



# **MISSING PUPILS**

## **Policy and Procedures**

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<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Headmaster and Governors</b>
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# Myddelton College

## MISSING PUPILS Policy and Procedures

### 1. Important guidance for Schools:

Taken selectively from: **KCSiE 2022**

Part one: Safeguarding information for all staff

2. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.

3. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances.

If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

19. All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful.

20. Any child may benefit from early help ...

Taken selectively from: **Working together to Safeguard Children July 2018**

A child centred approach to safeguarding

10. This child centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. A child centred approach means keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families.

12. Children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives. These threats can take a variety of different forms, including: sexual, physical and emotional abuse; neglect; domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour; exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Whatever the form of abuse or neglect, practitioners should put the needs of children first when determining what action to take.

13. Children are clear about what they want from an effective safeguarding system. These asks from children should guide the behaviour of practitioners.

#### Children have said that they need:

- *vigilance: to have adults notice when things are troubling them,*
- *understanding and action: to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon,*
- *stability: to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them,*
- *respect: to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not,*
- *information and engagement: to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans,*
- *explanation: to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response,*
- *support: to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family,*

- *advocacy: to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views,*
- *protection: to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee.*

14. Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child: listen to what they say; take their views seriously; and work with them and their families collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs.

## 2. Introduction:

This policy applies to the whole School including the Preparatory School and applies at all times when the pupil is, or is intended to be, in the care of Myddelton College.

We take the welfare and security of all our pupils very seriously. Every adult who works at Myddelton College is aware that they have a personal responsibility for keeping our pupils safe at all times when they are at School. We consider that if pastoral care and welfare are effective, there is less risk of a child going missing.

Our pupils are supervised both in the classroom, for games and activities and, of course, in Houses. Whilst every care is taken to ensure that pupils are accounted for at all times when in our care, this Policy sets out the procedures for dealing with the unlikely event of a child going missing.

It is recognised that there can be a link between pupils who become 'missing' and additional risks to which they may become exposed. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy emphasises the significance of such risks to children when missing education and the importance of taking early steps to identify and remedy any underlying safeguarding risks and to prevent future risks and harms to children.

## 3. 'Missing' - the definition:

When a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

## 4. Levels of Risk:

When a child or young person goes missing, it is important to remain calm to improve decision-making, and to follow a carefully considered route which will contribute to early and safe return.

Whilst, it is important to consider the possible or likely reasons why a child is missing, without causing or exacerbating panic, the risk to the child must remain paramount in our minds as we plan a search, and inform parents and external agencies as required and appropriate; we can then set about finding the missing child or young person.

### • Significant risk:

a pupil missing during school hours, or whilst away with a school trip, would be prioritised as at significant risk where:

- the risk posed is immediate and there are **substantial grounds** for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability;
- vulnerability characteristics may include:
  - Children on a plan - Early Help, Child in Need, Looked After or Child Protection Plan;
  - A disability and/or special educational needs;
  - Record of substance misuse;
  - Having an Education Health Care Plan.
- the significant risk category requires immediate contact with the police.

- **Intermediate risk:**  
the risk posed is intermediate where:
  - there are **indications** that the child/young person may already be at harm (CSE, grooming, radicalisation etc.);
  - the risk posed is likely to place the child/young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others; this is usually because of the child or young person's age.
  - this category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting; this will involve a proactive investigation and search in accordance with the circumstances to locate the missing child as soon as possible.
- **Other contributory factors:** should be taken into consideration when determining whether the pupil is at risk. For example, have there been past concerns about this child and family which, together with the sudden disappearance, cause concern?

Additional points:

- There should be a media strategy and / or close contact with outside agencies.
- Family support should be put in place.

## 5. Always INFORM!

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or duty DDSL, and the Deputy Head must always be informed when a pupil is found to be missing. It must be established quickly who will lead the action planning and who will record actions and times.

So, if a child, pupil or sixth form pupil is expected to be present and is not with you, or goes missing whilst on a school trip, follow the actions outlined in this Policy and Procedures. On every occasion when a member of staff discovers a pupil(s) is/are missing from their expected location, immediate action is required.

If a missing child or young person cannot be traced and found, **within an hour of their being reported missing**, a member of staff (usually the Headmaster, Deputy Head, DSL, Head of Prep School, or Head of Boarding) will make a risk assessment judgement of the situation having first discussed the situation with colleagues.

**\*\* She/he will then make the decision as to whether to inform the police immediately. \*\***

The Party Leader would make the similar call if the child or young person was out /away from School on a trip/expedition/school match/etc.

## 6. Contacting the Police:

Before the police are called, the pupil's parents should be informed by a member of the SLT.

Where attempts to contact the SLT and/or the parents are unsuccessful, this should not delay making contact with the police.

When contacting the police to report a missing child, call 101 (not 999). Pass to the police all pertinent details as requested.

