



Welburn Hall School

Pupils who Run Away or go Missing from Home, Education and Care Policy

Approved by Governors:

Dated:

Revised: January 2018

Review: January 2019

This policy has been informed by: DfE Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care. (January 2014)

Our policy follows the North Yorkshire County Council and North Yorkshire Police joint protocol dates August 2017 and is endorsed by North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board (NYSCB).

In the meantime, DfE guidance (Jan 14) has been used to inform the school's response to children who go missing from school and home.

When a child goes missing or runs away they are at risk. Safeguarding children therefore includes protecting them from this risk. At Welburn Hall we accept our responsibility for protecting children whether they go missing from the family home or from the residential care setting.

Staff are aware:

- Children may run away *from* a problem such as abuse or neglect at home or *to* somewhere they want to be.
- Children may have been coerced to run away by someone else.
- There are particular concerns about links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation.
- Missing children may also be vulnerable to other forms of exploitation, to violent crime, gang exploitation, or to drug and alcohol abuse.
- The communication difficulties of our children make them even more vulnerable as they may have limited understanding of risks posed by others.
- That evidence suggests that distance from home, family and friends is a key factor for looked after children running away could also be factors influencing residential pupils

The following four concerns raised in the Ofsted 'Missing Children' (Feb 13) report:

- Risk management plans for individual children were often not developed or acted on;
- Placement instability was a key feature of looked after children who ran away;
- Reports about looked after children missing from care placement were not routinely provided to senior managers in local authorities;
- There was little evidence that safe and well checks or return interviews were taking place.

have influenced school procedures to minimise the risks of children running away by adopting a preventative approach.

This has been achieved by:

- Ensuring risk assessments are in place for pupils at Welburn Hall;
- Regular reviews being scheduled to identify any risks to the stability of the placement and to ensure issues are resolved as speedily as possible;
- Encouraging children to keep in touch with friends and family whilst in residence
- Ensuring senior leaders are made aware of all incidents of missing children following the guidance within this policy;
- Ensuring children are safe and well on their return and meet with their tutor, keyworker or senior leader.

By adopting these procedures, we hope to support the aim of the practice guidance and protocol to develop robust responses to children who go missing, with the primary aim being to prevent the child suffering harm and recovering them to a place they are safe as soon as possible as children who are missing from home may be at risk of harm as a consequence of their basic need for food, safety and shelter and/or from the people with whom they may come into contact.

Risks can include physical harm, sexual exploitation, drug abuse and involvement in a range of other criminal activities. The additional vulnerability due to their age, communication difficulties, level of understanding or the significance and seriousness of the circumstances that led to the missing episode may also be present.

Definitions:

Since April 2013 police forces have been rolling out new definitions of ‘missing’ and ‘absent’ in relation to children and adults reported as missing to the police.

These are:

- **Missing:** *anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where circumstances may be out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk to themselves or another.*
- **Absent:** *a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be’*
- *Note that ‘absent’ within this definition would not include those defined as ‘away from placement without authorisation’ a child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either missing or absent under police definitions.*

A missing child would be prioritized as ‘high risk’ where:

- *A risk posed is immediate and there are substantial ground for believing that the child is in danger through their own vulnerability*
- *A child has been the victim of a serious crime*
- *The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger’.*

A missing child incident would be prioritized as 'medium risk' where:

- *The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger*
- *They are a threat to themselves or others.*

Where a child is categorized as 'absent' details will be recorded by the police and subject to constant review.

Procedure for Staff at Welburn Hall School

Rationale

Appropriate supervision is planned across both school and residential settings for individuals and groups of pupils. There are occasions, however when pupils may absent themselves from lessons or from the school site. This policy outlines how the school will respond to such situations.

Background

Teachers are responsible for all pupils in the classes or groups they are timetabled to teach. Keyworkers and RCO's are responsible for the pupils in their houses or pupils designated to be in their care for activities. Supervision may be delegated to other appropriate staff e.g. support assistants. The closeness of the supervision will depend on the number, age, aptitude experience of the pupils and nature of the activity.

Responsibilities of Teachers, Keyworkers and RCO

Staff should ensure that pupils arrive at their lessons/activity at the required time and that they remain in the appropriate place. If pupils need to leave the activity they should do so only with the permission of the person responsible after due consideration of the reason for leaving and any risk that might be involved.

Should a pupil or pupils not arrive, or leave without permission, the person responsible at the time should initiate enquiries as to their whereabouts and initiate a search if no satisfactory and reliable reason is established. Adequate supervision of pupils remaining must also be ensured.

If staffing resources do not allow for this to happen, the member of staff responsible should inform the Head of School (or if not available, other senior member of staff) in school or the Head of Care / Team Leader in the care setting. As a general guideline, if pupil(s) cannot be located within fifteen minutes, the Head of School or Head of Care / Team Leader must be informed and he/she will determine any further action which needs to be taken. Such action will include informing the senior member of staff who will, in all instances, inform the person on call (Headteacher or Head of Care). The senior member of staff will determine at what point parents and / or police or other agencies need to be involved.

