



Arbour House

Missing Child Policy

Policy Review Date: **November 2017**

Introduction

Arbour House School aims to provide a safe and secure environment and seeks to promote the welfare of all pupils, regardless of gender, ethnic background or ability. The production of this document in no way presupposes that students should or will go missing, but rather serves to provide staff with a clearly defined strategy for managing the situation in the unlikely event of its occurrence.

The particular characteristics of the pupils and the ethos of the school have been taken into consideration in preparing this policy and procedure. **The key issues are summarised as follows:**

1. The nature of the learning needs of pupils, with particular deficits in the areas of communication, social interaction and creativity/flexibility and unique sensory needs, places them in a position of vulnerability. These impairments may not be outwardly apparent to others and, in safeguarding each pupil, significant demands are placed upon staff and carers.
2. Every pupil is unique and therefore has different strengths, sensory needs and related issues which influence the bespoke and individualised curriculum. The level of support and provision is planned accordingly.
3. Pupils may present unpredictable, unprecedented, uninhibited and impulsive behaviour, without regard to, or understanding of, the consequences of their actions.
4. The school services aim to develop each pupil's independence and self-confidence and offers opportunities for them to make decisions and to solve problems. An essential element of every pupil's development is to be able to generalise skills and knowledge from the school to the wider community. Pupils have the opportunity to use and practise skills in real-life situations, both within and outside the education environment. Use of public facilities, services and community resources help pupils to learn to transfer skills and further their independence.
5. The school offers a high staff/student ratio and is committed to providing a level of support appropriate to meet the needs of each individual, both within the school and during out-of-school trips. Individual risk assessments identify the potential risks and detail the controls and actions required to minimise such risks.
6. Levels of support and supervision are based on regular assessments and review of individual needs.
7. Pupils are entitled to exercise their independence and a gradual progression towards self-advocacy, self-reliance and the acquisition of life skills is promoted.

Guidance on relevant procedures

The procedure focuses on the following areas:

- Prevention of such a situation arising;
- Management of the situation should a pupil be missing;
- Effective management review of situations involving a child missing from school.

Prevention of such a situation arising

The implementation of good practice which safeguards and promotes the welfare of each pupil plays an important part in keeping all pupil safe.

The whole staff team share the responsibility for educating pupils at the school. A clear understanding and vigilant implementation of the school's procedures is essential in promoting good practice. A variety of formal systems and practices (which are regularly reviewed) are operational. These serve to monitor, check and inform staff of the whereabouts of each student.

These include:

- The attendance register, which records the presence, or reason for absence, of each student at the beginning of each morning and afternoon. All parents/carers are provided with a copy of the school's Attendance Policy;
- 'Attendance Policy' and procedure for advising the school of absences or requesting authorisation for planned absence;
- The attendance board in the main office shows which pupils and staff are absent;
- The IN/OUT boards, which shows whether each pupil (and staff member) is within the school premises or not, and the 'Out of School Trips' sheet or 'Off-site diary', which displays details of those pupils' included in an education visit or trip;
- The ongoing system of individual record keeping relating to each student through his/her time at the school;
- The 'Out-of-School Trips Procedure', which includes venue risk assessments, individual risk assessments and Individual Positive Support Plans in respect of each pupil, relevant to trips out;
- Any pupil leaving the school unescorted does so with permission from an appropriate member of staff and in accordance with the school's policy and parental agreement to the pupil making planned, unescorted off-site trips;
- A high staff/student ratio during play times, break times and less structured periods;
- Pupils, wherever possible, are taught to be able to give details of their name, school and home address when circumstances require this.

Management of the situation should a pupil be missing during school hours

In the event of a pupil going missing from school without permission or a pupil does not arrive at school and no message has been received from parents and there has been no authorisation of absence, the school will contact parents to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts.

In the event of a student being missing, or absconding **during school hours**

- Staff will take all reasonable steps, under the direction of the Headteacher to find a pupil (i.e. checking IN/OUT and absence boards and their individual record book, searching the premises, or area if out of school).
In carrying out these checks, at no time should any other pupil be placed at risk or left unsupervised;
- The school will continue to monitor the pupil's absence without authority through its existing systems. Where a high level or worrying pattern of absences is recorded the school will investigate the reasons for the absences with parents and, if appropriate, social services and the LA;
- If, after carrying out these initial actions the child remains missing, the senior staff member on duty will contact either the Executive Headteacher or the Regional Director who will assume responsibility as the Incident Co-ordinator;
- After consultation a decision is taken to call the police to assist. In any event, the school is obliged to report children who have been missing for 30 minutes or more to the police, the child's parents and placing authority;
- **Detailed at Appendix 1** is the information to be made available to the police when reporting a missing child;
- Once located, the pupil should be collected and returned to the school safely, accompanied, wherever possible, by staff or adults familiar to him/her.

Effective reviewing of situations involving a missing child incident

Upon return to school, the pupil (wherever possible) is given the opportunity to meet with a member of staff to consider the reasons for absence without authority. Any reasons given are recorded and considered in relation to how the pupil is cared for and the school's care practice. The pupil should be responded to positively on their return.

