



**MISSING CHILD POLICY /**  
**PROCEDURES WHEN A CHILD IS NOT COLLECTED ON TIME /**  
**PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF WHEN FINDING A CHILD UNSUPERVISED IN SCHOOL –**  
**'WANDERING CHILD'**

**PART ONE**

**MISSING CHILD POLICY**

**References:**

- A. Keeping Children safe in Education – DfE guidance dated Sept 2023.
- B. Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage April 2021, DfE.
- C. National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools dated September 2022.

**Introduction**

The welfare of all of our children at Vinehall School is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the School has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that he or she is in our care, whilst providing freedom and opportunity for recreation on the School campus.

Staff will know the whereabouts of boarders in their charge (or know how to find their whereabouts) at all times.

**Missing Children**

**It should be noted that a missing child could potentially be at risk of abuse or neglect. We are alert to that possibility and will notify all relevant authorities if it is deemed necessary.**

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children at Vinehall refer to children from 2 to 5 years of age in our Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Kindergarten and Reception classes. Vinehall EYFS is included in the Missing Child Policy and Procedures with the whole School. Procedures include those for missing children, children not collected on time and a wandering child.

The indoors and outdoors premises are safe and secure. The outside play areas are fenced in and the children are supervised at all times. Staffing arrangements meet the needs of the children and

ensure their safety. Children are adequately supervised and must usually be within sight and hearing of staff and always within sight or hearing. The staff have relevant qualifications and are present in adequate numbers for safe supervision and more staff are available nearby. The department produces risk assessments for playtime and these are revised annually or more often if necessary. Duty staff have appropriate induction on supervision and also talk to the children to remind them of our playtime rules, see Pre-Prep and Early Years Rules.

No unauthorised person must be able to enter the Pre-Prep premises and steps are taken to prevent intruders entering the premises. There are security systems in place such as keypads on external doors and there are signing in/out procedures and name badges for visitors. Any staff, parent or child arriving and departing outside the usual times is recorded in a separate signing in/out book. Parents have additional information regarding security in the Handbook for Parents. The children are only released into the care of individuals named by the parents. Except where there is reasonable excuse, written permission from parents is requested where children are to be picked up by another adult.

Children do not leave the premises unsupervised, for example music and gym staff from the Prep School, collect from and return children to their Pre-Prep teacher when giving individual lessons. In the event that a child is missing, EYFS staff follow the guidance given in the whole school Missing Child Policy, see 'actions to be followed by staff' both at school and on an outing (as appropriate). For children not collected on time and for a wandering child, see the procedures stated in the whole school policy. Also see Pre-Prep and Early Years Daily Times.

In addition to whole school Inset training and Pre-Prep meetings, the EYFS staff have separate meetings to review, monitor and evaluate EYFS practices and the findings inform the department Self Evaluation Form (SEF) and action planning.

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our youngest children are set out in our School Trips Policy, which is available to parents on request from the School office. We review these policies regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of very young children.

### **Actions to be followed by Staff if a Child Goes Missing**

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions (with a record kept of each action):

- Inform the Head or Deputy Head, or the Head of the Pre-Prep (for KS1 and EYFS children) and other members of SMT on site. Additionally, if the missing child is a Boarder, the Houseparent must also be informed.
- Check the register in order to ensure that all the other children were present.
- Check the pupil records of the missing child for any relevant details that might have a bearing on the situation (e.g. any court orders in place against either parent, the medical condition of the child, etc.)
- The secretaries, matron and Houseparent should check the signing out book for day children and boarders.
- Ask adults - including Houseparent (for boarders), Matron, Form Teacher, recent teacher, Music School, Dispensary and Sports Department.
- Ask the children in the missing child's class, calmly, if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the child and whether the child was happy or unhappy.
- Occupy all of the other children in their classroom as normal.

- At the same time, arrange for as many staff as possible to carry out a thorough search, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, including cupboards and washrooms where a child might hide. Changing rooms and dormitories should be checked and staff should be sent into the grounds. The grounds staff should be asked to assist.
- Ensure that searchers are equipped with mobile phones.
- Note the names of those involved in the search.
- A fire drill might be held to ensure that he/she is not on the site.

