



Homefield Preparatory School

Missing Pupil Policy

The welfare of all of our children at Homefield Preparatory School is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

We take all possible measures to ensure that pupils do not go missing whilst on school premises or on school trips. Formal registers are taken twice a day, before morning and afternoon lessons, and any absences are followed up promptly. During the school day, teachers are also expected to be aware of any students missing from their lessons and to follow up any concerns they might have about a pupil's absence from a lesson. Homefield Preparatory School understands a 'missing' pupil to be a pupil not present without authorisation or explanation.

This policy applies to all pupils in the school including Pre-prep. Homefield Preparatory School is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). The school seeks to implement this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.

Homefield Preparatory School understands missing pupils to belong to two distinct categories:

- (i) pupils who are present on any given day on the school site but then go missing at some point during the day without authorisation or explanation.
- (ii) pupils who are absent from school without authorisation or explanation and who have not been marked present in the attendance register i.e. they have not disappeared from the school premises; rather they are missing from school altogether. Any child missing from education must be treated as potentially vulnerable.

Procedure for pupils missing during the school day or from school activities off-site

Registers must be taken at the beginning of each morning and afternoon teaching session, at the beginning of Games, at the beginning of each out of hours extra-curricular activity and regularly during every off site activity. If for any reason the Tutor/Form Teacher does not turn up for registration, after 5 minutes, a member of the form should get the nearest available teacher and ask them to register the form. This can be done on a paper register which is then passed on to the School Office, who will complete it in SIMS.

In the event that a pupil is recorded as present in the morning or afternoon register but is not present or accounted for in his lessons and his absence cannot be explained (e.g. he has not signed out, he is not in the medical room or has not been sent home by the Welfare Assistant, nor had a music lesson), staff must inform a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) without delay.

The exact point and time of when and where the pupil was last seen and by which adult must be ascertained. The adult last responsible for the child must be questioned as to the whereabouts of the pupil.

In the event that the pupil's absence cannot be explained and accounted for, a search of the building and area will be organised by the SMT. The search party will normally comprise of a member of Senior Management, the Form Teacher and an appropriate number of teaching staff, if necessary. If the pupil is believed to be off site, a search party will be sent to possible locations where the pupil might be.

Administrative staff will be required to maintain a central point: the School Office. All parties involved in searching for the pupil must liaise with and return to the central point to discuss progress.

In the event that the pupil is not found, the Facilities and Estates Manager may be asked by a member of the search party (at the request of SMT) to ring the fire bell. The search party will continue to search the premises whilst the rest of the school evacuates the building. If the evacuation fails to locate the missing pupil, the police will be called using 999 by administrative staff or by a member of the search party, we anticipate this would be within 30 minutes. The missing pupil's parents will be called by a senior member of staff.

The DSL would then, as necessary, inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the school's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

The school will co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority.

The Chair of Governors and the school's insurers would be informed. If the pupil is found to be injured, a report may be required under RIDDOR, to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

During the course of the investigation into the missing pupil, the school, in consultation with the LADO, will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with. A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the pupil was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

Missing Pupil from an off-site activity

Procedures to prevent pupils going missing during school activities off-site

- Risk assessments for educational visits and off-site activities must take supervision into account.
- Pupils must always be supervised by an adult.

- Pupils should be given a clear rendez-vous location in the event of them being separated from the group.

In the event that a pupil's absence cannot be explained or accounted for in any off-site activity, the protocol below will be followed:

- An immediate head count will be carried out in order to ensure that all the other pupils are present.
- A search will be initiated by the activity leader involving the organisation responsible for the area used.
- If the initial search proves unsuccessful, the police will be called using 999 immediately.
- The Headmaster (or the member of SMT on call) and parents/carers will be contacted.
- The Chair of Governors and the school insurers will be informed.
- If the child is found to be injured, a report may be required under RIDDOR, to the HSE and a full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found will be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these will be adjusted.

Once the child is found, talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child. Speak to the other pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises or separate from a group on an outing. The Headmaster/Deputy Head will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the LADO, if necessary). A full investigation will be carried out involving all concerned with written statements provided. All reports should be detailed covering time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how he appeared to have gone missing as well as lessons for the future.

In the case of an incident involving a pupil from our Pre-prep setting going missing, Ofsted must be informed within 14 days.

Pupils who repeatedly go missing from Homefield Preparatory School premises or activities

Pupils who repeatedly go missing from school premises or activities will require special procedures. Teaching staff will be informed to keep a close eye on the pupil and to alert SMT the moment they have any cause for concern about the pupil's whereabouts. Staff may be told to inform the School Office as soon as they notice a particular pupil missing from their lesson.

Pupils who repeatedly go missing may well trigger a Child Protection concern as going missing can be a sign of considerable emotional distress. The reasons for the pupil going missing will be explored by the Deputy Head and staff (Tutors, Head of Year) kept informed if there is cause for concern.

There may also be sanctions for pupils who repeatedly go missing because of the staff time involved in finding them, and possibly also police time.

Procedures for pupils missing from school

Pupils whose absence from school gives rise to concern are potentially a Child Protection concern. Unauthorised absences of longer than ten days must be reported to the local authority. In practice, the Headmaster must be kept informed sooner than this if there are concerns about a pupil's attendance.

The school would have concerns about a pupil who was absent from school without explanation or authorisation and where the School Office or teaching staff had been unable to contact the parents/guardians for an explanation. The procedure, as outlined in the Attendance Policy, is for the School Office to contact parents to ascertain the reason for any unexplained absences. Usually, such matters are resolved promptly when the parent responds.

The School Office staff must pass on the names of any pupils whose absence is still unexplained to the Deputy Head or Headmaster.

Should a pupil be missing from school without authorisation or explanation for more than two days, the Deputy Head would call parents/guardians the following day if the pupil was still missing without explanation.

If they are unable to make contact, unless inappropriate to do so, the pupils' friends should be asked whether they have heard from the pupil and if so they should ask their friend to make contact with the school.

If after 48 hours, there has been no contact from parents or the pupil and the school is unable to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts through additional emergency contacts listed on the school's database, the Headmaster must be informed and a decision will be taken at that point about how to proceed. Legally the school must take action within 10 days and inform the local authority (two days in the case of a pupil on a child protection plan) but in practice, it is very unusual for a pupil to be absent from Homefield Preparatory School without any explanation for any length of time, and so the school would give consideration to contacting external services before the ten-day period had expired.

Actions to be followed if a pupil who travels independently does not arrive home

The Headmaster/Deputy Head is to be informed. SMT, staff and reception staff are to liaise carefully with the parent (or emergency contact if the parent is not available) regarding details of movements – check if he was marked on/off of school bus, if applicable. Identify the last time the child was seen – location and time and by whom. If possible, speak with the child's friends – did he mention going anywhere other than home? If he has a mobile phone, call his number. If he walks home, an available member of staff should trace the route by foot/vehicle as soon as possible. If the child has not made it home within a reasonable period of time beyond the time they were expected to arrive, the police should be informed.

Procedures to be followed when a child is not collected on time

If a child is not collected within 15 minutes of the agreed collection time, the school will call the contact numbers for the parent/carers. If there is no answer, the school office will begin

to call the emergency numbers for the child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after by an SMT member or our external club provider.

If the School is not able to make contact, the school will make a full written report of the incident and will undertake to look after the child safely throughout the time that he remains in our care, until such time as he has been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate, alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Services and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety.

The school's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Child Safeguarding Policy.