



Gateway Primary School Policy Cover Sheet

Policy Name:	Lost Child Policy
Adopted at / by:	FGB
Signed on behalf of the Governing Board	
Name:	Kevin Moyes
Date:	September 2026
Signed on behalf of Headteacher:	
Name:	Kayleigh Anstee
Date:	September 2026
Review period:	1 year
Date of next Review	September 2027

Missing Child Procedure

Statement of Intent

Gateway Primary School recognises that a missing child is a serious safeguarding incident. The school will respond immediately and proportionately to any situation where a child is believed to be missing from school, the school grounds, or an educational visit or activity.

The school will act swiftly to establish the whereabouts of the child, assess the level of risk, secure the safety and supervision of the remaining children, and involve parents/carers and external agencies, including Thames Valley Police, where appropriate.

All staff have a responsibility to remain vigilant and to report immediately if they believe a child may be missing or unaccounted for. Staff must not assume that another member of staff has reported the concern.

The response will take account of the individual child and the circumstances, including their age, understanding, additional needs, vulnerabilities, known risks, medical needs, emotional state, and the location from which they are missing.

Aim

The school aims to:

- locate a missing child as quickly and safely as possible;
- assess and continually review the level of risk to the child;
- ensure appropriate supervision and safeguarding of all other children;
- establish when and where the child was last seen and by whom;
- secure the school site and identify any potential exit or security breach;
- notify parents/carers and emergency services promptly when appropriate;
- maintain clear communication and accurate records throughout the incident;
- ensure that staff understand their roles and responsibilities during a missing-child incident;
- learn from any incident and take appropriate action to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Child Missing from the School Site

As soon as it becomes apparent that a child is missing or unaccounted for:

Immediate actions

- The member of staff discovering the absence must immediately inform the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or other member of the Senior Leadership Team/person in charge.
 - The person in charge will take overall responsibility for coordinating the response and will assess the immediate level of risk.
 - A register/headcount will be undertaken immediately to establish that no other child is missing.
1. Staff will establish:
 - when and where the child was last seen;
 - who last saw the child;
 - what the child was wearing;
 - whether the child has any known vulnerabilities, additional needs or risks;
 - whether there are any known reasons why the child may have left the area;

- whether the child has access to a mobile phone or other means of communication.
- 2. A thorough and systematic search of the school building, grounds and immediate perimeter will begin immediately. This will include, where appropriate:
 - classrooms and shared areas;
 - toilets and changing areas;
 - cupboards, storage areas and other enclosed spaces;
 - playgrounds and outdoor areas;
 - Forest School/outdoor learning areas;
 - car parks and entrances/exits;
 - areas where the child is known to spend time or may seek out;
 - the immediate area surrounding the school.
- 3. Doors, gates and other access points will be checked immediately to establish whether there has been a breach of security or whether the child could have left the premises.
- 4. Staff will be asked for any information that may assist in locating the child. Children may also be sensitively asked whether they have seen the missing child.

Supervision of other children

The remaining children must be kept safely supervised. They should be brought together in an appropriate, secure location where possible, and registers/headcounts maintained. Staff must not leave other children unsupervised in order to search for the missing child. The person in charge will allocate staff to specific areas to avoid duplication and ensure that the search is systematic.

Escalation

- If the child is not located immediately, or there is any reason to believe the child may have left the school site, the situation must be treated as an urgent safeguarding concern.
- **Thames Valley Police should be contacted immediately where the circumstances indicate that the child may be at risk of harm, has left the school site, or cannot be located promptly. Staff must not delay contacting the police while completing the school's internal search.**
- The child's parent/carer will be contacted as soon as appropriate and kept informed throughout the incident.
- If the child lives within walking distance and this is considered a likely route, an adult may check the route, provided that this does not compromise the supervision of the remaining children or delay contacting the police.
- The school will provide the police with all relevant information, including the child's description, photograph where available, clothing, vulnerabilities, likely destinations/routes and the circumstances in which the child went missing.
- The person in charge will maintain a written record of significant actions, decisions, timings and communications throughout the incident.
- The Chair of Governors will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable.

Child Missing During an Educational Visit or Off-Site Activity

All educational visits must have appropriate risk assessments and arrangements for responding to a missing child.

If a child becomes missing during an outing:

- Staff must immediately alert the person in charge of the visit.

