

# COGNITA

An inspiring world of education



Duncombe  
School

An Independent Preparatory  
School and Nursery

## Safeguarding: Lost or Missing Children Policy

### September 2016

Date Policy Reviewed	Policy Reviewed By	Reason/Outcome	Next Review Due
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2016	Jeremy Phelan	Review	Autumn 2018

### KEY FACTS

- ✦ **This policy enables Schools to deal promptly and professionally in a “worst case scenario” of a lost or missing child.**
- ✦ **It emphasises the responsibility for attendance, registers and keeping children safe.**
- ✦ **It requires Schools to demonstrate collection and handover arrangements specific to the School.**
- ✦ **Procedures to follow should a child go missing or become lost are given.**
- ✦ **A SIRD (Serious Incident Report Form) must be completed.**
- ✦ **With regards to early years children who become lost or missing, Ofsted and Local Authority Children’s Services must be informed.**

## 1 Purpose

- 1.1. It is essential that Cognita as the Proprietor ensures that positive steps are taken to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The safety and welfare of all of our children at School is our paramount responsibility. Any child going missing from education or learning is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, particularly on repeat occasions.
- 1.2. 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.
- 1.3. 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.
- 1.4. It is the Headmaster’s responsibility to ensure that this policy is understood and followed.
- 1.5. It is the responsibility of all staff to read the policy and to act at all times accordingly.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1. This policy has been adopted in respect of any child who goes missing from our premises or wanders off from our care, even if they remain on site.
- 2.2. This policy will be used in respect of all cases in which it is found that a child is lost or missing. It should be read in conjunction with our policy and procedure for uncollected children (late collection) and the School Safeguarding Policy including managing allegations of abuse against staff and other adults.
- 2.3. 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 child, or may have harmed a child (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for definition of harm).
- 2.4. Any consequent disciplinary matter against staff will follow our separate disciplinary procedure, in consultation with the School’s Human Resources Business Manager.

- 2.5. Due consideration will be given by the Headmaster as to whether referral may be made to children's social care. For example, where the child is in need of protection, early help or in need of other support.
- 2.6. Staff are responsible for completing the attendance registers, including at after School clubs and activities. The register must be completed accurately and promptly. The law requires Schools to have an attendance register which is compliant with the Regulations.

### **3 Steps to Keep Children Safe**

- 3.1. Our procedures will always be managed with common sense and sound judgement. If a member of staff takes a child out of School they are responsible for informing the parents and the School office.
- 3.2. For children in the early years, we must only release children into the care of individuals who have been notified to us by the parent/carer(s) in advance, and we must ensure that children do not leave the premises unsupervised. We must take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised persons entering the premises, and have an agreed procedure for checking the identity of visitors.
- 3.3. At all times, parents can be assured that all children remain within the safe environment of our School/setting, including attendance at any outings. We ensure that proper precautions are taken to prevent children going missing.
- 3.4. If any child is found to leave the premises without permission of the School and parents, they will be deemed to have broken the School's code of conduct and the application of appropriate and proportionate sanctions will be considered by the Head accordingly.
- 3.5. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure they provide correct and updated information on a timely basis and know the procedures for handover of their child.
- 3.6. It is the responsibility of the Director of Education, on behalf of Cognita, to ensure that the Assistant Director of Education is aware of the School's procedures and that they will provide challenge and support to the School in the review of this policy.
- 3.7. Particular care will be taken to register all children in each and every club or out-of/after School activity. A register will be taken of each child's attendance at every club or out of School activity. As a minimum, any unexplained absences will be reported immediately to the School office and to the Headmaster by the responsible teacher so that swift and immediate action will be taken. In the absence of the Headmaster from the premises at the time, the designated member of the Senior Leadership team will always assume such responsibility. In the case of incidents occurring while children are learning outside the classroom on School visits, the visit leader will assume such responsibility, as agreed with the Educational Visits Coordinator on behalf of the Headmaster.
- 3.8. No child leaves our supervision and care without an appropriate adult. In order to achieve this aim, we operate the following procedures at our School:

### **Procedures**

### Procedure for Missing Pupils

A pupil may be identified as missing:

- After an absence at morning registration is not confirmed by the office staff's call home.
- By a teacher following afternoon registration where a child is not there.
- By comparing pupils in a class with the day's 'Fire List'.
- By a report of a missing child by a fellow pupil.

