Missing Child Policy & Procedures

Implementation Date: September 2015
Date / Term of last review: 18th September 2026

This policy applies to the whole school including those in the EYFS.

The following policies should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Behaviour Code of Conduct Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Educational Trips and Visits Policy

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Approval:	Clare Bradbury, Headteacher
Next Review Date:	Michaelmas Term 2027

For office use only:

Inspection folder		✔
Website	Required	✔
Internal Staff purposes only		

1. Aims and Objectives

1.1. The safety and wellbeing of all of our children at Oakwood School is our paramount responsibility.

1.2. A child being absent from education, for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including abuse and neglect, child sexual and/or criminal exploitation and 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.

1.3. Every adult who works at Oakwood has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all children safe at all times. This includes the importance of effective information sharing to ensure our children are safe and receiving suitable education. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child being absent in the future. Where staff have concerns that a child is absent from school for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions, or missing from school, this policy should be followed.

1.4. This policy consists of two parts; the first covering a missing child and the second covering the procedure to be followed in the event of a parent/carer failing to collect a child at the appointed time.

1.5. This policy ensures that all staff in the school are clear about the actions necessary in the event of a missing child to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible, and the procedure to be followed by the school in the event of a parent failing to collect a child at the appointed time.

1.6. The overall co-ordinator and central control for the policy is the Headteacher. In his/her absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team would assume the role. This role is supported by all staff.

2. Information for parents

2.1. The enhanced supervisory arrangements for trips and visits for all pupils at Oakwood School are set out in our Educational Visits Policy and Supervision Policy. Both policies are on our website. We review these policies regularly (at least annually) in order to satisfy ourselves that they are robust and effective. All new staff receive induction into the importance of effective supervision of very young children and read at least Part 1 of KCSIE.

3. Action to be followed by staff if a child fails to attend first day of school

3.1. All new pupils are placed on the school's admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed that the pupil will attend the school. If a child fails to attend on the agreed date, staff must inform the Headteacher without delay. The Headteacher will consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

3.2. The school's admissions register, also known as the school roll, contains specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended.

3.3. Where there are changes affecting the child (including change of address or school), these will be reflected in the admission register. This will assist the school and external agencies when making enquiries to locate any missing children.

4. Routines

4.1. We take great care to closely monitor the attendance of all our children and whenever there is doubt of a child's presence, we take the steps outlined in this plan immediately.

4.2. We have an attendance register which records pupil attendance. The register is taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon to monitor the attendance of all of our children; the registration times are: 8.30am-9.00am and 1.30pm-2.00pm. Staff check that all children are present at the start of each individual lesson and on each occasion we will record whether each registered pupil is physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance Regulations 2024. Please refer to the Attendance Policy.

4.3. We preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 6 years from the date of entry.

4.4. A daily list of absentees is kept in the School Office.

4.5. Late arrivals to school report to the Reception Desk/School Office where their attendance is marked in the electronic register / Paper copy. Regular reminders to parents should be placed in the Friday Flyer that late arrivals must report to the Reception Desk/School Office.

4.6. Registers are also taken for Breakfast Club, Lunchtime and After School Clubs, Acorns Tea Club and for After School Activities. All registers for wrap-around care require registration at the commencement of an activity and de-registration as children are collected.

4.7. A photo of each child (head and shoulders only) is taken at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term, or whenever a pupil joins the school. 'Missing Child' photographs are stored in the MISSING CHILD PHOTOS folder, located on the school's google shared drive which all staff can access; it is also a link on the Staff Oakwood Oracle for quick and easy access.

5. Safeguarding

5.1. All staff who work with children have read Part 1 of KCSiE 2026. Our staffing ratios are generous and are deliberately designed to ensure that every child is supervised the whole time that he or she is in our care.

5.2. In line with KCSiE 2026, all staff are alert to indicators for involvement in serious violent crime. It is a priority for staff to be aware of these indicators as they may have an impact on a child's vulnerability and safety at school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training to ensure up-to-date knowledge and understanding. (Refer to Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy Sept 26). Such indicators include:

- Increased absence from school
- A change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- A significant decline in performance
- Signs of self-harm or a significant change in well-being
- Signs of assault or unexplained injuries
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions

6. Duty to Report

6.1. We monitor attendance of our pupils and we take action to address poor or irregular attendance.

6.2. In line with statutory duties we will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school' s permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

6.3. We will make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence codes I and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive or cumulative school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 schools days.

7. Prolonged and/or persistent absence

7.1. Where a pupil has not returned from a period of leave or has had a continuous period of absence, the school, together with the local authority, may need to carry out joint reasonable enquiries under the School Regulations 2024 to try to find out where the pupil is.

