

Missing Child Policy

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Definitions

“Foundation”: The Foundation will mean the Mill Hill School Foundation. Cobham Hall School is one of the Foundation Schools, which educates girls aged both day pupils and boarders.

“School”: School will mean Cobham Hall School.

“Head”: Head will mean the Head of Cobham Hall School

“Deputy Head”: Deputy Head will mean the Deputy Head at Cobham Hall School.

1 Statement

- 1.1** This policy is addressed to current or prospective parent/s or legal guardian/s or education guardian/s, governors, staff and volunteers. The policy is available, upon request to the School Office, to the parents and prospective parents, governors, staff and volunteers at the School.
- 1.2** This policy has been approved by the Head, CEO and the Court of Governors of the Mill Hill School Foundation. Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue (see the Safeguarding and Protecting the Welfare of Pupils Policy).
- 1.3** The safety and security of the children in our care at the Mill Hill School Foundation is paramount. Every care is taken to ensure that the children are accounted for at all times. This policy should be read in conjunction with:
- Educational Visits Policy
 - Supervision Policy
 - Safeguarding and Protecting the Welfare of Pupils Policy
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance (September 2022)

2 Aims

- 2.1** The aim of this policy is:
- To ensure that the school has regard to and is in compliance with the statutory framework
 - To inform Governors, staff, and parents of pupils of the procedures to be followed in circumstances where a pupil may be missing

3 Procedures

3.1 Introduction

The School takes rigorous measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils at all times:

- 3.1.1 Pupils are registered throughout the day and pupils are made aware that they must stay within the bounds of the School.
- 3.1.2 A duty rota is in place where children are supervised by staff before morning registration (in House), during breaks and at the end of the School day (in House).
- 3.1.3 All visitors to the School are issued with a pass by Reception.

3.2 Registration

- 3.2.1 Pupils are registered electronically in their Houses or tutor bases at 08.20 and are registered in every lesson. Mill Hill School Upper Sixth Form pupils can leave School if they have no afternoon lessons or activities, but they must sign out.
- 3.2.2 The School Office staff compile the absence list for the day in the morning. The list also includes other reasons for absence, for example, early collections for appointments.

- 3.2.3 The School Office follows up any unauthorised absences by physically checking the pupil timetable, their class or other lesson, such as Private Study, and other attendance lists, such as the Medical Centre. If this does not resolve the matter the School Office makes a telephone call to the pupil's home and a daily list of absences unaccounted for is given to the Deputy Head.
- 3.2.4 The School Office follows the same procedure with regard to afternoon registration (P7) also.
- 3.2.5 During the week, boarding pupils are rolled three times during the evening; a formal roll is taken in the early evening and two informal rolls are taken later in the evening and at pupil bedtimes.
- 3.2.6 On Saturdays, pupils are rolled in the morning (before activities), in the early evening and at bedtime. On Sunday pupils are rolled after lunch, in the early evening and at bedtime.
- 3.2.7 When a pupil is collected from School during the school day, due to illness or a prearranged appointment, they must ALWAYS be collected from the School Office. A note is made in the register to record the fact that they are no longer on the School premises.
- 3.2.8 MHS Pupils other than Sixth Formers are not allowed to leave the School premises alone during the School day without the prior consent of their Housemaster/mistress and must sign out at the School Office. If they are a boarder and wish to go to a boarding house, they must sign in using Orah.
- 3.2.9 MHI pupils are required to sign out when they leave MHI and to write in the signing in/out book to say where they are going. If they go to a boarding house, they must sign in using Orah. If they are a boarder and wish to go to an activity at MHS they should be registered by the staff member taking the activity.

3.3 Missing Child During the Normal School Day

If it is suspected that a pupil is missing, in the first instance staff will maintain the safety and wellbeing of other pupils in their care.

- 3.3.1 The member of staff concerned will immediately alert the School Office to ascertain if the pupil has been collected. The School Office will try to contact the pupil directly.
- 3.3.2 The Office will contact the School Nurse in case the pupil is in the Medical Centre.
- 3.3.3 Staff will speak to other pupils to see if they have any helpful information.
- 3.3.4 The Head or a member of the School Senior Management/Leadership Team (SMT/SLT) will be informed.
- 3.3.5 A search of School premises and other reasonable areas will be undertaken by as many staff as are available. The Housemaster/mistress will be contacted to see if he or she has any helpful information. If the pupil cannot be located within approximately 30 minutes, a member of SMT/SLT will contact home to see if the child has gone home and immediately ensure parents are informed if they themselves are not at home.
- 3.3.6 If the pupil's whereabouts are still unknown The Head or a member of the School SMT/SLT will contact the Police.
- 3.3.7 The Head will inform the other Mill Hill School Foundation Executives.
- 3.3.8 The Police will take over the search and all relevant information will be passed to them
- 3.3.9 A written record will be made as soon as possible of the incident; it will include details of all action taken by staff and be placed in the pupil's file (Appendix A).