1. Ask for their direct contact number, so that you can make swift contact should the situation change.
2. Where the School contacts the police during the day or night, the following information should be provided:
  - The pupil's name and date of birth;
  - The pupil's age;
  - An up-to-date photograph if possible;

- The pupil's height, physical description and any physical peculiarities;
- Any disability, learning difficulty or special educational needs that the pupil may have;
- The pupil's home address and telephone number;
- A description of the clothing the pupil is thought to be wearing;
- Any relevant comments made by the pupil such as "I'm going to run away to Bangor";
- Any suspicion or evidence of a crime.

\*\* Conclude the call by giving your name, position, address and 'phone number.

\*\* Ask for the name and police number of the Police person to whom you have given this information.

## **7. Procedure for pupils missing during school day:**

### **A pupil may be identified as missing if:**

- an absence at morning registration is not confirmed by the office staff's call home to clarify the reason, before 9.30am,
- a pupil fails to attend a lesson / activity,
- a pupil fails to attend afternoon registration,
- a pupil fails to attend the prep/activities session at 4:30 pm.

**Any member of staff who discovers a pupil to be absent from their lesson or activity must immediately notify the School Office Secretary or Headmaster's PA who will:**

- check the authorised absence folder,
- check the trips and fixtures lists,
- check the pupil signing out book,
- check with the Head of Boarding or the deputy (if appropriate),
- check the Music/Swimming/LAMDA timetables/EAL/SEN lessons,
- speak to the teacher of the previous lesson,
- inform the SLT/HoH and Designated Safeguarding Lead and a thorough search of School will commence.

**If the pupil is still found to be missing, the School Office – Headmaster's PA - 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 (the School will hold more than one emergency contact for each pupil).

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

- inform the Headmaster, Deputy Head, (Head of Prep School) and the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will instigate a search of the School site, and also try to make contact by mobile 'phone; it might also be useful for friends to attempt contacting the missing child or young person, **under supervision**, using their 'phones, (this must be **under supervision** to allow the staff member to take down details and then take-over the call, supporting the friend later as necessary),
- advise all teachers due to teach the pupil later that day that they must immediately inform the School Office if the pupil appears,
- if considered appropriate, sounding a school fire alarm could be a useful means of locating a missing pupil.

**If the site search fails, parents / guardians will be informed.**

Concurrently, a search of local roads will be undertaken on foot, or by car, by available staff and parents as appropriate.

Dependent on the age of the pupil, and in consultation with parents (where appropriate), the Police and/or other emergency services may be contacted by the Headmaster, Deputy Head or DSL.

A decision will be taken in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Children Protection Policy as to whether the Headmaster, Deputy Head or DSL should also contact Children's Social Care in line with local procedures.

On completion of this and any subsequent searches made over the day, parents will continue to be informed of progress.

## **8. Procedure for boarding pupils missing after school hours, during the night or at the weekend:**

### **The member of staff who discovered the pupil is missing will:**

- inform the member of staff on duty immediately,
- check the signing out book/board in the House,
- check if the student has signed in or went to visit another boarding House,
- check with other boarding pupils and ask them if they have any knowledge of the missing pupil's whereabouts,
- it might be useful for friends to attempt to contact the missing student using their mobile 'phone **under supervision**, (this must be **under supervision** to allow the staff member to take down details and then take-over the call, supporting the friend later as necessary),

### **If the student is still missing, the duty member of staff will:**

- inform all duty members of staff/students,
- instigate a search of all of the boarding Houses.

### **If the student is still missing, the duty member of staff:**

- should inform the Head of Boarding / Headmaster and Designated Safeguarding Lead (if they are not available, then a senior member of boarding staff, most likely the Houseparent) who will:
  - instruct a member of staff to open a written record of the incident which will log all specific actions taken,
  - instigate a search of the School's site using available staff (and students in pairs / threes if the time of day is appropriate).

### **If the site search fails:**

- the Headmaster will be informed by the Head of Boarding; a search of local roads will be undertaken on foot, or by car, by available staff and parents, as appropriate;
- the student's parents (or guardian in the case of an overseas' student) may be contacted by the Headmaster;
- dependent on the age of the pupil, and in consultation with the parents/guardians, the Police and/or other emergency services may be contacted;
- A decision will be taken by the Headmaster, in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, as to whether to contact Children's Social Care, in line with local procedures.

On completion of these actions, and subsequent searches, parents will continue to be informed of progress.

## **9. Procedure for pupils who go 'missing' during a school trip, to include journeys:**

### **Each child should have:**

- A fully-charged personal mobile 'phone,**
- A list of staff school mobile 'phone numbers and friends' numbers saved in the PHONE BOOK,**

***c. A luggage label with emergency procedure information and advice.***

***Staff will have:***

- a. School fully-charged mobile 'phones,***
- b. Mobile 'phone numbers of all pupils on the trip,***
- c. School contact details, to include Headmaster and DSL,***
- d. A master copy of the emergency procedure information and advice,***
- e. The parent 'permission slips' which include relevant medical information.***

**The senior/lead member of staff in charge will:**

- ask a colleague to record on paper a running log of agreed actions with timings, and then:
  - attempt to contact the pupil using the child's / young person's mobile 'phone number,
  - contact the school by 'phone – Headmaster, Deputy Head or DSL,
  - check whether there were any delays or changes made to the scheduled journey,
  - ask all other pupils if they have any knowledge of the missing pupil's whereabouts,
  - contact the pupil's accommodation, if applicable,
  - contact the venue or the people who the pupil had visited, if applicable,
  - contact any local hospitals and the Police; contact parents taking great care with information and messaging.

