

March 21 Responding to a missing child or a child who has run away from school
Kirk Smeaton CE Primary School



Overview

Children should never be allowed to leave the premises during school time without the head teacher's permission. It is possible that on some occasions a child may leave the premises without the knowledge or permission of the head teacher. This policy is put in place to ensure that every action possible is taken to ensure the quick and safe return of that child to school. This policy also links to the procedures on the collection of children from school.

Prevention

At Kirk Smeaton School, we educate children on the benefits of being in school and keeping safe at all times. If someone expresses a need to leave the premises, we talk to the child to find out the issue. In some cases, we provide a safe and quiet space with the options of games/lego/reading books or an adult to talk through their current issues until they feel they are ready for the classroom. In addition, we work with parents and early help teams to support the child/family.

Objectives

- To locate any missing child quickly
- To ensure that all children are kept safely on the school premises during school hours unless they have the head teacher's permission to leave.
- To ensure that children who leave school during the school day only do so with the head teacher's, teacher's or office staff's permission and that they are accompanied by an authorised adult.
- To ensure that the building, grounds and play areas are safe and secure during school hours.
- To ensure that teachers and staff keep children under proper supervision at all times.
- To ensure that if a child 'goes missing' during the school day, he/she is located quickly and returned safely to school.

Strategies

- If the child has gone missing at the end of the school day members of staff may take the most appropriate route home to look for the child. They would also enquire whether the child is likely to have gone to a relative's house, an after-school club or a friend's house and explore these routes as well.
- If a child goes missing during an outing or school visit, the teacher in charge must ensure that the remaining children are safely cared for by the other staff and adults.
- If a child cannot be found by his/her teacher, teaching assistant or learning support assistant in the school day, the head teacher must be notified immediately and told when and where the child was last seen. Time is of the essence and prompt actions must be taken by all.
- The remaining children will be left safe in the care of suitable staff. All other available staff will conduct a thorough search of the child's classroom, play areas, storage areas, toilets, the school building and the school grounds.
- If the child is not found within a short period of time, the head teacher will advise that the parents must be called.
- Members of staff, who are not supervising children, will be sent in pairs with their mobile phones to search the area in the immediate vicinity of the school.
- An urgent but thorough search should be made of the immediate vicinity and if the child is not found quickly the head teacher must be notified and take action.
- Under direction of the head teacher, the parents will be notified that their child is missing.
- If a member of staff finds the child the head teacher must be told at once. They will ensure that relevant parties are notified.
- The head teacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

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Children who run

If a child runs away from school and is in the eye line of adults, the adult should call after the child or try and talk to the child to try and get them to come back.

- The member of staff will alert at least two other members of staff so that two of them search the immediate vicinity, taking their mobile phones with them. Whilst the other member of staff alerts the head teacher. The head teacher will then advise of the appropriate action and will advise that the parents must be called.
- If a member of staff finds the child the head teacher must be told at once. They will ensure that relevant parties are notified.
- The head teacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

The school could also consider contacting the police if:

- This is uncharacteristic behaviour for the pupil
- The pupil was under a large amount of stress
- The school believes the pupil to be in danger

Looking for the child

It is recommended to send teachers or other members of staff who know the pupil well to look for him/her. The school may know of particular places the pupil likes or feels comfortable in. For example, the pupil may feel safe and comfortable at a particular friend's house. It is also possible that, having run away, the pupil will not know where to go. It is therefore worth looking for him/her near the school.

What to do when the pupil is found

When the pupil is found and returned to school, it would not be advisable to discipline him/her. Instead, before deciding on any action, school should establish why the pupil decided to run away.

It should:

- Seek to show the pupil that his/her behaviour was dangerous
- Seek to understand why he/she decided to run away. Was it because of something that happened in school? Was it because of something happening outside of school?
- Ask the pupil whether he/she feels safe in school

School should then consider ways of ensuring the pupil does not run away again. This might involve looking at behaviour strategies for coping with stress. For example, school might provide a 'safe place' the pupil can go to for 'time out'. School might also encourage the pupil to speak to a particular member of staff if he/she begins to feel upset, angry or stressed.

What if the pupil has SEN?

The school should establish whether or not the pupil is prone to this sort of behaviour. If the pupil has special education needs (SEN), the behaviour may be associated with his/her learning difficulties. There may be strategies for dealing with the behaviour, so this should be reflected on straight away. Understanding why the pupil has run away it is important for school to establish why the pupil might have run away. This will help it to decide how to deal with the situation.

Some questions to help identify the cause are:

- Does the pupil have a relevant special educational need that might contribute to his/her decision to run away?
- Has something happened in the pupil's life outside school that might affect his/her behaviour in school?
 - Is there a specific place or person at the school that might prompt this behaviour?
- Has the pupil experienced acute stress at school for any reason?
- Is he/she a victim of bullying?

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- Does he/she have a record of running away?

Outcomes

The safety of all children will be given our highest priority. A missing child should be an extremely rare happening. This policy is designed to put into place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents and relevant parties at every appropriate point.