

# Missing Persons

*Gretton School is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.*

*This Policy is one of a series of School Policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the School's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each and every one of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this Policy should be read alongside all of these Policies in order to get the full picture. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the Equality Policy, the Health and Safety Policy and the Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy.*

*All of these Policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to evidence the work that the whole School is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.*

*In all the School's Policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. [Department for Education guidance](#) considers a 'parent' to include:*

- *all biological parents, whether they are married or not*
- *any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative*
- *any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person*

*A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.*

*The School employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure regulatory compliance and the implementation of best practice:*

- *Peninsula HROnline*
- *Peninsula BusinessSafe (Health and Safety)*
- *Carecheck (DBS)*
- *Educare (online CPD)*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

It is Gretton School's aim to ensure that all students remain safe and supported during their school day and during boarding time.

### ***National Minimum Standards – Residential Special Schools (April 2015) Standard 15.6***

***The school's procedures are compatible with the local runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the head of care (or school equivalent) follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority.***

## 2 POLICY

Gretton School has safety measures in place where reasonably practical to prevent students from leaving the site without permission, getting lost whilst on outings or abducted. A lot of emphasis is placed on the students making positive choices and choosing not to leave the school site without permission. Gretton School does recognise that some students will still choose to leave the school site on occasions.

As part of the assessment process for each student, consideration must be given to the risk of the student becoming 'Absent (missing)'. If there is a risk of the student becoming 'Absent (missing)', further consideration must be given to the risk posed to the student or others as a result.

Details regarding risk and actions to be taken are to be included in the Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP). This will include when the police may be called and will depend on the level of risk to each individual student.

Each student will be given the address and contact details of the school and boarding accommodation on admission.

This Policy takes into consideration the **Statutory Guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care** and the **RMFHC (Runaway and Missing from Home and Care) protocols**. The RMFHC protocols will be followed within Cambridgeshire along with other Placing Authorities from where the students come from.

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## 3 DEFINITIONS

### Absent:

A person is **not in a place** where they are expected or required to be but where carers or police do not feel the need to start a full 'Missing' investigation at that stage.

### Missing:

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established **and** where the circumstances are **out of character** or the context suggests **the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or others**.

We will report any student under the age of 12, automatically as 'Missing' rather than 'Absent' due to the levels of risk. We may also report any other student older than 12 years as 'Missing' should it be deemed necessary due to their diagnosis of Autism and their vulnerability in society.

## 4 TO PREVENT A STUDENT FROM BECOMING 'ABSENT' / 'MISSING'

In the first instance, it is important to do everything possible to prevent a student from becoming absent without authorisation and placing themselves or others at risk. Some of the ways to do this are:

- Staff building positive and trusting relationships with the students ensuring they are made to feel safe with staff and within their environment.
- Staff ensure that, as part of the 24 hour curriculum, advice and guidance is given on 'Keeping Safe', how to use a phone, how to contact the police, understanding of strangers, road safety etc.
- Staff adequately supervising the students in line with their agreed staffing ratio and expectation required of them.

## 5 PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW SHOULD A STUDENT BECOME 'ABSENT'/' MISSING'

- Staff are to follow the student and encourage the student to talk about why they want to leave and ensure their safety is paramount where possible.
- Staff to take note of what the student is wearing.
- If the student's whereabouts is known, staff will decide what actions are necessary to return the student to school or home. Staff are to maintain contact with the student, where possible.
- If the student is located and appears to be at risk or vulnerable (due to the environment), staff are to remain close to the student and supervise them as much as possible, seeking further advice and guidance from the police and Senior Leadership Team.
- If the student has not been seen leaving or staff are unaware of the student's location, staff are to thoroughly search the grounds of the school and boarding accommodation,

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the local parks and village or area they were last seen, and any other location that the student is likely to have gone.

- The Senior Leadership Team is to be informed that a student is missing within 10 minutes and updated as necessary. After 10 minutes staff involved and/or Senior Leadership Team will notify the police, (999) for all students 12 years old and under, and either 101 or 999 in a non emergency for those over 12 years to 19 years of age.
- Staff are to inform the student's parents (or person with Parental Responsibility) after contact with the police (unless stated otherwise in the student's Individual Behaviour Plan) and offer reassurance that staff are doing everything possible to find the student.
- Staff to update the parents where necessary.
- Police number is **999 or 101**

Staff are to give the police the following details:

**Gretton School, Manor Farm Road, Girton, Cambridgeshire, CB3 0RX  
or The Rectory, 65 High Street, Girton, Cambridgeshire CB3 0QD  
Telephone number: 01223 277438**

- Staff are to provide the police with a description, a photo of the student and any other information in aid of helping to find the student. (Identity Sheet contained within the grab bag - details under section 7 of this policy)).
- Staff are to ask Police for a relevant email address at the time of reporting to enable them to forward the Identity Sheet promptly.
- If the student becomes absent as a result of abuse at the school, the staff must contact the Headteacher, who will, under the advice of the Safeguarding Lead, contact the Cambridgeshire LSCB and the student's Placing Authority, if different, immediately to discuss the appropriate Safeguarding procedures.
- The staff are to update all persons involved to share any developments regarding the student's absence.