If the child is still missing after half an hour, the following steps would be taken:

- The Head, Deputy Head (or Head of Pre-Prep Department if KS1 or EYFS child) will ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. They may ask them to come to the School at once, or delay until further information has come to light.
- The Head / DSL will notify the Police and take advice.
- The Head will arrange for staff to further search the rest of the School premises and grounds.
- If the child's home is within walking distance, a member of staff would set out on foot or in a car, to attempt to catch up with him/her and staff will drive along the main roads to check.
- As DSL, the Head would inform the Local Children Safeguarding Board.
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care.
- If the child remains missing, the School would inform:
  - The Chairman of Governors
  - The School's insurers
- If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. Witnesses would be interviewed and asked to provide written statements. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

### **Boarders**

All actions recorded in this policy also apply to a missing Boarder. Additionally, all boarders are made aware that it is a School rule that they must inform a member of the Boarding Staff where they are going, if they are not going to be supervised at all times by a Vinehall staff member.

If a Boarder goes missing, all areas of the School would be searched and the outside bell would be sounded. Boarders are made aware that this signal means everyone should return to the Boarding House to facilitate a roll call. A subsequent search would be co-ordinated through the use of mobile phones by all staff involved.

### **Actions to be followed by Staff if a Child goes missing on an Outing**

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other children were present.
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity.
- One adult would retrace steps to the last place where the child was seen, the remaining children staying in one place with the other staff.
- Inform the Head by mobile phone.
- If the child was not located, the remaining children would be taken back to school, or arrangements would be made with the School.

- Ask the Head, Deputy Head or Head of Pre-Prep Dept (for KS1 or EYFS child) to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Discuss with them whether they should come to the location or wait at the School.
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search if in a building or on a site such as a garden / castle etc.
- Contact the Police.
- The DSL would inform the Local Children Safeguarding Board.
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Social Care.
- If the child was not quickly found the School would inform:
  - The Chairman of Governors
  - The School's insurers
- If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

#### **Actions to be followed by Staff once the Child is found**

- The Head / Deputy Head and /or Head of Pre-Prep Dept. (for KS1 and EYFS children) will contact the parents and any emergency services involved.
- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child. Counselling may be necessary and it may be best for the child to remain in the dispensary or to go home.
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
- Inform all staff involved in the search that the child has been found.
- The Head and/or Head of Pre-Prep Dept. (for KS1 and EYFS children) will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident.
- The Head will promise a full investigation (if appropriate involving Social Services/ Local Children Safeguarding Board).
- Media queries should be referred to the Head (see Crisis Management Procedures).
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements.
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appears to have happened, [the purpose of the outing], the length of time that the child was missing and how s/he appears to have gone missing, lessons for the future.

## **PART TWO**

### **PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF WHEN A CHILD IS NOT COLLECTED ON TIME**

If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, we will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. If there is no answer, the School office or member of staff will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child.

During this time, the child will be safely looked after.

If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers within a 3 hour period, or when the School is closing (for example at an exeat or for a holiday), the Head will:

- make emergency arrangements for the child (either staying at school, if the School is open or arranging for other care, perhaps with friends) and
- check with the Police in order that they may visit the child's house.

We will make a full written report of the incident.

### **PART THREE**

#### **PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF WHEN FINDING A CHILD UNSUPERVISED IN SCHOOL – 'WANDERING CHILD'**

On discovering a child wandering around the School premises without supervision or in suspicious circumstances:

- ASK where they are going/where they are supposed to be.
- ACCOMPANY the child to the care of a responsible adult. It is not advisable to send them to another unsupervised place such as the Library unless you are to join them directly. The Front Office or Head's PA are generally the most suitable places, as checks may be made by phone on where the child should be.

No child must be able to leave the Pre-Prep unsupervised. Pre-Prep (KS1 and EYFS) children should always be under supervision of a member of staff when moving around the School site. Any Pre-Prep child found wandering should be accompanied back to Pre-Prep and the incident reported to the Head of Pre-Prep. The Head of Pre-Prep and the child's class teacher will discuss the incident and decide if further action is required.

Related Documents:

1. School Trips Policy