




Missing Child Policy

Signed	
Position	Chair of Proprietor Body
Date Agreed	October 2024
Next Review	October 2025

Equality Statement

Centre Academy London is committed to a policy of equality and aims to ensure that no employee, job applicant, pupil or other member of the school community is treated less favourably on grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, marital status, age, sexual orientation, disability, or religious belief. We provide a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment.

Centre Academy London is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment.



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1. Introduction

Children can frequently be missing, only to be found in places where they are not expected to be; alternatively, they can abscond for a variety of reasons. However, Centre Academy London procedure ensures that all missing children are returned under staff supervision as quickly as possible.

This policy has been reviewed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Alternate, taking into consideration the following documents.

- *'Children Missing from Home and Care Policy and Protocol'* Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Partnership
- *'Keeping Children Safe in Education'* (KSCIE), Department for Education

As defined in 'Safeguarding Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care', the term 'missing' refers to children and young people up to the age of 18 who have run away from their home or care placement, have been forced to leave or whose whereabouts are unknown. (*Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care – Department of Education*).

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risk of a child going missing in future - see *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*.

KCSIE has been updated for 2023-2024 with a clearer distinction between:

- Our unauthorised absence procedures – If the absence has not been authorised by the school and an absence occurs, where the child's total unauthorised absences amounts to 10 or more sessions (5 school days), continuous or aggregated within the previous six months within the current academic year (including the most recent unauthorised absence), we are expected to notify the Education Welfare Service.
- Our children missing education procedures – we will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the school without a new school being named.

2. Reasons why a child is missing education

A child who **is** missing education is:

- Between the compulsory school age of 5 to 16 years old
- Not registered on a school register
- Not attending an alternate education provision
- Not being electively home educated (EHE)

A child **may be** missing from education because:

- They failed to start in Reception Year at a school.
- They did not move from one school to another. For example, when moved to/from another Local Authority area/Borough/district.
- They failed to transfer into a secondary school.
- They have been permanently excluded from school.
- They have failed to register in a school after travelling/living outside the UK.
- Their parent(s) are military personnel.
- They are part of a travelling community.

A child **is not** missing education when:

- They are registered on a school roll; however, the pupil may be recorded on the attendance certificate as having unauthorised non-attendance.
- They are receiving a full-time, effective elective home education (EHE)
- They are attending an alternative educational provision, such as a pupil referral unit (PRU)
- If you have a safeguarding concern regarding a child, email the safeguarding team at your child's Borough.

For those students who live in the borough of Wandsworth, please call the Wandsworth Safeguarding Team, which has a 24-hour Service: **020 8871 6622**.
If it is an emergency, please call the police on: **999**

3. Definitions

- Child - anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- Young runaway - a child who has run away from their home or care placement or feels they have been forced to leave or lured to leave.
- **Missing child - a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers***.
- Children in Care - a child who is looked after by a local authority by reason of a care order or being accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- Missing from care - a child in care, who is not at their placement, or the place they are expected to be (e.g., school) and their whereabouts is not known.
- Away from placement without authorised absence is when a child in care's whereabouts is known or thought to be known but unconfirmed; they are not missing and may instead be considered as absent without authorisation from their placement.
- Child Abduction - when a child has been abducted or forcibly removed from their place of residence; this is a 'crime in action' and should be reported to the police immediately.

4. Police Definitions:

- **Missing - A child whose whereabouts cannot be established, and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be a subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or others.**
- Absent - A child (person) not at a place they are expected or required to be when the behaviour is out of character and there is no apparent risk.
- '... as of July 2016, police are no longer using the term 'absent'. As a result of this, post July 2016, all children reported missing from home, care or school will be risk assessed and, if local/national definition of missing is met, will be classified as a 'missing child'.

5. Children Missing in Education

'All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, 'honour'-based abuse, or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Staff should be aware of their schools' or colleges' unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures.' Keeping Children Safe in Education

6. Causes of being missing

- Problems at home – ranging from arguments with parents to long-term abuse or maltreatment.
- Mental health problems.
- Bullying (peer on peer), racial harassment
- Teenage pregnancy.
- has a mental health need.
- is a young carer.
- is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines.
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home.
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation.
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited.
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse.
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves.
- has returned home to their family from care.
- is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage

- is a privately fostered child.
- Additionally, if a child or young person wants to be near friends or family – especially when a young person is in care and there are problems in contact arrangements with family and friends.

Children in care are three times more likely to go missing than children not in care.

(See CA London's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy)

7. Prevention

Every effort is made to ensure the safety of the pupils whilst they are in the school's care. To ensure that all pupils are accounted for at any given time, all children are registered twice a day, at the start of the school day and at lunch.

All students are checked when they are leaving the premises and those who are leaving the school site within the school day are asked to sign out. The form is held in the school office and updated daily.

Completed registers are returned to the school office so that the secretary can follow up on any absences and call parents.

If there is a trip off the school premises, it is the responsibility of the staff taking the trip to ensure that a regular register is taken or head count made. This will depend on the nature of the trip, the mode of transport used and the location of the trip. (See Risk Assessments).

