

Missing Child Policy



For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

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The Epworth Trust is a Multi-Academy Trust established with the aim of providing outstanding learning and opportunities for the children within its care.

Children are our nation's most precious resource. Their school life and learning experience will shape them for the whole of their lives

Mission Statement of Nutgrove Methodist Primary School

Nutgrove Methodist Primary School strives to provide a caring environment in which every individual can achieve his or her full potential, without limits.

This is encompassed by our Bible verse For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11.

To achieve this, we wish to create a happy, secure and purposeful culture throughout the school, which is conducive to learning and high standards, and is based on our Christian values, love, hope and respect.

Our school's motto and vision is 'My Best, Always, Everywhere' which is interwoven within our curriculum intent and design.

Safeguarding Statement

At Nutgrove Methodist Primary School we recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children.

We work to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice.

The procedures contained in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy apply to all staff, volunteers and governors.

This policy covers pupils attending schools within the Epworth Trust.

Children should never be allowed to leave the premises during school time except for medical /dental appointments or organised class/ whole school visits (appointment cards will be requested to authorise absence). It is possible that on some occasions a child may leave the premises without the knowledge or permission of the headteacher. This policy is put in place to ensure that every action possible is taken to ensure the quick and safe return of that child to school.

OBJECTIVES

1. To locate any missing child quickly.
2. To ensure that all children are kept safely on the school premises during school hours unless they have the headteacher's permission to leave.
3. To ensure that children who leave school during the school day only do so with the headteacher's permission and that they are accompanied by an authorised adult.
4. To ensure that the building, grounds and play areas are safe and secure during school hours.
5. To ensure that teachers and staff keep children under proper supervision at all times.
6. To ensure that if a child 'goes missing' during the school day, he/she is located quickly and returned safely to the school.

STRATEGIES

1. If a child cannot be found by their teacher/member of pastoral assistant or support staff member, the headteacher or member of senior leadership team must be notified **immediately and told when and where the child was last seen**. Time is of the essence and prompt actions must be taken by all.
2. The remaining children will be left safe in the care of a suitable staff. All other available staff will conduct a thorough search of the child's classroom, play areas, storage areas, toilets, the school building and the school grounds.
3. If the child is not found within a short period of time, the police must be called by the headteacher, member of SLT or staff member.
4. Members of staff, who are not supervising children, will be sent to search the area in the immediate vicinity of the school.

5. If a child goes missing during an outing or school visit, the teacher in charge must ensure that the remaining children are safely cared for by the other staff and adults. An urgent but thorough search should be made of the immediate vicinity and if the child is not found quickly the police must be called and the headteacher notified. If in an enclosed space the appropriate staff in that environment can be initially informed before calling the police, for instance to give a message over the walkie Talkie System.
6. As soon as possible, the school's SLT, parents and Social Worker (where appropriate) will be notified that the child is missing.
7. The LA will be notified by the headteacher that a child is missing.
8. If a member of staff finds the child the headteacher must be told at once. Parents, police and other authorities will be notified.
9. The headteacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

OUTCOMES

The safety of all children will be given our highest priority. A missing child should be an extremely rare happening. This policy is designed to put into place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents/carers and the authorities at every appropriate point.

This policy has been developed in reference to the Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022) and should be read alongside Nutgrove Methodist Primary School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Missing Children and Young People

Going missing is a dangerous activity and puts a child or young person at immediate risk. This part of the policy reflects the guidance set out in **St. Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership's Missing Children Procedure**, which is available on the St. Helens Safeguarding Partnership website.

For enquiries related to this issue the following email address is most appropriate:
cme@sthelens.gov.uk

This information is also in line with the Government guidance - Children who run away or go missing from home or care (2014).

There is a national definition of what constitutes a missing person (including a child):

"Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another".

In St Helens, anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.

The immediate risks associated with going missing include:

- No means of support or legitimate income – leading to high risk activities;
- Involvement in criminal activities including gang crime
- Victim of abuse
- Victim of crime, for example through sexual assault and exploitation or through gang activities
- Risk of trafficking
- Alcohol/substance misuse
- Deterioration of physical and mental health
- Missing out of school and education
- Increased vulnerability.

Longer term risks include:

- Long term drug dependency / alcohol dependency
- Crime
- Homelessness
- Disengagement from education
- Child sexual exploitation
- Poor physical and/or mental health.

The police should always be notified immediately when a child or young person goes missing, regardless of what setting they go missing from.

Preventing children and young people from going missing

Any missing episode is potentially serious; one run away is one too many. Therefore prevention work relating to children going missing is of paramount importance. The prevention of children and young people going missing required an integrated multi-agency approach to vulnerable children and young people. Prevention strategies need to include the prevention of children going missing from home and care and will include:

- Awareness and training for all professionals;
- Awareness and safety sessions for young people via curriculum opportunities;
- Multi-agency assessment procedures, including Early Help, should include the risk indicators for running away;
- Consistent implementation of this protocol across all agencies;

- Monitoring and reporting is missing from home, care and education incidents;
- Support to parents and carers;
- Every individual has a duty to inform the authorities if a child is missing.
- Effective interventions are best achieved by partnership working, information sharing, problem-solving and performance management.

Missing from care

Looked after children can also be 'absent' in that they are away from their placement, their whereabouts are known, but they should not be there. If a child is categorised by Merseyside Police as 'absent', the person calling the police will be asked if there are safeguarding concerns or risks, to inform the Police response.

Professionals should contact the Police if there is a change of circumstances that would increase risk level or if the person returns.

Merseyside Police Missing Persons Policy states that "All children aged 12 years and under will be categorised as 'missing' and not categorised as 'absent' under any circumstances".

If Merseyside Police have a CSE or CCE flag recorded on their systems, or have any intelligence that a child is at risk of CSE or CCE, they must automatically be recorded as 'missing' and never 'absent'.

With regard to children who are Looked After by another Local Authority and placed within the Merseyside boundary, they remain the responsibility of the placing Local Authority.

Regardless of how long a child has been missing, upon their return an Independent Return Interview should be offered to all children and young people who have been missing from home

Further information regarding children and young people who go missing from home, or children and young people who go missing who are already open to children's social care, can be found in the St. Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership's Missing Children Procedure