



LIFE Wirral Sports School CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

This policy, which applies to the whole school, is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Document Details

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Amendments:

Date	Amendment

Availability: This policy applies to all activities undertaken by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours and away from the school site and is inclusive of all staff (teaching, support and agency staff), pupils on placement, contractors, the Chief Executive Officer, the Advisory Board and volunteers working in the school. All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy being required to state that they have read, understood and will abide by this policy and its procedural documents and confirm this by signing the *Policies Register*.

Monitoring and review:

- This document will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Head teacher
- This policy was last reviewed agreed by the Advisory Board in September 2023 and will next be reviewed no later than September 2024 or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed:

Sarah Quilty
Headteacher

Alastair Saverimutto
Chief Executive Officer

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Our staff will follow the School’s separate procedures for dealing with children who go missing, particularly on repeat occasions. They should act to identify any risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation. The school will put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. Staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage. More information can be found in ‘Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care’ and KCSIE (DfE: September, 2023).

1. Definition [Statutory guidance for local authorities: Children missing education \(Sep 2016\).](#)

"Children missing from education" refers to all children of compulsory school age:

- Who are not on a school roll or being educated otherwise (e.g. privately or in alternative provision); or
- Who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as ten days), without an acceptable reason.

Each year children either fail to start in a new school or appropriate education provision or become lost from school rolls or fail to re-register at a new school when they move home. “Children who are absent from education” refers to all children of compulsory school age:

- Who are absent from school, particularly repeatedly and/or prolonged periods
- Who may have patterns of repeated absence, or a significant number of days off
- But are not absent from school for more than ten consecutive days (where there is not a clear reason as to why e.g. holiday)

Risks: These 'missing' children can be vulnerable; it is essential that all services work together to identify and re-engage these children back into appropriate education provision as quickly as possible. It is important to establish the reasons for the child being missing from education at the earliest possible stage.

Possible reasons that should be considered include:

- Failure to start appropriate provision and never enter the system;
- Stopped attending, due to illegal exclusion or withdrawal by parent/carers;
- Failure to complete a transition between schools.

Children who remain disengaged from education are potentially exposed to higher degrees of risk such as anti-social behaviour and/or sexual exploitation.

Families moving between local authority areas can sometimes lead to a child becoming 'lost' in the system and consequently missing education. Where a child has moved, local authorities should check with other local authorities – either regionally or nationally – and share information in order to ascertain where a child has moved. Once the location of the child is established, the relevant local authority must ensure that the child is receiving an education either by attending a school or otherwise.

A child missing from education is not in itself a child protection matter, and there may be an innocent explanation for this. However, regular school attendance is an important safeguard and unexplained non-attendance can be an early indicator of problems, risk and vulnerability. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in 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. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. The school ensures that staff are aware of its unauthorised absence and attendance procedures and children missing education procedures. All staff have a responsibility for raising concerns for pupils who have poor attendance or patterns of absences with the senior leadership team.

The school will endeavour to deal with this problem in three ways:

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- by preventing and actively improving poor school attendance and truancy
- acting once an absence has occurred to establish children's safety and try to get them back to school; and
- acting to trace children whose whereabouts are not known.

Process: If a child fails to attend school without explanation, we will make all reasonable attempts to contact the family, including telephone calls and home visits. If these attempts are unsuccessful, staff, in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, should consider what level of risk is presented by the situation. They should then make the appropriate referral to police or the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership if necessary.

- If contact is made with the family and it is confirmed that the family has left the address, a referral should be made to the Pupil Tracking Officer if no new educational provision is notified. The Pupil Tracking Officer will advise on whether it is appropriate to remove the child from roll. If has been informed that the child has started at a new school, contact should be made with that school to confirm that the child has started there.
- If contact is made with the family and it becomes clear that they are still living at the same address but the child is not attending school, the school should follow its attendance procedure leading ultimately to a referral to the County Attendance Team.

In any event, the school should inform the Pupil Tracking Officer of any child who has not attended for 10 consecutive school days **without provision of reasonable explanation**.

Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Children (MET): http://4lscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_missing_exploit_traff.html.