Middle School pupils are supervised at **all** times, whether in the classrooms before school starts, during break time, mealtimes, PE, or Games lessons. However, sixth form students are entitled to 'independent periods' during the school day, which in the main are carried out in the sixth form mentor room.

If at any time a member of staff observes a pupil absconding or trying to leave site, they should immediately phone the office or send a staff member or student to the office and then follow and encourage the pupil to return. Try at all times to keep the pupil in sight until support arrives.

If at any time a pupil is thought to be at risk of immediate harm, restraint may be the appropriate option. However, restraint should only be used if the member of staff has an 'honestly held belief' for example: the pupil is threatening to run in front of a car, and the member of staff believes this could occur.

At the end of the school day or after activities, the children are only allowed to leave the school premises if their parent or an adult approved by their parents and previously introduced to the school has come to collect them. (In the case of pupils picked up by the local authority's approved taxi service, the pupil will be escorted by a member of staff to the taxi). If no approved adult is there at normal pick-up time, the child will be left in the care of the staff member on duty whilst enquiries are made and until the child is collected. Exceptions to this are made for the sixth form students with parental permission.



When a child is collected from school during the school day, whether due to illness or a prearranged appointment, they must ALWAYS be collected from the school Office so that a note may be made in the register to record the fact that they are no longer on premises. Pupils are not allowed to leave the school premises, during the day, unescorted. It is the responsibility of the member of staff on duty whether teaching or supervising to ensure that the children remain safe.

Any visitors to the school are recorded arriving and leaving. Parents who come to school during the school day, or after the day has ended, are requested to report immediately to the school office.

8. Policy Links

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Student Behaviour Policy and Statement of Behaviour Principles
- Student Conduct, Discipline and Exclusion
- The Attendance policy

Appendix 1

Missing Child Procedure

If a child is noted to be missing during school hours

Staff must check with the school Office immediately as to whether the child has another commitment e.g., music lesson, play rehearsal, School trip, external appointment etc. This can be achieved by either sending another student or member of staff to the office or calling by phone if there is one in the classroom.

The staff member should then inform the Head of School of the situation, and the Head of School will launch an immediate search. The missing child's friends may be consulted if it will not cause unnecessary alarm.

All available staff will check grounds and rooms to ensure the child has not hidden or been locked in anywhere within the boundary. This search should take no longer than 30 minutes. The senior member of staff present arranges for all the other children to be satisfactorily supervised.

If the child is not located, the Head of School, senior person on site or DSL, will contact the **police** and **parents**. These phone calls should be implemented no more than 45 minutes after the child's absence was first noted.

**Of course, the actual timespan may be adjusted to reflect the age, situation, vulnerability of a given child and the time of day.*

A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon as practicable after the incident and placed in the Missing from Care Book and the child's confidential record.

CA London will work with parents, carers, and the local authority to establish the whereabouts of any child missing from education who is currently on the school roll.

Wandsworth Safeguarding Partnership recommend contacting **Missing People - Safe Call Service**: [SafeCall - Missing People](#)

Missing People provide a free confidential service to children and young people who may have been involved in gangs or county lines and have regular missing episodes. They accept self-referrals from children and young people and referrals from external professionals and agencies (police, social services, schools, charities, youth organisations etc). They work closely with children, young people, and their parents/carers to ensure that the risk of exploitation is minimised and ensure that information is shared between social workers, youth workers and other services that they may be receiving support from.

Their main objective is to provide a confidential child led service, drawing up safety plans to minimise future exploitation and reduce the risks of missing episodes reoccurring. Their values are to offer a non-judgemental service to ensure that children/young people have a safe space to talk about their experiences in confidence. They also support the families and carers of those who have missing episodes, providing them with emotional support and guidance.



Missing Child Policy

The operating hours for the Safe Call team are Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm and they also have a free 24-hour helpline which is available should support be needed out of hours.

If you have any children or young people you would like to refer, you can complete the online form or you can send an email to the Safe Call team with the name of the young person, DOB, telephone numbers and reason for referral with any concerns highlighted.

- *SafeCall Telephone: 020 8392 5710 SafeCall*
- *E-mail: SafeCall@missingpeople.org.uk*
- *<https://missingpersons.police.uk/en-gb/contact#>*

- *The preferred method of contact is via e-mail at:*
- *ukmpu@nca.gov.uk or ukmpu@nca.police.uk*
- *You can also fill in our [contact form](#).*
- *The telephone number for the UK Missing Persons Unit is: 0800 234 6034*
- *The postal address for the UK Missing Persons Unit is PO Box 58358 London NW1W 9LA.*
- *Follow the Unit on Twitter: [@UKMissingPerson](#)*
- *[Like the 'UK Missing Persons Unit' page on Facebook](#)*
- *Media enquiries should be addressed to our Media team: Tel: **020 7979 5835***

'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care' DfE, needs to be followed.

This Policy should be read alongside the following:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Student Behaviour Policy and Statement of Behaviour Principles
- Student Conduct, Discipline and Exclusion
- The Attendance policy

For schools:

Parents can get in touch with the Education Welfare Office (EWO) at their child's school via the school office.

Alternatively, the EWS can be contacted directly at EWSAdmin@wandsworth.gov.uk or on 020 8871 8306.