



Templefield Lower School

Responding to children who go missing or run away

Introduction

Children should never be allowed to leave the premises during school time without the school's permission. It is possible that on some occasions a child may leave the premises without the knowledge or permission of the school. 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.

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 school's permission to leave.
- To ensure that children who leave school during the school day only do so with the school'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, they are located quickly and returned safely to school.

Procedures

- If the child has gone missing at the end of the school day, members of staff may take the most appropriate route home to look for the child. They would also enquire whether the child is likely to have gone to a friend or relative's house or an after-school club, and explore these routes as well.
- If a child goes missing during an outing or school visit, the teacher in charge must ensure that the remaining children are safely cared for by the other staff and adults.
- If a child cannot be found by their teacher, teaching assistant or learning support assistant during the school day, the headteacher or deputy headteacher must be notified immediately and told when and where the child was last seen. Time is of the essence and prompt actions must be taken by all.
- The remaining children will be left safe in the care of suitable staff. All other available staff will conduct a thorough search of the child's classroom, play areas, storage areas, toilets, the school building and the school grounds.
- If the child is not found within a short period of time, the headteacher or deputy headteacher will advise that the parents must be called.
- Members of staff, who are not supervising children, will be sent in pairs with their mobile phones to search the area in the immediate vicinity of the school or venue.
- An urgent but thorough search should be made of the immediate vicinity and if the child is not found quickly the headteacher must be notified. They will take appropriate action.
- Under the direction of the headteacher or deputy headteacher, the parents will be notified that their child is missing.
- If a member of staff finds the child, the head teacher or deputy headteacher must be told at once. They will ensure that all relevant parties are notified.
- The headteacher or deputy headteacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

Children who run

- 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 headteacher or deputy headteacher. The head teacher or deputy headteacher 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 headteacher or deputy headteacher must be told at once. They will ensure that all 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 child.
 - The child was under a large amount of stress.
 - The school believes the child to be in danger.

Looking for the child

Where possible, teachers or other members of staff who know the child well will look for them. They may know of particular places the child likes or feels comfortable in. For example, the child may feel safe and comfortable at a particular friend's house. It is also possible that, having run away, the child will not know where to go. It is, therefore, worth looking for them near school.

What to do when the child is found

When the child is found and returned to school, staff will establish why the child decided to run away. Before deciding on any action to be taken, we will:

- Seek to show the child that their behaviour was dangerous.
- Seek to understand why the child decided to run away. Was it because of something that happened in school? Was it because of something happening outside of school?
- Ask the child whether they feel safe in school.

We will then consider ways of ensuring the child does not run away again. This might involve looking at behaviour strategies. For example, we might provide a 'safe place' the child can go to for 'time out'. We might also encourage the child to speak to a particular member of staff if they begin to feel upset, angry or stressed.

Children with SEN

If the child has special education needs, the behaviour may be associated with their learning difficulties. In this case, there may be strategies for dealing with the behaviour which will be reflected on straight away.

Understanding why the child has run away

It is important to establish why the child might have run away as this will help us decide how to deal with the situation. Some questions to help identify the cause are:

- Does the child have a relevant special educational need that might contribute to their decision to run away?
- Has something happened in the child's life outside school that might affect their behaviour in school?
- Is there a specific place or person at the school that might prompt this behaviour?
- Has the child experienced acute stress at school for any reason?
- Is the child a victim of bullying?
- Does the child have a record of running away?

Outcomes

The safety of all children is our highest priority and a missing child should be an extremely rare happening. This policy is designed to put in place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents and other relevant parties at every appropriate point.

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