



Missing Child and Children Missing Education (CME) Policy

Person responsible	DSL
Last update	September 2023
Frequency of Review	Annual
Date of last review by Governors	November 2023
Date of next review by Governors	November 2024

PART ONE: MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES

1. Introduction

The welfare of all of our pupils at Bute House is our paramount responsibility. A child going missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Staff should follow this procedure for dealing with children who go missing and refer to the Safeguarding Policy, if appropriate.

Every adult who works at the school 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. Where staff have concerns that a child is missing from school, this policy should be followed.

It may be very stressful and distressing if a child goes missing. It is important for the staff to stay calm and act in a rational and logical way. It is also important to act promptly. In the vast majority of cases, there will be nothing sinister involved, but as school staff, we have to be prepared for the worst.

2. Procedures in The Case of a Child Missing During the School Day

If a member of staff is concerned that a child is missing, they should take action immediately. They should firstly check with the school office to see if there is any explanation for the absence, along with asking the pupil's friends and classmates if they have any knowledge of the missing pupil's whereabouts.

The staff in the school office should then take measures to check whether the child is elsewhere in the school, either physically or by telephone. Staff should check specific rooms and toilet facilities. This should take a matter of minutes (up to five minutes).

If there are still concerns, then a member of SLT should be alerted and the child's primary and secondary contact should be phoned for further checks, whilst premises continue to be searched. It is at this point, if the child is still missing, that the police should be contacted by a member of SLT (by calling 999) to report a missing child. It should be noted that, in most cases, there is an explanation for a missing child, but it is still better to contact the police earlier rather than later. A missing child report form must be filled in by the appropriate member of staff and subsequently signed by a member of SLT.

As well as these formal measures, staff are expected to know their classes well enough to check if pupils are missing or unaccounted for. They should do informal checks on the class during the day, particularly if they are moving around, leaving the building or going on transport. If they are concerned, they should contact the School Administrator.

3. Procedures in the Case of a Child Missing During a Trip

Particular care is taken on trips as it is when children may be at the greatest risk of going missing. Staff leading trips should assess the risk of children going missing and set appropriate staffing

and control measures in place. This may include limiting the activities available, supervising visits to the toilets and regular head-counts of the groups. The Risk Assessment drawn up by the member of staff leading the outing or trip must contain details of the control measures to prevent children going missing and the procedures to be followed in the case of a child going missing.

If a child does go missing on a school outing or trip, the staff must act quickly and sensibly and follow this procedure:

1. Taking account of the number of staff on the outing, a member of staff must go and start looking, visiting the most recent places and checking toilets and facilities.
2. If this proves unsuccessful, then the help of the police (if available) or staff at the site being visited or, for example, London Transport should be sought.
3. After an initial search, the Group Leader must contact the police for assistance and then ask one of the staff to call the school and brief the DSL (or Deputy DSL) of the situation. If needed, extra staff from school may be asked to go to join the group.
4. Once the police and school have been informed, the parents should be called by the Group Leader. If this is not practicable due, for example, to poor signal in the case of the use of a mobile phone, the DSL, Deputy DSL, Deputy or Head will inform the parents. As a guide, if a child has not been found after five minutes of them being noticed as missing, then the police should be contacted.

4. Follow-up

Where a child has gone missing at school or on an outing, the form in Annex A must be completed, so a review of procedures can take place, to reduce the chance of a similar situation happening again. The issue should also be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or the Deputy, to ensure that any concern is recorded.

5. Staff Training

Regular guidance and training on this policy is provided to staff (including volunteers and external providers) on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that they understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles.

PART TWO: CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

1. Introduction

This part of the policy should be read in conjunction with the Hammersmith & Fulham CME Policy (see Appendix B).

Every child of statutory school age is entitled to an education; this entitlement is enshrined in legislation. According to Hammersmith & Fulham ACE Team, children who are missing from education are defined as “children of compulsory school age who are not on roll at a school and are not in receipt of suitable education otherwise than at school, such as a placement in alternative provision or electively home educated by their parents or carers.”

Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more without permission may be at risk of becoming ‘children missing from education’. There will not always be a safeguarding concern for children who are missing from education. Most children are moving schools supported by their parents/carers, schools and local authority admissions services. A smaller number are at risk of dropping out or disengaging from education and, being out of school, they are at risk of exploitation, going missing and significant harm.

