

Missing Persons Policy

Person Responsible:	G. Rughoobee (Head of Compliance/DSL), ratified by B. Elkins (Headteacher)
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Gretton School is owned and operated by Newcome Education, a subsidiary group of Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each and every one of its learners and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside all of these policies in order to ensure an awareness of the bigger picture. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the Equality Policy, the Health and Safety Policy and the Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core values.

In all the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility

, or who has care of the child. [Department for Education guidance](#) considers a 'parent' to include:

- *all biological parents, whether they are married or not*
- *any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative*
- *any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person*

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure regulatory compliance and the implementation of best practice:

- *Peninsula HROnline*
- *Peninsula BusinessSafe (Health and Safety)*
- *Carecheck (DBS)*
- *Educare (online CPD)*

1 INTRODUCTION

It is Gretton School's aim to ensure that all learners remain safe and supported during their school day and during boarding time and this policy relates principally to absconding and the way in which school will manage these incidents.

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.

2 POLICY

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

As part of the assessment process for each learner, consideration must be given to the risk of the learner becoming 'absent (missing)'. If there is a risk of the learner becoming 'absent (missing)', further consideration must be given to the risk posed to the learner 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.

Each learner 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 learners come from.

3 DEFINITIONS

Absent:

A person is **not in a place** where they are expected or required to be but where the school, 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 learner under the age of 12, automatically as 'missing' rather than 'absent' due to the increased levels of risk. We may also report any other learner older than 12 years as 'missing' should it be deemed necessary due to their diagnosis of Autism, any other identified risk factors and their vulnerability in society. This decision will be taken by the DSL/Headteacher or DDSL/Senior Leadership Team in the event of any absence.

4 TO PREVENT A LEARNER FROM BECOMING 'ABSENT' / 'MISSING'

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

- Staff building positive and trusting relationships with the learners ensuring they are made to feel safe with staff and within 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, where a safe meeting point is, understanding of strangers, road safety etc.
- Staff adequately supervise the learners in line with pre agreed staffing ratios and processes.
- Staff provide the learners in boarding with key contact numbers for use on any outing away from the school site.
- Staff consider any proactive positive behaviour strategies for individual learners and plan accordingly.

5 PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW SHOULD A LEARNER LEAVE THE SCHOOL SITE & LATER BECOME MISSING

- Staff should attempt to maintain the learner in view, keeping a safe distance and encourage where possible, the learner to talk about why they want to leave, ensuring their safety is paramount where possible.
- Staff to take note of what the learner is wearing and notify safeguarding that they have left the site using the school radio or telephone.
- If the learner's whereabouts is known, staff will liaise with the behaviour and safeguarding teams to decide what actions are necessary to return the learner to school or home. Staff are to maintain contact with the learner, where possible; however, if a learner decides to run, one staff will maintain their position and start to time the absence, another can continue in the direction the learner was last seen. Staff

will then follow guidance from the safeguarding team if the learner's absence is prolonged (further contact made once 10 mins has been reached; if they do not return and if their surroundings require intervention. These increased risks may determine a call for additional support by external services such as the police, and/or parents/carers.

- If the learner is located and appears to be at an increased risk or vulnerable (due to the environment or personal wellbeing), staff are to remain close to the learner and supervise them as much as possible, seeking further advice and guidance from the safeguarding team, Behaviour and Welfare team/or external services.
- If the learner has not been seen leaving or staff are unaware of their location, staff will thoroughly search the grounds of the school and boarding accommodation, the local parks, village and area they were last seen, as well as any other location that the learner is likely to have gone but report the absence to safeguarding immediately.
- The DSL will inform the Headteacher if a learner is missing and provide regular updates as necessary. After 10 minutes staff involved will provide their location through WhatThreeWords and the safeguarding team will determine if the police should be notified (for all learners aged up to 12 years old) or if an extended period of time is required (for older learners where there has been determined increased risk). Where this is not the case, and the learner is aged 13 or above, safeguarding will seek advice from 101 in a non emergency situation and/or liaise with them.

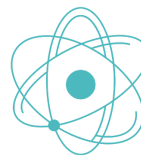
Staff are to give the police the following details:

Gretton School, Manor Farm Road, Girton, Cambridgeshire, CB3 0RX
or The Rectory, 65 High Street, Girton, Cambridgeshire CB3 0QD
Telephone number: 01223 277438

- The safeguarding team or member of the School Leadership Team will notify the learner's parents (or person with parental responsibility) after contact with the police (unless stated otherwise in the learner's Individual Behaviour Plan) and offer reassurance that staff are doing everything possible to find them.
- Staff to update the parents where necessary.
- Staff are to provide the police with a description of the learner and photo if available, together with any other information in aid of helping to find the learner.
- If the learner becomes absent as a result of alleged abuse at school, the DSL will contact the Cambridgeshire LSCB and the learner's placing authority, if different, to discuss any possible additional safeguarding procedures that may be required.
- The DSL will update the Headteacher and any other relevant personnel involved to share any developments regarding the learner's absence.

6 ONCE A LEARNER HAS BEEN FOUND OR RETURNED

- Staff are to collect the learner if safe to do so using the school vehicle. If it is deemed unsafe to collect and return the learner for any reason, staff are to request support from the police to return the learner to school.
- Once the learner is back in the care of the staff, staff will review with the learner how they are feeling and determine if they require any medical assistance or if they wish to



talk to someone for further support. Staff will offer the learner the opportunity to talk about their reasons for leaving.

- The learner is to be welcomed back, reassured and informed that they were missed and staff were very worried about them.
- Staff may offer the learner food and drink.
- If the learner was due medication during their absence and the time has passed or staff are concerned that the learner may be under the influence of drugs, alcohol or appear to be unwell, staff are to seek immediate advice from either the learner's GP, or 111 prior to administering any medication. These concerns and advice given will need to be recorded in the learner file and MyConcern.
- Staff will monitor and observe the learner upon their return from being 'absent' or 'missing' to ensure their overall welfare and needs are being met.
- Once the learner has been returned to the care of the staff, the safeguarding team are to contact all relevant persons (police, parents, social worker, senior leadership team etc.) to make them aware of the learner'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 learner to complete a 'Safe and Well Check'.
- Staff are to complete all paperwork (incident report/MyConcern) relating to the learner being absent.
- School Leadership will monitor the incident reports regularly to identify any patterns to the absences and liaise with the Behaviour and Welfare team to put strategies in place to minimise the absences where possible.
- The learner's Individual Behaviour Plan and Personal Risk Assessment will need to be reviewed and amended if necessary.
- All staff involved during the learner's absence are to attend a debrief and will be offered support as necessary.
- If any issue was raised regarding the welfare or safety of the learner that was not already known to us – this too must be reported immediately to the safeguarding team where it will be further reviewed.

7 REFLECTIONS ON RETURN

When a learner is found, they must be offered an opportunity for reflection. These will provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home.

The discussion should be carried out within 72 hours of the learner returning to school, their home or care setting. This should be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person (ie, someone not involved in caring for the learner) from either the Safeguarding, Behaviour or School Leadership Team and who is able to follow-up any actions that emerge. Learners sometimes need to build up trust with a person before they will discuss in depth the reasons why they chose to abscond.

The interview and actions that follow from it should:

- identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the ‘Safe and Well check’ – either before they absconded or whilst missing;
- understand and try to address the reasons why the learner left; help them to feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them absconded;
- provide them with information on how to stay safe if they determine they have to leave again - including helpline numbers.

The meeting will be held in a neutral place where the learner feels safe. The meeting provides an opportunity to hear from the learner about why they went missing and to understand the risks and issues faced by the learner while missing. This could include exploring issues where a learner:

- has been reported missing on two or more occasions;
- is frequently away from placement (or their home) without authorisation
- has been hurt or harmed while they have been missing
- is at known or suspected risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking
- is at known or suspected risk of involvement in criminal activity or drugs
- has contact with people posing a risk to children
- has been engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities while missing.

The assessment of whether a learner might abscond again should be determined considering the following:

- their individual circumstances, including family circumstances;
- their motivation for absconding
- their potential destinations and associates
- their recent pattern of absences
- the circumstances in which the learner was found or returned
- and their individual characteristics and risk factors such as whether a learner has other vulnerabilities.

School will work to review the learner’s Individual Behaviour Plan and support strategies in order to include any information which may have come from the reflection with the learner in order to reduce the possibility of an absconsion recurring.