

Founded 1642



New Hall School

Early Years Missing Child Policy

Reviewed by Senior Leadership Team

Date January 2016

Authorised by Board of Governors of New Hall School

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Independent Catholic boarding and day school for boys and girls aged 3-18

newhallschool.co.uk

**PREPARATORY SCHOOL EARLY YEARS
MISSING CHILD POLICY**

1. Introduction

“We believe that New Hall, a Catholic Boarding and Day school, enables pupils to meet confidently the challenges of the wider world. Here, pupils from many traditions are educated in an environment where academic excellence is achieved. This is brought about in surroundings where relationships are based on the Gospel values of trust and respect.”

As a Catholic school, this Mission Statement lies at the heart of all we do. We recognise that all our pupils are made in the image and likeness of God; each one is special and unique. It is therefore our responsibility to ensure that each one discovers his/her strengths and gifts and this is done by providing a holistic curriculum, which offers breadth, as well as depth, of learning.

Children’s safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of the children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

2. Procedures

Child going missing on the premises:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/staff alerts the Pre-Reception Manager or Head of Foundation Stage and school office and site team
- The Pre-Reception Manager/Head of Foundation Stage will carry out a thorough search of the building and garden. Estate staff will be asked to search the wider grounds
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out
- The Pre-Reception Manager/Head of Foundation Stage informs the Head of Preparatory Division
- Senior management will decide when to call the police and then the parent is contacted.
- The Head of Preparatory Division /Head of Foundation Stage talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this

Child going missing on an outing:

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing, leaving the setting leader and/or other staff back in the setting. If the Pre-Reception Manager/Head of Foundation Stage has accompanied children on the outing, the procedures are adjusted accordingly.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that
- The Head of Foundation Stage/Head of Preparatory Division is contacted immediately and the incident is reported

- The school would make the decision when to call the police
- The Head of Foundation Stage/Head of Preparatory Division contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting/outing venue as agreed with the setting leader. The setting is advised as the best place, as by the time the parent arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found
- The Pre-Reception Manager/Head of Foundation Stage, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive

The investigation:

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried
- The Senior Management Team speaks with the parent(s) of the missing child alongside the EY Teacher/Head of Pre-Reception/Reception
- The Head of Preparatory Division carries out a full investigation, taking written statements from all the staff and parents who were on the outing
- A report will be written by the Management Team alongside the Head of Pre-Reception stating:
 - The date and time of the report
 - What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child
 - When the child was last seen in the group/outing
 - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing
 - The time it is estimated that the child went missing
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely there is a child protection issue to address
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted/ISI are informed
- The insurance provider is informed

Managing people:

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Management need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable
- The parents will feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be the Principal or the Chair of the Governing Body or a nominated representative. No matter how understandable the

parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and the police should be called

- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The Principal or Chair of Governors will use their discretion to decide what action to take
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press