

Packwood

Part of the Shrewsbury
School Family



Missing Child Policy

2026-2027

Packwood School

Applies to: Whole School, including EYFS

Owner: Headmaster and DSL

Approved by: Governing Body

Review Cycle: Annual

1. Policy Statement

The welfare, safety and protection of every pupil are of paramount importance to the School. The School recognises that any situation in which a pupil's whereabouts are unknown must be treated as a matter of urgency and considered through both a safety and safeguarding lens. A child who goes missing may be at risk of harm and may be vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health difficulties, peer-on-peer abuse, criminal activity or other safeguarding concerns. Schools are expected to have appropriate arrangements for responding to missing children, children missing education and repeated missing episodes.

This policy applies to all pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), boarders, day pupils, pupils attending educational visits and pupils participating in school activities outside normal lesson times.

The policy should be read alongside the School's:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Pupil Supervision Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Boarding Handbook (where applicable)

This policy reflects the principles contained within Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools, the EYFS Statutory Framework, the Independent School Standards Regulations and, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

2. Objectives

The School aims to:

- Safeguard pupils whose whereabouts become unknown.
- Ensure a swift, coordinated and proportionate response to incidents.
- Minimise risk to pupils and maintain the safety of others.
- Fulfil statutory safeguarding responsibilities.
- Ensure effective communication with parents, carers and external agencies.
- Promote a culture of vigilance and accountability.
- Identify and address any underlying safeguarding concerns.
- Learn from incidents to reduce future risk.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff have a duty to maintain appropriate supervision, follow registration and attendance procedures diligently, and take immediate action if a pupil cannot be located.

Any member of staff who becomes aware that a pupil's whereabouts are unknown must immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Deputy DSL, Head, Deputy Head or another member of the Senior Leadership Team. Staff must never assume that a pupil is elsewhere on site or under another member of staff's supervision without confirmation.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for ensuring that all incidents are assessed from a safeguarding perspective. The DSL will determine whether further safeguarding action is required, liaise with external agencies where appropriate, oversee incident recording and ensure that appropriate support is put in place for the pupil. Current safeguarding guidance identifies missing episodes as a potential indicator of wider safeguarding concerns.

The Head is responsible for overseeing significant incidents, supporting communication with parents and governors, and ensuring that lessons learned are reflected in school procedures and risk assessments.

Governors maintain strategic oversight of safeguarding arrangements and will receive information regarding significant incidents through established safeguarding reporting mechanisms.

4. Preventative Measures

The School seeks to minimise the likelihood of a pupil going missing through robust supervision arrangements, effective registration procedures, secure site management and a culture of safeguarding vigilance.

Measures include:

- Accurate registration and attendance procedures.
- Appropriate staff deployment and supervision.
- Controlled site access and visitor management.
- Educational visit risk assessments.
- Boarding supervision arrangements.
- Staff safeguarding training.
- Clear signing in and signing out procedures.
- Secure collection arrangements for younger pupils.

The School will seek to maintain at least two emergency contacts for every pupil wherever reasonably possible in line with current safeguarding expectations.

5. Procedure When a Pupil is Missing on Site

A pupil will be regarded as missing when their whereabouts cannot be established and there is reasonable concern regarding their safety or welfare.

Once a concern is identified, the member of staff must immediately notify a senior member of staff and the DSL. The time at which the concern was raised must be recorded.

Duty staff should be vigilant during free time and should make a particular effort to 'keep tabs' on the

whereabouts of any child known to be distressed.

- If a member of staff suspects, having failed to establish a satisfactory explanation for absence, that a child may be missing from the school or may be hiding somewhere in the grounds, he/she should immediately inform the Head (or in his absence, the Deputy Head) who will institute a search.
- Such staff (and senior children, if appropriate) as are available and are required will be enlisted to assist with the search. One or two members of staff should take cars and drive around the local area. Ideally, they should carry mobile phones. One or two members of staff should speak sensitively to the friends of the missing child to ascertain why and where the missing child may have gone.

- If after 20 minutes the child remains missing, then the siren should be sounded and a check of all children made.
- If, after 30 minutes, the child remains missing, the Head or Deputy Head will telephone the local police and the child's parents.
- Should the child be missing from the boarding house in the evening/nighttime then the Head (or in his absence the Deputy Head) should be informed immediately and a search of the boarding house conducted by the boarding staff and the grounds by the resident staff. If the child cannot be found the parents and the police should be contacted immediately.
- Should a child go missing whilst on an outing then a search by available staff will take place, the meeting point will be checked and the venue's staff informed. If, after 15 minutes, the child cannot be found the police, and the parents will be informed. The Head will also be informed.

The search may include:

- Classrooms and teaching spaces.
- Toilets and changing rooms.
- Medical facilities.
- Sports facilities.
- Library and communal areas.
- Outdoor learning spaces.
- Boarding accommodation.
- Vehicles and transport areas.
- All other locations where the pupil may reasonably be expected to be.

Attendance records and registers will be checked. Where available, CCTV footage may be reviewed. External exits, gates and perimeter security arrangements will also be checked.

Throughout the incident, the welfare and supervision of other pupils will remain a priority.

All actions, decisions and timings must be recorded contemporaneously.

6. Escalation and Contact with Parents and External Agencies

Where a pupil cannot be located promptly, parents, carers and emergency contacts will be contacted without delay.

The School will assess the circumstances of the incident, taking account of factors including:

- Age and vulnerability of the pupil.
- Medical needs.
- Additional educational needs.
- Previous missing incidents.
- Time elapsed.
- Weather conditions.
- Known safeguarding concerns.

The School will determine whether contact with the Police, Children's Social Care or other relevant agencies is required. Where there is concern for a child's immediate safety, emergency services will be contacted without delay.

All communications and decisions will be fully documented.

7. Children Missing Education

The School recognises that children who are missing education may be at increased risk of harm. Persistent absence, repeated unexplained absence, prolonged absence or unknown whereabouts may indicate wider safeguarding concerns and will always be considered through a safeguarding lens.

The School will investigate unexplained absences promptly, seek contact with parents and carers, and involve the DSL where concerns arise.

Where appropriate, the School will:

- Undertake safeguarding enquiries.
- Liaise with the Local Authority.
- Follow statutory Children Missing Education procedures.
- Maintain detailed records of actions taken.
- Consider whether patterns of absence indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation or other vulnerabilities.
- The School will comply with its responsibilities under statutory Children Missing Education guidance.

8. Educational Visits and Off-Site Activities

The School recognises that pupils can become separated from their group whilst participating in educational visits and off-site activities.

Visit Leaders are responsible for ensuring appropriate supervision and accountability arrangements throughout any visit.

Should a pupil be believed to be missing during an off-site activity, a coordinated search will begin immediately while ensuring that the remainder of the group remains safely supervised. Venue staff and relevant authorities may be informed as appropriate, and the School will be contacted immediately.

Decisions regarding parental notification, police involvement and additional action will be informed by the circumstances and assessed level of risk.

A written record will be completed following any incident.

9. Boarding Provision

Where boarding provision exists, the School recognises its responsibilities to respond swiftly and effectively whenever a boarder's whereabouts become unknown.

If a boarder is believed to be missing, boarding staff must immediately notify the House Parent, DSL and relevant senior staff. Searches of residential accommodation and associated facilities will commence without delay.

Appropriate enquiries may be undertaken with friends, peers and staff members in order to establish the pupil's last known movements. Parents and external agencies will be informed as appropriate, taking account of the circumstances and assessed risk.

All incidents involving missing boarders will be recorded on the School's safeguarding recording system.

Boarding staff will receive appropriate training regarding their responsibilities under this policy and relevant boarding standards.

10. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

The safety and welfare of children within the EYFS is of particular importance.

Where an EYFS child cannot be located, an immediate search will be initiated and a headcount undertaken. The Head and DSL will be informed without delay.

The School will ensure that:

- Remaining children continue to be supervised safely.
- Appropriate EYFS staffing ratios are maintained.
- Parents are contacted promptly.

- Police involvement is sought where necessary.

The School will carefully review any incident involving an EYFS child and determine whether any further safeguarding actions or notifications are required.

The EYFS Statutory Framework requires providers to maintain procedures for responding to children who go missing.

11. When a Pupil is Found

When a missing pupil is located, their welfare will be the School's immediate priority.

The pupil will be offered appropriate reassurance and support and, where necessary, medical attention. Parents will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will review the circumstances of the incident with the Headmaster and consider:

- Why the pupil went missing.
- Whether any safeguarding concerns exist.
- Whether additional support is required.
- Whether risk assessments should be amended.
- Whether external agencies should be consulted.
- Repeated missing incidents will trigger an enhanced safeguarding review.

12. Recording and Reporting

The School will maintain accurate and comprehensive records of all missing pupil incidents.

Records will include:

- Date and time of the incident.
- Circumstances of the concern.
- Actions taken.
- Individuals involved.
- Agencies contacted.
- Outcome of the incident.
- Safeguarding considerations.
- Lessons identified.

- Records will be maintained in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

13. Monitoring, Review and Governance

Following any significant incident, the Head and DSL will review the effectiveness of the School's response, consider any lessons learned and determine whether changes to procedures, supervision arrangements or risk assessments are necessary.

Significant incidents and patterns of repeated missing episodes will be reported to Governors through established safeguarding reporting arrangements.

This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier in response to:

- Changes in legislation.
- Revised statutory guidance.
- Local safeguarding partnership recommendations.
- Serious incidents or safeguarding reviews.
- Inspection findings.

The School remains committed to maintaining effective arrangements that promote the safety, welfare and protection of all pupils in its care.