Any member of staff discovering a discrepancy must immediately notify the School Office who will:

- Contact the form/class teacher to assess whether the absence is expected.
- Check for any known medical emergency.
- Contact the teacher of any timetabled class at which the missing pupil should be present (or should have been present earlier in the day: staff who might previously have taught or the pupil that day)
- Check all lists of trips out of School.
- Check sports fixtures and team lists.
- Check the peripatetic timetables.

If the pupil is still found to be missing, the school office will immediately:

- Open a written record of the incident which will log all specific actions taken.
- Contact the parents/guardians and ask for further information (this would normally be within 10 minutes of the report of a missing pupil).

If the pupil is still found to be missing, the School Office will:

- Inform the Headmaster and Leadership Team members, who will initiate and oversee a search of the site.
- Inform Site Managers and ask them to assist in the search
- Message sent by email to all staff with the name of the pupil, date and time of first noted absence.
- A school fire alarm practice will be used as a tool in locating missing pupils if required.
- Advise all teachers due to teach the pupil later that day that they must immediately inform the School Office if the pupil appears.

If the site search fails:

- The parents of the missing pupil will be informed, and a search of local roads will be made on foot, or by car, by available staff and parents as appropriate.
- On completion of this and any subsequent searches made over the day parents will continue to be informed of progress.
- At their discretion, the Headmaster will arrange for the police and Cognita to be informed.

If the pupil is found, or the incident is otherwise resolved:

- The Headmaster and parents of the missing pupil will be directly informed by the School Office.
- The police and Cognita will be informed if they have been involved.
- An email sent to all relevant staff notifying the end of the emergency.
- The written log kept by the School Office will be signed off.

- The Headmaster will initiate a full inquiry, and provide a written report for Cognita. This report and the incident log will be kept on the pupil's file.
- An outline report on missing pupil incidents will be made to the Governance Committee at each of its meetings.

### **Procedure for a Missing Pupil from Early Years**

- The teacher in charge will calmly inform a member of the Leadership Team and the Office Staff.
- The Office Staff open a written record of the incident which will log all specific actions taken.
- The remaining pupils will be gathered together into one group, for an activity and with designated member of staff. The pupils will be sensitively asked by the class teacher whether they have seen the pupil who is missing, as will all adults who were with the child, so that it can be established who was last to see the missing child, when and where.
- The teacher in charge of the class will then carry out a thorough search of all the rooms in the immediate vicinity and the outside perimeter of the school
- A register will be taken of the remaining pupils in the class and sent immediately to the office.
- The remaining staff will then search for the missing pupil.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a pupil could wander out.
- The teacher in charge talks to staff to establish what happened.
- Site Managers staff should be notified.
- At their discretion, the Headmaster will arrange for the police, parents of the missing pupil and Cognita to be informed and given regular updates as appropriate.

If the pupil is found, or the incident is otherwise resolved:

- The Headmaster and parents of the missing pupil school will be directly informed by the School Office.
- The Police and Cognita will be informed if they have been involved.
- An email sent to all relevant staff notifying the end of the emergency.
- The written log kept by the School Office will be signed off.
- The Headmaster will initiate a full inquiry, and provide a written report for Cognita. This report and the incident log will be kept on the pupil's file.
- An outline report on missing pupil incidents will be made to the Governance Committee at each of its meetings.

