

Missing child policy and procedures

Frogwell Primary School takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every reasonable precaution necessary to ensure that the children in their care do not leave the school premises unaccompanied. The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is discovered quickly. In the unlikely event that a child is noted to be missing from school premises, the school puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the most effective resolution of this potentially distressing and dangerous situation. Many of our school routines and procedures are in place to contribute to the prevention of a child going missing and to ensuring the safety and security of all children at all times.

Preventative measures in place on a day-to-day basis include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- All entrance gates are padlocked during the school day after drop-off and until pick-up time.
- The inner door leading to the main front door and rear door leading to the staff car park have PIN codes to exit. All other doors exit within the fenced perimeter of the site.
- Registers are taken twice daily (start of the morning and start of the afternoon session) and regular head-counts are done during the day following times where classes have moved around the school to ensure all children are present (e.g. after playtime). Registers are also taken at Froggy Fun Club (breakfast/after-school childcare) and after-school clubs.
- Class teachers write the number of children present each day on the board in class to support all adults with head-counts. This number is updated if children arrive/leave from/for appointments out of school or go home ill.
- All children who need to leave school for a pre-arranged appointment with their parent/carer (e.g. medical appointment) or who are sent home ill are signed out at the school office. Likewise, children arriving late are signed in. Teaching staff are kept informed of these in/out arrangements by the admin team using the SIMS register notes tools and/or the internal radio system.
- The staff maintain the appropriate high level of supervision throughout the day and are aware of the location of the children in their care at all times.
- Children are taught how to move around the school independently (e.g. to access the toilets, take a note to the office etc) and how to return to class straight away afterwards, as appropriate to their age and stage of development. Any children who are deemed unsafe to be allowed to move around the building independently are given adult supervision as much as possible, e.g. escorted to the toilet.
- Regular health and safety checks are carried out to ensure there are no holes in fences etc that children could use as routes off the premises.
- We make regular checks to ensure that in the event that a missing child incident does ever happen, we have all the necessary phone numbers and contact details at hand – correct, up to date and easily accessible to the relevant staff.

In the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child's whereabouts, the following action will be taken:

PROCEDURE IF A CHILD IS MISSING:

Stage 1 - search systematically

- All available staff to immediately check toilets, shared areas, rooms, playgrounds and other outdoor spaces to ensure the child is not hiding or locked in anywhere (e.g. toilet cubicle).
- One member of staff to immediately inform school office and the Headteacher or senior member of staff in charge and check whether the child has been signed out for an external appointment (e.g. dentist) or has an internal appointment with a visiting professional (School Nurse/Speech Therapist/Social Worker etc)
- The online SIMS register will need checking by office staff as soon as a missing child has been reported so it can be confirmed they should be in school.
- One member of staff to gather the class and call the register to confirm that one named child is missing.
- Check exterior doors that lead outside the fenced perimeter and entrance gates are secure to help ascertain if the child may have left the school site or is still within the grounds.
- Staff will ensure that all other pupils are kept safe and closely supervised throughout incident should it be during the school day. Calm should be kept in the event of a child reported missing at the end of the school day.
- If the child is found within 10 minutes, office and senior staff to be informed and the search stood down.
- If the child has not been located within a maximum of 10 minutes, move to Stage 2 (below).

Stage 2 – if child is not found within 10 minutes

- After Stage 1 is completed without resolution (no more than 10 minutes), school office staff will contact the police and parents/carers with parental responsibility. At this point, school will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident. The Headteacher (or next most senior member of staff available) will liaise with emergency services and parents/carers.
- Staff will call registers in all classes to confirm presence of other pupils, if the event is during the school day.

Stage 3 – when the child is found

- Staff need to remain calm and reassure the child.
- Check the child is not hurt and seek relevant first aid / medical attention if needed.
- Remember that the child is likely to have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Update parents/carers that child has been found and inform them of any injuries.

Stage 4 - actions immediately after the incident

- We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, *all involved* may suffer great fear, guilt and distress. This includes the child themselves, members of staff and the parents/carers. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found and it is recognised that people may need immediate support. Staff members who have been affected may need time away from the classroom to calm and compose themselves as they

are likely to be shaken by what has happened. Other school staff should be ready to provide flexible help to ensure this can happen to support the wellbeing of the affected staff.

- The Headteacher (or relevant member of SLT if the Headteacher is absent) should communicate the incident to the Chair of Governors.
- If the Headteacher is not on the premises, she/he will be informed as soon as possible via the school office team, Assistant Headteacher or senior staff member in charge.
- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and placed in the pupil's confidential record. The recording system the school uses is CPOMS (Child Protection Online Management System) and all staff involved should input any relevant information; including conversations with parents/carers, police or any other person they feel has contributed to the collection of evidence.
- The Senior Leadership Team should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective the response was and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again. This information should also be collected in writing and logged onto the CPOMS system.

Stage 5 – actions to be followed up in the days / weeks following the incident

- The child and affected staff members will be supported as necessary to deal with the emotions and potential shock of the incident.
- The incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.
- After the incident we will review our current procedure and evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.
- If requested, we will provide the following information to the Local Authority or other authority such as Ofsted:
 - What happened
 - What we did, at what time and in what order
 - Who we informed and when
 - What systems are in place for preventing such occurrences in future

Policy on children who deliberately leave the school site

If a child deliberately leaves the school site due to defiant behaviour etc (e.g. by wilfully climbing over the fence or gate), the member of staff witnessing this must inform the most senior member of staff immediately available, without losing sight of the child if possible. The internal walkie-talkie system will support this communication.

As a general rule staff should not pursue a child beyond the school boundary in these circumstances. Instead they should report to the Headteacher (or next most senior member of staff available) 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 Headteacher.

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, using their knowledge of the child's age and their level of development and understanding.
- 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.
- Staff 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.
- 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.