A decision will be taken in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy as to whether the School should also contact Children's Social Care in line with local procedures.

#### **10. Information to be provided to UK Visas and Immigration**

If the child or young person is sponsored by the School under Tier 4 of the Points Based System, and the pupil misses ten consecutive expected contact points, the Headmaster, Deputy Head or DSL will initiate a report to the fact that the child or young person has gone missing.

The report will be made by the School's Level 1 User via the sponsor management system and in accordance with prevailing Tier 4 Sponsor Guidance.

#### **11. Risk assessment**

Where a concern about a pupil's or pupils' welfare has been or is identified, the risks of her/him/them going missing will be assessed and appropriate action will be taken to reduce the risks identified.

The format of risk assessment will vary and may be included as part of the School's overall response to a welfare issue, including the use of individual pupil welfare plans (such as behaviour, healthcare and education plans, as appropriate). Regardless of the form used, the School's approach to promoting pupil welfare will be systematic and pupil focused.

The Headmaster has overall responsibility for ensuring that matters which affect pupil welfare are adequately risk assessed and for ensuring that the relevant findings are implemented, monitored and evaluated.

Day to day responsibility of carrying out risk assessments under this policy will be delegated to the DSL, or a DDSL who has been appropriately trained in, and tasked with, carrying out the particular assessment.

#### **12. Record keeping during a Missing Child / Young Person situation:**

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed according to the School's GDPR policy.

The School will keep a full written record of any incident of a missing pupil; this will include:



- the pupil's full name and date of birth,
- relevant dates and times, and whether the incident was a single occurrence or part of a repeating pattern, using the Pastoral Incident Log; these written records will be kept on file,
- the actions taken to find the pupil,
- whether (and when) the parents, the police or Children's Social Care were involved, including reporting associated decision-making by named staff,
- outcome or resolution of the incident, with full details of pupil's return home/school,
- all reasons and explanations given by the pupil to staff for being missing,
- any concerns or complaints about the handling of the incident,
- a record of the staff involved.

This full written record of the incident will be kept on the pupil's file. This record, created in accordance with this Policy, may contain personal data which is taken and kept according to GDPR requirements.

Staff must ensure they follow the School's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this policy.

### **13. Planning for the Immediate Return:**

When the child or young person has returned, the first priority is to ensure they are safe and well.

Then you should discuss the incident with them. Whilst it is usually good practice to do so as soon as is practicable, sometimes it may be better to wait until the child or young person is receptive and open to discuss the matter, even if this is the following day.

The key is to be available to listen to them if are able to talk, rather than what is the natural response of asking them lots of questions and to demonstrate calm concern, rather than the upset and angry response we may naturally feel, borne out of fear.

You will also need to plan for the time the child/young person returns to your care - this will include:

- how you will give care and support with their immediate needs - offered a hot drink, food and medical attention;
- how you will make the Child or Young Person feel accepted back into the school;
- how the child/young person will be transported to the school, can you arrange to pick them up?
- the child/young person will also be given the opportunity to talk about their experiences and any concerns they have will be taken seriously. In the first instance the Police will conduct a 'Safe and Well Check'.

### **14. Follow-on to a Missing Pupil Incident:**

Once a pupil has returned from being missing, and is ready to reintegrate into the school, she/he must be provided with pastoral and wellbeing support, and an opportunity to discuss the incident with the DSL, and Head of House or tutor, and perhaps the School counsellor.

In the case of boarders, the Independent Person/Listener might also be asked to attend. The child or young person may also be provided with the contact details for external support services (e.g. NSPCC).

The pupil's parents will also be given the opportunity to discuss the incident with the DSL, who will provide advice and support where required.

Any residual concerns about the pupil's welfare resulting from an incident will be acted upon and, where appropriate, Children's Social Care Services and / or the police will be informed, in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures.

**15. As appropriate, the following contacts should be considered:**

- a. the Chair of Governors and School insurers be provided with a brief summative statement from the Headmaster of the incident and its conclusion,
- b. this might also be sent to Children's Social Care.

If the child has been injured, a report should be made under RIDDOR to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

**16. Review of Policy and Procedures:**

This policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate every year, in conjunction with the School's annual review of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. It will also be updated in the light of any 'findings' following a 'missing child' incident review.

In undertaking this review, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, SLT and Governors will take into account any recorded incidents that indicate that there may be a problem with supervision, pupil support or security at the School, and any issues raised by individual members of staff, parents and pupils.

The safeguarding of our pupils is of paramount importance and the School is committed to regular reviews and improvements to all systems and processes.

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