

MISSING PERSONS

Purpose of document

Policy File Name	Schedule Number	Person Responsible
P30.SNR.01.Missing Child Policy	30	Senior Deputy Head - EMB

Version History

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Scope

Name	Applicability	Date of Last Review	Frequency of Review
Whole School			
Early Years Foundation Stage			
Prep School			
Senior School	✓	August 19	Annual
Taunton School International (TSI)	✓		

Policy for Approval by:

Governors		SPC		Senior SMT	✓	Prep SMT		TSI SMT		EYFS		Other	
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Distribution Means

Email		Intranet	✓	Internet (web)	
Governors (Citrix Access)		Inspectors (Citrix Access)		Notices	
Staff handbook	✓	Hard copy			

Missing Child Policy

The definition of a missing person for the purposes of this policy and guidance material is as follows:

“Anyone whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established”.

If a Taunton School student is defined as “missing”, it will be the responsibility of the Deputy Head, to decide whether the Critical Incident Policy should be activated.

Guidelines for supervised activities

As a member of staff you will be responsible for students in the following scenarios. It will be your responsibility to ensure appropriate action is taken.

Supervised activity	What the teacher should do	The next steps
Registration or Callover in the House	The teacher should follow the codes which are written in the register.	The register must be taken immediately to reception who will follow up absences. If a student is missing and they are on the at risk register the teacher must immediately contact the deputy head
Lessons / Co-Curricular	The teacher takes the register. Missing students identified.	If you cannot reasonably account for a student then immediately send another student to reception or to the deputy head to report the absence. If the student is on the ‘at risk’ register then unless you have written confirmation from another member of staff explaining their absence you must immediately send another student to reception or to the deputy head.

Broader guidelines for Staff relating to a student whose absence is unexplained

As a teacher you may sometimes have to deal with a situation where a student goes missing. There are many circumstances in which students might be unaccounted for – they are not all to be considered as “missing persons”. The vast majority of students will turn up safe and sound, unaware that their absence has caused concern. However, staff must be aware that if a student does run away, or their absence is unexplained and there is concern for their safety, there is an urgency required in any response in order to ensure the safety and well-being of that student, who may well be vulnerable.

Initial checks to consider if a student cannot be accounted for:

- When were they last seen and by whom?
- Are they signed out? (to town, medical appointment, exeat with their parents or relatives etc.)
- Had they told another student where they planned on going?
- Are they in the medical centre or with another member of staff?
- Can they be contacted? Other students will often hold mobile phone contact numbers that may not be listed elsewhere.
- Are they with parents if not returned from exeat?
- Critically, are on they on the ‘students at risk’ register document which is circulated at the beginning of each term?

If it seems likely that the student has run away, or their absence is unexplained and the length of absence causes concern for their safety, the member of staff should seek advice urgently from the Deputy Head.

Initial response to a student’s disappearance

There are several sources from which you may learn that a student has disappeared, although you are most likely to have concerns because a student has missed classes, registrations or other commitments. A student missing at night should be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Before contacting the Deputy Head, try and assess as much of the following as possible:

- Could they have been involved in an accident?
- Could they have been the victim of serious crime?
- Has the student run away before?

- What reason could the student have for running away?
- If the reasons for the disappearance are totally unknown, what clues do you have, if any?

It is not always easy to decide whether a missing student has run away, is playing truant, or is missing because they have been abducted or come to harm. Care should be taken not to jump to any conclusions.

If the disappearance is suspicious

Although abduction is the most feared reason for a child's disappearance, it is the least likely reason. If the student's disappearance is considered suspicious, and it is feared that they may have been abducted or come to some other harm, contact the Deputy Head *immediately*. He will consider:

- Contacting the police
- In what way can the trauma for other students be minimised?
- How best to help the teachers, who might be troubled themselves
- How best to contact/help the parents/carers of the student
- Form a strategy for dealing with possible media interest

If the Deputy Head cannot be contacted and /or you have reason to be seriously concerned (for example, if a teacher is concerned that the student may be at risk of significant harm – see Safeguarding Policy) then do not hesitate, contact the police.

It's important that the school works closely with the authorities to determine the exact circumstances surrounding the disappearance.

Contacting Parents

The Deputy Head will discuss with the relevant member of staff, usually the Housemaster / Housemistress, the timing of this contact – it is vital that this is handled with extreme sensitivity as parents will understandably be very concerned.

Students who run away

In making a balanced risk assessment of the likelihood of a student having run away, it is useful to consider :-

- The young person's previous history of running away

- Previous history of stress related symptoms – e.g. self harm/neglect
- Recent family breakdown
- Other significant life changes
- If the student has a talked about running away
- Cultural issues and pressures

Identifying potential runaways

- *This is difficult, but look out for :-*
- Marked variations in mood
- Repeated absenteeism
- Depression: tearfulness or detachment, lack of motivation
- Difficulties concentrating - extreme tiredness
- Change in confidence levels
- Self-neglect – e.g. appearing unwashed or unusually unkempt
- Social changes: eg disassociation from old friends, withdrawal, or becoming a loner

THIS IS A TAUNTON SCHOOL POLICY – AS PART OF THE TAUNTON SCHOOL ORGANISATION
GUARDIANS UK MUST COMPLY WITH ALL POLICIES. WE EXPECT ANY REFERENCES TO STAFF
OR TEACHERS TO COVER HOST FAMILIES.