

North Nibley Church of England Primary School
Children Who Go Missing During the School Day

Status	Non-statutory
Responsibility for this procedure	Teaching and Learning Committee
Procedure reviewed/amended	January 2021
Procedure review frequency	Every 3 years, or when incident occur (whichever comes first)
Procedure due for renew	January 2024 (if not before)

North Nibley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, formerly the William Purnell Endowed School, was founded in the Eighteenth Century to provide education for the children of North Nibley and the surrounding villages.

***Our Vision is to inspire and celebrate learning,
achievement, faith and fun.***

Ours is a school that works in partnership with the community to enable and equip each child to “live life to the full” (The Gospel of John, Chapter 10 Verse 10), reflecting the Christian values of our foundation.

We will realise our Vision by:

- demonstrating, as a Church school, our Christian values in action
- providing a happy, healthy and secure environment where all are respected, valued and encouraged to contribute
- encouraging participation and a love of learning by offering experiences full of opportunity and creativity
- pursuing excellence in every aspect of school life, supporting one another and celebrating the achievements of all

This procedure supports our vision by making clear that we have a special responsibility to safeguard the children in our care, in order that we provide an environment that is “happy, healthy and secure.”

A Biblical Perspective: Matthew 18:12-14

“If a man has 100 sheep, but 1 of the sheep gets lost, he will leave the other 99 sheep on the hill. He will go to look for the lost sheep. And if he finds it, he is happier about that 1 sheep than about the 99 that were never lost. I tell you the truth. In the same way, your Father in heaven does not want any of these little children to be lost.”

INTRODUCTION

This protocol refers to pupils who register at school in the morning and then go missing during the school. When a pupil's whereabouts cannot be established, this pupil may be the subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or others. An abbreviated version of this procedure can be found in the staff handbook.

A missing pupil is at significant risk.

A pupil 'gone missing' during school hours will be prioritised as a pupil at 'significant risk'. The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child/young person is in danger through their own vulnerability.

As such, locating the pupil takes precedent over all other activities and supervision within class must be reduced to the minimum acceptable level to allow the deployment of staff to the search.

PROCEDURE:

1. Once a pupil is suspected as missing by any member of school staff, an immediate check will be made with the class teacher (if different), any support groups working outside the classroom and the admin office (in case of a medical appointment).
2. School staff will try to locate the pupil on the school site. We know that the toilets, 'within' the coat racks and behind the pavilion have the potential to be hiding places.
3. A register will be taken to check that all other pupils (and staff) are properly accounted for.
4. Other staff will be deployed to search the immediate locality – the field and surrounding lanes as far as the junction at the 'Black Horse', the lane to Stancombe and the lanes either side of the church.
5. The route to the child's home should be prioritised.
6. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (if on site) will be informed. (If not on site, this can wait a while until the opportune moment)
7. Office staff will attempt, in the first instance, to contact home, secondly those with parental responsibility (who may not be at home) and thirdly, approved contacts.
- 8. If the child is not found within 10 minutes of being identified as 'gone missing' the police should be called. (See below).**
9. At this point, school will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident.
10. Every stage will be recorded, in note form initially and afterwards as a formal document.
11. The senior teacher on site will liaise with emergency services and parents/carers. After this, the senior teacher on site should communicate the incident to the appropriate Local Authority Office, Gloucestershire's Safeguarding Children Executive, Ofsted and the Chair of Governors.

NOTIFYING THE POLICE

The information required by the Police to assist in locating and returning the pupil to a safe environment may include the following, which should be compiled and communicated without delay:

- The pupils name/s; date of birth; status (for example looked after child); responsible authority;
- Where and when they went missing;
- Previous missing episodes and where they went;
- Who, if anyone, they went missing with;
- What the child was wearing plus any belongings they had with them such as bags, phone etc.; include mobile number.
- Description and recent photo;
- Medical history, if relevant; e.g. does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Details of family, friends and associates;
- Contact details of safeguarding lead if the incident continues after school hours.
- Circumstances or events around going missing with relevant safeguarding information;

INFORMATION SHARING

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) will compile information that **MUST** be shared with partner agencies, such as the police, including:

- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Has the child been a victim of bullying?
- Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying?
- Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
- Is there any known history of domestic violence?
- Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g. rites of passage, female genital mutilation or forced marriage planned for the child?

DEALING WITH PEOPLE'S REACTIONS

Staff will ensure that all other pupils are kept calm, safe and closely supervised throughout the incident should it be during the school day.

We accept that the child's parents/carers will be frightened, distressed and angry. If the setting shares all policies with parents/carers, the situation will be easier for all because there will be an understanding of working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding.

We accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry, threaten legal action or approach the local press.

We will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

Responses could include

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
- That a full investigation is in hand.
- That the Local Safeguarding Children's Board/Ofsted has been informed and will be investigating.

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Distressed parents/carers may contact the local press, or reporters may hear about the incident if the police are involved. It is sensible for one person, usually the Headteacher or Chair of Governors to be the one who speaks for the school. All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson. There are further procedures in the school's Disaster Recovery Plan.

WHEN THE CHILD IS FOUND

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents/carers and others suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember:

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge how important it is that they have been found.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.

AFTER THE INCIDENT

- We will review our current procedure.
- We will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.
- The incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.