



Children Missing Education Policy

Updated
March 2021

CHILDREN MISSING IN EDUCATION POLICY - APPLIES TO WHOLE SCHOOL INCLUDING EYFS

This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Missing Child Policy
- KCSIE 2020

It takes full account of the child protection procedures agreed by Kent County Council and statutory guidance.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

A child who is missing from an education setting is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect. St Faith's Prep School will put in place appropriate safeguarding responses if children are missing from school. We will follow-up unexplained absences of any student with a telephone call from the school office on the morning of the first day of absence and priority will be given to vulnerable children especially those on a Child Protection Plan. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) will notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a student who is on the student safeguarding register. St Faith's Prep School works within the safeguarding partners in Kent and as such, access the services for Children Missing Education within the Kent Local Authority. The school will follow the protocol to identify children missing from education. This applies to all starters and leavers at non-standard transition points. Any changes to our admission register will trigger notification to our Single Point of Contact (SPOC) at Kent County Council Welfare Service (KELSI Digital Front Door).

The school will view absence as both a safeguarding issue and an educational issue. Termly Persistent Absence data i.e 85% or below will be reported to our SPOC, KELSI Digital Front Door, at Kent County Council Welfare Services. The school secretary (Shirley Bourne) will also inform her of any student who has been absent without the school's permission for 10 continuous school days. Additionally, the school secretary will notify the School Business Manager (Julie Haywood) of any student who is going to be deleted from the admissions register where the student:

- has been taken out of school by his/her parents and is being educated outside the school system e.g. elective home education; has ceased to attend St Faith's Prep School and no longer lives within reasonable distance;
- has been permanently excluded;
- has been removed from the admissions register at non-standard transitions i.e. where a child leaves St Faith's Prep School Prep before completing Year 6.

Requests for special leave

Parents requesting special leave have to fill in an absence form which is then passed to the Head. The absence may be declared authorised or may be refused. If the parents then take the child out of school, this becomes an unauthorised absence. The school will be mindful of risks to children including FGM and travelling to conflict zones.

Absence after a holiday

After every holiday, including half term, the parents of any absent children are immediately contacted to ensure that the children have not gone on unauthorised extended leave. Any requests for extended leave in school time are refused unless parents can provide evidence of an emergency e.g. sickness, bereavement etc. In all cases parents are asked to provide a return date.

St Faith's Prep School Children Missing Education Policy

Patterns of children missing education can be an indicator of either abuse or safeguarding risks. A relatively short period a child is missing does not reduce the risk of harm to that child, and all absence or non-attendance should be considered with other known factors or concerns.

Designated Safeguard Leads (DSLs) and staff should consider:

Single missing days:

- Is there a pattern in the day missed?
- Is it before or after the weekend suggesting the child is away from the area?
- Are there specific lessons or members of staff on these days?
- Is the parent informing the school of the absence on the day?
- Are missing days reported back to parents to confirm their awareness?
- Is the child being sexually exploited during this day? Do the parents appear to be aware?
- Are the pupil's peers making comments or suggestions as to where the pupil is?

Continuous missing days:

- Has the school been able to make contact with the parents? Is medical evidence being provided?
- Are any siblings attending school (either our or local schools)?
- Did we have any concerns about radicalisation, FGM, forced marriage, honour-based violence or sexual exploitation?
- Have we had any concerns about physical or sexual abuse?

Children Missing from Home or Care

Children who run away from home or from care provide a clear behavioural indication that they are either unhappy or do not feel safe in the place that they are living. Research shows that children run away from conflict, neglect, abuse, problems at home or school, or because children are being groomed by predatory individuals who seek to exploit them.

The association of chief police officers has provided the following definitions and guidance.

A "Missing" person is: '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 another.'

An "Absent" person is: 'A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.'

All cases classified as Missing by the police will receive an active police response - such as deployment of police officers to locate a child. Cases where the child is classified as Absent will be recorded by the police and risk assessed regularly but no active response will be deployed. The Absent case will be resolved when a young person returns or new information comes to light suggesting that he/she is at risk. In the latter instance, the case is upgraded to Missing.

Within any case of children who are missing both push and pull factors will need to be considered.

Push factors include:

- Conflict with parents/carers;
- Feeling powerless;
- Being bullied/abused;
- Being unhappy/not being listened to;

St Faith's Prep School Children Missing Education Policy

- The Toxic Trio (domestic violence, mental ill-health and drug/alcohol misuse (as defined by Ofsted)). Working Together notes these issues rarely exist in isolation. There is a complex interaction between the three issues.

Pull factors include:

- Wanting to be with family/friends;
- Drugs, money and any exchangeable item;
- Peer pressure;
- For those who have been trafficked into the United Kingdom as unaccompanied asylum seeking children there will be pressure to make contact with their trafficker.

As a school we will inform all parents of children who are absent (unless the parent has informed us). If the parent is also unaware of the location of their child, and the definition of Missing is met, we will either support the parent to/directly contact the police to inform them.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or (c) through the violence or threat of. It does not always involve physical contact and can occur through the use of technology. Staff should be aware of the following indicators for children who:

- appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- Associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- Suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- Misuse drugs and alcohol;
- Go missing for periods of time or come home late; and
- Regularly miss school or education

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. CSE can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex. It can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity and may occur without the child or young persons immediate knowledge (e.g. through others copying videos or images they have created and posted on social media). If required, we make a holistic assessment of vulnerability, examining risk and protective factors as set out in the statutory guidance Working Together.

The above CCE indicators can also be indicators of CSE, as can:

- Children who have older girlfriends or boyfriends; and
- Children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant

Sexual exploitation can have links to other types of crime. These include:

1. Child trafficking;
2. Domestic abuse;

St Faith's Prep School
Children Missing Education Policy

3. Sexual violence in intimate relationships;
4. Grooming (including online grooming);
5. Abusive images of children and their distribution;
6. Drugs-related offences;
7. Gang-related activity;
8. Immigration-related offences; and
9. Domestic servitude.

The following vulnerabilities are examples of things children can experience that might make them more susceptible to child sexual exploitation:

10. Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse;
11. Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example);
12. Recent bereavement or loss;
13. Social isolation or social difficulties;
14. Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality;
15. Economic vulnerability;
16. Homelessness or insecure accommodation status;
17. Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited;
18. Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work;
19. Having a physical or learning disability;
20. Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories); and
21. Sexual identity.

Actions:

22. Use missing persons approach if appropriate
23. Report continuous absence of ten days
24. Follow procedures around concerns
25. Victims can be of any age, gender, ethnicity or nationality. Look for signs of malnourishment, bruising or lack of required paperwork.

Students being withdrawn from school

If a student is withdrawn from St Faith's Prep School, the KELSI Digital Front Door at Kent County Council Welfare Service will be notified so that all reasonable efforts can be made to confirm the school to which the student is being admitted; their confidential educational and student protection records will be sent separately. Educational records sent to our school concerning a student who is not registered by the parents will be returned and the school advised to refer to their Local Authority Education Welfare Service.

Appendix 1

Proposed timeline for reporting a child missing from education

Day 1 - Phone call

A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent or carer that the child is safe at home.

Response from parent	Next step from school
There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers	Call back. Risk assess after 2 hours
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is safe with them	Ask for reason for absence and record on your school's attendance management system
The person answering is not the parent/carer and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe	The school's designated lead for child protection should be consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child.
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned	School to advise the parent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing • Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searching for the child • Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school, in case he/she has sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment • Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing

Day 2 - Follow up phone call

A subsequent telephone call must be made either from the school landline or preferably a mobile phone.

Day 3 - Write/email parents

Write or email to the parent in plain English, asking for contact to be made with the school immediately. Please give the parents/carers 3 working days to make contact and if you are aware that English may not be the parent's first language, copy the letter into a language that may be more accessible.

Day 5/6 - Home visit

Arrange a visit to the home address ensuring that risk assessments are in place

Once you have completed these checks (or within 10 days, whichever is earlier)

If the child has not been seen and the parents or carers have not made contact with either, schools must report the child as missing from education.