

# **LOUDWATER COMBINED SCHOOL**

## **Children who go missing or who are absent policy.**

The welfare of all our children at Loudwater Combined School is our paramount responsibility. A child going missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, including child sexual exploitation and so called 'honour based' violence.

Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she always has a key responsibility for helping to keep all the children safe. Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2024). Our staffing ratios are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that he or she is in our care.

During the school day, teachers are also expected to be aware of any pupils missing from their lessons and to follow up any concerns they might have about a pupil's absence from a lesson. We understand a "missing" pupil to be a pupil not present without authorisation or explanation.

This policy applies to all pupils in the school including EYFS pupils. Loudwater Combined 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.

This policy should be read in conjunction with: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Attendance for Learning Policy, Fire Policy, Educational Visits Policy.

Loudwater Combined School understands missing pupils to belong to two distinct categories:

- 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.
- 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.

In the case of such pupils, we follow the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006) (with 2016 amendment). This means that we have important statutory reporting responsibilities to the Local Authority. This is because pupils who are missing from education must be treated as potentially vulnerable.

### **ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IF A CHILD GOES MISSING FROM THE SCHOOL**

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible.

If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions:

- Take a register to ensure that all the other children are present.
- Check with the Office who will check for messages or if the child has been signed out.
- Inform a member of SLT.
- Ask all adults and children calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the child.
- Occupy the other children in their classroom(s) with a relevant activity.
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search everywhere within the school, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, washrooms etc. where a small child might hide.
- Check the doors, gates for signs of entry/exit.

If the child is still missing, the following steps would be taken:

- Inform the Head teacher and/or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- The Head teacher (or other SLT member in her absence) to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the school at once.
- The DSL/Head teacher would notify the Police

- The Head teacher would arrange for staff to search the school premises and grounds.
- If the child's home is within walking distance, a member of staff would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with him/her.
- The DSL would inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the school's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- The school would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority.
- Inform the Chair of Governors.
- The school's insurers would be informed.
- If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

During the investigation into the missing child, 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. In the case of an incident involving a pupil from our EYFS setting going missing, Ofsted must be informed within 14 days. A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

#### **ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IF A CHILD GOES MISSING ON AN OUTING**

- An immediate head count would be carried out to ensure that all the other children were present.
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity.
- Inform the Head teacher and/or the Deputy DSL by mobile phone.
- The remaining children would be taken back to school or to a place of safety.
- The Head teacher would ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. Ask them to come to the venue/ the school at once.
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search.
- Contact the Police.
- The DSL would inform the LSCB and the school's LADO.
- The school would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the Local Authority.
- Inform the Chair of Governors.
- The school's insurers would be informed.
- If the child is injured a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these would be adjusted.

#### **ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF ONCE THE CHILD IS FOUND**

- Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child.
- Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing.
- The Head teacher will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the LADO if necessary).
- The Head teacher will instigate a full investigation (if appropriate involving the LSCB).
- Media queries should be referred to the Head teacher (after discussion with the LADO if appropriate).
- The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements
- The report 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 s/he appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future.

#### **PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF WHEN A CHILD IS NOT COLLECTED ON TIME**

If a child is not collected within half an hour of the agreed collection time, we will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. If there is no answer, we will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after in the L8R after-school club.

If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers within a one-hour period when the premises are closing, the Head teacher will contact the Duty Social Care Officer.

Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. The Head teacher or DSL will make a full written report of the incident.

We undertake to look after the child safely throughout the time that he or she remains under our care, until such a time as s/he has been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate, alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police 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 Safeguarding Policy.

### **PROCEDURES FOR A CHILD WHO IS ABSENT FROM SCHOOL WITHOUT AUTHORISATION**

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.(Bucks CME) In practice, the Head teacher 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 for Learning Policy, is for the School Office to contact parents via telephone 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 Head teacher.

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

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 Head teacher must be informed and a decision will be taken at that point about how to proceed.

Legally the school must act within 10 days and inform the local authority (2 days in the case of a pupil on a child protection plan). In practice, it is very unusual for a pupil to be absent from Loudwater Combined School without any explanation for any length of time. Therefore, the school would consider contacting external services before the ten-day period had expired.

Date: November 2024

Review Date: November 2025