However, it is important to note that this is a **general guideline** only and staff must make a professional judgment taking into account, numbers, age, aptitude, experience and previous history as well as local conditions (e.g weather) in determining all decisions about

handling students absconding from school. There will be occasions when it is necessary to involve senior person on call immediately.

Responsibilities of Senior Member of Staff:

When a child cannot be located or is known or presumed to be offsite without permission, the member of senior on call should:

Initiate a search, calling on sufficient numbers of staff to complete a thorough search of the buildings and grounds in a short timeframe.

Extend the search into the immediate locality of the school including Wombleton, Kirkdale, Nawton, Beadlam and Kirkbymoorside. Staff going out of school on a search should take a mobile phone. The school office should have the phone number to reach the member of staff when necessary.

When the child is located, the member of staff should if necessary contact school for advice and support in approaching and returning the child.

Throughout the process, it is imperative that supervision of remaining pupils is ensured.

When a child runs away:

The senior leader on duty is responsible for ensuring the following individuals and agencies are informed within the time scales set out in the local RMFHC protocol:

- The local police
- The LA responsible for the child's placement
- Parents and any other person with parental responsibility, unless it is not reasonably practicable or to do so would be inconsistent with the child's welfare

See Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from care: Flowchart to accompany statutory guidance.

Contacting Parents

Decisions about contacting parents will be taken by senior person on call.

If the child is not located **within an hour (maximum)**, parents **must be informed immediately**. However, there are occasions when it would be necessary to inform parents as soon as the child is missing.

Parents will always be informed at an appropriate time when a child has been offsite without permission but has been returned safely and in a reasonable timeframe.

Contacting the police:

Police will be contacted **after a period of two hours** if a child is missing. This may be actioned earlier depending on the circumstances or if parents request it.

When referring to the Police any relevant information that might help to find or support the child should be shared, including:

- Description of the child including their clothing.
- Details of where the child was last seen and with whom.
- Recent photograph.
- Relevant addresses, known associates and addresses frequented.
- Previous history of absenteeism and circumstances of where found.
- Circumstances under which the child is absent.
- Any factors that increase the risk to the child. “

(Children & Young People who go missing from Home and Care Joint Protocol Aug 2017)

Action on the return to school

Mindful of The Children’s Rights Director (2012) report: ‘one of the major influences of them running away is having a sense that they are not being listened to and taken seriously’. On return to the school, the child will be seen wherever possible by a senior member of staff and / or the person responsible for their pastoral care to check whether they are safe and well. A supportive approach, including actively listening and responding to the child’s needs will be adopted as this will have a greater chance of preventing the child from going missing again and safeguarding them against other risks. Running away should not be viewed as behavior that needs to be punished. Any reasons given will be considered in relation to how the child is cared for in future and the school’s care practice.

In addition to providing the child with the opportunity to raise issues of concern, the purpose of the check is to identify any indications of harm, where and with whom they have been and give the child the opportunity to disclose any offending against them.

Following the meeting the child’s risk assessment will be reviewed and amended accordingly to minimize a repeat of running away.

A written record will be completed in the form of an incident report which should be forwarded to the school’s Designated Senior Lead. The incident report will detail:

- The length of time missing
- Whereabouts of child when missing
- Any known associates
- Risk factors

The Designated Senior Lead will scrutinize the reports identifying and patterns and trends over time, in particular frequency of such incidents as there is an established link between frequent missing episodes and serious harm, which could include gang involvement, forced marriage, bullying and sexual exploitation (p.14 Statutory Guidance Jan 14)

When the monitoring demonstrates:

- Reported missing on two or more occasions
- Frequently away from residential care without authorization

Meetings with Independent Advocates

The child will be offered the support of an independent advocate which will be sourced at the relevant point or David Braybrook our Standard 20 unannounced visitor of whom is a trusted visitor to the school.

The meeting will be held in a place the child feels safe and provides the opportunity for the child to discuss the reasons why they went missing and to understand the risks and issues faced by the child while missing. This will help to build up a picture of why the child has run away, identify additional support and inform future planning.

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

- Individual circumstances
- Motivation for running away
- Potential destinations / associates
- Recent patterns of absence
- Circumstances in which child was found / returned
- Risk factors such as mental health issues / depression / other vulnerabilities

If the child prefers not to engage in an independent interview parents / carers will be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information.

When older students run away or go missing the school acknowledges they are no less vulnerable and are equally at risk, particularly of sexual exploitation. Repeatedly going missing will not be viewed as a normal pattern of behaving. The school is aware that repeat episodes can indicate sexual exploitation.

The school acknowledges the importance of early and effective sharing of information between professionals. Information to be shared will include duration of missing episodes, information from return meetings, absence data which will help authorities to identify risks in the area such as exploitation, gangs or other crime related activity.

In addition governors will also receive anonymized reports on missing children.

Children Missing Education

The school has a strong reputation of working effectively with young people and families with a history of school refusal. However, we are aware of the potential of such children falling through the net and that not knowing of their whereabouts may result in serious safeguarding incidents.

To support our work in this area, the school employs a family support manager who is informed daily after the registers are checked, They make and record the first day contact have been made with families when children are recorded as absent.

All communication is logged in a timely fashion on the schools management information software, SIMs.

See Guidance Flowchart for Headteachers of School's Where Children are Missing from Education

Absence is tracked closely and where persistent, the support of other NYCC agencies such as CAMHS and Prevention is sought.

On the 10th day if whereabouts remain unknown despite all efforts to contact the family a referral is to be made to the Children Missing Education of the appropriate LA (CME) who will conduct further checks.

Children are NEVER to be removed from roll unless one of the following can be evidenced:

- A new destination school and the pupil file has been forwarded
- Referred to the appropriate service (Children Missing Education / Elective Home Education)
- Approval from the placing Local Authority

Associated policies and procedures:

- Child protection
- Attendance
- Behaviour management
- Physical intervention and restraint
- Risk assessment

Associated Resources:

DfE Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (January 2014)

DfE Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care Flow Chart Showing Roles and Responsibilities (January 2014)

North Yorkshire Joint Protocol (August 2017) - Children & Young People who go missing from Home and Care: <http://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/missing>

Contact Numbers:

NYCC Customer Resolution Centre	01609 780780
Emergency Duty Team	01609 780780
North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board	01609 535137
North Yorkshire Police Vulnerabilities Assessment Team missingfromhome@northyorkshire.pnn.police.uk	101
North Yorkshire Police	999 or 101
Sexual Assault Referral Centre	01904 669339
NSPCC Child Protection Helpline	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111
Missing People Helpline www.missingpeople.org.uk or 11600@missingpeople.org.uk	116000
Rape and Abuse Line	0808 800 0123
NHS Direct Health Advice	111
Victim Support www.supportingvictims.org	01609 643100
Domestic Abuse Support: IDAS www.idas.org.uk	03000 110110
Drug & Alcohol Advisory Service (FRANK)	0800 776600

Appendix 1: The following chart shows the main steps that need to be taken when a child goes missing from local authority care, and where responsibility lies for those steps. It should be read alongside the full statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, and is not intended to be a comprehensive list of actions.

Children's home or foster carer

Responsible authority

Host authority

Local police

Planning and placement

Local authorities should agree with local police and other partners a runaway and missing from care and home (RMFCH) protocol. Carers, local authority and police staff should be aware of the protocol as appropriate. All partners should work together to assess risks and develop appropriate strategies to prevent children from going missing and respond when children do go missing. Staff should receive appropriate training.

Children's homes should have explicit procedures in place both to prevent children running away or going missing, and to locate, return and support a child who has run away or is missing from their placement. This procedure must have regard to local protocols of the host authority.

Care planning should include assessment of appropriate placement arrangements to protect the child from the risk of going missing, and strategies for dealing with any known risks of running away.

When a child is placed out of area, the responsible authority must notify the host authority of the placement. Notification processes for missing episodes should be agreed between the responsible and host authorities.

When a looked after child goes missing

The carer should take agreed actions to locate the child. If they can not be located, they should inform the police, the responsible authority and anyone else identified in the child's care plan (such as their parents).

Useful information to report to the police include:

- the child's name, date of birth, description and a recent photograph
- any details of where and when the child was last seen, who they were with, etc
- details of family, friends and associates
- details of the responsible authority.

The responsible authority should provide relevant information about the missing child to the police to enable all the risk factors to be considered.

The responsible authority should notify the host authority that a child in their area has gone missing.

Police should perform a risk-assessment which will form the basis for their operational response. The case will remain the subject of constant review, particularly in the light of new information and changes in circumstances.

Children's home or foster carer

Responsible authority

Host authority

Local police

When a looked after child is found

If the child returns to their placement, the responsible authority and police should be informed.

Carers should continue to offer warm and consistent care when a child returns, and running away should not be viewed as behaviour that needs to be punished.

If the child is located but meaningful contact can not be established, the responsible authority and police should consider appropriate action.

An independent return interview should be offered and provided within 72 hours of the child's return. When a looked after child is placed in a host authority, the responsible authority should ensure the independent review interview takes place, working closely with the host authority.

A safe and well check should be carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported as missing has been found.

The responsible local authority should review whether the child's placement remains appropriate. The decision should be informed by discussions with the child and carers where appropriate.

Care plans should include a strategy to minimise future risk of repeated missing episodes.

IROs should be informed about missing episodes and address these in statutory reviews.

Data and analysis

Children's homes should be prepared to provide information on missing incidents to those conducting independent visits to monitor the effectiveness of the home.

Data on missing episodes, including intelligence from return interviews, should be analysed regularly by all relevant partners to map problems and patterns. Regular reports should be provided to council members and the LSCB.

Data for children missing or away from placement without authorisation should be reported to the Department for Education by the responsible authority through their annual data returns on looked after children.