

Hartley Primary School

Procedures for a Child Missing from School

1. Introduction

At Learning in Harmony, all staff are committed to maintaining a safe and secure learning environment for all pupils. The health and safety of our pupils is of paramount importance. Pupils are taught from an early age how to keep themselves safe. Once pupils have entered the school site at the beginning of their school day, they are to remain on school premises until authorised to leave with a parent, carer, an approved school transport provider or through an organised school activity.

We are committed to the inclusion of all pupils and therefore:

- Provide an environment which enables every pupil to be safe and healthy.
- Ensure every teacher is a teacher of every child, including those with SEND.
- Value every individual and enable them to enjoy their learning, achieve their full potential and secure positive well-being.
- Enable every child to make a positive contribution to the school and their community.
- Identify and respond to pupils' diverse and individual needs.
- Identify and overcome potential barriers to learning.
- Set suitable learning challenges for every pupil.

2. Scope of the guidance

The purpose of these procedures is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a child abscond (go missing) from school. Schools should continue to use their discretion based on the child's individual needs/circumstances.

These procedures are written in line with, but not limited to, the following:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025
- The Education Act 2002 (Section 175)
- Early Years Statutory Framework 2024
- LiHT's Safeguarding Policy 2025

These procedures apply to all schools and settings within the Learning in Harmony Trust.

3. Definitions

Term	Definition in this guidance	Staff action
School	In these procedures the term 'school' also includes Early Years Centres.	N/A
Missing/absconding from School/Setting/ Site	A child's whereabouts are unknown, and they are believed to have left the secure school premises; or a child leaves the site and refuses to return, but their whereabouts is known; or a child is unaccounted for during an organised off-site activity. This is treated as an immediate high-risk safeguarding emergency.	Follow Missing Child Procedure and the school's Emergency Planning Procedure (if unaccounted for on an organised off-site visit)
Unauthorised Absence	A child fails to arrive at school as expected, or is absent without prior explanation. This is a matter for the school's Attendance Policy and/or Safeguarding policy after reasonable enquiries are exhausted.	Follow Attendance Policy/Safeguarding Policy
Head Teacher	Where the procedure refers to Head Teacher, this refers to the most senior member of staff on site at that time. In the case of our Early Years Centres, this refers to the Manager.	If the most senior member of staff on site is not the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher, they should be contacted to keep them abreast of the situation.
Pupil's key details	Key details should include: name, address, date of birth, parent contacts, if a parent does not have parental responsibility, photo, medical information, any vulnerabilities, social worker (if the child has one). The information should also include the time and location that the child was last seen.	Head Teacher should instruct someone to pull the key information from Arbor

4. Missing: A child leaves (or attempts to leave) the site, but their whereabouts is known

On the rare occasion when a pupil chooses to leave the school site without permission the following procedure will be followed:

- Staff should follow the pupil to the perimeter fence and must try to persuade the pupil to stay in school.
- Staff should use their mobile phone to alert the Head Teacher and senior leaders of the incident that requires immediate response.
- If a pupil is deemed to be a high risk to themselves or others, then appropriately trained staff should consider whether it is appropriate to prevent the pupil from leaving the site, adhering to the Use of Reasonable Force and Restrictive Interventions Policy.
- At all times, staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the pupil to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting them at risk of running onto a busy road. **No member of staff will chase after the child, nor will they ask other children to encourage the pupil back into the school grounds.**
- If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school this will be reported without delay to the Head Teacher via phone call. The Head Teacher should ensure that the most appropriate members of staff move immediately to the reported area of the school to assist.
- If the child has left the school site, the Head Teacher should ensure the police (999) are notified immediately. The person contacting the police should provide all prepared details and take note of the police Incident log number.
- The Head Teacher should ensure parents are contacted using all numbers on record, starting with the primary contact. They should state clearly the child is unaccounted for and a full search is underway. If the pupil's parents do not answer; a voicemail message should be left for them to contact the school as soon as possible. Further contact should be made at the nearest available opportunity.
- It is the Head Teacher's responsibility to decide on the course of action to be followed next. In making their decision they will take into account the following:
 - **If the pupil is still within the immediate vicinity of the school and not showing signs of venturing any further**, the Head Teacher should ensure that an appropriate member of staff monitors the pupil's whereabouts, in the expectation that they may return to school in their own time. If the pupil persists in remaining outside the school grounds, the Head Teacher may authorise a member of staff who knows the pupil well to approach them in a calm and friendly manner to encourage them to return. If the pupil begins to move further away, this approach should be stopped immediately.
 - **If the pupil has begun to move down the road away from the school site**, the Head Teacher should ensure that suitable staff members walk in the same direction as the pupil - never running after them - but keeping them in sight to maintain awareness of their safety and