### 6 ONCE A STUDENT HAS BEEN FOUND OR RETURNED

- Staff are to collect the student if safe to do so. If it is deemed not safe to collect and return the student for any reason, staff are to request support from the police to return the student to school.
- Once the student is back in the care of the staff, staff are to ask the student how they are feeling, ask if they require any medical assistance or if they wish to talk to someone for further support. Staff are to offer the student the opportunity to talk about their reasons for leaving.
- The student is to be welcomed back and informed that they were missed and staff were very worried about them.
- Staff are to offer the student food and drink.
- If the student was due medication during their absence and the time has passed or staff are concerned that the student maybe under the influence of drugs, alcohol or appear to be unwell, staff are to seek immediate advice from either the student's GP,

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or the Emergency Out of Hours medical services prior to administering any medication. These concerns and advice given will need to be recorded in the student file, or schoolbase chronology log.

- Staff are to monitor and observe the student on return from being 'Absent' or 'Missing' to ensure their overall welfare and needs are being met.
- Once the student has been returned to the care of the staff, staff are to contact all relevant persons (police, parents, social worker, senior leadership team etc.) to make them aware of the student's return and share any relevant information or concerns. It will need to be recorded that all the above (where applicable) have been informed.
- The police may visit the student to complete a 'Safe and Well Check'.
- Staff are to complete all paperwork (incident report) relating to the student being absent.
- Senior Leadership are to monitor the incident reports regularly to identify any patterns to the Absences and put strategies in place to minimise the Absences where possible.
- The student's Individual Behaviour Plan and Risk Assessment will need to be reviewed and amended if necessary.
- All staff involved during the student's absence are to receive a debrief and will be offered support as necessary.
- If any issue was raised regarding the welfare or safety of the student – this must be reported immediately to the Senior Leadership Team who will then arrange to contact the Safeguarding Team if necessary.

### 7 INDEPENDENT RETURN INTERVIEWS

When a child is found, they must be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home.

The interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (ie, someone not involved in caring for the child) who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able to follow-up any actions that emerge. Children sometimes need to build up trust with a person before they will discuss in depth the reasons why they ran away.

The interview and actions that follow from it should:

identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the 'safe and well check' – either before they ran away or whilst missing;

- understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away; help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them running away;

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- provide them with information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers.

The interview should be held in a neutral place where the child feels safe. The interview provides an opportunity to hear from the child about why they went missing and to understand the risks and issues faced by the child while missing. This could include exploring issues where a child:

- has been reported missing on two or more occasions;
- is frequently away from placement (or their home) without authorisation; has been hurt or harmed while they have been missing; is at known or suspected risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking;
- is at known or suspected risk of involvement in criminal activity or drugs;
- has contact with people posing risk to children; and/or
- has been engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities while missing.

The assessment of whether a child might run away again should be based on information about:

- their individual circumstances, including family circumstances;
- their motivation for running away;
- their potential destinations and associates;
- their recent pattern of absences;
- the circumstances in which the child was found or returned; and their individual characteristics and risk factors such as whether a child has learning difficulties, mental health issues, depression and other vulnerabilities.

### 8 GRAB BAG DETAILS

In the case of a student being 'missing' from Gretton School, please follow this procedure and ensure that you have the correct additional information with you when leaving the site, including all items that are in the grab bag/folder.

- Take a note of what the student is wearing.
- If the student's whereabouts is known, staff will decide what actions are necessary to return the student to school or home. Staff are to maintain contact with the student, where possible.
- If the student is 12 years or younger the police will be called if the student is not in sight.
  - Ensure you have printed a copy of the student's Identity sheet to issue description to the police

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- If the student is over 12 years old staff will contact 101 unless the student is deemed vulnerable in which case 999 will be called.
  - Ensure you have printed a copy of the students Identity sheet to issue description to the police
- If the student is located and appears to be at risk or vulnerable (due to the environment), staff are to remain close to the student and supervise them as much as possible, seeking further advice and guidance from the police and Senior Leadership Team.
- If the student has not been seen leaving or staff are unaware of the student's location, staff are to thoroughly search the grounds of the school and boarding accommodation, the local parks and village or area they were last seen, and any other location that the student is likely to have gone.
- Parents will be called and kept updated by Admin staff or lead staff member.
- When leaving the premises to look for a student take the following with you: -
  - a copy of the students identity sheet
  - either the schools mobile phone or your own
  - A first aid kit
- Keep in contact with the school at regular intervals to allow for updates a minimum of 10 minute intervals
- Do not contact the police or parents yourself, allow the lead contact at school to do this, unless otherwise instructed.

### ***Contents of bag/folder***

*Notebook \* Pencil \* School Contact Details \* First Aid Kit \* Staff need to provide relevant student Identity Sheet*