofold:

- i. Children who are left behind often feel an increasing level of anxiety and distress the longer that they are unsure of where their parents are. Clearly this is not a good thing to happen to any child.
- ii. the impact on the school of having a child left behind at the end of the day in terms of additional administrative and supervision costs

Parents are asked to call the academy office if they are running very late to help appropriate provision to be made and children can be kept informed.

Persistent Late Collection

If a family is persistently late in collecting a child, then the head of school will consider taking further action that may include a referral to other services

3.5 Procedure to be taken by staff if a pupil goes missing from school:

The following step-by-step guidance should be followed in the event that a pupil is considered to be missing from a school session:

1. Take a register in order to ensure that all other children are present
2. Make relevant enquiries from other adults and children in the classroom into where and when the child was last seen.
3. Ensure the safety and supervision of other children in the classroom.
4. Ask the school office to check the electronic signing in/out book (Inventory).
5. Inform the Head of School or assistant headteacher, or another member of the safeguarding team in their absence.
6. At the same time, a whole school alert will be made to search all the premises and grounds carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, washrooms where a small child might be.
7. Check the doors and gates for signs of any breach in security whereby a child could wander out and contact the school office.

If the child is still missing, the following steps should be taken:

1. Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Head of School) and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (assistant headteacher), or another member of the safeguarding team in their absence.
2. The Head of School will co-ordinate other staff searching the rest of the school premises and grounds.
3. The Head of School will notify the child's parents and explain what has happened and what steps have been taken/are in place. Reassure them as much as possible but ask them to come to the academy at once.
4. The Head of School will contact the Police.
5. The Designated Safeguarding Lead may inform the Local Children Safeguarding Board.
6. The academy will cooperate fully with any police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by social care. In the case of an investigation, the chair of governors and insurers would be informed. If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

3.6 Procedure to be taken if a child is seen voluntarily leaving the premises

If during the search the child is seen leaving the premises, the member of staff witnessing this must inform the most senior member of staff immediately available or, if none is available, send a message to the office via a reliable messenger without losing sight of the child if possible.

As a general rule, staff should not pursue a child beyond the school boundary. Instead, they should report to the Head of School where they last saw the child and the direction the child was heading so that this information can be communicated to the parents or police as appropriate. The member of staff should then resume their normal duties unless directed otherwise by the Head of School.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the member of staff to go beyond the academy boundary, e.g. to retrieve a child who has accidentally wandered out of an open gate, or to follow/retrieve a child with special needs who has deliberately left the premises but in doing so does not understand the gravity of their action. Staff are expected to use their professional discretion in deciding whether or not it is appropriate to go beyond the school boundary in pursuance of such children. If a child is followed beyond the academy boundary, the member of staff must behave in a manner that is not threatening to the child. They must not run after the child as this may cause the child to run into a dangerous situation, e.g. the child might run into a road without looking out for traffic in an attempt to evade the pursuing running adult.

In exceptional circumstances where a child is known to be liable to run off the premises, the academy may prepare and enact contingency search plans involving named staff. When enacting these plans staff should be mindful not to put themselves or the child at risk.

3.7 Procedure to be taken by staff if a pupil is missing on an offsite visit:

Prior to all offsite visits, a risk assessment will be carried out and shared with all adults present on the visit. All trips, whether in the locality or on visits away from school will be adequately supervised, the adult/child ratio will vary according to the age of the children and the nature of the trip.

All parties will be grouped into small groups with an adult leader. Regular head counts must be carried out on children throughout the trip. When boarding or alighting from transport, arriving or departing from a venue or in a venue with large crowds, there must be a clear meeting point communicated to all children before they could get lost, and registers must be taken using names and a marked list by group leaders.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing whilst on a trip the following actions will be implemented immediately

1. Take an immediate head count to ensure that all other pupils are present.
2. All adults and pupils will be asked to calmly explain when and where they last remember seeing the missing pupil.
3. An adult will search the immediate vicinity and, if at a venue, the venue manager will be informed to arrange a search and potentially secure the venue.

4. The Head of School and assistant headteacher should be informed if the pupil is still missing.
5. A strategy would be agreed with the Head of School, which may involve returning the rest of the group to school, or moving to a different location (if outside, for example) where the rest of the group can be safely supervised and ideally occupied.
6. The Head of School will phone the pupil's parents to explain what has happened and what steps have been taken. Depending on where the trip is, it may be appropriate for them to go to the venue, or to come to academy.
7. Depending on the precise circumstances, either the Head of School or the staff with the group would call the police to notify them of a missing pupil. Precise information, timings (if known) and descriptions should be readily available before making this call.
8. The Local Children Safeguarding Board and the chair of governors will be alerted at the appropriate stage.
9. The academy will cooperate fully with any police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care. In the case of an investigation, the Head of School, CEO, chair of governors and insurers would be informed. If the pupil is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.
10. A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the pupil was found would be made for the incident report.
11. If the child is not found before the end of the trip a member of staff will stay behind to help the search and bring the child back once found.

3.8 Procedure to be taken by staff once the pupil is found:

1. Talk to and take care of the pupil, as necessary.
2. Speak to the other pupils to ensure that they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
3. The Head of School will speak to the pupil's parents to explain what happened and what action was taken.
4. It may be necessary for an investigation or review to take place. The investigation will be carried out by the Head of School and it should always involve taking written statements from all those concerned at the time. Specific details should be given: date, time, place, numbers of staff and pupils, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, [the purpose of the visit], the length of time the pupil was missing as well as any lessons for the future.
5. Preventative measures will be taken to prevent future occurrences
6. All media queries should be referred to the Head of School.
7. If the incident warrants a police investigation all staff will co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff.
8. Social services may be involved if a child protection issue needs to be addressed

9. The HSE may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.

4. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of the academy's Lost Child and Missing Child procedures are monitored by the CEO, Head of School and local governing body.

5. Linked Documents

- [Children Missing Education](#) – CMR Policy and Practice Guidance (2023)
- Educational Visits Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Security Policy
- Health, Safety & Welfare Policy
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- [SET Procedures](#)

6. Document Version Control

Version	Date Issued	Author	Update Information
	May 2017	K Ellwood	Original Issue
2019-1	September 2019	K Ellwood	The following amendments were made <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section 1: clarification that the policy covers non-arrival of a child at their new school• Section 2.4: inclusion of a time lime within which staff would notify the head of a missing child.• Section 3.2: new section to clarify definition of children missing in education and the procedures to take• Inclusion of the term assistant headteacher
2021-1	March 2021	K Ellwood	No procedural changes.
2025-1	Mach 2025	K Ellwood	Section 3.4 was amended to clarify the timing triggers within the late collection procedure and the academy's position on persistent late collections.