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RISHWORTH SCHOOL

MISSING CHILD POLICY
(includes procedures for when a child is not collected on time)

Distribution: School website, School Policy Drive.

Note: **This policy should be read in conjunction with all other relevant policies and procedures relating to child protection and registration.**

Rishworth is committed to the promotion of the welfare of all children and recognises the primary importance of maintaining a safe environment for all children and adults. The school will safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are students at the school, in compliance with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Guidance *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education* (see hyperlink). For this reason, health and safety is of paramount importance and should be an integral part of all processes. In the event of a student not being collected, it is vitally important that all adults use professional and personal judgement in order to ensure the safety and well-being of that young person.

Policy

The School aims to keep all students safe and secure at all times.

School Procedures ensure that up-to-date information and contact numbers are held centrally, and can also be accessed by all staff. Colleagues are able to access and use the centralised computer record system, currently iSAMS. In addition, parents are supplied with contact numbers for the School on hard copy literature and on the website: https://www.rishworth-school.co.uk/

Policies concerning uncollected children exists to help staff ensure the welfare of any student who has been left at School after closure and to establish the cause as soon as possible.

This policy also concerns procedures for children who go missing. Exact procedures will necessarily depend on particular circumstances: what is done in School will differ from what is done on a residential, for example. Actions will also vary according to the age of the child, and many other factors. Colleagues are asked to err on the side of caution in individual assessment of circumstances. The purpose will be to provide a general 'flow chart' of actions.

Available to staff via School's Internal Policy Library and Staff Handbook

1.0 Purpose

1.1. This policy outlines the requirements which the School must meet in any cases where a child is missing.

Central to this policy is the need to act quickly in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child in question.

2.0 Procedures

2.1 Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing a member of SLT must be alerted; if no member of SLT can be immediately contacted (i.e. actively spoken with, not having a message left), then another senior colleague should be contacted. **The colleague reporting may be the most senior person available and should not hesitate to take appropriate action.**

- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray

- The member of SLT or senior member of staff calls the police (999) and reports the child missing and then calls the parent

- The member of SLT will contact the Director of External Relations to prepare communications with stakeholders, including other parents, news outlets, etc.

- The member of SLT will inform the Chair of Governors

- A search of the buildings during the above may be appropriate

- It may be necessary to ensure continued safe supervision of other children

- It may be appropriate to check doors and gates in case there is a security breach

- The most recent movements of the missing person/s should be recorded and statements taken from all those (adults and children) who may have last seen the missing person/s. These records should be timed, dated and signed by the person providing the record

- A senior member of staff must carry out a review of the actions taken in due course, which should be completed with actionable outcomes

2.2 Child going missing on an outing or in residential settings

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing designate a safe space for other children and carry out a register, in whatever form is most appropriate, to ensure that no-one else has gone missing

- A search of the immediate environment might be appropriate and can be organised with the setting managers as long as there is no danger inherent in so doing

- If possible, an attempt is made to communicate with the person/s involved, e.g. by mobile

- The setting leader or manager is contacted immediately; the School is contacted and a member of SLT contacts parents or guardians as described above

- The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing and follows the instructions of the police
- Colleagues and children follow the instructions of setting managers and / or the police

- The most recent movements of the missing person/s should be recorded and statements taken from all those (adults and children) who may have last seen the missing person/s. These records should be timed, dated and signed by the person providing the record

- A senior member of staff must carry out a review of the actions taken in due course, which should be completed with actionable outcomes

2.3 **Child failing to return to School**

As a boarding school, there may be times when a child does not return from an unaccompanied outing.

- In the first instance, the duty staff will attempt to communicate with the person/s missing by mobile, or in any other appropriate way

- A check should immediately be carried out to ensure that no-one else is missing

- It may be necessary to ensure continued safe supervision of other children

- A member of SLT must be alerted; if no member of SLT can be immediately contacted (i.e. actively spoken with, not having a message left), then another senior colleague should be contacted. **The colleague reporting may be the most senior person available and should not hesitate to take appropriate action.**

- The member of SLT or senior member of staff calls the police (999) and reports the child missing and then calls the parent

- The member of SLT will prepare communications with stakeholders, including other parents, news outlets, etc.

- The member of SLT will inform the Chair of Governors

- A search of the buildings may then be appropriate

- It may be appropriate to check doors and gates in case there is a security breach

- The most recent movements of the missing person/s should be recorded and statements taken from all those (adults and children) who may have last seen the missing person/s. These records should be timed, dated and signed by the person providing the record

- A senior member of staff must carry out a review of the actions taken in due course, which should be completed with actionable outcomes

In all cases, it should be recognised that there will be a need to ensure that other children are well-cared for in the aftermath, including access to mental health support as appropriate.

2. The investigation

- Staff members should remain calm and minimise anxiety for all concerned

- The incident report should include:
  a. The date and time of the report
  b. What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name/s of those with designated responsibility
  c. When the child was last seen
  d. What has taken place in the group or outing before/ during/after
  e. The time it is estimated that the child went missing.

- A conclusion is drawn as to how and why the breach of security happened

- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

- All appropriate third parties are informed as appropriate: e.g. RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences) arrangements; the local authority; the Health and Safety Executive; the ISI; the Charities Commission

- In the event of disciplinary action, this outcome should be recorded and the appropriate procedures followed

- The insurance provider must be informed.

3. Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The children may also be sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.

- Parents should be informed of any incident involving a missing child by a member of the SLT

- Staff may feel vulnerable during this process and will need support. Senior staff must be available when conversations with parents are undertaken

- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time and there will need to be further guidance from the SLT as necessary

- Members of staff, volunteers and Trustees must not discuss any missing child incident with the press and should refer any questions to the School

Procedures for when a child is not collected on time

Rishworth Preparatory Immediate Procedure

Any student who is not collected by 3:40 pm and who is not otherwise engaged in a supervised after-school activity will be escorted to Out of School Care building where he / she will be registered and then cared for until the close of Out of School Care at 5.45 pm.

The Out of School Care Manager (or duty manager) will attempt to contact parents to establish the cause of the delay. A senior member of staff will be contacted and kept up to date with any developments. If, at 5.45 pm, the student has not been collected, the Out of School Care staff will contact the Matronic Department at Rishworth to arrange for the student to be taken there. Attempts to contact the parents/carers and/or the supplied emergency contact numbers will continue throughout the evening. A message with relevant contact details will be left inside the window of the Out of School Care building in case an adult comes to the Heathfield Out of School Care.

Rishworth Immediate Procedure

Any student who is not collected by 3.40 pm and who is not otherwise engaged in a supervised after-school activity will report to the Library where he / she will be registered and cared for until the close of the Library at 5.45pm

Attempts to contact the parents/carers and/or the supplied emergency contact numbers will continue throughout the evening.

Overnight Provision

If parents cannot be contacted/are not able to collect their child, the student will be cared for overnight in an appropriate environment in one of the boarding or Matronic areas, with an appropriate charge being made at the discretion of the SLT.

The Matronic staff will inform a member of SLT of the situation.

The senior member of staff using all known available information will consider who to contact and at what stage (Police, Social Services, etc.)

The senior member of staff should ensure that proper records are kept of all significant points relating to the incident and that clear channels of communication are established and maintained from the outset.

At every stage of the above procedure the student will be informed of the current situation as age and situation-dependent, and possible next steps to ensure the student is calm and conversant.