Oakwood Community School

Missing Child Policy

Introduction

This policy is produced in line with local Authority and police protocols and procedures and will be shared by managers with such bodies as deemed necessary.

Children rarely go missing, and if they do they return quickly. Children who do go missing are to be protected as far as possible and responded to positively on return. Staff should do their best to help young people understand the risks and dangers involved and make them aware of how to seek help.

When young people go missing from school there should be a constant awareness of the child protection implications including child sexual exploitation and staff should adhere to safeguarding and child protection procedures at all times.

Every local safeguarding board, local authority and police force must have in place locally agreed 'runaway and missing from School protocols. Young people at risk from being missing from care must have in place a written strategy detailed in care and placement plans to minimise this risk. Local police should be notified of any young people who are resident in the area who pose a risk of being missing from care.

A copy of the local protocol will be held in school and staff will be instructed to read this on beginning employment and be notified of any changes and updates as they occur. The link below accesses the local protocols for Leicester and Nottingham.

Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from school should be regarded in line with this policy and the local protocols.

http://llrscb.proceduresonline.com/pdfs/child_missing_from_home_or_care.pdf

http://nottinghamshirechildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_ch_miss_run_away.html

Definitions

Missing Person - Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another

Absent - A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be

Runaway – The pupil to staffing ratio is quite within the school and the staff must ensure that they have sight of the pupil. If the pupil is no longer in sight after 10 minutes police and other parties involved / working with the child should be contacted. Risk assessments are updated to show this and measures are put in place by the school staff to prevent future occurrences for this.

Absconded – A child who absconds from school. The school have a policy whereby if the pupil is out of sight for more than 10 minutes the police should be contacted as well as other parties such as parents/carers/ social workers etc.

The Policy

Each young person must have in place a missing from school protocol and risk assessment which are individual to their needs, but which work alongside local policies and procedures and those of the placing authority. Pupil files and Education Support plans should assess the potential risks of young people going missing and identify the names and addresses of all the people and locations to which the young person is likely to run to. These plans must also include strategies for minimising the risk. This information should be shared with the local missing persons team from the Police and where necessary the CSE team.

The protocol must highlight any potential safeguarding concerns including gang involvement, criminal activity, and risks of sexual exploitation,

A young person's age, level of understanding, level of vulnerability and legal status must be considered in strategies for managing the risk of that young person becoming missing from school.

A current up to date photograph of all young people must be kept in the school with details of name, date of birth, distinguishing marks, medical history, placing authority, family, known associates and missing history so this can be immediately handed over to the local police on reporting a young person as missing from school.

Written records must be kept in the school detailing all individual incidents when young people are missing from school and the information will be shared with the placing authority and where appropriate the young person's parents.

When young people are persistently missing from school or are engaging in risky behaviours then the missing from school they must also adhere to the safeguarding, child exploitation and child protection procedures. A multi-agency risk management meeting must be held to develop a strategy for managing the risks identified and this strategy must be recorded and include actions to be taken by the school, Local Authority and other agencies to contribute to the strategy and manage the risk.

Staff must ensure that a young person is missing and not hiding in the school grounds. If this is the case then parents/residential homes, home managers and social workers need to be contacted immediately.

If there is a risk that a young person may go missing from school, they should work with the young person to help them understand the risks and dangers involved and make them aware if how to seek help if they are away from the school.

Procedures

Prevention and Planning

In order to safeguard young people it is the role of the school with the Placing Authority to try and reduced the likelihood of young people being missing from school. Strategies need to be implemented into education support plans and missing protocols to manage young people who may present a risk of being missing from school.

The care plans, with regards to our residential pupils, and education support plans for all pupils. Risk assessments and Missing from school protocol need to be implemented on admission to the school and risks should be reviewed and assessed prior to making a decision to accommodate a young person ensuring the best placement match is identified

Plans and strategies should be regularly reviewed, and direct work used following any missing from school or absence incidents in the school. Review of all plans and strategies must be regularly reviewed PEP, child in Need and/or LAC Reviews and professionals meetings with all relevant agencies and professionals involved.

Unauthorised Absence

Please see attendance policy.

Missing with Cause for Concern

Young people who are missing from school with cause for concern should be immediately reported to the police. This risk includes from self-harm, suicide, sexual exploitation, substance misuse, gangs, criminal activity and trafficking.

Level of Risk

The decision regarding the level of risk will be determined by the police who will complete a risk assessment to determine the level of police response. The home must provide to the police information about the risk factors for the young person.

The risk will be determined as high or medium. No young person under the age of 18 years will be categorised as low risk.

High Risk – The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the young person is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.

Medium Risk – the risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.

Returning a young person

If the young person contacts the school and asks to return it is the responsibility of the home and placing authority to ensure the young person's return.

If collecting a young person from a location that involves a likelihood of risk to staff or the young person then the police should also be asked to attend.

If the police locate a young person missing from school themselves they may either return them to school or request staff to collect them from the location found or from a police station.

If a young person returns voluntarily then the police, and placing authority should be informed immediately. The police will not routinely visit the home to verify a return this is the responsibility of the placing authority and the allocated social worker or someone appointed by the Local Authority should visit and see the young person within 72 hours of his or her return.

Safeguarding Considerations

Please refer to the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

Following any missing from school incidents where there is cause for concern regarding safeguarding the young person a full referral must be made to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board in line with Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

Refer to the safeguarding policies and procedures for further information

Where a child runs away persistently or engages in other risky behaviours such as frequently being absent from the home to meet with inappropriate adults, the registered persons, in consultation with the child's placing authority should convene a risk management meeting to develop a strategy for managing risk to the young person. The strategy should be agreed with the child's placing authority, the local authority where the home is located and the local police.

Police Powers

The police have powers to safeguard vulnerable young people. These include power to enter premises, to recover young people and to make police protection orders.

Child Abduction Warnings

Anyone who has care of a young person without agreement or permission and the young persons is believed to be at risk of offences being committed against them then the police can consider issuing a Child Abduction Warning notice.

Where a missing young person is known to have been in the company of an adult and there is suspicion an offence has been committed by that adult including child abduction, sexual offences, drug offences, assault, or procuring the young person to commit and offence then the police will investigate and can take actions against those responsible.

Monitoring

Regularly review incidents of Missing from school and absences. This review should highlight any training needs of the staff, any needs for amended strategies and evidence of what has worked well.

All incidents of Missing from school should be recorded and checked by the school and registered manager to ensure effective record keeping.