Where it is not possible to obtain the view of the pupil, the school should explore the antecedents to the incident in an objective manner, in an attempt to establish the reasons for the pupil's actions.

Any report from the pupil that s/he went missing because of abuse at the school must be referred immediately, by the school, to the local Social Services department for consideration under Safeguarding procedures, and appropriate action will be taken by the school to protect the pupil concerned, and other pupils as necessary.

All staff involved will be expected to write a full, accurate, objective report of the incident (prior to leaving the school premises), without consultation or discussion with colleagues. The report should be forwarded to either the Executive Headteacher or Regional Director within 24 hours. They will then inform the Board of Proprietors.

Information from the reports and views of the pupils (where obtained) and parents will be considered by the school and, where appropriate, placing authorities, and practices and procedures reviewed and amended as appropriate, in the light of information received.

When a pupil has absconded in the past, and is at risk of doing so again (if not supervised) the school will establish procedures to monitor the pupil and specify how s/he may be prevented from leaving the school without authority in future. These procedures may include physical modification to the premises, behavioural and/or therapeutic approaches to change the student's behaviour, or physical restraint (in accordance with the school's policy).

Full details of the incident, action taken by staff, the circumstances of the pupil's return and subsequent action taken by the board of proprietors will be made available to parents/carers, placing authorities, the education authority local to the school and that of the pupil's home and any other agencies involved.

Appendix 1

**Arbour House School
Missing Child Policy**

Notification proforma to be completed before contacting the Police

Full Name of Student			
Date of Birth		Age:	
Gender			
Ethnicity		Nationality:	
Last Known Address of the child			
Date the child went missing		Time child went missing:	
Is the child subject to a CIN	Yes / No		
Is the child subject to a CP plan	Yes / No		
Is the Child Looked After?	Yes / No	If Yes, what type of placement: Residential / Foster/ Other	
What, if known, has led to the child going missing:			
Has the child a known mental health need?	Yes / No If Yes, give details		
Is the child at risk of sexual exploitation?	Yes / No If Yes, give details		
Date Police Notified:		Time Police Notified:	

What was the child wearing at time of going missing		
Brief Description of the missing child	Skin Colour	
	Hair colour	
	Distinguishing Features	
	Height	
	Build	
Any other relevant information		

Police Contact Details:

Missing from education contact Dorset Police:		Contact Tel No.	
Dorset Police			
Name of Officer Taking the Call			
Initial Guidance received from Police			

Arbour House Contact Details:

Incident Reporting Officer	
Position held at Arbour House	
Address	
Contact Telephone Number	
Emergency Contact Telephone Number	

Social Services Contact Details:

Social Worker		Contact No:	
Social Worker Manager:		Contact No:	
Local Authority			
Emergency Duty Team		Contact No:	
Date of notification to Safeguarding service			

Parent Contact Details:

Name		Relationship to Child:	
Address		Contact No:	

Follow up interview and Action:

Date Child Found:			
Return Interview completed on:		Contact No:	
Return Interview to be completed by:			

Appendix 2

Introduction

Children who go missing may sometimes be running from something which places them at risk and may run into or to, situations which also place them at risk. Children may need to talk about these issues, however professionals need to find out why the child goes missing in order to safeguard them.

Who Interviews the Child?

Professionals must liaise to ensure that children are not interviewed more than is absolutely necessary about the same thing. The Police will interview all children when they return. In addition all children should be offered the opportunity to talk to an independent person whom they trust.

According to the Young Runaways Report (SEU, 2002) the professionals most closely involved with the child are often frustrated by the child's behaviour which means that children are likely to receive a negative response when they return. This response can stop the child talking about their experience and exacerbate the situation rather than resolve it for the child.

The independent person could be a social worker other than the child's social worker, if they have one, or a teacher, school nurse, Connexions, Youth or Youth Offending Team Worker, a voluntary sector practitioner or a police officer whom the child knows and trusts. The child should be asked who they wish to speak to.

The following points need to be considered when interviewing a missing person:

- Try to determine the reason why the person went missing and in particular, if they have been subject to violence, abuse or bullying;
- Establish whether they have been a victim of crime before or while missing;
- Establish if they have been committing Crime whilst missing;
- Discover where and by whom they have been harboured;
- Obtain information which may lead to their early discovery should they go missing again;
- Put in place any support and preventative measures to avoid such a recurrence (consider, EWMHS, YOT, and Children's Social Care etc).

Appendix 3

Areas to be Covered in interview (The fullness of the interview will depend on the circumstances and the degree of risk to the child.)

1. Is the child happy where they are living, or are they worried/upset about anything?
2. Where was the child and who were they with?
3. What did the child do whilst they were missing?
4. Did the child feel safe and looked after?
5. What happened when the child got home?
6. What does the child want to have happen now – short term/long term?
7. Parents/carers view of the incident?
8. The interviewer should provide the child with information about how they can access further or ongoing support services. Record the information here: