



## **Practice Guidance: Children Missing On and Off Site**

### **Tees Valley Education Trust**

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# **Guidance for Children going Missing on/off site**

## **Missing Child On-Site**

It is the Head teacher's responsibility to ensure that children do not go missing, however there is a wider responsibility to all staff to ensure children remain safe and accounted for, whilst under their care and supervision.

We have the highest regard for the safety and welfare of the children in our care. Staff will always be extremely aware of the potential for children to go missing during sessions of our day. We minimise opportunities for children to 'hide' within academy environments, by ensuring cupboard doors are closed and communal areas are free from obstructions and clutter. Outdoor equipment should be purchased with this in mind. Children are aware that 'hiding' from adults is not allowed.

Systems are in place to register attendance during the academy day/sessions. Staff are responsible for those young people in their care and, alongside session attendance, should undertake periodic checks to ensure all young people are accounted for. There are occasions when young people may leave a learning environment to carry out a task, visit the toilet, receive specialist support and are unsupervised. These children are still the member of staff's responsibility, particularly should an evacuation of the building occur.

If for any reason a member of staff cannot account for a child's whereabouts during a session, the following procedure should be activated, calmly but without delay:

- The member of staff will inform the Head teacher/SLT, Designated Safeguarding Lead and the rest of the staff team that the child is missing and believed still to be on-site (until this can be ruled out).
- A thorough search of the entire premises will be commenced (indoor & outdoor areas). The staff team will be careful not to create an atmosphere of panic and to ensure that the other children remain safe, focused on learning and adequately supervised.
- If the child is not on the premises the search will be widened to include the surrounding area.
- If after 15 minutes of thorough searching the child is still missing, the HT will inform the police and then the child's parents/carers.
- While waiting for the police and the missing child's parents/carers, searches for the child will continue. During this period other members of staff will maintain as normal a routine as is possible for the rest of the children. The correct adult child ratios will be maintained at all times.
- If the child has made their way off-site, and you identify them, remember to remain calm and do not give chase especially near built up areas where there is traffic. Call their name calmly and reassure them you are not angry with them.
- The HT will be responsible for meeting the police and the missing child's parent/carers. They will coordinate any actions instructed by the police and do all they can to comfort and reassure the parents/carers.
- Once the incident is resolved, the HT/Manager and the staff team will review relevant policies and procedures and implement any necessary changes (paying particular attention to reviewing security on site).
- Inform all relevant parties of findings, implications and outcomes of review.
- All incidents of children going missing from the setting will be recorded on an incident form and a full SLT de-brief with lessons learned to follow.

## **Missing Child Off-site (visit)**

It is the Headteacher and party leader's responsibility to ensure that children do not go missing. In order to do this, it is our responsibility to ensure that:

- A risk assessment of the venue or visit has been undertaken prior to it taking place, and is deemed suitable. The academy visits coordinator has gained full sign-off from the HT.
- We regularly count the children when on trips, particularly when moving from one place to another.
- Inform children what to do in the event that they become separated from the group school /setting party; make them aware of identifiable 'meet points' should they go missing.
- Remind children to stay close to you at all times.
- Inform children where they can and cannot go without your permission. Toilet breaks must always be taken with an adult
- Try to make children distinguishable from others by means of hats/tabards/bands etc. But do not identify with name badges.
- Check the register/take a name call if you are in any doubt that a child may be missing.
- Ensure any vulnerable learners who are likely to pose as a 'flight risk' undergo a full risk assessment prior to the visit taking place. The HT has full discretion and makes the final decision on whether it is safe for the child to participate on a visit, based upon all of the evidence. The reason(s) will be fully explained to parents in advance.

If a child goes missing off-site the following procedures will be activated:

- The member of staff will inform the HT/SLT and Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately
- Ask other staff if they have seen the child and instigate a search of the area (as missing child on site).
- Ensure there is suitable supervision for the other children and ensure staff ratios are maintained at all times.
- If after 15 minutes of thorough searching the child is still missing, the HT will inform the local police and the child's parents/carers (or emergency contact if they are unobtainable).
- At least one member of staff will remain at the scene whilst others return to the setting with the children.
- The remaining most senior member of staff will meet the police and parents/carers when they arrive at a designated point.

Once the incident is resolved, the procedure below should be followed:

- HT and the SLT will de-brief and review relevant policies and procedures and implement any necessary changes, ensuring this is cascaded to all staff.
- Inform all relevant parties of findings, implications and outcomes of review.
- All incidents of children going missing will be recorded on an incident form.
- Do not make any media releases. Be careful who you discuss the situation with.
- The academy needs to be prepared for press interest. This would be managed through HT, CEO and PR company employed by the trust. Staff briefing should take place to ensure staff are aware of responses and a script for the whole workforce would be prepared in conjunction with press office and other critical incident support

## **References**

Working together to safeguarding children 2025 update  
LSCB/Safeguarding Partner procedures

KCSIE 2025 update

EYFS - Links to 3.8/3.51 in the Statutory Framework EYFS

Missing from home/missing from education policy SCRs  
return to school interviews

Read in conjunction with LAC policy