

## Missing Child Policy

**Responsible person:** Tim Pragnell

**Last review date:** 5th September 2022

**New review date:** 4th September 2023

“Burlington House School” refers to Burlington House Prep, Burlington House Senior and Burlington House Sixth Form

This guidance should be read in the context of the following:

- The Education Act 1996 section 436A;
- The Education Act 2002;
- The Children Act 1989;
- The Children Act 2004;
- Statutory guidance for local authorities: Children missing education (September 2016);
- Elective Home Education Guidelines;
- Unregistered independent schools and out of school settings - non-statutory guidance for local authorities;
- School Admissions Code;
- School to school service: how to transfer information;
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended (Education law regarding pupil registration where a child is on a school roll); The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013; as amended The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

### SECTION A: CHILD MISSING FROM SETTING

Burlington House School (its Fulham High Street, Bishop’s Avenue and Beavor Lane sites) is very secure. All external doors are locked and can only be accessed by staff key-cards. In the unlikely event that a pupil is noted to be missing from the premises during the school day, the following procedures will be implemented.

#### Stage 1

Search systematically:

- All available staff will immediately check toilets, shared areas, classrooms, therapy rooms and the playground to ensure that the child is not hiding or locked in anywhere.
- One member of staff will immediately inform Reception, the Headteacher (or member of staff in charge) and the DSL and check whether the child has been signed out for an external appointment or has an internal appointment.
- The receptionist will check the daily attendance register.
- Staff will ensure that all other pupils are kept safe and closely supervised throughout the incident should it be during the school day.

### **Stage Two**

- After stage one is completed without resolution (no more than 10 minutes), the receptionist will contact the police and parents/carers with parental responsibility. At this point, the school will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident.
- The Headteacher or DSL will liaise with emergency services and parents/carers.
- Staff will call registers in all classes to confirm the presence of other pupils.

### **Stage Three**

- The Headteacher should communicate the incident to the appropriate Local Authority Office/LADO and Lead Governor.
- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and recorded on MyConcern. All staff involved should input any relevant information including conversations with parents/carers, child minders, police, the Local Authority and any other person they feel has contributed to the collection of evidence.
- The Senior Management Team should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective the response was and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again.
- If the Headteacher is not on the premises, he will be informed as soon as possible via the senior staff member in charge.
- The Headteacher or Lead Governor will be the only members of staff who will communicate with the media.

### **When the child is found**

During the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. It is important to remember:

- that the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort
- remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault
- ensure the child is not hurt
- the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why

### **After the Incident**

Review current procedures and processes, including the security of the site, and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.

## **SECTION B: CHILD MISSING FROM EDUCATION**

### **Definition and Overview**

The statutory guidance Children Missing Education (September 2016) sets out the key principles to enable local authorities in England to implement their legal duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, children missing education (CME). Local authorities should be able to demonstrate that they have considered this statutory guidance and, where it is not followed, the local authority should have reasonable grounds for not doing so.

1. All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have;
2. Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation (including travel to conflict zones), and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life;
3. Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving a suitable education. Local authorities should focus their resources effectively in intervening early in the lives of vulnerable children to help prevent poor outcomes.

### **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 the reasons for the child being missing at the earliest possible stage.

Possible reasons why a child is missing education 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 experiencing mental health problems
- Children at risk of a forced marriage
- Children at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Children experiencing abuse and neglect

Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk.

Children who are missing out on education are at increased risk of being criminally exploited or being groomed and exploited by gangs.

Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education.

When families move between local authority areas it can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. Where a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities - either regionally or nationally - and share information in order to ascertain where a child has moved. 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 the provision of electronic or distance learning packages where these are available.

Research has shown that many children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore important that schools inform the local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education. Although many are settled, some GRT families move regularly and their children can be at increased risk of missing education. Local authority Traveller Education Support Services (TESS), where these exist, or the named CME officer within the local authority, can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring the minimum disruption to GRT pupils' education.

Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently - both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice. Schools and local authorities should contact the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) for advice on making arrangements to ensure continuity of education for those children when the family moves.

Children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education. Local authority Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) work with young people (aged 10 to 18 years) who are involved with the Criminal Justice System. YOTs should work with the local authority CME officer to ensure that children they are working with are receiving, or returning to, appropriate full-time education.

## **Indicators**

As a result of daily registration, the school is particularly well placed to notice when a child has gone missing. If a member of staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will try to establish with the parents/carers what has happened.

If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the DSL should assess the child's vulnerability by making reasonable enquiries, and where appropriate refer any concerns about the child to Children's Social Care.

The school will monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance.

In the more general circumstances of a child going missing who is not known to any other agencies and there are no immediate safeguarding concerns, the Deputy Headteacher Pastoral/DSL should inform Education Welfare of any child who has not attended for 5 consecutive school days without

provision of reasonable explanation. All schools, colleges and educational providers have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, and this includes investigating any unexplained absences.

All schools are required to notify the local authority within 5 days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. Schools will need to provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

Schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register at a non-standard transition point under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the regulations, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.

In line with the duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, the expectation is that the school and the local authority will have in place procedures designed to carry out reasonable enquiries. The type of procedures may include the appropriate person checking with relatives, neighbours, landlords - private or social housing providers - and other local stakeholders who are involved. They should also record that they have completed these procedures. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral (see Referrals Procedure) should be made to Children's Social Care (and the Police if appropriate).

### **Protection and Action to be Taken**

The DSL should inform Education Welfare and the child's social worker immediately if a child who is Looked After or subject to a Child Protection Plan is missing.

In the following circumstances a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police should always be made promptly:

- The child may be the victim of a crime
- The child is subject of a Child Protection Plan
- The child is subject of Section 47 enquiries
- The child is Looked After
- There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household
- There is a history of the family moving frequently
- There are serious issues of low attendance

Where a Headteacher has been notified by a parent that a pupil is receiving education other than at school, and has removed the child's name from the school roll, notification must be given to the education service within 10 school days; the pupil's records should then be transferred to the education service to be stored in accordance with local arrangements.

If a school receives a new pupil without receiving information about the pupil from their previous school, the school should contact the previous Local Authority.

### **Issues arising from non-attendance at school**

A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter and there may be a reasonable explanation. However, regular school attendance is an important safeguard and unexplained non-attendance can be an early indicator of problems, risk and vulnerability.

The school will endeavour to deal with this problem in three ways:

- By preventing poor school attendance and truancy
- By acting once absence has occurred to establish children's safety and try to get them back to school
- By taking action to trace children whose whereabouts are not known

### **Elective Home Education**

There is no suggestion or evidence that home-educated children are at any greater risk of abuse or neglect than other children. However, it is possible that where abuse or neglect is already taking place, it can be easier to hide if the child is home-educated and is not necessarily being seen on a regular basis by professionals such as teachers. This potentially increases the chances that any parents who set out to use home education as a means to avoid their child having contact with agencies may be more successful by doing so.

Safeguarding concerns may not simply arise in relation to the family. Some parents who educate at home believe that by doing so, they are safeguarding their child from risk in the school environment.

Local authorities should approach all cases where they have concerns about the suitability of home education being provided using their powers in the Education Act 1996. However, they should also be ready, if a lack of suitable education appears likely to impair a child's development, to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities to protect the child's well-being, which includes their right to a suitable education.