



ST JOSEPH'S BOYS' SCHOOL

MISSING CHILD  
POLICY AND  
PROCEDURES

Agreed SMT

Principal

Date:

Agreed BOG

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

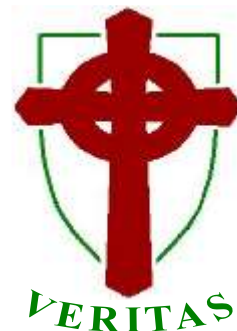
Date:

Review Date:

St Joseph's Boys' School

'Achievement for All'

## **Missing Child Policy and Procedures**



### **Introduction**

This policy is written and should be read in conjunction with the whole school Health and Safety policy. It also is linked to whole school Safeguarding and Child Protection, Pastoral Care and Critical Incident Policies.

### **Rationale**

The safety of our pupils is paramount in keeping with our school Pastoral Care strategy "Parent/Guardian on the shoulder" approach to interactions will all our pupils and in line with our school rules - Ready, Respect, Safe. The safe keeping and welfare of all our pupils is embedded in our Catholic ethos which permeates all aspects of school life underpinned by the mission "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." (Mark 9:37)

### **Aim**

Our aim at St Joseph's Boys' School is to keep pupils safe and secure whether on school premises or in our charge off site. We take all reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of the children. The general aims of the policy also include: -

- Provision of a clear procedure which is understood and effectively implemented by all staff,
- Locating the missing child as quickly as possible and provision of the appropriate level of safety and security commensurate with the pupil's age and emotional/behavioural maturity. In all situations Parent/Guardians are immediately contacted and a decision made whether to contact other agencies including the PSNI depending on the child circumstances and school's knowledge of the child.

### **Purpose**

Purpose of this Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy statement 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 or has run off.

#### **1. Occasions when a child may go missing**

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

##### **a) During a lesson**

This could occur when a pupil is allowed to leave the classroom unaccompanied by an adult and fails to return; e.g. – to go to the toilet, to

collect something from his/her bag from another classroom, being sent to another class or teacher or going to the school office.

**b) 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 that make it easy for a pupil to wander away unnoticed, e.g. – during games lessons on the playground, other outdoor lessons or using the toilet even with permission

**c) Travelling to and from lessons within 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 hall or outdoors before and after a PE lesson, going to and from the hall before and after assembly, going to and from the classroom at the beginning / end of lunch/ break times.

**d) Other times**

These include at the start of the school day, at break and lunch times, at the end of the school day when children, Parent/Guardians and visitors to the school are freely moving about. If a child goes missing or absent themselves from a class or any other supervised activity during the school day, the following procedures should be activated.

**2. Upon discovering a pupil is missing**

It is important that the person discovering a pupil is missing knows what to do. What action is taken depends on who discovers the pupil is missing. Therefore, the following action should be taken by the following personnel.

**Classroom Support Staff will:**

Immediately notify the class teacher, if unavailable, the class support staff or the nearest available teacher.

**Lunchtime supervisors will:**

Immediately notify a teacher, the Vice Principals or Principal (whoever is available first). Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the children as directed by members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) or the Principal.

**The Class Teacher will:**

Send a generic email to all staff informing them of the pupil's absence and asking for details if they know of the pupil's whereabouts. Conduct a search of the immediate surroundings i.e. classrooms, nearby corridors and toilets, in the immediate area where the child was last seen if at all possible. A search by the Class teacher should only begin if the teacher has arranged for another adult (e.g. support staff or neighbouring teacher) to supervise their class while they conduct any search. The class teacher will inform Head of Year (HOY) / Head of School (HOS) or SMT member as available for follow up actions.

**The missing child**

Upon notification/realisation of the disappearance of a child the Principal or in her absence the Vice Principals will be immediately informed.

The time of the disappearance and lesson last attended will be noted.

Classmates and friends should be asked of the child's whereabouts. Also where and when the child was last seen.

Check with the school office for any further information which may have arisen as the result of any recent phone calls to explain the absence from Parent/Guardian / guardian.

### **Missing Children Seen Running Off the Premises**

Upon notification/realisation of the disappearance of a child the Principal or in her absence the Vice Principals will be immediately informed.

If the missing child is seen leaving the premises, the member of staff witnessing this must inform the most senior member of staff immediately available or, if none is available, send a message to the office via a reliable messenger without losing sight of the child if possible.

As a general rule staff should not pursue a child beyond the school boundary. Instead they should report to the Principal where they last saw the child and the direction the child was heading so that this information can be communicated to the Parent/Guardians or PSNI as appropriate. The member of staff should then return to their normal duties unless directed otherwise by the Principal / Vice Principals.

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the member of staff to go beyond the school boundary, e.g. to retrieve a more vulnerable pupil who has accidentally or in a distressed state gone out of an open gate, or to follow/retrieve a child with special needs who has deliberately left the premises but in doing so does not understand the gravity of their action. Staff are expected to use their professional discretion in deciding whether or not it is appropriate to go beyond the school boundary in pursuance of such a pupil. If a pupil is followed beyond the school boundary the member of staff must behave in a manner that is not threatening to the pupil. They must not run after the pupil as this may cause the pupil to run into a dangerous situation, e.g. the pupil might run into a road without looking out for traffic in an attempt to evade the pursuing running adult.

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 as part of normal risk assessment planning agreed and involving named staff. These measures will be written into a risk management plan and agreed upon by a Parent/Guardian. When enacting these plans staff should be mindful not to put themselves or the child at risk. The time of the disappearance will be noted.

In certain situations, where there is a known risk or other extenuating circumstances that school is aware of, then PSNI may be contacted to inform that a child has been missing or has gone missing in consultation with Parent/Guardians who are contacted immediately via Main Office Principal / Vice Principals will contact PSNI as appropriate.

**The Principal/ Vice Principals, SMT, Heads of School or Heads of Year as available will;**

Deploy school administration staff in the Main Office to inform Parent/Guardians that the pupil has not attended timetabled class. They will oversee the procedures at the point of being informed. If satisfied that the class is adequately supervised the Senior member of staff will join the class teacher (and support staff if applicable) in searching the school premises for the missing child directing the class teacher (and others) where to search (e.g. while he/she searches externally, the class teacher searches internally) Alternatively, Senior Staff may direct the class teacher (or support staff) to return to their class in order to continue supervising the class and to be a familiar adult should the missing child return to their classroom. In this situation the Principal will continue the search alone or with other available adults.

**The Office staff will;**

Await further instructions. They will not take part in the search but will instead contact the child's Parent/Guardians/guardian when instructed by the member of Senior staff / Pastoral team to do so and inform them of the situation and enquire if the child has returned home. They will then hand communication with the Parent/Guardians over to the Principal/Vice Principals / Senior staff unless directed otherwise by the Principal.

**3. Follow up Procedure**

**Investigations**

When a missing child has been located and safely returned to school or home, the child's Parent/Guardian/guardian or the PSNI. The Principal / Vice Principals 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 Parent/Guardians to prevent a recurrence of the child going missing. This will be used to inform a risk management plan or updating of current plan that will be agreed upon by and with the Child's Parent/Guardian / Guardian.

- A Pastoral meeting and / or Multi Agency Support Team (MAST) meeting to discuss the incident will be convened as required.
- The Designated Teacher will follow up on any identified safeguarding / child protection concerns as per Safeguarding Policy in the School.

**4. Encouraging and Returning Pupil into School**

1. Discuss how the pupil may be feeling. Apprehensive, frightened etc. and suggest ways of helping him/her back into class and travel through the school successfully using the criteria of risk management plan.
2. The pupil should be monitored by their teacher and pastoral staff assigned kept informed of any developments until such time that the risk of further problems has diminished. Parent/Guardians/Guardian will be invited to sign the risk management plan.

3. A full written report of the incident and follow up actions will be compiled by the Principal/ Vice Principal and entered into the child's records and used to inform a risk management plan.
4. Ongoing communication with Parent/Guardian / Guardian as appropriate will be maintained to ensure no further issues arise.

### **MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY**

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years as part of the school's policy review cycle, by the designated teachers or as appropriate after issue or incident necessitating review arises. The policy will therefore be ratified biannually by Board of Governors.

Reviewed by SMT \_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by BOG \_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Next Review: \_\_\_\_\_