### **After the Incident**

- The Headmaster will discuss with the child's parents the events surrounding the disappearance of the child.
- The Headmaster will carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff present at the time.
- The incident report will detail:
  - The date and time of the report.
  - What staff/children were in the group/class.
  - When the child was last seen in the group/class/playground.
  - What has taken place in the group/class/ since then and the time it is estimated that the child went missing.

- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened and, if appropriate, procedures (including risk assessments and training) may be updated.
- OFSTED is informed in the case of an incident of a missing EYFS pupil.

### **Normal procedures for parents collecting pupils from School**

#### **Treetops**

Early Kindergarten and Kindergarten children are collected from the conservatory. The staff hand over each child to the parent or named adult collecting.

Nursery children are collected from their classrooms. All key persons hand over to parent/named adult collecting.

Reception children say good afternoon to their class teacher at the Treetops main door and then walk over to their parent/ named person when the teacher has seen them waiting behind the Treetops fence.

Any children attending After School Club wait in their classroom or the Octagon and are then taken to After School Club by their teacher or Nursery nurse.

#### **Lower School**

In Lower School the children come down from their classroom accompanied by their Class Teacher or a timetabled substitute teacher. (or TA in certain circumstances) to New Hall. The children are then dismissed when the parent or a known adult is seen by the child AND the Teacher/TA. If there has been an arrangement between parents to take another child home this is often communicated in the gold reading book and if not the parent is asked by the Teacher /TA to confirm they are taking the child. At 3.40pm any children who have not been dismissed are all grouped together and the member of staff on sibling duty dismisses them. At 3.50pm any remaining children are either taken to tea or a Teacher from Upper School will dismiss them.

If there are any queries about whether a child should be going home the office is asked to ring the parent to confirm.

#### **Upper School**

In Upper School the children come down from their classroom accompanied by their Class Teacher or designated alternate teacher covering dismissal (or TA in certain circumstances) to New Hall 10 minutes later than Lower School. The children are then dismissed when the parent or a known adult is seen by the child AND the Teacher/TA. If there has been an arrangement between parents to take another child home this is often communicated in the gold homework diary or by email and if not the parent is asked by the Teacher /TA to confirm they are taking the child. At 4.00pm any children who have not been dismissed are all grouped together and handed over to After School Club staff who will dismiss them.

Year 6 pupils are permitted to leave the school site unaccompanied once a permission is given by the school and a Walking to and From School Alone permission slip has been received and approved by the school. A record of pupils with permission to walk to and from school alone is kept in the school office and also in New Hall where pupils are dismissed

from. A Photograph of each pupil is included in this list. Staff tick and sign a record to show they have dismissed a pupil in this manner.

If there are any queries about whether a child should be going home the office is asked to ring the parent to confirm.

### **After School Club**

The leader of every activity will hold their own individual register which will include a signature column against the child's name. Parents are able to sign their child out with either the club leader at the end of the activity, or they can collect their child from Treetops once the children have been taken back there. Children will take their bags with them to the activity so, once signed out; you do not have to go back to Treetops to gather belongings.

If parents are collecting from Treetops once an activity has finished then they will be asked to sign the register for the activity their child has taken part in and your child will be released to the parent.

### **Procedures to be followed by staff when a child is not collected in time**

If a child is not collected within 10 minutes of the agreed collection time at the end of the day the class teacher will refer the child to our After School Care provision. If a child is not collected within 15 minutes of the agreed collection time following ASC (6.30pm) we will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. If there is no answer, the After School Care Leader 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 a member of the Leadership Team will be contacted. We will make a full written report of the incident.

- 3.9. Permission from parents is obtained generically at the beginning of each academic year for any educational visits which are deemed as part of the School curriculum, and once again specifically for any other visit.
- 3.10. School mobile phones are taken on every School visit and the contact numbers are left at the School office. Pupils are instructed to contact the responsible teacher in the event of any unexpected incident or undesirable behaviour in the first instance before contacting their parents directly. This is because it is the School's responsibility to safeguard the pupil's health, safety and well-being while they are in the care of the School staff.
- 3.11. While staff are supervising children off-site, the Learning Outside the Classroom Policy will apply at all times.
- 3.12. 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.
- 3.13. 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.

