



## Missing Child and Children Missing Education (CME) Policy

<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>DSL</b>
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# **PART ONE: MISSING CHILD PROCEDURES**

## **1. Introduction and Aims**

The welfare of all pupils at Bute House Preparatory School (the School) is the School's 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.

It may be very stressful and distressing if a child goes missing. It is important for 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 School staff have to be prepared for the worst.

## **2. Scope and Responsibilities**

This Policy is applied to the whole School, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Every adult who works at the School has been trained to appreciate that they have a key responsibility for helping to keep all pupils safe at all times. This includes the importance of sharing information effectively to ensure pupils are safe and receiving suitable education. Where staff have concerns that a pupil is missing from School, this Policy should be followed.

## **3. Procedures in the Case of a Child Missing During the School Day**

If a member of staff is concerned that a pupil 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 pupil 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, the DSL or DDSL should be alerted and the pupil's primary and secondary contact should be phoned for further checks, whilst premises continue to be searched. It is at this point, if the pupil is still missing, that the police should be contacted by a member of the SLT (by calling 999) to report a missing pupil. It should be noted that, in most cases, there is an explanation for a missing pupil, 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 the 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 undertake 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.

## **4. Procedures in the Case of a Child Missing During a Trip**

Particular care is taken on trips as it is on trips when pupils may be at the greatest risk of going missing. Staff leading trips (the trip leader) should assess the risk of pupils going missing and put appropriate staffing and control measures in place. This may include limiting the activities available, supervising visits to toilets and regular headcounts of groups. The Risk Assessment drawn up by the trip leader must contain details of control measures to prevent pupils going missing and the procedures to be followed in the case of a pupil going missing.

If a pupil does go missing on a School outing or trip, 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 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 trip 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 join the group. 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. Once the police and school have been informed, the pupil's parents should be called by the trip 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, Senior Deputy or Head will inform the pupil's parents.

## **5. Follow-up**

Where a pupil has gone missing at school or on an outing, the form in Appendix 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 DSL or the DDSL to ensure that any concern is recorded.

## **6. Staff Training**

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

## **PART TWO: CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION**

### **1. Introduction and Aims**

**This part of the Policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Attendance Policy, Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, August 2024) and 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 move 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. Scope and Responsibilities**

This Policy is applied to the whole School, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

### **3. 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
- Children who 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.

#### 4. 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, which is monitored by the School Administration Team, the School is immediately aware when a pupil 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 pupil's absence from School and to consider the pupil's vulnerability with their parent, as far as practicable on the first day.

#### 5. Children Missing from Education Persistently

This Policy should be cross-referenced with the School's Safeguarding Policy. KCSIE (2025) states:

*"Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions 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 with 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.

As stated in 'Working together to improve school attendance' (DfE, August 2024) the School is legally required to share information from registers with the local authority. As a mandatory requirement this includes:

- **New Pupil and Deletion returns:** notifying the local authority when a pupil's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times.
- **Attendance returns:** providing the local authority with the names and addresses of all pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly or have been absent for a continuous

period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised (G, N, O, and/or U).

- **Sickness returns:** providing the local authority with the full name and address of all pupils of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the School has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness. Only one sickness return is required for a continuous period of sickness in a school year. This is to help the School and local authority to agree on any provision necessary to ensure continuity of education, in line with the statutory guidance on arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

## 6. 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 pupils 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 pupil 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. Pupils who have had little interaction with peers since diagnosis may feel sad, anxious, and have lowered self-esteem.

The Form Teacher, Phase Leader, Assistant Head Pastoral and Senior 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 pupil has a smooth transition back into the School environment. This may include:

- One-to-one check-ins with Form Teacher, Phase Leader, Assistant Head Pastoral or Senior Deputy Head
- Counselling sessions with the School Counsellor, subject to agreement from parents
- Specific intervention groups subject to specific area of need (eg. social skills, self-regulation, managing stress or anxiety)

This plan will be periodically reviewed by the Assistant Head Pastoral with both the pupil and parents to ensure support is appropriately addressing current needs.

## 7. Children Missing from Education but not Missing from Home

The length of time that a pupil remains out of School could, in itself, be an alerting factor of risk of harm to the child. A judgement on 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, at which point a return date is set. In these cases, the timeline for enquiries starts from when the pupil does not attend School on the expected return date, not from the day the authorised leave started.

## **8. 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 pupil'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.

## **9. Transfer of Information When a Pupil Changes School**

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

The School will inform the local authority (Hammersmith and Fulham) of any pupil 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 the School, 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 they nor their parent(s) have indicated the intention to continue to attend the School before 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 pupil 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 another school after that school's first point of entry.

In relation to deletions from the register, the duty arises as soon as the grounds for deletion are met, and in any event before deleting the pupil'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.

## 10. Monitoring and Review

The Senior Deputy Head will regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this Policy. The Missing Child and Child Missing Education Policy will be subject to review at least annually (or more frequently if changes to legislation, regulation or statutory guidance so require) by the Senior Deputy Head and the Governing Body. The date of the next review is shown on the front page.

## Appendix 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: .....

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Outline of actions taken: .....

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Outcomes: .....

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Description of any injury/injuries sustained:

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Date parent/~~care~~ informed of incident: ..... Time: .....

Informed by whom: .....

Outline of parent response: .....

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Signature of staff completing report: ..... Date: .....

Signature of Head / Senior Deputy Head: ..... Date: .....

Description of any follow-up:

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

## **Appendix B: Other relevant links**

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham CME Policy (August 2021)

LBHF Referral Form for Children Missing Education