

Missing Child Policy and Procedures

Member of Staff Responsible	Deputy Head
Date of Policy	September 2026
Date for next review	September 2027 or updated following DfE or ISI guidance.
Approved By Governors	N/A
Distribution:	All

GUIDANCE ON MISSING CHILD POLICY & PROCEDURES WHEN A CHILD IS NOT COLLECTED ON TIME

A Legal Requirement incorporated into the EYFS Statutory Framework, an ISI Reporting Standard for Independent Schools with Early Years provision, a National Minimum Standard for Boarding Schools

References:

A: Handbook for the inspection of association independent schools, including residential (boarding) schools and registered early years settings <https://www.isi.net/inspection-explained/inspection-handbook/>

B: ISI Inspection Framework, <https://www.isi.net/inspection-explained/inspection-framework/>

C: Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, September 2026 [EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

D: Keeping Children Safe in Education, DfE guidance, Sept 2026: [Keeping children safe in education 2026 \(comes into force from 1 September 2026\)](#)

E: Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, DfE guidance, March 2026 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

F: Signs of Abuse NSPCC fact sheet: www.nspcc.org.uk/signsofabuse

G: Children Missing Education, DfE guidance, September 2025

[Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools - GOV.UK](#)

H: Working together to improve school attendance. DfE guidance, July 2026

[Working together to improve school attendance: July 2026](#)

INTRODUCTION

KCSIE 2026 states that governing bodies and proprietors should ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures in place in order for appropriate action to be taken in a timely manner to safeguard and promote children's welfare. These policies should include appropriate safeguarding arrangements to respond to children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions.

In any EYFS setting, the procedure for dealing with the circumstance of a child going missing at, or away from the setting is part of the information which must be made available to parents and/or carers (EYFS 3.74: Information for Parents and Carers).

CONTENTS OF POLICY

The consists of two parts, the first covering a missing child and the second covering the procedure to be followed by the school in the event of a parent failing to collect a child at the appointed time.

Parents should have their attention drawn to the existence of both procedures, in the school's staff behaviour and child protection policy and, for example, the school's policy covering the information for parents of EYFS and early years children. There are clear links between this policy and policies on staff behaviour and child protection, all of which apply to the whole school. The policy will be kept under regular review and updated to keep pace with changes to DfE and ISI guidance as well as the EYFS framework.

RELATED POLICIES:

- Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Child Missing Education Policy
- Policy for Induction of New Staff, Governors and Volunteers in Child Protection

POLICY

PART ONE: MISSING CHILD POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The welfare of all of our children at Rokeby school is our paramount responsibility. A child being absent from education, for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including abuse or neglect, child sexual and/or criminal exploitation and county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. 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. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child being absent in the future. Where staff have concerns that a child is absent from school for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, or missing from school, the DSL should be informed and this policy should be followed.

Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). 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.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed at the first possible opportunity of any incidences of a missing child, if they are unavailable one of the DDSL will be informed.

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. For day pupils we take a register of pupils at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. 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 Policy'. This document is on our website and can be provided to parents on request. We review all our policies regularly 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 and read Part 1 of the DfE's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' guidance [, or at least Annex A of KCSIE, if their role does not require them to work directly with children].

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

All new pupils (regardless of their age) 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will notify the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed/notified date, the school will try to establish contact with the parent/carer to establish the child's whereabouts. The school will also check with agencies known to be involved with the family and/or check the original LA/ school that the child has moved from. If we

are unsuccessful in our enquiries, we will take measures to notify the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

The School admission register, also known as the School roll, contains specific personal details of every pupil in the School along with the date of admission or re-admission to the School, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. The School also has an attendance register which records pupil attendance.

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.

Registers are legal records. The School will preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 3 years from the date of entry.

DUTY TO REPORT

The School monitors attendance of its pupils closely and will take action to address poor or irregular attendance. The School's Senior Attendance Champion is Ms K Bratt (Deputy Head Pastoral) Contact: k.bratt@rokeby.org.uk. The DSL will be informed of any attendance concerns, and they will be involved in decision making. Attendance concerns will be recorded on My Concern.