- Staff will undertake an immediate headcount of all children to confirm that only the identified child is missing.
- Staff will establish when and where the child was last seen and obtain a clear description, including clothing and any known vulnerabilities.
- One or more members of staff may search the immediate vicinity, where safe and appropriate, but staff must not allow the search to compromise the supervision of the remaining children.
- The remaining children will remain together with their designated staff and will be moved to a safe location if necessary.
- The visit leader will contact the school immediately and provide full details of the incident.
- The Headteacher or person in charge at school will coordinate the school response and act as the main point of contact for parents/carers and, where appropriate, the police.
- Thames Valley Police will be contacted without delay where the child cannot be located immediately or where there is any concern for the child's safety.
- Parents/carers will be contacted and kept informed.
- Staff must follow the venue's emergency procedures. At indoor or managed venues, venue security will be informed immediately and any relevant search or lockdown procedures followed.
- Staff must not leave the venue or return to school with the remaining children if doing so would compromise the search or the safety of the missing child, unless this has been agreed by the visit leader and/or police. The priority is the safety of both the missing child and the remaining children.
- The person in charge will inform the Chair of Governors as soon as reasonably practicable.
- A full written record of the incident, including timings, actions, decisions and communications, will be completed following the visit.

When the Child is Found

When the child is located:

- Two appropriate members of staff should remain with the child where possible, providing reassurance and ensuring their immediate safety.
- Staff should remain calm and reassuring. The child should not be made to feel that they are in trouble or blamed for what has happened.
- The child's physical and emotional wellbeing will be assessed. First aid or medical assistance will be provided where necessary.
- If the police or other emergency services are involved, staff will follow their instructions regarding the child and any further investigation.
- The parents/carers will be informed promptly that the child has been located and advised of any relevant follow-up arrangements.
- Other children will be reassured appropriately and reminded of the importance of remaining with their group and following adult instructions.
- Staff will establish, as far as possible, where the child has been and whether there are any safeguarding concerns arising from the incident.

Safeguarding Considerations

A missing-child incident may constitute a safeguarding concern even where the child is quickly located.

The school will consider whether the incident indicates:

- a safeguarding concern;
- a risk of neglect or inadequate supervision;
- a vulnerability or unmet additional need;
- a behavioural or emotional concern;
- a medical or mental health concern;
- a concern regarding another person or location;
- a failure in the school's site security or procedures.

Where appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed and the school's safeguarding procedures followed.

If information suggests that a child may have been harmed, abducted, exploited or otherwise placed at significant risk, the school will work with Thames Valley Police and/or Oxfordshire Children's Services in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Parents and Communication

The school will communicate openly and appropriately with parents/carers.

Parents/carers will be contacted as soon as reasonably practicable where a child is missing and particularly where the child has left the school site or cannot be located promptly.

The school will provide factual information and avoid speculation about the circumstances until these have been established.

Information about the incident will be shared only with those who need to know. Staff must not discuss the incident with members of the public or post information on social media.

Any media enquiries must be referred to the appropriate Local Authority/Trust communications contact or other person designated by the school. Staff should not make comments or statements to the media.

Recording and Reporting

A written record will be completed following every missing-child incident.

The record should include:

- Date and time of the incident.
- Name and age of the child.
- Location and circumstances of the incident.
- Who was supervising the child.
- The time and place the child was last seen.
- Who last saw the child.
- Description and clothing of the child.
- Actions taken to locate the child.
- Staff involved in the search.
- Time parents/carers were contacted.
- Time police or other agencies were contacted, where applicable.
- Time and location at which the child was found.
- The child's presentation and any injuries or concerns identified.

- Any information provided by the child.
- Any identified safeguarding concerns.
- Any security breach or procedural failure identified.
- Actions taken following the incident.
- Recommendations to prevent recurrence.

Where appropriate, the school's incident/accident reporting procedures will also be followed.

The Headteacher will consider whether the incident meets the threshold for reporting to the Local Authority, Ofsted, RIDDOR or any other relevant body. Such reporting will be completed in accordance with the current statutory requirements and guidance.

Investigation and Review

Following a significant incident, the Headteacher or nominated senior leader will lead an investigation. Where appropriate, the Chair of Governors or another nominated governor may be involved in the review.

The investigation will establish:

- what happened;
- when the child was last seen;
- how the child became unaccounted for;
- whether appropriate supervision was in place;
- whether school procedures were followed;
- whether there was a failure in site security;
- whether communication was effective;
- whether the child's individual needs and vulnerabilities were appropriately considered;
- whether any safeguarding concerns have arisen; and
- what actions are required to prevent recurrence.

Written statements may be obtained from relevant staff and, where appropriate, other witnesses.

If the incident is subject to a police investigation, staff will cooperate fully with the police and any other statutory agency involved. The school will not undertake its own investigation in a way that could compromise a police or safeguarding investigation.

Learning and Preventative Action

Following the incident, the Headteacher will determine whether changes are required to:

- supervision arrangements;
- staffing levels or deployment;
- risk assessments;
- educational visit procedures;
- site security;
- access and exit arrangements;
- individual risk assessments or support plans;
- staff training;
- communication systems; or
- this policy/procedure.

Any actions identified will be recorded, allocated to an appropriate member of staff and monitored through the school's leadership and safeguarding processes.

The school will seek to ensure that every incident results in appropriate learning and that any identified weaknesses are addressed promptly.