



## Ruthin School

MISSING CHILD POLICY	
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# Missing Child Policy

## PART ONE: MISSING CHILD POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

The welfare of all of our children at Ruthin School is our paramount responsibility. A child going missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, including sexual exploitation and so called 'honour based' violence. Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. This includes the importance of effective information sharing to ensure our children are safe and receiving suitable education. Where staff have concerns that a child is missing from school, this policy should be followed.

Every member of our staff who works with children is aware of the requirements of the Welsh Government guidance *Keeping Learners Safe, January 2015*. Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that he or she is in our care.

This policy was drawn up having had regard to the Independent School Standards (set out in Schedule 1 to the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003) (in particular Schedule 1, paragraph 3), National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, and Welsh Government's *Statutory guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education (March 2017)*.

### INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Our pupil supervision policy describes:

- The arrangements for children arriving at school and leaving the premises at the end of the day
- The qualifications of our staff and the arrangements for supervising the children whilst they are in school
- The arrangements for registering the children in both morning and afternoon. We take a register of pupils at the start of the morning and during all lessons.
- Parents are responsible for notifying the school if their child is absent for any reason. The School will always contact the parent if the child fails to arrive at school without an explanation
- The physical security measures which prevent unsupervised access to or exit from the building
- The supervision of the playground and the physical barriers that separate it from the rest of the school

The enhanced supervisory arrangements for outings involving our pupils are set out in a detailed policy document: 'Educational Visits for Pupils'. This document is on our website and can be provided to parents on request. We review all our policies regularly (at least once a year) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive a thorough induction into the importance of effective supervision of pupils.

## **ACTION TO BE FOLLOWED BY STAFF IF A CHILD FAILS TO ATTEND FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

It is the parents'/carers' prime responsibility to ensure attendance at school and parents/carers are asked to inform the school as soon as possible if their child will not be attending school on a particular day.

If a pupil is absent without explanation, school administrative staff should, wherever possible, contact the parents/carers that same day, particularly for cases where the pupil skips lessons after registration. By contacting the parent/carer, the school ensures that they are aware that their child is not in school, enabling them to take steps, where necessary, to establish that their child is safe.

All new pupils are placed on the School's admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the School has agreed that the pupil will attend the School. If a child fails to attend on the agreed date, staff must inform the Headmaster and DSP without delay. The DSP will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

Where there are changes affecting the child (including a change of address or school), these will be reflected in the admission register. This will assist the School and external agencies when making enquiries to locate any missing children.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day pursuant to the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010. The School monitors attendance closely and will take action to address poor or irregular attendance.

The School will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more without permission.

Where a pupil has been continuously absent without authorisation for a period of not less than 20 school days (and there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unwell or unable to attend because of any unavoidable cause), and the School and local authority have failed, following reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is, the school may delete the pupil's name from the admission register. The School will inform the local authority of such deletion no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

The School also recognises its wider reporting duties following deletions from the admission register, in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to help identify children who are missing education and/or otherwise at risk of harm.

Where appropriate, reports may be made to the School's Education Welfare Officer for assistance in trying to improve a child's attendance.

## **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 during the working day:

- Check with the pupil's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check the sick bay
- Check with reception who will check the signing out/in book

- Inform the senior member of staff on duty
- Call the pupil's mobile telephone
- Ask all of the adults and pupils calmly if they can tell us when they last remember seeing the pupil
- Occupy all of the other pupils in their classroom(s) if in school
- At the same time, arrange for one or more adults to search the school grounds
- Check the doors, gates and CCTV records for signs of entry/exit

If a pupil is missing at bedtime or in the early hours, or they fail to return from 'leave out' at the appointed time, we would carry out the following actions:

- Check with the pupil's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Carry out a thorough search of the boarding area
- Call the pupil's mobile telephone
- Consult the senior member of boarding staff on duty in School (see duty rota)
- Check request for absence forms or any other information before contacting the senior member of staff on duty who will then deal with the matter if there is not a suitable explanation.

A record is kept by the school of any instances in which a pupil is missing from school without satisfactory permission and documentation, including the action taken and the pupil's explanation.

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

- Inform the Headmaster and the Designated Senior Person (DSP)
- Ask the Receptionist to ring the pupil's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. If they are a day parent, ask them to come to the school at once
- The DSP/Deputy would notify the Police
- The DSP/Deputy would arrange for staff to search the rest of the school premises and grounds
- If the pupil's home is within walking distance, a member of staff would set out on foot to attempt to catch up with him/her
- The DSP would inform the North Wales Safeguarding Children's Board (NWSCB) and the school's Education Welfare Officer
- The School would co-operate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority.
- Inform the Chairman of Council of Management
- The School's insurers would be informed

During the course of the investigation into the missing pupil, the school, in consultation with the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer, will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with.

A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the pupil was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be reviewed and, if necessary, be adjusted.

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

- An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other pupils were present
- An adult would search the immediate vicinity
- Inform the Head of School and the DSP/Deputy by mobile phone
- If appropriate, the remaining pupils would be taken back to school
- Ask the Receptionist to ring the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion. If appropriate, ask them to come to the venue/ the school at once
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search
- Contact the Police
- The DSP would inform the NWSCB and the School's Education Welfare Officer
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority
- Inform the Chairman of Council of Management
- The School's insurers would be informed
- If appropriate 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 pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- The Head of School will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the Local Authority Education Officer if necessary)
- Media queries should be referred to the Headmaster
- 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.