



The Federation of Spixworth Schools

Response to a Child Missing or Run Away from School

Agreed by Governing Body: Autumn 2023

To be reviewed: Autumn 2026

Group Responsible: SLT

This policy is to give all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, a clear understanding of how to respond and who to inform should they discover a child is missing.

Aims

- provide a clear procedure which is understood and effectively implemented by all staff,
- enable the missing child to be located as quickly as possible and given the appropriate level of safety and security commensurate with the pupil's age and emotional/behavioural maturity.

Objectives

- To locate any missing child quickly.
- To ensure that all children are kept safely on the school premises during school hours unless they have permission to leave.
- To ensure that children who leave school during the school day only do so with pre-agreed permission and that they are accompanied by an authorised adult.
- To ensure that the building, grounds and play areas are safe and secure during school hours.
- To ensure that teachers and staff keep children under proper supervision at all times.
- To ensure that if a child 'goes missing' during the school day, s/he is located quickly and returned safely to the school.

Occasions when a child may go missing

Staff need to be mindful that a child can go missing at any time of the day.

- From an indoor lesson
This could occur when a child is allowed to leave the classroom unaccompanied by an adult and fails to return; e.g. to go to the toilet
- From an outdoor lesson
This could occur when the class are outside the building with the children spread out and/or engaged in a variety of activities e.g. during games lessons on the playground
- Travelling about the school
This could occur when the children are spread out and beyond the teacher's direct total supervision. e.g. going to and from the classroom at the beginning/end of lunch/break times.
- Other Times
These include: at the start of the school day when children are freely moving about the grounds and building to get to their cloakroom and classroom; at break and lunch times; at the end of the school day when children and parents are freely moving about.

Upon discovering a child is missing

It is important that the person discovering a child is missing knows what to do. The following action should be taken by the following personnel:

Voluntary helpers will:

Notify immediately the class teacher. If the teacher is not available they must inform the classroom support staff or the nearest available teacher. They should state the name of the

child, what the child was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child as directed by the class teacher or the Senior Leadership Team.

Classroom Support Staff will:

Notify immediately the class teacher or the nearest available teacher. They should state the name of the child and what he/she was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the class as directed by the class teacher or the Senior Leadership Team.

Lunchtime Supervisors will:

Notify immediately a teacher, or Senior Leadership Team member (whoever is found first).

They should state the name of the child, what the child was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the children as directed by the Senior Leadership Team.

The Class Teacher will:

Conduct a search of the immediate surroundings, i.e.:

Indoors - in the classroom (looking under tables, work surfaces and other possible hiding places such as cupboards), adjacent work areas and classrooms, nearby cloakrooms and toilets.

Outdoors - in the immediate area where the child was last seen including looking under bushes and up trees etc.

If this initial search does not find the child the teacher will:

Inform the Senior Leadership Team of the missing child and any facts surrounding the child's disappearance.

Arrange for another adult (e.g. support staff or neighbouring teacher) to supervise their class while they begin to conduct any search away from the class for which they are responsible.

Begin a wider search of the school buildings and grounds including searching public areas in other parts of the school e.g. library, toilet and cloakroom areas, corridors, hall etc. The task of undertaking this search can be done either by the teacher personally or they can delegate this to a member of the support staff depending on the teacher's knowledge of the child including their emotional and behavioural characteristics.

If this search does not find the child:

The Senior Leadership Team will:

Instruct the office staff to contact the child's parents and inform them of the situation.

The Senior Leadership Team will, in consultation with the parents, begin a search outside of the school premises.

If the parents cannot be contacted at home the Senior Leadership Team (or other adults as directed by the Senior Leadership Team) will begin a search outside of the school's immediate premises. This may include a visit to the child's home if this is near the school.

If the child is not found within a reasonable timeframe (no more than 30 minutes) the Head teacher (or office staff if so directed by the Senior Leadership Team) will inform the police and, as appropriate, the Local Authority and the Chair of Governors of the child's disappearance. Thereafter the Senior Leadership Team will follow the instructions of the police regarding the continuation of the search for the child.

The Office Staff will:

Contact the child's parents when instructed by the Senior Leadership Team to do so and inform them of the situation. They will then hand communication with the parents over to the Senior Leadership Team unless directed otherwise by the Senior Leadership Team.

If directed to do so by the Senior Leadership Team, the office staff will telephone the police, the Local Authority and Chair of the school governors to inform them of the missing child and giving them such information as they may request.

They will not take part in the search.

If a member of staff finds the child the Senior Leadership Team must be told at once. Parents, police and other authorities will be notified.

The Senior Leadership Team will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

Children who run

As a general rule staff should not pursue a child beyond the school boundary.

If a child runs away from school and is in the eye line of adults the adult should watch and monitor from an unthreatening distance. The adult should call after the child or try and talk to the child to encourage them to come back.

If a child is followed beyond the school boundary the member of staff must behave in a manner that is not threatening to the child. They must not run after the child as this may cause the child to run into a dangerous situation, e.g. the child might run into a road without looking out for traffic in an attempt to evade the pursuing adult.

Under no circumstances should a member of staff physically restrain or grab the child, unless the child is in immediate danger of hurting themselves or putting themselves in a dangerous situation e.g. running onto the road.

A member of staff should never put themselves at risk in the process and should not attempt to intervene without assistance unless it is an obvious emergency.

In exceptional circumstances where a child is known to be liable to run off the premises, the school may prepare and enact contingency search plans involving named staff. When enacting these plans staff should be mindful not to put themselves or the child at risk.

Investigations

When a missing child has been located and safely returned (to the school, the child's family or the police), the Senior Leadership Team will conduct an investigation into the circumstances of the child going missing. This is in order to identify any factors that need to be addressed by the school or communicated to the parents to prevent a recurrence of the child going missing.

Outcomes

The safety of all children will be given our highest priority. A missing child should be an extremely rare happening. This policy is designed to put into place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents and the authorities at every appropriate point.