



Missing Child and Child Exiting the School Policy

Milton Road Primary School

School Name	Milton Road Primary School	Date
Version Date	Nina Burton	July 2023
Review Date	Rae Snape/Ali Hall	January 2025

Emergency Procedures when a child is discovered to be missing or has exited the school

Introduction

At Milton Road Primary School, the children's safety is of paramount concern. In support of our efforts to ensure the safety of all children, this policy statement is designed to give all staff, teaching and non-teaching, a clear understanding of how to respond and who to inform should they discover a child is missing or if they have left (or are in the process of leaving) the school grounds.

Aims

The aims of this policy statement are to:

- 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 provided with the safety and support that they need.
- Return a child safely to the school grounds if they have left

Occasions when a child may go missing.

It is important for all staff to realise that a child can go missing at any time of the school day. The following provide examples of the occasions when a child may go missing:

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.
- To collect something from his/her bag in the cloakroom.
- Being sent to another classroom or teacher.
- Undertaking errands for the teacher such as taking the register to the office.

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 is easy for a child to wander away unnoticed; e.g.:

- During PE lessons on the playground or field.
- During other outdoor lessons, (e.g. measuring parts of the building).
- At the beginning or end of outdoor lessons when children are getting changed or using the toilet, getting a drink etc.

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 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 playtimes/lunchtimes.
- Going to and from individual music lessons.

Other times

These include:

- At the start of the school day when children are freely moving about the school grounds and
- When they enter the building to go to their cloakroom and classroom.
- At break and lunch times.
- At the end of the school day when children and parents are freely moving around.
- When a child is going to a school club at the end of the day

Upon Discovering a Child is Missing

At Milton Road Primary School, we understand that it is important that the person discovering a child is missing knows what to do. What action is taken depends on who discovers the child is missing. Therefore, the following action should be taken by the following personnel.

Teaching Assistants and Midday Supervisors will:

Notify immediately a teacher, or the DH, AHT or HT (whoever is found first). They should:

- State the name of the child (if known) or a description of the child (if the child's name is not known to them),
- State what the child was last seen doing and where.
- State how long since they last saw the child.

Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or assist with supervision of the rest of the children as directed by the class teacher or the Headteacher.

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/in bushes and up trees etc.

(N.B. The teacher should quickly arrange for another adult (e.g. support staff or neighbouring teacher) to supervise their class while they conduct any search away from the class for which they are responsible).

If this initial search does not find the child, the teacher should begin a wider search of the school buildings and grounds, including searching public areas in other parts of the school e.g. library areas, toilet and cloakroom areas, corridors, hall etc. (it is not necessary at this stage to search classrooms unless they are empty).

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. At all times the rest of the class must be supervised by either the class teacher or a member of the support staff. If appropriate a neighbouring teacher can be asked to supervise the class (as well as their own) to enable both the teacher and the support staff to conduct the search.

If this search does not discover the missing child within a reasonable time the teacher must inform the Headteacher (directly or via the school office) of the missing child and the facts surrounding the child's disappearance.

The Headteacher (or Deputy / Assistant Head) will:

Take over responsibility and charge of the situation. If satisfied that the class is adequately supervised the Headteacher will join the teacher (and support staff if applicable) in searching the school premises for the missing child, directing the teacher (and others) where to search (e.g. a strategic approach may be employed with searches externally and internally being conducted simultaneously) Alternatively, the Headteacher may direct the 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 Headteacher will continue the search alone or with other available adults.

When the Headteacher is satisfied that the child is not on the premises she will instruct the office staff to contact the child's parents and inform them of the situation and to enquire if the child has returned home. If the child is at home the parents will be informed by telephone of the known facts surrounding the child going missing. If the child is not at home the Head teacher (or other staff if so directed by the Headteacher) will inform the police and, as appropriate, the social services and the Chair of Governors of the child's disappearance. Thereafter the Headteacher will follow the instructions of the police regarding the continuation of the search for the child.

If the parents cannot be contacted at home the Headteacher (or other adults as directed by the Headteacher)' having first informed the police, 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.

Whilst there is no amount of set time before contacting the police, as each child is different e.g. age, frequency the child "hides"/goes missing, the school will not wait much more than thirty minutes before contacting the Police.