Within our Local Authority, the acronym MET is used to identify all children who are missing; believed to be at risk of or being sexually exploited; or who are at risk of or are being trafficked. Given the close links between all of these issues, there has been a considered response to join all three issues so that cross over of risk is not missed.

Children Missing from Education: http://4lscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_child_miss_edu.html,
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/395138/Children_missing_education_Statutory_guidance_for_local_authorities.pdf.

Patterns of children missing education can be an indicator of either abuse or safeguarding risks. A relatively short length of time a child is missing does not reduce risk of harm to that child, and all absence or non-attendance should be considered with other known factors or concerns.

DSLs and staff should consider:

Missing lessons:

- Are there patterns in the lessons that are being missed?; Is this more than avoidance of a subject or a teacher?
- Does the child remain on the school site or are they absent from the site?
- Is the child being sexually exploited during this time?; Are they late because of a caring responsibility?
- Have they been directly or indirectly affected by substance misuse?
- Are other pupils routinely missing the same lessons, and does this raise other risks or concerns?
- Is the lesson being missed one that would cause bruising or injuries to become visible?

Single missing days:

- Is there a pattern in the day missed?
- Is it before or after the weekend suggesting the child is away from the area?
- Are there specific lessons or members of staff on these days?
- Is the parent informing the school of the absence on the day?
- Are missing days reported back to parents to confirm their awareness?
- Is the child being sexually exploited during this day?; Do the parents appear to be aware?
- Are the pupil's peers making comments or suggestions as to where the pupil is at?

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Continuous missing days:

- Has the school been able to make contact with the parent? Is medical evidence being provided?
- Are siblings attending school (either our or local schools)?
- Did we have any concerns about radicalisation, FGM, forced marriage, honor-based violence, sexual exploitation?
- Have we had any concerns about physical or sexual abuse?

The school will view absence as both a safeguarding issue and an educational outcomes issue. The school may take steps that could result in legal action for attendance, or a referral to children's social care, or both.

Children Missing from Home or Care

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care>

<http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-lobbying/children-risk/runaways>

Children who run away from home or from care, provide a clear behavioural indication that they are either unhappy or do not feel safe in the place that they are living.

Research shows that children run away from conflict or problems at home or school, neglect or abuse, or because children are being groomed by predatory individuals who seek to exploit them. Many run away on numerous occasions.

The association of chief police officers has provided the following definitions and guidance.

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

An absent person is: ‘A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.’

All cases classified as ‘missing’ by the police will receive an active police response – such as deployment of police officers to locate a child. Cases where the child was classified as ‘absent’ will be recorded by the police and risk assessed regularly but no active response will be deployed. The absent case will be resolved when a young person returns or new information comes to light suggesting that he/she is at risk. In the latter instance, the case is upgraded to ‘missing’.

Within any case of children who are missing both push and pull factors will need to be considered. Push factors include:

- Conflict with parents/carers; Feeling powerless;
- Being bullied/abused; Being unhappy/not being listened to;
- The Toxic Trio (domestic violence, mental ill-health and drug/alcohol misuse as defined by Ofsted). Working Together notes these issues rarely exist in isolation. There is a complex interaction between the three issues.

Pull factors include:

- Wanting to be with family/friends;
- Drugs, money and any exchangeable item; Peer pressure
- For those who have been trafficked into the United Kingdom as unaccompanied asylum seeking children there will be pressure to make contact with their trafficker

As a school we will inform all parents of children who are absent (unless the parent has informed us). If the parent is also unaware of the location of their child, and the definition of missing is met, we will either support the parent to/directly contact the police to inform them.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

<http://paceuk.info/>

http://4lscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_sexual_exploit.html

Sexual exploitation of children is not limited by the age of consent and can occur up until the age of 18. CSE involves children being in situations, contexts or relationships where they (or a third person) receive ‘something’ as a result of them performing sexual activities. The something can include food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, or money. Child sexual exploitation can happen via technology without the child's being aware; for example, being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.

In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. CSE can happen to a child of any age, gender, ability or social status. Often the victim of CSE is not aware that they are being exploited and do not see themselves as a victim.

Characteristics of Child Sexual Exploitation and abuse: it is often planned and systematic—people do not sexually abuse children by accident, through sexual abuse can be opportunistic; grooming the child—people who abuse children take care to choose a vulnerable child and often spend time making them dependent; grooming the child's environment—abusers try to ensure that potential adult protectors (parents and other carers especially) are not suspicious of their motives.

Indicators of sexual abuse: Some of the following signs may be behavioural indicators of sexual exploitation:

- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions; who associate with other young people involved in exploitation; have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant; who suffer from changes in emotional well-being; children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education; staying away from certain people or avoiding being alone with someone; displaying sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age;
- inappropriate masturbation or self-harm (including eating disorders) and an unwillingness to remove clothes when changing for PE etc.

Physical observations include damage to genitalia, anus or mouth; sexually transmitted diseases; unexpected pregnancy, especially in very young girls; soreness in genital area, anus or mouth and other medical problems such as chronic itching; unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain. The concerns listed are not exhaustive. Staff can and should also record and report other concerns about a child, such as general welfare concerns.

As a LIFE Wirral Sports School we educate all staff in the signs and indicators of sexual exploitation. We use the sexual exploitation risk assessment form [CSE2 Measurement Tool](#) to identify pupils who are at risk and the DSL will share this information as appropriate with children's social care. We recognise that we may have information or intelligence that could be used to both protect children and present risk.

Trafficked Children

http://4lscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_safeq_traff_ch.htm

Human trafficking is defined by the UNHCR in respect of children as a process that is a combination of:

- Movement (including within the UK);
- For the purpose of exploitation

Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim.

There is significant evidence that children (both of UK and other citizenship) are being trafficked internally within the UK and this is regarded as a more common form of trafficking in the UK. There are a number of indicators which suggest that a child may have been trafficked into the UK, and may still be controlled by the traffickers or receiving adults. These are as follows:

- Shows signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection or has an unwanted pregnancy;
- Has a history with missing links and unexplained moves;
- Is required to earn a minimum amount of money every day; Works in various locations;
- Has limited freedom of movement; Appears to be missing for periods;
- Is known to beg for money;
- Is being cared for by adult/s who are not their parents and the quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good;
- Is one among a number of unrelated children found at one address;

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- Has not been registered with or attended a GP practice; Is excessively afraid of being deported.

For those children who are internally trafficked within the UK indicators include:

- Physical symptoms (bruising indicating either physical or sexual assault);
- Prevalence of a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy;
- Reports from reliable sources suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation / the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation;
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse;
- Being in the community in clothing unusual for a child i.e. inappropriate for age, or borrowing clothing from older people
- Relationship with a significantly older partner;
- Accounts of social activities, expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding;
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for despite having not been at home;
- Having keys to premises other than those known about;
- Low self- image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour including cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity;
- Truancy / disengagement with education;
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links; and/or
- Possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming on-line relationships, particularly with adults.

These behaviours themselves do not indicate that a child is being trafficked, but should be considered as indicators that this may be the case. If staff believe that a child is being trafficked, this will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead for referral to be considered to children's social care.

We will follow-up unexplained absences of any child with a telephone call from the school on the morning of the first day of absence and notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a child who is on the child safeguarding register. The DSL shall also inform the applicable local authority of any child who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority. Additionally, the DSL will notify the applicable local authority (within which the child resides) when not at *LIFE Wirral Sports School* of any child who is going to be deleted from the admission register where the child:

- has been taken out of school by his/her parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education; has ceased to attend *LIFE Wirral Sports School* and no longer live within reasonable distance of *LIFE Wirral Sports School*;
- has been certified by a doctor as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend *LIFE Wirral Sports School* before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend *LIFE Wirral Sports School* after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- has been permanently excluded;
- is in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and *LIFE Wirral Sports School* does not reasonably believe he/she will be returning at the end of the period or, has been permanently excluded;
- where the child fails to attend school regularly or is absent without leave for more than 10 school days (continuous);
- when we remove or add a pupil's name to the admissions register at non-standard transitions ie where a compulsory school-aged child leaves a school before completing the school's final year or joins a school after the beginning of the school's first year