7.2. Where a pupil has been continuously absent without authorisation for a period of not less than 20 school days (and there are no reasonable grounds to believe the pupil is unwell or unable to attend because of any unavoidable cause), and the school and local authority have failed, following reasonable enquiry, to ascertain where the pupil is, the school may delete the pupil's name from the admission register. The school will inform the local authority of such deletion no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

7.3. In addition, the school recognises its wider reporting duties following deletions from the admission register, in accordance with the School Attendance Regulations 2024, to help identify children who are missing education and/or otherwise at risk of harm.

7.4. The school also recognises that children who are bent from education particularly on repeat occasions and/or for prolonged periods can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. The school's response to persistently absent pupils supports identifying such abuse, and helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing in education in the future.

8. Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing from school

8.1. Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible. If a child was found to be missing, we would carry out the following actions without delay.

8.1.1. **Notification:** The member of staff who has taken a register and who notices a child is absent calls the school office to check the electronic register and see if the child is sick, has gone home, temporarily left the site for an appointment or is at a music or special educational needs lesson. Office staff will check emails and/or phone messages for any recent information from parents. Phone confirmation will be made to form teachers/Prep supervisors etc. to check attendance and a senior member of staff will be informed. The staff member with the class ensures that all of the other children are safe and occupied with an appropriate activity.

8.1.2. **Security:** The School Office radio The Estates Team to close the school gate and electronic barrier to prevent traffic from driving in/out of the school. Any visitors/families on site will be asked to remain on site until advised otherwise. The CCTV records will be checked for signs of entry and exit.

8.1.3. **Search of Immediate Area:** At the same time there will be a search everywhere across the school, both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, washrooms etc where a small child might hide; communication will be given to all staff on radios, and specifically:

- **Estates x2**: Outside areas of Prep School: The Barn, Lyne Hall, Gym, Gym Toilets (both inside and out), Pavilion, Science Lab, Food Tech Room, Dining Hall, Kitchen and outside kitchen area.
- **Estates x1:** Swimming Pool & pool office, pool changing rooms, pool toilets, pool plant room and Nursery/Nursery garden.
- **Office x2:** Main House - changing rooms and toilets, SLT office, IT Network room, Heritage Room, Art Room, Pevensey, Boot Room, Staff Toilet, Library, upstairs classrooms, PE Office, Halnaker (SEND office), 2 x SEND rooms and upstairs toilets / sickbay. (JC to check staff accommodation if unlocked).
- **Office x1:** Year 5 Classrooms, Hastings office and Harcombe Block.
- **EYFS x1:** All Pre-Prep Brewhouse classrooms, PP Hall, PP Hub, all PP toilets, conservatory, school shop and Brewhouse Garden.

8.2. If the child remains missing at this time, the following steps would be taken without delay:

8.2.1. Inform the DSL and Headteacher

8.2.2. An appropriate senior member of staff will contact the child's parents and explain what has happened, and what steps have been set in motion; parents will be asked to come to school at once

8.2.3. The DSL will notify the police; a full description and photo of the child is made available to them on arrival as well as the estimated time of disappearance

8.2.4. The Headteacher, or member of the Senior Leadership Team will activate the CODE RED procedure detailed below to widen the search area of the school site and the surrounding area (see below for further details)

8.2.5. If the child's home is within walking distance, a member of stuff may be asked to check if the child has gone home; this may be on foot or by car

8.2.6. A member of the office team will call the residents on the Oakwood drive to alert them of the incident ***(See Appendix A held in the school office).***

8.2.7. The DSL will inform the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) who will liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate; the DSL will check with the LSCB this has happened

8.2.8. The school will co-operate fully with any Police investigation and and safeguarding investigation by the local authority

8.2.9. The Headteacher will inform the Chair of Governors

8.2.10. The School's insurers will be informed

8.2.11. If the child is injured, a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE.

8.3. During the course of the investigation into the missing child, the school will decide what information should be given to other parents, staff and other pupils and how press enquiries are to be dealt with, appropriate to the circumstances.

8.4. A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. If appropriate, procedures would be adjusted.

8.5. We will always consider the wider circumstances around a child going missing from school and whether there are wider safeguarding concerns that may need to be addressed in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

9. CODE RED - Missing Child Search

9.1. If the child is still missing a member of the senior leadership team or office staff activate a **'Missing Child Code Red'** message to all staff via the school Bodet Communication System. This message directs all staff to activate the procedure to ensure that all pupils on site will be safely supervised while facilitating the Missing Child search. The message instructs all staff to '***Escort pupils to the Pre-Prep Hall or Lyne Hall and staff to then report to the Heritage Room - CODE RED.'*** The office staff will produce printed details of the missing child including a photograph to all staff on arrival at the Heritage Room. **ALL STAFF WHO HAVE A RADIO (on Channel 6) IN THEIR CLASSROOM SHOULD CARRY IT WITH THEM WHEN THE CODE RED IS SOUNDED AND ALL STAFF SHOULD BRING THEIR MOBILE PHONE & CAR KEYS IF POSSIBLE.**

9.2. Due to Health and Safety precautions, **kitchen staff** remain in the dining hall and kitchen areas and a member of the **estates staff** remains in the estates barn, unless instructed otherwise.

9.3. At this time, the remaining pupils will have been escorted to the following areas by supervising staff as per the CODE RED instruction:

- Prep School: Lyne Hall - **2 x Performing Arts staff**. Phone available in Lyne Hall. *(Phone extension: 401)*
- Pre-Prep: Pre-Prep Hall - **Head EYFS** / + 1 other member of Pre-Prep team. *(Phone extension: 101)*

9.4. All remaining staff on site who have reported to the Heritage Room are allocated responsibilities by the Headteacher or member of SLT so that the school and its surrounding areas can be searched effectively. It is imperative that **All School radios are brought to the Heritage Room for allocation to aid the search**

9.5. The Headteacher will assign staff to allocated roles and responsibilities as outlined in ***Appendix B.*** All staff involved in searching should have access to a radio and wear high visibility jackets. Staff involved in the off-site search will have a mobile phone with them and staff will continue to search their allocated areas until a member of the office calls them back to the school. Police called to the scene will be given registration numbers and locations of searching cars.

9.6. Staff involved in the on-site search will search outdoor areas twice and then radio to central control, continuing to repeat their searches until advised accordingly.

9.7. Equipment required:

- 20 members of staff are required for the search operation
- All radios (A minimum total of 7 radios are required to execute this plan)
- High visibility vests
- Appendix B: Printed copy of Assigned Roles

9.8. **CODE RED - Missing Child found:** The priority of all search staff on finding the missing child is to reassure and comfort the child then **immediate** notification of finding the missing child should be given to the office/Headteacher via the school radios/mobile phones. This will then be communicated to all other staff conducting the search and supervising staff in the hall(s) via school BODET system, radios and/or phones.

9.9. The Headteacher will ensure the parents and the police are informed. Further communication will be given to instruct in the next steps in returning pupils and staff to their timetabled lessons/locations.

9.10. **CODE RED - Missing Child not found:** At the point at which a missing child has not been found during the search, the police will lead the investigation and the school will cooperate with their instructions. All search staff will be recalled back to the school and given instructions accordingly.

10. **Actions to be followed by staff in after School Clubs and Activities/Wrap Around Care**

10.1. If a child goes missing during after school activities/after the end of the timetabled school day the following actions will be taken:

10.1.1. **Notification:** The member of staff who has taken a register and/or has responsibility for the supervision of children in after school activities or wrap-around-care, and who notices a child is absent, will for younger children (in EYFS) either radio the duty staff member in Pre-Prep to begin a search for younger children and/or call the school office to contact the duty staff in EYFS if the phone is within easy reach. The office staff will check the electronic register and see if the child is sick or has gone home. Office staff will check emails and/or phone messages for any recent information from parents. Phone confirmation will be made to form teachers/Prep staff/club providers etc. to check attendance in clubs and a senior member of staff will be informed. If appropriate parents will be called to ascertain if an early pick up has taken place without informing the class teacher at the end of the day. The staff member with the class ensures that all of the other children are safe and occupied with an appropriate activity while this all takes place.

10.1.2. **Immediate Search for younger children:** The duty staff member in EYFS will complete an immediate search of the Pre-Prep (for a missing child in EYFS between 3.30pm - 4.15pm) keeping in radio contact with the office, checking both inside and out, carefully checking all spaces, cupboards, washrooms etc where a small child might hide.

10.1.3. **Security:** A member of the office staff will also with immediacy contact the Estates Team to close the school gate and electronic barrier to prevent traffic from driving in/out of the school; any visitors/families on site will be asked to remain on site until advised otherwise. The CCTV records will be checked for signs of entry and exit.

10.1.4. **Extended Search:** If the child has not been located, after office checks and after the initial search for younger children in EYFS, the Missing Child - Code Red message will be sent via the Bodet system to all staff to facilitate a wider search; due to the fewer number of children and staff on site at this time the following adjustments will be made:

- All EYFS Acorns Tea Club children in will remain in Nursery with supervising staff
- All Year 1 & 2 children will be escorted to the Pre Prep Hall by club/ATC staff
- All Prep School children will be escorted to the Lyne Hall by club/prep staff
- An appropriate supervising adult (from one of the clubs) will remain with the children in the Pre-Prep Hall and Lyne Hall, and all other staff will report to the Heritage Room to begin the wider search, checking the immediate areas of where the child was last seen; if the child is still not found the Missing Child - Code red process will then be followed (*as detailed in paragraphs 4.2 - 4.5 and 5.4 - 5.10*).

10.2. All club providers and after school care staff receive details of this process as part of their safeguarding induction at Oakwood and is part of the annual information provided in September to all club and after school club providers, alongside registration processes and procedures.

11. Actions to be followed by staff if a child goes missing on a school trip

11.1. The following actions will be taken:

- 11.1.1. An immediate head count would be carried out in order to ensure that all the other children were present & supervision will be appropriately organised
- 11.1.2. An adult would search the immediate vicinity & liaise with the venue manager
- 11.1.3. Immediately inform the Headteacher and DSL by phone
- 11.1.4. Headteacher to contact parents of the missing child
- 11.1.5. Immediately contact the police
- 11.1.6. The remaining children would be taken back to school as soon as reasonably practicable
- 11.1.7. The DSL will inform the LSCB who should liaise with safeguarding partners including local children's services as appropriate
- 11.1.8. The school would co-operate fully with any police investigation and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority including children's services
- 11.1.9. Inform the Chair of Governors without delay
- 11.1.10. The school's insurers would be informed as soon as reasonably practicable
- 11.1.11. If the child is injured and is taken directly from the scene of the accident to hospital for treatment a report would be made under RIDDOR to the HSE as soon as reasonably practicable and no later than 15 days of the accident.

11.2. A full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found would be made for the incident report. We will review our procedures, and if appropriate, these would be adjusted.

12. Actions to be followed by staff once the child is found

7.1. The following actions will be taken:

- 12.1.1. Talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child
- 12.1.2. Speak to the other children to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises/separate from a group on an outing
- 12.1.3. The Headteacher will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident
- 12.1.4. The Headteacher will oversee a full investigation (if appropriate involving the LSCB)
- 12.1.5. Media queries should be referred to the Headteacher
- 12.1.6. The investigation should involve all concerned providing written statements
- 12.1.7. The report should be detailed covering: time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the trip, the length of time that child was missing and how the child appeared to have gone missing, as well as lessons for the future
- 12.1.8. Consider whether actions need to be taken in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy where there are concerns about the welfare of the child.

13. Procedures to be followed by staff when a child is not collected on time

13.1. We will always undertake to look after the child safely throughout the time that he or she remains under our care.

13.2. If a child is not collected within 15 minutes of the agreed collection time, we will call the contact numbers for the parent or carers. If there is no answer, office staff or duty staff will begin to call all other emergency numbers for this child.

13.3. If there is no response from the parents' or carers' contact numbers or the emergency numbers when the premises are closing (after 6pm), the Headteacher will contact the Social Care Duty Officer. Social Care will make emergency arrangements for the child and will arrange for a visit to be made to the child's house and will check with the Police. The Headteacher will ensure a full written report of the incident is made.

13.4. We will look after the child safely throughout the time that they remain under our care, until such a time as they have been collected by a parent, guardian or carer, or until appropriate alternative care arrangements have been made with Social Care and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety. The DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

APPENDIX A: Missing Child Policy – Neighbour Contacts

(not for publication on school website, please contact Oakwood School 01243 575 209)

APPENDIX B: Missing Child Policy – Assigned Roles

Off-site:

	Area to be searched	Name	Mob. No.	Car Reg
Driver A	Salthill Road (off Funtington Road B2178 & A259)			
Passenger B				**n/a**
Driver C	Hunters Race (off B2178 Funtington Road)			
Passenger D				**n/a**
Driver E	Mouthey's Lane (off Funtington Road B2178) East Ashling (Funtington Road B2178)			
Passenger F				**n/a**

On-site:

	Area to be searched	Names
G - 2 x staff RADIO + 2 VESTS	Nursery & Brewhouse garden, Pre-Prep playground, car parks	
H - 2 x staff RADIO + 2 VESTS	Playing fields, Teddy Bear Woods, tennis courts x 2	
I - 2 x staff RADIO + 2 VESTS	**Woods:** Woodland Walk to Fenn House, via Outdoor classroom and running along the periphery of the car park and woods	
J - 2 x staff RADIO + 2 VESTS	**Woods:** Fenn House to the Pool, via cross country route, along the boundary fence	
K - 2 x staff RADIO + 2 VESTS	Walk from Fenn House to the bridge and through the woods towards Sennicotts Church. Radio central control on arrival at Main Road.	
L - 2 x staff RADIO + 2 VESTS	Walk the length of the back drive and remain at Mouthey's Lane until called back to Oakwood by central control. They must radio on arrival at the end point.	
M - 2 x staff RADIO + 2 VESTS	Walk the length of the school drive and back again and wait until radioed to come back to the school.	