Absence (Missing) Policy

This Policy and the Procedures applies to all paid staff, volunteers, agency staff and anyone working on behalf of Gretton School, students, parents/carers, external agencies and members of the public.

Introduction

It is Gretton School's aim to ensure that all students remain safe and supported during their school day and during boarding time.

National Minimum Standards – Residential Special Schools (April 2015)
Standard 15.6

The school's procedures are compatible with the local runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the school is located. Where children placed out of authority go missing, the head of care (or school equivalent) follows the local RMFHC protocol and complies with and makes staff aware of any other processes required by the placing authority.

Policy

Gretton School has safety measures in place where reasonably practical to prevent students from leaving site without permission, getting lost whilst on outings or abducted. A lot of emphasis is placed on the students to make positive choices and help them choose not to want to leave site without permission. Gretton School does recognise that some students will still choose to leave site on occasions.

As part of the assessment process for each student, consideration must be given to the risk of the student becoming 'Absent'. If there is a risk of the student becoming 'Absent', further consideration must be given to the risk posed to the student or others as a result. Details regarding risk and actions to be taken are to be included in the Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP). This will include when the police may be called and will depend on the level of risk to each individual student.

Each student will be given the address and contact details of the school and boarding accommodation on admission.

This Policy takes into consideration the **Statutory Guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care** and the **RMFHC (Runaway and Missing from Home and Care) protocols.** The RMFHC protocols will be followed within Cambridgeshire along with other Placing Authorities from where the students come from.

Absence (Missing) Policy

Definitions:

Absent:

A person is **not in a place** where they are expected or required to be but where carers or police do not feel the need to start a full 'Missing' investigation at that stage.

Missing:

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 others.**

We will report any student under the age of 12, automatically as 'Missing' rather than 'Absent' due to the levels of risk. We may also report any other student older than 12 years as 'Missing' should it be deemed necessary due to their diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Diagnosis and their vulnerability in society.

To prevent a student from becoming 'Absent' / 'Missing'

In the first instance, it is important to do everything possible to prevent a student from becoming absent without authorisation and placing themselves or others at risk. Some of the ways to do this are:

- Staff build positive and trusting relationships with the students ensuring they are made to feel safe with staff and their environment.
- Staff ensure that, as part of the 24 hour curriculum, advice and guidance is given on 'Keeping Safe', how to use a phone, how to contact the police, understanding of strangers, road safety etc.
- Staff adequately supervise the students in line with their agreed staffing ratio and expectation required of them.

Procedure to follow should a student become 'Absent'/ Missing'

- Staff are to follow the student and encourage them to talk about why they want to leave and ensure their safety is paramount where possible.
- Staff to take note of what the student is wearing.
- If the student's whereabouts is known, staff will decide what actions are necessary to return the student to school or home. Staff are to maintain contact with the student, where possible.
- If the student is located and appears to be at risk or vulnerable (due to the environment), staff are to remain close to the student and supervise them as much as possible, seeking further advice and guidance from the police and Senior Leadership Team.
- If the student has not been seen leaving or staff are unaware of the student's location, staff are to thoroughly search the grounds of the school and boarding accommodation, the local parks and village or area they were last seen, and any other location that the student is likely to have gone.

Absence (Missing) Policy

- The Senior Leadership Team are to be informed that a student is missing within 10 minutes and updated as necessary. After 10 minutes staff involved and/or Senior Leadership Team will notify the police, (999) for all students 12 years old and under, and either 101 or 999 in an non emergency for those over 12 years to 19 years of age.
- Staff are to inform the student's parents (or person with Parental Responsibility) after contact with the police (unless stated otherwise in the student's Individual Behaviour Plan) and offer reassurance that staff are doing everything possible to find the student.
- Staff to update the parents where necessary.
- Police number is **999 or 101**

    Staff are to give the police the following details:
    Gretton School, Manor Farm Road, Girton, Cambridgeshire, CB3 0RX
    Telephone number: 01223 277438

- Staff are to provide the police with a description, a photo of the student and any other information in aid of helping to find the student. (Identity Sheet).
- Staff are to ask Police for a relevant email address at the time of reporting to enable them to forward the Identity Sheet promptly.
- If the student becomes absent as a result of abuse at the school, the staff must contact a Designated Safeguarding Person who will contact the Cambridgeshire LSCB and the student's Placing Authority, if different, immediately to discuss the appropriate Safeguarding procedures.
- The staff are to update all persons involved to share any developments regarding the student's absence.

    Once a student has been found or returned
- Staff are to collect the student if safe to do so. If it is deemed not safe to collect and return the student for any reason, staff are to request support from the police to return the student to school.
- Once the student is back in the care of the staff, staff are to ask the student how they are feeling, ask if they require any medical assistance or if they wish to talk to someone for further support. Staff are to offer the student the opportunity to talk about their reasons for leaving.
- The student is to be welcomed back and informed that they were missed and staff were very worried about them.
- Staff are to offer the student food and drink.
- If the student was due medication during their absence and the time has passed or staff are concerned that the student maybe under the influence of drugs, alcohol or appear to be unwell, staff are to seek immediate advice from either the student's GP, or the Emergency Out of Hours medical services prior to administering any medication. These concerns and advice given will need to be recorded in the student file, or schoolbase chronology log.

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- Staff are to monitor and observe the student on return from being 'Absent' or 'Missing' to ensure their overall welfare and needs are being met.
- Once the student has been returned to the care of the staff, staff are to contact all relevant persons (police, parents, social worker, senior leadership team etc.) to make them aware of the student's return and share any relevant information or concerns. It will need to be recorded that all the above (where applicable) have been informed.
- The police may visit the student to complete a 'Safe and Well Check'.
- Staff are to complete all paperwork (incident report) relating to the student being absent.
- Senior Leadership are to monitor the incident reports regularly to identify any patterns to the Absences and put strategies in place to minimise the Absences where possible.
- The student's Individual Behaviour Plan and Risk Assessment will need to be reviewed and amended if necessary.
- All staff involved during the student's absence are to receive a debrief and offered support as necessary.
- If any issue was raised regarding the welfare or safety of the student – this must be reported immediately to the Senior Leadership Team who will then arrange to contact the Safeguarding Team if necessary.

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