The Office staff will:

Inform the Headteacher / Senior Leader of the missing child and then await further instructions. They will not take part in the search but will instead contact the child's parents when instructed by the Headteacher to do so and inform them of the situation and enquire if the child has returned home. They will then hand communication with the parents over to the Headteacher unless directed otherwise by the Headteacher. If the parents cannot be contacted, the office staff will, if directed to do so by the Headteacher, telephone the police, and, where appropriate, social services and Chair of Governors to inform them of the missing child and giving them such information as they may request. The school staff, including the Headteacher, will then continue the search as directed by the police and the office staff will continue to try to contact the child's parents.

A child seen exiting the school premises or about to exit the school premises

The following protocols set out how we, as a school, will respond to the situation of a child exiting the school premises. These protocols relate to all children, but they also include protocols for adults working with specific children who the school knows have difficulties and may, as part of their on-going problems, seek to exit the school.

If, as part of any search for a missing child, they are seen leaving the school premises, the member of staff witnessing the event must inform the most senior member of staff available, or, if none is available, send a message to the office, whilst seeking not to lose 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 Head Teacher where they last saw the child and the direction the child was heading so that this information can be communicated to the parents or police as appropriate. The member of staff should then return to their normal duties unless directed otherwise by the Head Teacher.

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the member of staff to go beyond the school boundary, e.g. to retrieve a child who has accidentally wandered out of an open gate, or to follow/retrieve a child with special educational 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 children.

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, running adult.

Exceptional Circumstances – Responding to the needs of individual children

As a school, we know that, sometimes, there may be children who, as a result of particular issues, may be prone to seeking to exit the school premises; as such, in these exceptional circumstances we may prepare and enact contingency search plans involving named staff (usually the adult(s) assigned to work with the child). When enacting these plans staff should be mindful not to put themselves or the child at risk.

In these cases, where there is an increased likelihood of a child leaving the school without permission, the school will work with parents / carers and teaching staff to complete a Risk Reduction Plan, specific to the child's needs. *See Appendix 1.* This is a personalised plan which is aimed at reducing the likelihood of the child putting themselves or others in danger, through the use of highly specific steps and language.

At Milton Road Primary School we use the [Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking](#) approach to behaviour.

This is a therapeutic approach to positive behaviour management and is already well established in our school. The approach is based on the following shared principles:

- A focus on inclusion of children and young people
- A set of values and beliefs about understanding behaviour
- Open communication
- A commitment to diversion and de-escalation
- Risk management

- Reparation, reflection and restoration

Each individual child will need to be taken into account and their emotions and demeanour 'read' by the staff members present. If the pupil is upset or angry, care should be taken in approaching the child. The age of the pupil will also be taken into account.

As a school, we will be aware of these children and the adults assigned to work with them will be properly informed. When it appears a child is about to exit the school premises, (or has already exited) the assigned member of staff should alert their nearest colleague to inform the school office and the Head, Deputy or Assistant Head that the child has left the premises. The assigned adult should then follow at a safe distance - keeping the child in sight, at all times. The member of staff should proceed in a calm manner; they should not run or shout to the child.

If it is possible to communicate with the child, the member of staff should use the Help Script (below), using a calm voice: **(N.B. Once the individual child's needs and difficulties are known the script can be personalised to include the strategies set out in any risk reduction plan)**

'John/Jane (*name of child*) John/Jane (*use child's name to gain their attention*) I can see there something is wrong / has happened

I'm here to help

Come on let's talk about it / let's sit down here together / let's walk back to school together (*as appropriate*)'

Once alerted to the situation, the school office should phone parents and, where appropriate, the local police. Having passed on the message a colleague should then follow the assigned adult/member of staff supporting the child, collecting a mobile phone or walkie-talkie from the school office, if possible. This will enable them to remain in contact with the school office, so parents / police can be informed about the child's current whereabouts.

EXITING PROTOCOL IN BRIEF

Where a pupil attempts or is seen to be leaving school premises, the following procedure should be followed:

1. A member of staff will alert the Headteacher. In their absence, this would be the Deputy Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher; this lead person will direct the course of action.
2. A member of staff who knows the pupil well and has a good relationship with the pupil will follow the pupil to the perimeter fence, exit or gate and will try to persuade the pupil to stay in the school, using a Cambridgeshire Therapeutic Thinking script. Another member of staff will be present but standing back and observing.
3. As active pursuit may encourage a child to leave the site and may also cause the pupil to panic; possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, staff will not chase but will try to keep a child in sight at a distance. Two members of staff (if possible) will observe the child at a distance and will avoid leaving the premises on their own, unless not doing so may place the child at further risk of harm.
4. The lead member of the Leadership Team may request additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact the school.
5. A member of staff will contact the pupil's parents/carers to inform them.
6. If the searching staff members lose sight of the pupil they must contact the school office giving details of their location and the clothes that the pupil is wearing. A member of the administration team will also call the police to log the incident and make a log of the call.
7. If the pupil has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the lead SLT member will make a decision how to take matters further. This will take into account the age of the pupil, the nature of the incident which led to the pupil exiting, the pupil's previous history of being involved in episodes of leaving the premises and their outcomes. If the pupil returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed.
8. Upon his or her return to school, and when the pupil is calm, the pupil will meet with a member of the SLT so that the reasons for leaving may be discussed in detail, with the parent/carer present. At this point a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions.

Follow up Investigations

When a missing child has been located and safely returned to school, the child's family or the police, the Headteacher 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.

For those children for whom the school already has a contingency in place, the following framework to support an investigation into the incident may prove useful, using a HELP model.

Hear the child / young person's story first and try to listen to the feelings as well as the words

Explain why the member of staff had to take the actions they did. Use 'I' messages to explain that we have a duty of care to keep people and property safe and why the actions were in the child / young person's ultimate best interests.

Link the feelings of the child / young person with those of the member of staff to show that both parties have feelings which drive their behaviour; separate the person from the behaviour; it is not personal

Plan together to find better ways of dealing with similar situations in the future: What can both parties do differently? Any plan which results from listening and learning should be reported, recorded and reviewed.

WHEN THE PUPIL RETURNS TO THE SCHOOL AFTER EXITING WITHOUT PERMISSION

Pupils who exit the school or go missing will usually do so as a result of a specific incident which may have taken place at school, at home or on the way to school. At this time they are likely to be in a heightened state of emotion.

Following an incident when a child has exited the school site, an Individual Risk Management plan will be put into place. This will help staff to identify the triggers and escalation of behaviours that have resulted in the child running out of school and to plan appropriate strategies to intervene at an early stage to divert and offer support to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence of the incident.

For these pupils who return to school either by their own choice, with parental support or following intervention by a member of staff, thought should be given to their welfare. They are likely to be in need of support, understanding and perhaps some time apart from their peers.

PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents and carers of pupils are responsible for supporting the work of the school and encouraging their children to keep to all school procedures and policies.

Once school has informed the parents that their child has left the premises, parents and carers are responsible for actively supporting the school with subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming into school to help secure the safety of their child as well as meeting with a Senior Leader in order to agree subsequent actions.

Policy agreed: July 2023

Reviewed January 2025

Appendix 1

Individual Risk Management Plan

Name	DOB	Date	
-------------	------------	-------------	--

Photo	Risk reduction measures and differentiated measures Make any anti-social behaviour boring, pro-social behaviour is rewarded by attention and interest. Trigger:
--------------	--

Pro social / positive behaviour	Strategies to respond
Anxiety / DIFFICULT behaviours	Strategies to respond
Crisis / Dangerous behaviours	Strategies to respond

<p>Procedure for Exiting school (following discussion with Inclusion Manager / Parent)</p> <p>All staff to carry their mobile phone with them in case of exit, with the mobile numbers of relevant staff (office and Inclusion Manager), to access the generic school number is quite slow with the switchboard facility.</p> <p>Ring and alert office or Inclusion Manager, another member of staff will come to provide distance support.</p> <p>Ensure small gate hooked open to allow easy re-entry.</p> <p>Provided the child seems still in control, follow the plan and remain at a distance.</p> <p>Engage in agreed STEPS script when child has stopped, but ensure this is not seen as pursuit as this may encourage further movement.</p> <p><i>"Milton come back into school it's not safe out here"</i></p> <p>Provided s/he is not in a position of immediate danger stand a short distance away and often children will come in of their own accord. <i>(Knowledge of child is key here)</i></p> <p>Inform mum/ police if child is outside for a prolonged period or sight of them is lost. Use the script, moving further than Asham/ Gurney way area or overly distressed and so in danger.</p> <p><i>"Milton come back into school it's not safe out here, we will need to ring mum and the police because it's not safe"</i></p> <p>School ring mum and the police</p>	
<p>Post incident recovery and debrief measures</p>	
<p>Signature of Parent or Carer:</p>	<p>Date:</p>
<p>Signature of Senior Leader:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

