

# Safeguarding policy guidance for children who abscond or go missing from a School/Early Years settings



*'We can and we will'*

**GLEBE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **Safeguarding policy guidance for children who abscond or go missing from a School/Early Years settings**

### **Mission Statement:**

At Glebe school we believe in an ethos that values the whole child. We strive to enable all children to achieve their full potential academically, socially and emotionally.

### **Overview**

Children should never be allowed to leave the premises during school time without the head teacher's permission. It is possible that on some occasions a child may leave the premises without the knowledge or permission of the head teacher. This policy is put in place to ensure that every action possible is taken to ensure the quick and safe return of that child to school. This policy also links to the procedures on the collection of children from school.

### **Principles and Purpose**

Children absconding or go missing from care, home and education is a key risk factor in safeguarding children. All school and early year's staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn. (Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2018)

Working Together 2015 outlines the key safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing the impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

### **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 the head teacher's permission to leave.
- To ensure that children who leave school during the school day only do so with the head teacher's, teacher's or office staff's 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, he/she is located quickly and returned safely to school.

### **Action to take if a child runs away**

- Keep calm and undertake a thorough search of the setting and ensuring all other children are supervised by other appropriate staff.
- Ensure all other exits are closed to ensure no further breach of security.
- Checking the register to ensure no other child is missing.
  - Alerting the relevant Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and head teacher/leader in charge.
- Check the pupil records of the missing child for any relevant details that might have a bearing on the situation (e.g. any court orders in place against either parent, the medical condition of the child or learning needs of the child etc).
- Staff should check the signing out book for all children
- Review any CCTV footage.
- Check with the parents/carers, children's social care and Virtual School if child on Child Protection Plans (CPP) or Children Looked After (CLA) if they have arrived at home. If not, then advise them of steps you are taking.
- Simultaneously contact the Police whilst reviewing an on-going assessment of the situation. After an initial search has taken place of the school (ideally within 10 minutes or immediately if child had additional vulnerabilities). For early years and primary and special needs provision contact with the police should happen immediately.

### **Additional vulnerabilities may include any of the following:**

- Special Education needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Learning disabilities
- Association with gangs or anti social behaviour
- Risk of any form of exploitation to child sexual exploitation (CSE), radicalisation, modern day slavery
- A young carer
- Frequently going missing from home or care
- Misusing drugs and alcohol
- Returned to family home after being in care
- Privately fostered children
- Parental toxic trio prevalent in family home
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by Children's Social Care if child is not found. The School governing body should also be notified.
- If the child is not located within a short space of time the School should inform:
  - The Chairman of Governors
  - The School's insurers

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- If the child is injured, a report should be made under the *Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations* (RIDDOR) to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
- If child in an Early Years' setting goes missing, then Ofsted must be notified within 24 hours of child missing even if child is found within that period.
- Completing accurate records with a clear chronology of times the various interventions which took place and who was involved.

If a child **runs away from school and is in the eye line of adults**, the adult should call after the child or try and talk to the child to try and get them to come back.

The member of staff will alert at least two other members of staff so that two of them search the immediate vicinity, taking their mobile phones with them. Whilst the other member of staff alerts the head teacher or deputy head teacher. The head teacher or Deputy will then advise of the appropriate action and will advise that the parents must be called.

If a member of staff finds the child the head teacher or deputy head teacher must be told at once. They will ensure that relevant parties are notified.

The head teacher or deputy head teacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

The school could also consider contacting the police if:

- This is uncharacteristic behaviour for the pupil
- The pupil was under a large amount of stress
- The school believes the pupil to be in danger

### **What to do when the pupil is found**

When the pupil is found and returned to school, should establish why the pupil decided to run away. It should:

- Seek to show the pupil that his/her behaviour was dangerous
- Seek to understand why he/she decided to run away. Was it because of something that happened in school? Was it because of something happening outside of school?
- Ask the pupil whether he/she feels safe in school

School should then consider ways of ensuring the pupil does not run away again. For those 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 and a 'return to school' meeting should be set up to discuss this support.

### **Action after the child is found:**

- Talk to child calmly and offer reassurance so they feel supported
- Notify the relevant person - DSL and Head teacher.

- Advise other staff who may be part of the search the child has been found
- Notify the police and parents know and/or social care if they are known to them
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- Brief all staff members of incident and updates on child missing policy
- A full investigation must be undertaken by the head teacher and senior staff which should include all concerned written statements, if appropriate involving other agencies.
- The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child/young person was last seen, what appears to have happened, (the purpose of the outing), the length of time that the child/young person was missing and how s/he appears to have gone missing, lessons for the future. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.
- If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means the local children's social care services and, in emergencies, the police.
- Police will undertake a safe and well check with the young person to ensure they are well. Please see details under Police responsibilities for further information.

### **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 absconded, parents and carers are responsible for actively supporting the school with subsequent procedures and actions. This could include coming in to help secure the safety of their child as well as meeting with a Senior Leader in order to agree subsequent actions.

### **What if the pupil has SEN?**

The school should establish whether or not the pupil is prone to this sort of behaviour. If the pupil has special education needs (SEN), the behaviour may be associated with his/her learning difficulties. There may be strategies for dealing with the behaviour, so this should be reflected on straight away.

### **Understanding why the pupil has run away**

- It is important for school to establish why the pupil might have run away. This will help it to decide how to deal with the situation. Some questions to help identify the cause are:
- Does the pupil have a relevant special educational need that might contribute to his/her decision to run away?
- Has something happened in the pupil's life outside school that might affect his/her behaviour in school?
- Is there a specific place or person at the school that might prompt this behaviour?
- Has the pupil experienced acute stress at school for any reason?
- Is he/she a victim of bullying?
- Does he/she have a record of running away?

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### **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 relevant parties at every appropriate point.

**Written: October 2020**

**Date to be reviewed: October 2021**

