

Missing Child Policy & Procedures

Expanse Learning Wigan School

September 2024

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Version:
5

This Policy was approved by:
Board of Directors on 16th September 2024

Date for Review:
September 2025

1. Scope

This policy applies to all staff at Expanse Learning Wigan School (Hereafter referred to as the School).

2. Introduction

Expanse Learning Wigan School takes the safety of children very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in their care do not leave a session unaccompanied. The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. In the unlikely event that a child is noted to be missing from school premises, the school puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the most effective resolution of this potentially distressing situation. Many of our school routines and procedures are in place to contribute to the prevention of a child going missing and always ensuring the safety and security of all children.

If, in the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child's whereabouts, the following action will be taken:

3. Procedure for if a child leaves the setting unaccompanied:

Stage One - Search systematically

- All available staff to immediately check toilets, shared areas, rooms and playground to ensure the child is not hiding or locked in anywhere.
- One member of staff to immediately inform school office and the Headteacher or member of staff in charge and check whether the child has been signed out for an external appointment or has an internal appointment with a visiting professional. (Social Worker/Speech Therapist etc) The online DatabridgeMIS register will need checking by office staff as soon as a missing child has been reported.
- One member of staff to gather class and call the register to confirm that one named child is missing.
- Staff will ensure that all other students are kept safe and closely supervised throughout incident should it be during the school day. Calm should be kept in the event of a child reported missing at the end of the school day.

Stage Two

- After stage one is completed without resolution (no more than 10 minutes), school office staff will contact the police and parents/carers with parental responsibility. At this point, school will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident. The Headteacher will liaise with emergency services and parents/carers.
- Staff will call registers in all classes to confirm presence of other students, if the event is during the school day.

Stage Three

- The Headteacher should communicate the incident to the appropriate Local Authority
- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practicable and placed in the student's confidential record. The system the school uses is DatabridgeMIS and all staff should input any relevant information; including conversations with parents, carers, child minders, police, the Local Authority and any other person they feel has contributed to the collection of evidence.
- The Senior Management Team should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective was the response and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again. This information should also be collected in writing and onto DatabridgeMIS.

We will ensure that:

- We make regular checks to ensure that if an incident of this sort does happen, we have all the necessary phone numbers at hand – correct, up to date and kept together.
- If the police are called then the Wigan Safeguarding Hub are informed.
- If the Headteacher is not on the premises, she/he will be informed as soon as possible via the school office team, Safeguarding Lead or senior staff member in charge.
- We will provide the following information to Ofsted, if required: What happened?
 - What systems are in place for preventing such occurrences?
 - What we did, at what time and in what order.
 - Who we informed and when
 - We will cooperate fully in any investigation.
 - Recording
 - We will start to build a record as soon as is possible in the incident log, this will include:
 - *The last definite sighting of the child.*

- *Any unusual behaviour of the missing child or other children.*
- *How many children were on the premises?*
- *How many adults were on the premises and who?*
- *What steps have been taken and when, by whom.*

4. Dealing with people's reactions

We accept that the child's parents/carers will be frightened, distressed and angry. If the setting shares all policies with parents/carers, the situation will be easier for all because there will be an understanding of working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding.

We accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry, threaten legal action or approach the local press.

We will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

Responses could include

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
- That a full investigation is in hand.
- That the Local Safeguarding Hub have been informed.

5. Dealing with the media

Distressed parents/carers may contact the local press, or reporters may hear about the incident if the police are involved. It is sensible for one person, usually the Director of Pre-16 and Schools or the Headteacher to be the one who speaks for the setting. All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson.

The spokesperson for the setting is: Richard King (Director of Pre-16 and Schools) or in their absence Ed Hanley (Headteacher) .

6. When the child is found

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents/carers and others suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember:

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.

7. After the Incident

- We will review our current procedure.
- We will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.

8. Contacts

Police – 101 or in emergency 999

Wigan Safeguarding Hub Tel: Office hours 01942 828300

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months but can be revised as needed.

Impact of non-compliance

Staff:	Disciplinary action
Student:	Welfare
Legislation/organisational:	Reputational damage, litigation, statutory and non-regulated compliance. prosecution
Compliance lead:	Headteacher/Director of Schools
Policy Reference:	ELWS-OPER-POL-0026
Version:	5
Agreed policy location:	DatabridgeMIS and Company Webpage
Review Schedule:	12 Months
Does the policy require Governor approval?	No

Version Control

Version	Date	Revision	Review Date
1	01/01/2021	First Issue	31/12/2021
2	20/01/2022	Policy Review	19/01/2021
3	20/01/2022	Policy Review	19/01/2024
4	22/08/2023	Policy reviewed	31/08/2024
5	16/09/2024	Policy reviewed	16/09/2025