The applicable local authority must be notified as soon as the grounds for deletion are met, but no later than the time of deleting the child's name from the register. This will assist the local authority to fulfil its duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing in education and follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

Children being withdrawn from school: If a child is withdrawn from the school, all efforts will be made to identify the school to which the child is being admitted; their confidential educational and child protection records will be sent separately. If the

parent/guardian/carer fails to provide information regarding the new school, an urgent referral will be made to Children's Services. Educational records sent to our school concerning a child who is not registered by the parent will be returned and the school advised to refer to their Local Authority Education Welfare Service. A child's name will only be removed from the School's Admission Register in accordance with the Child Registration Regulations. Further information is contained in our Admissions Policy.

We also understand our duty to provide information to the local authority for standard transitions if requested. We also appreciate that there is an overlap with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* (currently in force) which recognises children missing education as a safeguarding issue particularly when a child leaves with no known destination. In addition to reporting to the Wirral Local Authority we also inform the local authority where the child is normally resident. We also understand that our right to remove a child is also subject to the terms and conditions of our school/parent contract.

We recognise that from September 2016 (due to the absence of illness or unavoidable cause) that we have the right to delete a pupil for non-return within 10 school days after authorised leave of 10 school days or more, or after 20 school days unauthorised absence but this does not arise until LIFE Wirral Sports School and the local authority have jointly made reasonable enquiries as to the pupil's whereabouts and failed. As such, LIFE Wirral Sports School recognises that it is a criminal offence not to report, as required.

Notifiable Incidents: This is an incident involving the care of a child that meets any of the following criteria:

- a child has died (including cases of suspected suicide) and abuse or neglect is known or suspected;
- a looked after child has died (including cases where abuse is **not** known or suspected);
- a child has been seriously harmed and abuse or neglect is known or suspected;
- a child in a regulated setting or service has died (including cases where abuse is **not** known or suspected).

Any such incident should be reported to Wirral Safeguarding Partnership (WSCP) Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) manager whose contact details are: Telephone: 077397 03929 / 0151 233 1151
e-mail: Irene.wright@liverpool.gcsx.gov.uk

Also Ofsted and the DfE are to be informed along with the *Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR)* in accordance with the regulations of 2013.

Appendix 1

Grounds for notification to Local Authority for Additions/Deletions from LIFE Wirral Sports School Admission Register (Annex A: taken from Children Missing From Education 2016)

1. Where the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order, that another school is substituted by the local authority for that named in the order or the order is revoked by the local authority on the ground that arrangements have been made for the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude otherwise than at school.
2. Except where it has been agreed by the proprietor that the pupil should be registered at more than one school, in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) or regulation 9, that he has been registered as a pupil at another school.
3. Where a pupil is registered at more than one school, and in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (j) or (m) or regulation 9, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor of any other school at which he is registered has given consent to the deletion.
4. In a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph, that he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.
5. Except in the case of a boarder that he has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place, which is a reasonable distance from the school at which he is registered.
6. In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence in accordance with regulation 7(1A), that — (i) the pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted; (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and (iii) the proprietor and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.
7. That he is certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he nor his parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
8. That he has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and (i) at no time was his absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6(2); (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and (iii) the proprietor of the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is
9. That he is detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court or of an order of recall made by a court or the Secretary of State, that order being for a period of not less than four months, and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return to the school at the end of that period.
10. That the pupil has died.
11. That the pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and— (i) the relevant person has indicated that the pupil will cease to attend the school; or (ii) the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements for admission to the school's sixth form.
12. In the case of a pupil at a school other than a maintained school, an Academy, a city technology college or a city college for the technology of the arts, that he has ceased to be a pupil of the school.
13. That he has been permanently excluded from the school.
14. Where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, that he has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher, class at the school.
15. Where— (i) the pupil is a boarder at a maintained school or an Academy; (ii) charges for board and lodging are payable by the parent of the pupil; and (iii) those charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate.