



# **DURANTS SCHOOL – POLICY DOCUMENT**

## **Missing Child Procedure**

**September 2023**

*Reviewed & updated: September 2023 (Rachel Carli)*

*Next review date: September 2024*

# **Missing Pupil Procedures**

## **Aims of the procedure**

At Durants school pupils safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made to ensure the security of pupils is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a pupil going missing, our missing child procedure is followed as set out in the two flow charts which follow

## **Purpose**

- It is essential that all staff at Durants ensures that positive steps are taken to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The safety and welfare of all of our pupils at school is our paramount responsibility.
- The procedures outlined in this policy will be followed alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures, Whistleblowing Policy, Staff Disciplinary Procedure and any other relevant school policy or procedure.
- All staff and volunteers understand what to do in the unlikely event that a child were to be lost or go missing either from the school building site or during an off-site visit.
- It is the Headteacher's responsibility to ensure that this policy is understood and followed.
- It is the responsibility of all staff to read the policy and to act at all times accordingly.

## **Introduction**

- This policy has been adopted in respect of any pupil who goes missing from our premises or wanders off from our care, even if they remain on site.
- The policy will be used in respect of all cases in which it is found that a pupil is lost or missing.
- At all times we will treat very seriously any evidence which shows that any member of staff has behaved in a way that has harmed a pupil, or may have harmed a pupil (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for definition of harm).
- Any consequent disciplinary matter against staff will follow our separate disciplinary procedure, in consultation with the Schools Business Manager.
- Due consideration will be given by the Head Teacher as to whether a referral may be made to children's social care/adults social care.
- It is the staffs' responsibility to complete the attendance registers, including after school clubs and activities. The register must be completed accurately and promptly. The law requires schools to have the attendance register which is compliant with the Regulations.

## **Steps to Keep Pupils Safe**

- Our procedures will always be managed with common sense and sound judgement. If a member of staff takes a pupil off site, they are responsible for completing a risk assessment and informing a member of SLT.
- At all times, parents can be assured that all children / young adults remain within the safe environment of our school setting, including attendance at any outings. We ensure that proper precautions are taken to prevent pupils going missing.

### **DURANTS SCHOOL – Missing Child Procedure Policy**

- If any pupil is found to leave the premises without permission of the school and parents, they will be deemed to have broken the school Code of Conduct and the application of appropriate and proportionate sanctions will be considered by the Head Teacher accordingly.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure they provide correct and updated information in a timely basis and know the procedures for handover of their child.
- Particular care should be taken to register pupils in the morning and after lunch. Pupils also must be registered in clubs/after school activities and on out and about trips.
- No pupil should leave our supervision and care without an appropriate adult. In order to achieve this aim, we operate the following procedures at our school.

### **STRATEGIES**

- a. If a pupil cannot be found by their teacher, the Head Teacher/Deputy Headteacher must be informed immediately and told where and when the pupil was last seen. Time is of the essence and prompt actions must be taken by all.
- b. The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher will notify the police once they become aware of a report of a missing pupil. It is critical that the police are informed earlier rather than later. It is better to ring police afterwards to say that the pupil has been found rather than delay and thus endangering the pupil. The police refer to the Golden Hour when there is the greatest chance of finding a missing child. Members of staff, who are not supervising pupils, will be sent to search the area in the immediate vicinity of the school.
- c. The remaining pupils will be left safe in the care of suitable staff. All other available staff will conduct a thorough search of the pupil's classroom, play areas, storage areas, toilets, the school buildings and the school grounds.
- d. As soon as possible the parents/carers and social worker ( if applicable) will be notified that the pupil is missing.
- e. If a member of staff finds the pupil the Head must be told at once. Parents, police and other authorities will be notified.
- f. The Head will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

Permission from parents is obtained for any educational visits which are deemed as part of the school curriculum at the start of their child's schooling at Durants. It can be updated at any time if parents change their mind. Permission is obtained once again specifically for any other visit.

- Staff mobile phones are taken on every school visit and the contact numbers are left at the school office.
- While staff are supervising children/young adults off-site, the Educational Visits Policy will apply at all times.
- After school clubs will only take place when a completed register of pupils is taken, the situation has been risk managed and the school has obtained written consent from parents with contact numbers and details of how the pupils are to go home and who with.
- Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity in accordance with the school's practice in maintaining confidentiality and our obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Procedures following a Child Reported Missing or Lost**

- If a teacher suspects that a child is missing from a lesson or activity, they will contact the nearest member of SLT and school office immediately.
- All remaining children/young adults will be kept safe in a secure place with adequate adult supervision, including assistance from other school staff if necessary.
- A full headcount will be taken by the teacher-in-charge and matched against the register; usually the class teacher or nominated person.
- A senior member of staff will make a thorough search of the building and/or site and immediate surroundings including storage areas and toilets. A thorough check of all exits will be made, to ensure all gates/doors are locked and there is no other way a pupil could have left the site. If something is discovered, the SLT member must be immediately informed.
- The following list held in the school office will be checked: attendance register, off site records, and other school clubs.
- If the child is not found after this initial search, the Head of Senior school will be informed and/or approximately 30 minutes from the initial report of them deemed missing, the school office will inform Director of Education, including where a child is found wandering or at risk of being lost or missing. The designated safeguarding officer in school will be notified immediately and they will ensure that the parents have been informed. The Headteacher, or Deputy Head teacher in the absence of the Head, will contact the police immediately when they are informed a pupil is missing.
- All relevant emergency contacts for children will be used to inform parent/carer(s) accordingly. However, until such time as the child is safely returned to the care of the parent/carer(s), the Headteacher remains responsible for the care and welfare of the child, including off-site.
- As soon as is practicable, the Serious Incident Reporting Form (AF1) will be completed and sent to health & safety at the borough. The visit leader (off site) or responsible form/class teacher will make a contemporaneous record to provide full details of the incident in the school's incident report book. A note will also be made on the school's attendance register accordingly
- Near misses will also be recorded and reported to the Director of Education and all details fully provided in writing to the school's Safeguarding Governance Committee (SGC). This Report must outline the steps being taken to avoid any repeat incident, communication with parents and actions to be taken following the risk assessment process to mitigate future risk. Any relevant policy and procedure must be reviewed by the school and submitted to governor compliance committee for approval.
- All incidents will be reported, for the attention of our insurers, as appropriate. Staff must try to remember and write down a description of what the child was wearing and any distinguishing features.
- If a missing pupil has any special medical or particular needs then these need to be noted to be disclosed to the police or other agencies.
- A thorough search of the premises should continue until the child is found.

**Following the Incident**

- It is in everyone's interest to resolve what has happened as quickly as possible, consistent with a fair and thorough investigation.
- The written findings of the investigation must be reported by the Headteacher to Director of Education within 48 hours of the occurrence of the incident.
- All relevant policies and procedures will immediately be reviewed and revisions presented formally to the Director of Education for approval within 5 working days.
- The parent/carer(s) will be involved at all times.
- Following receipt of our investigative report, the Director of Education will report his conclusions as to the next steps to further safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the care of the school to the UK compliance committee.
- Where the parent/carer(s) remain concerned despite reassurances informally by the school, they may choose to use the school's complaints procedure accordingly.

**Procedures following a Child Missing from an Off Site Location**

- The visit leader must ensure the safety of remaining pupils. At least two adults must stay with them.
- One or more adults should immediately start to search for the child.
- If a pupil is found to be missing the visit leader must then contact the police immediately by telephoning 999.
- The visit leader should alert the school office, or in the case of out-of-hours, the nominated school contact for the trip, that the police have been contacted. The school will make arrangements to notify the parents accordingly.

**Monitoring & Evaluation**

- This policy and our procedures will be reviewed annually and more frequently following a near miss or missing child incident. Compliance with this policy is reported formally to the Safeguarding Governance Committee (SGC) with the Head reporting any changes including Senior Leadership actions accordingly.
- If, as a parent, you are not happy with the way that you or your child is treated by any member of staff you should consider raising your concern with the Head. You may find it helpful to refer to our formal complaints procedure for guidance. This procedure emphasises the importance of resolving any concerns informally and at the earliest possible opportunity. We expect our parents to share any concerns informally with us so that we can continuously improve the quality of education at our school.
- Our school's leadership team ensure that we monitor the quality and compliance of our accident and incident reports at our compliance committee meetings. The Headteacher ensures that staff are

## **DURANTS SCHOOL – Missing Child Procedure Policy**

sufficiently trained and experienced to be compliant at all times; particularly during school trips and visits.

- The Safeguarding Governance Committee (SGC) is chaired by an Independent Chair who will maintain an overview of the effectiveness of this policy and local school practice in this regard, providing appropriate governance scrutiny and challenge

### **Actions Following an emergency situation**

It is critical that following a situation when a pupil has gone missing and has been found that the effect on that pupil and the other members of the community is evaluated and appropriate actions are taken. Below is a list of suggested actions but you must be aware that every situation is different.

- Talk to and take care of, if necessary comfort the pupil
- Speak to the other pupils to ensure that they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
- The Head teacher or Deputy Head will speak to the parents/carers to discuss events and give a full account of the incident.
- There will be a full review of the incident and the procedure evaluated in light of what has happened
- Media queries should be referred to the Head teacher or Chair of Governors only; staff should not engage in conversations with the media about the incident, nor should they contact any third party until told to do so.

### **Managing People**

- Missing children incident are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The staff will feel very worried about the child, especially the key worker or staff responsible for the safety of that child/ or for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time that the pupil is missing increases.
- Staff may understandably be the target of parental anger and may be afraid. The Head teacher/Deputy Head teacher will ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the head teacher or the Deputy Head teacher. No matter how understandable the parents' anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and the police should be called.
- The other pupils are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer the pupils' questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a pupil is not found, is injured or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Headteacher will use his discretion to decide what action to take.
- Any contact or questions from the media will be dealt with solely by the Head teacher or the Chair of Governors.

**Compliance**

Compliance with

ISSR 2014, Keeping Children Safe in Education, The Education (Pupil registration)(England) Regulations 2006c. Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences RIDDOR 2013, Statutory Framework for EYFS 2014, Incident Reporting in Schools HSE 10/13.

**Related documentation**

Related documentation

Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Procedure, Supervision Policy, Health and Safety Policy, After School Clubs and Activities, First Aid Policy, Learning Outside the Classroom, Special Educational Needs, Data Protection, Complaints Procedure, SIF Form and Guidance, Critical Incident Management Plan, School Compliance Committee terms of reference, Safeguarding Governance Committee terms of reference