3.4 End of Day/After School Fixtures and Activities/Weekend Programme

- 3.4.1 Pupils staying to attend after school activities are briefed about the need to inform parents in advance of their commitments. Details of the Saturday Programme will be provided to pupils at the start of term. Activity commitments are outlined to parents at the start of each academic year.
- 3.4.2 In the event of a pupil not being collected at the end of the day, or after a co-curricular activity or sports fixture, the member of staff in charge should contact a member of the SMT/SLT who will follow the procedures outlined in 3.3.
- 3.4.3 All day pupils participating in the Saturday Programme must register centrally in the School office before sessions commence. Boarders are registered in boarding houses before sessions commence. At the start of each session a register is taken by the teacher in charge. In the event of a pupil failing to register and/or attend an activity session, the member of SMT/SLT on duty will follow the relevant procedures outlined in 3.3.
- 3.4.4 A register is kept in the school office of children who travel on the various School buses.

3.5 Missing Child Outside the School Day

- 3.5.1 **Boarders:** If it is suspected that a pupil is missing, for example they fail to return to the boarding house after weekend leave or are absent at night, the Housemaster/mistress will determine, as far as is possible, whether the pupil is a 'missing person' or an 'unauthorised absence':
- the Boarding House and likely whereabouts, i.e. other Housemasters/Mistresses will be contacted and the other Boarding Houses, will be fully searched
 - the School Calendar, Staff Intranet and other possible sources of information will be checked to see if the pupil may be involved in an event and has forgotten to inform appropriately
 - friends of the missing pupil will be questioned if the pupil remains unaccounted for, a member of the SMT/SLT will be informed, according to the nature of the situation, e.g. the Head or in the Head's absence, the Assistant Head (Boarding) or a Deputy Head
 - the parents, or guardians as appropriate, will then be contacted, and in consultation with the Head, it will be decided when to ring the Police

The following factors should be considered at all stages of the decision making process: previous behaviour patterns; state of health and any requirement for medication; state of mind at time of absence; time of day/night; history of self-harm; physical or learning difficulties; whether the pupil is perceived as running to someone or from a situation.

- Although parents will have a significant say in the School's decision, if a pupil has gone missing under the School's care and control, parental wishes may be overruled - e.g. the School may wish to ring the Police even though parents do not. If the parents insist upon police involvement sooner than the School advises, the parents' wishes will be respected
- If neither parents nor guardians are contactable then the SMT/SLT will decide when to inform the Police

- When reporting to the Police the following information will be passed on: a full description of the child; precise details of when the child was last seen, by whom and with whom; a recent photograph and family addresses. Any circumstances, which may increase the risk to the child, should be drawn immediately to the attention of the Police
- On receiving a report of a 'missing' child, the Police will record and make enquiries in accordance with their policy and procedures. Ownership of a 'missing' person enquiry remains with the Police

A boarding pupil who is suspected to be missing during the School day, for example from a daytime registration, will be searched for in accordance with the procedures outlined in 3.3 above.

3.5.2 Day pupils: If it is suspected that a pupil is missing, the person leading the activity/event will determine, as far as is possible, whether the pupil is a 'missing person'. The immediate vicinity and likely whereabouts, e.g. other Houses, will be fully searched. Staff also attending the event/activity and friends of the missing pupil will be questioned to ascertain his/her whereabouts. If the pupil remains unaccounted for, the procedures outlined in the "Boarders Section" will be adhered to.

3.5.3. Weekly boarders: In cases where parents have previously arranged with the appropriate Housemaster/mistress for a pupil to stay in the boarding House on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night, and it is suspected that a pupil is missing during the period specified, the Housemaster/mistress will follow the procedures laid down in

3.5.1. If it is suspected that a pupil is missing outside the School day, but the pupil is not expected to be resident in the House that evening then the Housemaster/mistress will follow the procedure laid down for Day pupils outlined in 3.5.2.

3.6 Missing Child on an Educational Visit (Introduction)

3.6.1 When on an Educational Visit outside the School environment staff will ensure they take precautions to ensure the safety of all pupils in accordance with the School's Educational Visits Policy and refer to the individual Risk Assessment prepared for that trip. They also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Teachers should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation.

If a pupil goes missing, the priorities are to:

- assess the situation
- safeguard the other members of the group
- seek for and then attend to the pupil(s) involved
- inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know of the incident

The Group Leader would usually take charge in an emergency and would need to ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that back up cover is arranged. The Group Leader should liaise with the representative of the tour operator if one is being used.

All those involved in the School trip, including supervisors, pupils and their parents, should be informed of who will take charge in an emergency, the named back up cover and what they are expected to do in an emergency.

3.6.2 Day Educational Visits (General Principles)

- On trips away from the School setting, pupils should be divided into groups in accordance with the Educational Visits policy. The groups will be decided in advance
- Each adult will have details of which pupils they are responsible for, including names and any special requirements (dietary/medical). For trips that occur out of School hours, consent forms and contact details for Parents/Carer will be taken on the trip so that Parents/Carer can be contacted in case of an emergency
- The Group Leader will make sure that the pupils know who is responsible for them, including the adult's name and what they are wearing. The pupils will also be briefed to ensure that they know not to stray and that if they want to go anywhere e.g. to a shop or to the toilet they must ask
- The pupils will be given information about where they are staying, including the name and a contact number
- The pupils will be told what to do if they become separated from the group:
 - Stay where you are – we will come back to look for you
 - Look around you – can you see your group or one of the other groups?
 - If it seems like a long time before we find you, whom can you talk to:
 - Someone in uniform or wearing a badge from the attraction you are visiting
 - a uniformed policeman or woman
- A regular headcount of the group will be taken. This will depend on the children and the activity. If, on taking a headcount a pupil appears to be missing, the Group Leader will be contacted immediately
- The group should stay still and keep together. If there is another adult with the group, one of them will retrace their steps (to a pre agreed distance, for no more than five minutes away), to look for the pupil
- If the pupil is still missing after 5 minutes, the member of staff will inform a member of staff from the venue and ask for their help in finding the pupil. Following consultation with the Head/Deputy Head and the Group Leader, the Group Leader will ask the member of staff from the venue to contact the police on 999. Staff should be prepared to give them the following information:
 - The adult's name and phone number and where the group is
 - What has happened
 - Name, age and address of the child
 - Description of the missing child
 - Time of incident
- The Group Leader will consult with the Head/Deputy Head who will then inform the Parent/Carer of the missing pupil giving them details of what has happened and the steps that are being taken to find their child
- The Group Leader will ensure the Head/Deputy Head knows what actions have been taken
- The search will continue after calling the Police although staff should be guided by the Police as to the action taken to locate the child
- The Group Leader involved will complete an Incident Form (Appendix A) as fully as possible on return to School
- No one in the group should speak to the media. Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Media enquiries should be referred to the Head

- No one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties.

3.6.3 Missing Child on a Residential Trip in UK or Abroad

If an emergency involving a missing child (or children) occurs on an Educational Visit the Group Leader will normally take responsibility and will consider the following main factors:

- Establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible
- Ensure that all the group are safe and looked after
- Establish the names of all children involved
- Ensure that all group members who need to know are aware of the incident and that all group members are following the emergency procedures
- Ensure that the rest of the group are adequately supervised at all times and kept together
- Notify the Police if necessary
- Notify the British Embassy/Consulate if an emergency occurs abroad and the pupil(s) is not found within the first two hours
- Inform the emergency School contact based back at School. The School contact number should be accessible at all times during the visit
- Details of the incident to pass on to the School should include: nature, date and time of incident; location of incident; names of missing pupil(s); names of others involved so that parents can be reassured; action taken so far; action yet to be taken (and by whom)
- Notify insurers, if medical assistance is required (this may be done by the School contact)
- Notify the provider/tour operator (this may be done by the School contact)
- Ascertain telephone numbers for future calls (e.g., Group Leader's personal phone to be used for contact with School; School mobile phone to be used for contact with parents, where considered appropriate, or this may be undertaken by the School).
- Write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence
- Keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident
- No-one in the group should speak to the media. Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Media enquiries should be referred to The Head or Deputy Head at the School dealing with the situation will identify a designated media contact at the School
- No-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties

The main factors for the nominated emergency contact based back at

School to consider include:

- Ensuring that the Group Leader is in control of the emergency and establishing if any assistance is required from the School base
- Contacting parents. Details of parents' contact numbers need to be available at all times while the group is on the visit. The School contact should act as a link between the group and parents. Parents should be kept as well informed as possible at all stages of the emergency
- Liaison with the governing body. The School contact should act as a link between the group and/or chair of governors and arrange for the group to receive assistance, if necessary
- Liaison with media contact. If a serious incident occurs, the School contact should liaise with the designated media contact as soon as possible
- The reporting of the incident using appropriate forms (Appendix A)
- In some cases, it may be helpful to contact local community support services and to seek professional advice on how to help individuals and the School as a whole cope with the effects of an incident of this type
- Review of Missing Child procedures
- When the situation has been resolved, the Head will review the reasons for the event happening and make any necessary amendments to School procedures
- A written record of any pupil who goes missing from School, the action taken and the reason given by the pupil for going missing, will be held centrally by the Designated Safeguarding Lead who is responsible for matters relating to child protection and welfare. These records will be reviewed annually by the Head and members of the SMT/SLT and the review with any recommendations will be reported to the Governors' Pastoral Committee

4 Review

The Head will monitor the operation of this policy and the efficiency and effectiveness of its procedures, and make an annual report to the Court of Governor.

The Court of Governors will undertake an annual review of this Policy through the Court of Governors' Pastoral Sub-Committee and the Heads.

Last Review: September 2022 Next Review: September 2023

BY RESOLUTION OF THE PASTORAL COMMITTEE OF THE COURT OF GOVERNORS,
21/09/22