



# Merchant Taylors' School

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# Missing Child Policy MTGS

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Last Amended: January 2021

Review: January 2022

# Missing Child Policy

## 1. Introduction

The welfare of all of the children at the school is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is appropriately supervised when she is in our care.

## 2. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH A CHILD WHO IS MISSING FROM MORNING REGISTRATION

- Procedures for parents to follow in the case of pupil absence are set out in The Parents' Handbook.
- Parents are requested to inform the school in advance of any planned absence, for example for medical or dental appointments which cannot be arranged during the school holidays.
- They should write to the girl's Form Tutor in the first instance. The Form Tutor will use the appropriate code in the register on the day of the girl's absence to indicate the cause.
- In the case of unexpected absence, most typically because of illness, parents are requested to telephone or e mail the school before 8.00am on the first day of the absence.
- Morning registration takes place at 8.40am and registers are checked by the morning receptionist who makes a list of any unexplained absences.
- All teaching staff email reception to notify them of any girls missing from their class without explanation who are timetabled to be taught, in order to ensure that they are not in fact in school and have been registered as absent in error.
- The receptionist telephones parents or guardians of those who are absent without explanation to establish whether the girl is unwell or whether there is some other explanation for her absence of which they have failed to inform the school.
- The receptionist e-mails a list of absentees to members of the Head of Section, including an explanation where one has been discovered and highlighting unexplained absentees whose parents or guardians she has not been able to contact.
- The relevant Head of Section or Assistant Head of Section investigates those absences that continue to be unexplained, for example by calling the girl on her mobile phone, checking whether or not her friends are aware of any reason why the girl is not in school of which her parents have failed to inform the school.
- The school is required to hold more than one emergency contact number 'where reasonably possible'. The relevant Head of Section may also try to make contact with the emergency contact. In the case where there is only one parent, the second emergency contact has to be another close relative or nominated family friend.
- The relevant Head of Section/Deputy Head exercises their professional judgement on how to pursue any unresolved instance of unexplained absence, if necessary contacting the police or social services.

### **3. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE MUSIC, SEND LESSONS OR COUNSELLING SESSIONS**

- All visiting music staff, SENDCOs and Counsellors are expected to give a copy of their weekly/daily timetables to reception for them to use to check pupils who have not been present in other lessons. This information should be provided to reception at the latest of the Friday prior to the lesson taking place the following week.

### **4. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CHILDREN WHO GO MISSING DURING THE SCHOOL DAY**

- MTGS is located on a secure site. Once the school day has begun, there is only one entry and exit point via reception which is manned throughout the school day and which is covered by CCTV.
- Girls cannot leave the school site without permission and must sign in and out if they are given permission to leave the school buildings.
- Teachers are expected to take a register at the beginning of every lesson and make a note of who is absent.
- If a girl is absent and there is no satisfactory explanation for her absence (e.g. she is absent from school for the day, has a music lesson or is with the School Nurse) the teacher reports her absence to reception at the earliest opportunity.
- Unexplained absences from lessons of those who are registered as being in school are reported to the relevant Head of Section, who investigates the absence, organising a search of the premises if necessary.
- In cases, where a girls absents herself within school on successive occasions, the relevant Head of Section, pending further investigation may seek to apply the appropriate sanctions or put in place a reporting mechanism to help monitored this in line with the School's Behaviour and Rewards and Sanctions Procedures.
- In the very unlikely event of a pupil not being found when the premises are searched, and if it is suspected that they have managed to leave the school undetected (for example if they have somehow managed to scale a fence), the school will contact the girl's parents or guardians and the police.

### **5. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CHILDREN WHO GO MISSING DURING EDUCATIONAL VISITS AWAY FROM THE SCHOOL SITE**

- All members of staff receive training on safety on educational visits, risk assessment and dealing with emergencies. All educational visits are subject to a rigorous process of planning and approval which includes giving due consideration to staffing ratios and supervision arrangements.
- Girls are kept under direct or remote supervision at all times and are given clear instructions of how to act if they do get lost or become detached from the party. This information includes teachers' contact mobile phone numbers and emergency rendezvous instructions.
- If a child does get lost and cannot be contacted, the teachers in charge of the visit will contact the local police and will contact the school emergency SMT contact.

- Staff will be deployed so that enough teachers remain with the main party to ensure their safety whilst others assist the authorities in the search for the missing child.
- The school emergency SMT contact will activate the school's Contingency Plan in consultation with the Headmistress.

## **6. ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF ONCE THE CHILD IS FOUND**

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child.
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
- The Headmistress will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident.
- The Headmistress will promise a full investigation (if appropriate involving Sefton Social Services).
- Media queries should be referred to the Head of Marketing.
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements.
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, [the purpose of the outing], the length of time that the child was missing and how she appeared to have gone missing, lessons for the future.

## **7. PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE OR FREQUENT OR PROLONGED ABSENCES WHICH LACK A SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION**

- If parents request permission to take their children out of school for a purpose which does not accord with DFE regulations governing schools' ability to grant authorised leave of absence, such as a family holiday in term time, permission will be refused and parents will be warned that if they do take their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised
- If a child repeatedly takes unauthorised absence, or if the unauthorised absence is prolonged, the school will consult the Sefton DO and may contact Children's Services and/or the attendance service in the child's home location.
- The same procedure will be followed if the school considers that no satisfactory explanation of a child's absence has been received

## **REFERENCES**

- Parents Handbook/Prep Parents Handbook
- Pupil Code of Conduct
- School Health and Safety Policy
- School Educational Visits Policy

**Reviewed:** September 2019

**To be reviewed by:** September 2020