2. Risks

These 'missing' children can be vulnerable; it is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage these children back into appropriate education provision as quickly as possible. It is important to establish, at the earliest possible stage, the reasons for the child being missing. Possible reasons that should be considered include:

- Failure to start appropriate provision and never enter the system;
- Stopped attending, due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal by parent/carers;
- Failure to complete a transition between schools;
- Children from refugee and asylum -seeking families;
- Children from families who are highly mobile;
- Children at risk of a forced marriage;
- Children experiencing abuse and neglect.
- Children supervised by the Youth Justice System Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk such as anti-social behaviour and/or sexual exploitation.

Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. When a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities, either regionally or nationally, and share information to ascertain where the child is living. Once the location of the child is established, the relevant local authority must ensure that the child is receiving an education either by attending a school or otherwise.

3. Procedures

As part of the school's overall Safeguarding and Child Protection responsibilities, the school monitors pupil attendance and absence in accordance with its Attendance Policy. As a result of twice-daily registration on SIMS, that is monitored by the School Admin Team, we are immediately aware when a child is not present and no reason for their absence has been provided.

Where there is a concern, the DSL will seek to clarify the reason for a child's absence from school and to consider the child's vulnerability with their parent or carer, as is practicable on the first day.

4. Children Missing from Education Persistently

This policy should be cross-referenced with the School's Safeguarding Policy. KCSIE (2023) states:

"Children missing from education, particularly persistently, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school response to children missing from education supports identifying such abuse and helps prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where going missing from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community."

School attendance registers are carefully monitored to identify any trends. Action should be taken in accordance with this, and the School's Safeguarding Policy, if any absence of a pupil from the School gives rise to a concern about their welfare.

The School endeavours to hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil so that the School has additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and / or safeguarding concern.

5. Children Missing Education for Specific Known Reasons

In the case of illness or other unusual circumstances, provision will be made for re-entry strategies to school. These children may display some school phobia, if there has been little or no interaction with the school during diagnosis and treatment. Staff should be aware the child may experience stress and feelings of being overwhelmed. They may wonder how they will be treated when they return to school, with some expecting special attention and others wishing to be treated the same as their peers. The children who have had little interaction with peers since diagnosis may feel sad, anxious, and have lowered self-esteem.

The Form Teacher, Phase Leader and Deputy Head will all be involved in the re-entry process and will agree on a suitable arrangement, depending on the circumstances, to ensure that the child has a smooth transition back into the school environment.

6. Children Missing From Education but not Missing From Home

The length of time that a child remains out of school could, of itself, be an alerting factor of risk of harm to the child. A judgement as to timeliness is required in respect of the referral to the local authority. This timeliness should be on a case-by-case basis.

In exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence can be authorised by the head teacher, at which point a return date is set. In these cases, the time line for enquiries starts from when the child does not attend school on the expected return date, not from the day the authorised leave started.

7. Notifications and Actions for Children Missing from Education Where There Are Safeguarding Concerns

If the answers to any of the points set out in the previous section indicate that there are concerns about the child's safety then a referral should be made to London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (LBHF) on day one. The school should work in collaboration with Social care services and the Designated Safeguarding Lead should participate in any strategy discussions which may arise.

8. Transfer of Information When a Pupil Changes School

In accordance with the law, Bute House Preparatory School has an Admissions Register and an Attendance Register and all children are placed on both registers.

The school will inform the local authority (Hammersmith and Fulham) of any child who is going to be deleted from the Admissions Register where they:

- have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education;
- have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school;
- have left the school outside of normal exit points (at Bute House this would be the end of Year 6) or mid-academic year.
- have been certified by a medical professional as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the Head does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period;
- have been permanently excluded.

The school will inform the local authority (Hammersmith and Fulham) of any child who is added to the Admissions Register or deleted from the Admissions Register at non-standard transitions i.e. where a compulsory school-aged child leaves the school before completing the school's final year or joins a school after the beginning of the school's first year.

In relation to deletions from the register, the duty arises as soon as the grounds for deletion are met, in any event before deleting the child's name. The notification of non-standard admissions is to be made within five days of the entry on the Admissions Register.

It is essential that schools comply with this duty, so that local authorities can, as part of their duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Annex A

**Bute House Preparatory School
Missing Child Report Form**

Date of incident: Time of incident:

Pupil Name: Form:

Pupil DOB:

Members of staff involved:

Outline of events leading to the child going missing:

.....

.....

Outline of actions taken:

.....

.....

Outcomes:

.....

Description of any injury (ies) sustained:

.....

Date parent/carer informed of incident: Time:

By whom informed:

Outline of parent/carer response:

.....

Signature of staff completing report: Date:

Signature of Head/Deputy Head: Date:

Description of any follow-up

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

This report must be sent to the Head, DSL and DFO.

Annex B

[London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham CME Policy \(August 2021\)](#)

[LBHF Referral Form for Children Missing Education](#)