### 4 Procedures following a Child Reported Missing or Lost

- 4.1. If a teacher suspects that a child is missing from a lesson or activity, they will contact the nearest member of LT and School office immediately.
- 4.2. All remaining children will be kept safe in a secure place with adequate adult supervision, including assistance from other School staff if necessary.
- 4.3. A full headcount will be taken by the teacher-in-charge and matched against the register; usually the class teacher or nominated person.
- 4.4. 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 LT member must be immediately informed.
- 4.5. The following list held in the School office will be checked: attendance register, off site records, and other School clubs.
- 4.6. If the child is not found after this initial search and/or approximately 10 minutes from the initial report of them deemed missing, the School office will inform the Headmaster and Assistant Director of Education (Cognita Head Office), 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 by the responsible teacher. The Headmaster, or LT member in the absence of the Head, will decide at which point the police will be called.
- 4.7. 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 Headmaster remains responsible for the care and welfare of the child, including off-site.
- 4.8. As soon as is practicable, the Serious Incident Reporting Form (SIRF) will be completed by the Headmaster and sent to the PA to the Head of Facilities. 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.
- 4.9. Near misses will also be recorded and reported to the Assistant Director of Education and 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 UK compliance committee for approval, via Head of Education Compliance.
- 4.10. All incidents will be reported to the Head of Facilities, Head Office, 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.
- 4.11. If a missing child has any special medical or learning needs then these need to be noted to be disclosed to the police or other agencies.
- 4.12. A thorough search of the premises should continue until the child is found.



### **5 Following the Incident**

- 5.1. It is in everyone's interest to resolve what has happened as quickly as possible, consistent with a fair and thorough investigation.
- 5.2. The written findings of the investigation must be reported by the Headmaster to Cognita Head Office within 48 hours of the occurrence of the incident.
- 5.3. Where the child is under two years of age, Ofsted must be informed of the incident under our separate registration arrangements. Local authority children's social care should also be informed of any missing child in the early years, and our usual local authority safeguarding and child protection arrangements followed.
- 5.4. All relevant policies and procedures will immediately be reviewed and revisions presented formally to the Assistant Director of Education for approval within 5 working days.
- 5.5. The parent/carer(s) will be involved at all times.
- 5.6. 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.
- 5.7. Where the parent/carer(s) remain concerned despite reassurances informally by the School, they may choose to use the School's complaints procedure accordingly.

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

- 6.1. The visit leader must ensure the safety of remaining pupils. At least two adults must stay with them.
- 6.2. One or more adults should immediately start to search for the child.
- 6.3. If the child is not found within 5 minutes, the visit leader must then contact the police by telephoning 999 (within the UK or similar equivalent number if overseas).
- 6.4. 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. The remaining procedures outlined above in sections 4 and 5 will then be followed.

### **7 Monitoring & Evaluation**

- 7.1. 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 management actions accordingly.
- 7.2. 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 Headmaster. 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.

- 7.3. 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 Headmaster ensures that staff are sufficiently trained and experienced to be compliant at all times; particularly during School trips and visits.
- 7.4. 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

## Lost or Missing Children

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<b>Ownership and consultation</b>	
Document sponsor (role)	Director of Education
Document author (name)	Rosalind Vahey – Head of Education Compliance
Specialist Legal Advice	n/a
Consultation	n/a

<b>Compliance</b>	
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.

<b>Audience</b>	
Audience	Heads, DSLs

<b>Document application</b>	
England	Yes
Wales	Yes
Spain	Yes

<b>Version control</b>	
Implementation date	September 2016
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<b>Related documentation</b>	
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, SIFR Form and Guidance, Critical Incident Management Plan, School Compliance Committee terms of reference, Safeguarding Governance Committee terms of reference