location. The Head Teacher should oversee this process and ensure clear communication is maintained.

- **If the pupil has moved out of the direct vision of staff**, the Head Teacher should authorise and coordinate a local search, ensuring that the most appropriate staff are deployed to attempt to re-locate the pupil. If, upon being sighted, the pupil continues to move away, active pursuit must not be undertaken, as this could cause the child to panic and put themselves at further risk. The Head Teacher should ensure that the police are promptly updated that the pupil is no longer in sight, that all relevant details are shared, and that the police Incident log number is recorded.

Once the child is found, the police and parents/carers must be updated immediately if they have been contacted previously. The Headteacher should ensure that a full incident report and post-incident review (as described in Section 8) are completed.

5. Missing: the child's whereabouts are unknown

This procedure must be followed immediately upon discovery that a child is missing. **Time is critical.**

- On discovery of a missing child, the member of staff should carry out a rapid, focused search of the immediate vicinity (e.g. classroom, toilets, cloakroom etc) to confirm the child is not hiding.
- The staff member must focus on securing the remaining children in the group.
- The member of staff must immediately notify the Head Teacher, who will take the lead.
- The Head Teacher will ensure that an immediate check of main gates is carried out and ensure that the building is secured.
- Head Teacher will ensure a search team is organised to conduct a calm, quiet, systematic search of the internal school site, including external areas (sheds, car parks, boundary fences).
- Where the school has CCTV, the Head Teacher will ensure that the premises manager carry out a review of CCTV of all exits.
- The Head Teacher should ensure communication is maintained with all parties, even if leaving the school grounds, through the use of their phone.
- If CCTV confirms the child has left the site OR the child is highly vulnerable (SEND/Looked After) OR the child is in Early Years or KS1, the police should be contacted without delay.
- In all other circumstances, the Head Teacher must decide at what point to report the child as officially missing to the police. This should be no later than 15 minutes after the initial discovery of the child being missing. The child's key details should be shared with police and note taken of the police Incident log number.
- The Head Teacher should ensure parents are contacted using all numbers on record, starting with primary contact. They should state clearly the child is unaccounted for and a full search is underway. If the pupil's parents do not answer; a voicemail message should be left for them to contact the school as soon as possible. Further contact should be made at the nearest available opportunity.
- If the child has a social worker or the incident involves potential abduction (e.g. an unauthorised adult was seen) Children's Social Care should be contacted.
- The Trust's Leadership Group should be informed immediately after the immediate risk has been

managed and provided with updates.

- Once the child is found, the police and parents/carers must be updated immediately if they have

been contacted previously. The Headteacher should ensure that a full incident report and post-incident review (as described in Section 8) are completed.

6. Missing: from an off-site activity

If a child goes missing during a school visit or trip, the following procedure applies. **Time is critical.**

- The member of staff in charge of the pupil must carry out an immediate, quick visual search and report the child missing to the Group Leader, stating when and where they were last seen.
- The member of staff must ensure the entire group is secured, and a register is taken to ensure no other children are missing. A sufficient ratio of staff must remain with the group in a secure location.
- An appropriate number of staff should begin searching the immediate area and enlist the help of staff at the venue.
- If the child is not found within 5 minutes, the Group Leader must contact the Head Teacher at school immediately using their phone. The Group Leader must provide the exact location - if in a large building, ensure the floor number or nearest entrance is provided; if in an open space, it is more helpful to provide the [What3Words](#) for the location as this will help police locate the group.
- The Head Teacher at school should coordinate the emergency response, including arranging for the police (999) to be contacted immediately. They should provide all key pupil details and take note of the police Incident log number.
- The Head Teacher should ensure parents are contacted using all numbers on record, starting with the primary contact. They should state clearly that the child is unaccounted for and a full search is underway. If the pupil's parents do not answer, a voicemail message should be left for them to contact the school as soon as possible. Further contact should be made at the nearest available opportunity.
- If the child has a social worker or the incident involves potential abduction (e.g. an unauthorised adult was seen), Children's Social Care should be contacted.
- The Trust's Leadership Group should be informed immediately after the immediate risk has been managed and provided with updates.
- Once the child is found, the police and parents/carers must be updated immediately if they have been contacted previously. The Headteacher should ensure that a full incident report and post-incident review (as described in Section 8) are completed.

Staff must not actively pursue the child into potentially dangerous or unknown areas.

7. Missing: from out of hours provision, when a senior member of staff is not on site

These procedures apply when a child goes missing from an after-school club, holiday provision or other extended-hours activity taking place on the school site outside the normal school day and when a senior leader is not physically present. **Time is critical.**

- The member of staff or activity lead who discovers that a child is missing should carry out an immediate visual search of the surrounding area (e.g. toilets, cloakrooms, playground, corridors) and confirm that the child is not hiding or with another member of staff.
- The staff member must ensure that the remaining children are safely supervised and accounted for. Where possible, a second adult should assist with supervision while the first continues the search.
- If the child is not located within five minutes, the activity lead must contact the designated on-call senior leader or Head Teacher using the agreed emergency contact procedure [call the numbers on the emergency contact card].
- The on-call senior leader will liaise with the activity lead and coordinate the response remotely, ensuring that:
 - an immediate check of gates and exits is carried out;
 - if there is any indication that the child has left the site, the police (999) are contacted without delay by the most appropriate person;
 - the child's key details (name, age, description, vulnerabilities, and parental contact information) are provided to the police, and the Incident Log Number is recorded;
 - parents/carers are contacted using all numbers on record and informed that a full search is underway.
- If the child has a social worker or the incident involves potential abduction (e.g. an unauthorised adult was seen) Children's Social Care should be contacted.
- If the on-call senior leader is not the Head Teacher, the Head Teacher should be informed as soon as possible.
- The Trust's Leadership Group should be informed immediately after the immediate risk has been managed and provided with updates.
- **Staff must not chase or follow the child into unsafe or unfamiliar areas; their safety and that of others must remain the priority.**
- Once the child is found, the police and parents/carers must be updated immediately if they have been contacted previously. The Headteacher should ensure that a full incident report and post-incident review (as described in Section 8) are completed.

8. Post-Incident Management and Review

The following actions should be completed following a 'Missing Child' incident. A template is provided in

appendix 3. .

- **Found/All Clear:** If the child is found, the police and parents/carers must be informed immediately, if they have been previously contacted.
- **Record Keeping:** The Head Teacher must ensure that a detailed factual record of the incident, including the Police Log Number, a completed Incident Log Form (see Appendix 2), and accurate timings of all actions taken, is filed securely. A record must be kept on the child's behaviour and safeguarding record.
- **Risk Assessment:** A specific pupil risk assessment should be put in place, or reviewed, for any child who has gone missing/absconded to identify triggers and put in place appropriate supervision strategies and behaviour support plans.
- **Pupil's Re-integration:** A re-integration/follow-up meeting should be held with the pupil and their parents/carers. Staff should try to show the pupil that their behaviour was dangerous and seek to understand why they decided to abscond. Leaders should consider each incident individually and decide if it is appropriate for the child to receive a sanction for their actions in line with the school's behaviour policy, which could include a fixed term suspension.
- **Review:** The Head Teacher must ensure an incident review is completed (a 'lessons learned' exercise) to determine if the incident was preventable and if any changes to site security, supervision, risk assessments, behaviour support plans or guidance are required. This review must be reported to the Trust's Safeguarding Lead. The review should consider whether:
 - a risk assessment is required to mitigate the risk of another child being able to abscond again in the same way, taking into consideration key moments in the school day where absconding is more likely e.g. transitions, beginning and end of the school day etc
 - a behaviour support plan should be in place for the pupil. If one is in place, it should be reviewed following an incident of absconding.
 - any changes to the site security are required (if so, contact the Trust's Estates Team as soon as possible for advice)
 - staff working with the pupil had all the necessary information and training required to support the child
 - supervision of the child was appropriate
 - the pupil or their family need further support from external agencies
 - the absconding incident was as a result of staff negligence, in which case it may be necessary to contact the Trust's Safeguarding Lead, the HR team and the LADO for advice on next steps.
 - the response to the incident was effective
 - this guidance regarding absconding pupils or other policies/guidance need to be updated in light of the findings from the lessons learnt exercise
- **Manage publicity:** If there is a possibility that the incident may receive negative publicity from the parent community or local media, contact PLMR for advice.
- **Reporting:** If the incident involved a serious injury, the incident may need to be reported under RIDDOR arrangements (Reporting of Accidents and Incidents) [RIDDOR reportable incidents](#). Early Years Centres will also need to consider if the incident is reportable to Ofsted under the 'Report a serious childcare incident' requirements [Report a serious childcare incident](#)

9. Well-being considerations

- Missing child incidents are distressing for everyone involved. As part of managing the situation, it is important to maintain a calm and controlled atmosphere. Staff may experience feelings of anxiety, guilt or self-blame. Any staff member requiring emotional support should be directed to the Employer's Assistance Programme or offered a debrief with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Parents and carers are likely to feel extremely anxious, upset or angry and may express frustration towards staff. When meeting with a distressed parent or carer, two members of staff should be present whenever possible to provide reassurance, support and clarity about the steps being taken.
- Other children may also be affected by the incident and aware that something is wrong. Staff supervising them should remain calm and attentive to their emotional needs, avoiding unnecessary discussion of the incident in their presence. Children's questions should be answered honestly and simply, with reassurance that everything possible is being done to keep everyone safe.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: School's Key Information

Each school within the Learning in Harmony Trust must complete and embed the following school-specific details in their local version of these procedures and ensure all staff are aware of them.

Key school contacts	Head Teacher: Leilah McClay - Leilah.McClay@lihtrust.uk Deputy HT: Kiran Bhangra - Kiran.bhangra@lihtrust.uk Deputy HT: Rebecca Owen - becca.owen@lihtrust.uk Premises manager: Emma Marchant - Emma.marchant@lihtrust.uk
Communication channels to be used	mobile phone

Site Security and Specialist Areas

Physical Security Check	Actions to be taken to secure all exits immediately: <i>Office staff to secure main entrance door and ensure buzzer system is locked. Key contacts to check rear gates and car park access.</i>
Specialist Search Areas	Areas requiring immediate, specific checks : Wakefield building Basement area, library, computing suites, Wakefield hall including kitchen area ,Hub, nursery indoor and outdoor area, side office rooms, SEND turret office, HQ, 01, G1, on top of the Hub

External Contacts

Agency	Contact Detail	Notes/Alternative
Local Police (Emergency)	999 (Always use in an emergency)	
Local Police (Non-Emergency)	101	For follow-up or non-immediate risk absence.
Local Authority Children's Social Care (CSC)	Newham MASH 020 3373 4600 / 0208 430 2000	

	020 8430 2000	Includes out-of-hours service.
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Alex Mihi alex.mihu@newham.gov.uk 0203 373 6706 / 0792 918 2262 Evelyn Millyard (Assistant LADO) - Evelyn.Millyard2@newham.gov.uk 0203 3730751 / 07929 399336 lado@newham.gov.uk	Must be notified if staff conduct is implicated.
Trust Safeguarding Lead	Jo Conduit jo.conduit@lihtrust.uk	
PLMR	Liht@plmr.co.uk	

Appendix 2: Missing Child - Incident Log Checklist

Child's name:	
Child's Class:	
Incident date:	
Staff member in charge of child at the time:	
Incident Lead:	

Checklist Item	Initial	Time
Child first reported missing/unaccounted for		
Alarm raised		
Main gates/security checked		

and secured		
Systematic Search initiated		
Parent/Carer PHONED and informed (Contact 1)		
Police (999) contacted		
Police Incident Log Number obtained		
Trust Leadership Group informed		
Child located (Time of return)		
Police and Parents informed of safe return		
Re-integration meeting/follow-up planned		
Risk Assessment / Behaviour Support Plan updated		
Lessons learnt report completed		
Safeguarding and behaviour records updated		

Appendix 3: Post-Incident Investigation and Lessons Learned Report

Section 1: Incident Overview

School / Setting:	
Date of incident:	
Time child first unaccounted for:	
Time incident resolved:	
Location of incident:	
Child/Children involved:	
Incident Lead:	
Police involved (Yes/No):	
Police Incident Log Number:	
Other agencies involved:	

Section 2: Child Context and Risk Profile

Known vulnerabilities (SEND, LAC, medical needs, previous incidents):	
Risk assessments or plans in place:	☐ Individual risk assessment ☐ Behaviour Support Plan ☐ EHCP ☐ None
Were documents up to date and known to staff?	

Section 3: Factual Chronology of Events

Provide a clear, factual, time-ordered account of events:	
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Section 4: Immediate Response and Management

Was the Missing Child Procedure followed?	☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No
Commentary on response, communication, and safeguarding of others:	

Section 5: Analysis – Why Did This Happen?

Trigger(s):	Contributing factors: ☐ Supervision ☐ Transitions ☐ Site security ☐ Behavioural/emotional needs ☐ Communication ☐ Training/awareness ☐ Other
How did the child leave or become unaccounted for?	

Section 6: Safeguarding and Supervision Review

Was supervision appropriate?	
Were staffing levels and training adequate?	
Any concerns regarding practice or conduct:	

Section 7: Impact and Wellbeing Considerations

Impact on child:	
Impact on other pupils:	
Impact on staff:	
Support provided:	

Section 8: Actions Taken Since the Incident

Action	Responsible	Timescale

Section 9: Lessons Learned and Preventative Measures

What could have prevented this incident?	
What will be done differently?	

Section 10: Review and Sign-Off

Completed by:	
Role:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Appendix 4: Quick reference posters

CHILD LEAVES / ATTEMPTS TO LEAVE THE SITE

-  Stay with pupil at perimeter; encourage calmly; never chase
-  Alert Head Teacher immediately
-  If high-risk, trained staff may use reasonable force to prevent harm
-  Walk (don't run) to keep pupil in sight; stop if they move further away
-  If pupil leaves site: CALL 999 immediately
-  Contact parents; leave voicemail if needed
-  If pupil goes out of sight, coordinate local search; update police
-  When found: update parents/police; complete incident report

CHILD MISSING ON SITE (WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN)

-  Quick check of immediate areas (classroom, toilets, cloakroom)
-  Secure remaining children
-  Notify Head Teacher immediately
-  Ensure gates/exits are secured
-  Organise systematic full-site search
-  Review CCTV for exits if available

 Call 999 immediately if EY/KS1/SEN or CCTV shows exit; otherwise no later than 15 mins

 Contact parents; update as search continues

 If needed: contact Social Care

 After found: update police/parents; complete report + review

CHILD MISSING DURING AN OFF-SITE ACTIVITY

 Immediate visual check; confirm last seen location

 Secure group; take register

 Staff search immediate area; involve venue staff

 After 5 mins: Group Leader calls Head Teacher with exact location

 Head Teacher calls 999 immediately

 Contact parents

 If needed: contact Social Care

 After found: update police/parents; complete report + review

CHILD MISSING FROM OUT-OF-HOURS PROVISION

 Immediate area search (toilets, corridors, playground)

 Ensure others supervised; use 2nd adult if possible

 After 5 mins: Contact on-call SLT/Head Teacher

 On-call leader coordinates exit checks

 If signs child left site: CALL 999 immediately



Contact parents



Contact Social Care if relevant



After found: update police/parents; complete report + review