All reasonable measures will be taken by the Senior Attendance Champion to work with the family to improve attendance or ascertain a pupil's location.

Through consultation with the DSL, 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 not returned to school for ten consecutive school days after a leave of absence or is absent from school for reasons statistically recorded as unauthorised absence for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil's name can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to find out the location and circumstances of the child or have succeeded but agree there are no reasonable grounds to believe that they will attend the school again. In deciding there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will attend the school again both school and local authority must agree, including that there are no reasonable steps that could be taken (either jointly or separately) to secure the pupil's attendance. The DSL will be involved in all decision making. Neither ground for deletion applies if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

In addition, the School recognises its wider reporting duties following deletions from the admission register, in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, to help identify children who are missing education and/or otherwise at risk of harm.

The School also recognises that children who are absent from education particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. The School's response to persistently absent pupils supports identifying such abuse, and helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

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:

- Take a register in order to ensure that all other children were present
- Check with the pupil's friends to see if they know their whereabouts
- Check SOCS to see if they have an extra-curricular event
- Check the First Aid Room
- Check with reception who will check the signing out/in book
- Inform the senior member of staff on duty
- 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 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 grounds, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, washrooms etc. where a small child might hide.
- Check the doors, gates and CCTV for signs of entry/exit

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 Head of the Lower School/Deputy Heads and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Ask the Head/DH to ring the pupil'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 would notify the police
- The Head of the Lower School/Deputy Head 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.
- The DSL would inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) who should liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate, 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 pupil is injured the school will consider whether a report should be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

During the course of the investigation into the missing pupil, the school, in consultation with the LADO/Police, 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 adjusted.

The School will always consider the wider circumstances around a child going missing from School and whether there are wider safeguarding concerns that may need to be addressed in line with the School's [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy].

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 and the DSL by mobile phone
- Contact the venue manager and arrange a search
- Immediately contact the Police
- The remaining pupils would be taken back to school as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Ask the Head/DSL 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 venue/ the school at once
- The DSL would inform the LSCB who should liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate
- The School would cooperate fully with any Police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority including children's services
- Inform the Chair of Governors without delay
- The school's insurers would be informed
- If the child is injured and is taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than 15 days of the accident.

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/Deputy Head or Head of Lower School will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the LSCB if necessary)
- The Head of Lower School/Deputy Head will instigate and oversee a full investigation (if appropriate involving the LSCB)
- Media queries should be referred to the Head (after discussion with the LSCB 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 he appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future.
- Consider whether actions need to be taken in line with the School's [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy] where there are concerns about the welfare of the child.

ACTIONS TO BE FOLLOWED IF A CHILD WHO TRAVELS INDEPENDENTLY DOES NOT ARRIVE HOME

- Senior Member of Staff on patrol to be informed.
 - HM (or DH if HM not available) and DSL to be informed
 - SLT staff and reception staff to liaise carefully with the parent (or emergency contact if parent not available) regarding details of movements – check if he was marked on/off school bus if applicable
 - Identify the last time the child was seen – location and time and by whom
 - Speak to the child's friends – did he mention going anywhere other than home? Has there been a miscommunication? Did he go to a friend's house?
 - If he has a mobile phone, call his number
 - If he walked home, an available member of staff should trace that route by foot/by vehicle asap
 - If the child has not made it home within a reasonable period of time beyond the time they were expected to arrive, the police should be informed.
-

PART TWO: 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, the Senior Teacher on duty will begin to call the emergency numbers for this child.

During this time, the child will be safely looked after.

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 or Senior Teacher on Duty will contact the police. If the child has an allocated social worker, contact should also be made with them or the emergency duty social worker if it is out of normal office hours. We will make a full written report of the incident.

We undertake to look after the child safely throughout the time that he remains under our care, until such a time as 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 in order 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 child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures.