

Missing Pupil Policy



Ellesmere College

1 Policy statement

1.1 Policy aims: Through the operation of this policy we aim to:

- 1.1.1 protect the health, safety and welfare of pupils at the College;
- 1.1.2 ensure that College staff know how to respond promptly and appropriately if a pupil goes missing or their whereabouts cannot be established;
- 1.1.3 ensure that the College actively searches for pupils who are missing and escalates concerns in a manner proportionate to the circumstances and level of risk;
- 1.1.4 ensure that any incident involving a missing pupil is managed in accordance with the College's safeguarding procedures and, where appropriate, with the police, children's social care and other relevant agencies.

1.2 Scope: This policy:

- 1.2.1 applies to staff (including volunteers), pupils and parents at the College;
 - 1.2.2 should be read with the College's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, Attendance Policy, Educational Visits Policy and relevant boarding procedures;
 - 1.2.3 supports the College's compliance with the safeguarding duties and expectations in *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026* (KCSIE), and the *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools* (NMS), in particular Standards 8 and 20, including the requirement that staff know the whereabouts of boarders, or know how to find their whereabouts, at all times and that staff actively search for boarders who are missing, including working with the police where appropriate;
 - 1.2.4 Children Missing Education (CME), including pupils who cease to attend the College and whose educational whereabouts cannot be established, is covered by the College's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Attendance Policy and CME procedures. This policy should be read alongside those procedures.
- 1.3 The procedures in this policy provide a framework for responding to missing-pupil incidents. They should be applied according to the circumstances of each individual case and may be adapted as necessary to protect the pupil's safety and welfare. The Head, Deputy Head and Designated Safeguarding Lead have appropriate discretion in relation to the procedures in this policy. Where there is an immediate concern for a pupil's safety, staff must not delay taking appropriate action while seeking to follow the normal sequence of this policy.
- 1.4 Publication: This policy is provided to all staff in the Staff Handbook. Parents may request a copy from the College or review the policy on the College website.

2 Responsibility

- 2.1 The Governors delegate appropriate responsibilities for the day-to-day management of the College to the Head. In practice, all members of staff contribute to the safety of pupils at the

College by providing appropriate supervision in accordance with the directions of the Head and Senior Leadership Team.

Any member of staff who notices that a pupil is missing, cannot account for a pupil who is expected to be under the College's supervision, or sees a pupil in a place where the pupil should not be, has a duty to inform the relevant [Tutor/Head of Section/Housemaster/Housemistress] and/or Reception without delay.

The member of staff should provide the last known location of the pupil, the time the pupil was last seen or accounted for, the circumstances in which the pupil was identified as missing, and any information known about the pupil's likely whereabouts or welfare.

- 2.2 All staff must understand that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. A member of staff who has a safeguarding concern about a missing pupil must report that concern immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or, in their absence, a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), in accordance with the College's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- 2.3 All staff receive safeguarding training and regular updates, including their responsibilities in relation to missing pupils, the identification of risk factors and the procedures to be followed where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown.

3 Procedure for pupil missing during the day

- 3.1 A pupil who is expected to be under the College's supervision must be accounted for in accordance with the College's arrangements for attendance, registration and supervision. Registration does not, by itself, establish the pupil's whereabouts for the remainder of the school day.

A pupil will be regarded as missing when their whereabouts are unknown and the College is unable to establish their location after reasonable enquiries.

Where a pupil who is expected to be present cannot be located, the College will take prompt and proportionate action to establish the pupil's whereabouts and assess whether there is any concern for the pupil's safety or welfare.

High-risk indicators include:

- Age under 13
- Self-harm concerns
- Known mental health issues
- Exploitation concerns
- Severe weather
- Water hazards
- Leaving site unexpectedly

- 3.2 If a member of staff or volunteer (Adult Responsible) notes that a pupil is missing from class / sport practice / other activity, the Adult Responsible should immediately inform Reception and the Head of Lower School for pupils in Year 3 to Year 8 or the relevant Housemaster (HsM) for pupils in Year 9 to Year 13. If the HsM is absent, contact the tutor, Head of Section and a member of SLT, unless the pupil is located immediately.

The Adult Responsible, or another member of staff designated by the relevant Head of Section (Y3 to Y9I) or HsM (Y9 to Y13). The Head of Section/ HsM should make a prompt initial effort to locate the pupil, taking account of the circumstances and any known information, by:

- checking the child's timetable for that day;
- checking attendance/registration information;
- checking whether the pupil has been authorised to be elsewhere;
- contacting the Sick Bay to check whether the pupil has reported sick or has an appointment;
- checking the list of music lessons;
- contacting the Music Department;
- contacting the Library in case the pupil is there;
- checking the pupil's boarding House where applicable;
- checking other relevant school buildings, grounds and facilities;
- considering the pupil's likely route from their last known location;
- speaking to relevant staff and, where appropriate, friends or classmates;
- checking available CCTV, access-control or other relevant information where appropriate and in accordance with the College's safeguarding and data-protection arrangements.

The search must be conducted safely and must not place staff or pupils at unreasonable risk.

3.3 If the pupil cannot be located promptly, the Head of Lower School (Y3 to Y8) or HsM (Year 9 to Y13) must be informed immediately and the time at which the pupil was first identified as missing must be recorded.

The Head of Lower School / HsM will consider the information available, including:

- the pupil's age and maturity;
- the pupil's last known location;
- whether the pupil may have left the College site;
- any known medical, physical, emotional or mental-health needs;
- any special educational needs or disability which may affect the response;
- any known safeguarding concerns or vulnerabilities;
- whether the pupil has previously gone missing;
- anything concerning that the pupil may have said or done;
- weather, traffic, water, terrain or other environmental risks;
- whether there is any indication of accident, injury, exploitation, criminal activity or other harm.

3.4 The [Head of Lower School / HsM] must notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) in their absence, without delay where the circumstances give rise to a safeguarding concern and otherwise as soon as the pupil cannot be located through the initial search.

The DSL/DDSL will determine the appropriate level of escalation and coordinate further action.

There is no requirement to wait for a fixed period before involving the DSL, Head, parents, police, children's social care or other relevant agencies. The response must be proportionate to the circumstances and level of risk.

- 3.5 The DSL, or a member of staff acting under the DSL's direction, will coordinate an appropriate search of the College site and relevant surrounding areas. Assistance may be requested from Reception / boarding staff / porters and other available staff as appropriate.

Friends and classmates may be asked whether they have any knowledge of the missing pupil's whereabouts. Staff should be sensitive to confidentiality and should not disclose unnecessary information about safeguarding concerns to other pupils.

Where appropriate, the College may use relevant CCTV, access-control records, electronic sign-out systems, transport information or other available information to assist in establishing the pupil's whereabouts.

- 3.6 If the pupil is found on site or in the vicinity, College staff will seek to ensure the pupil's immediate safety and encourage the pupil to return to the College or another safe location.

Staff should use appropriate de-escalation and should not place themselves or the pupil at unnecessary risk. Staff must not pursue, confront or physically intervene with a pupil where doing so would be unsafe or inappropriate, except where reasonable force may lawfully be used to prevent injury or serious harm and in accordance with the College's relevant policies.

If the pupil refuses to return, is distressed, appears to be at risk of harm, or is in a location or situation that presents a significant risk, the DSL will consider whether the parents, police, children's social care or other appropriate agency should be contacted.

- 3.7 If the pupil is not found following the initial search, the DSL will coordinate the continuing response and notify the Head, providing relevant details.

Reception will be informed and the pupil will be recorded as missing in accordance with the College's procedures.

The DSL will determine whether and when the pupil's parents should be contacted. Parents should normally be informed as soon as reasonably practicable, taking account of the circumstances, the pupil's welfare and any safeguarding considerations.

The College will not delay contacting parents, the police, children's social care or other agencies where delay could increase the risk to the pupil.

- 3.8 If the pupil remains unaccounted for, or at any earlier stage where the circumstances warrant it, the DSL or Head will contact the police and/or children's social care in accordance with the College's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and relevant local protocols.

Police or children's social care should be contacted without delay where there is an immediate or serious concern for the pupil's safety or welfare, where the pupil may be at risk of significant harm, or where the circumstances indicate that police or children's social care involvement is otherwise necessary.

Contact with parents should not delay contact with the police or children's social care where this would increase risk.

The College will provide the police, children's social care and other relevant agencies with all information reasonably requested and will continue to cooperate with them until the incident has been appropriately resolved.

3.9 When the pupil is found

When a missing pupil is located, the College will take appropriate steps to ensure the pupil's immediate safety and welfare. The DSL, or an appropriate member of staff, will consider:

- the reasons why the pupil went missing;
- whether the pupil has suffered or is at risk of harm;
- whether any safeguarding referral is required;
- whether the pupil's risk assessment or support plan requires amendment;
- whether additional support should be offered to the pupil and family;
- any lessons learned for College procedures.

A record of the outcome and any follow-up actions will be recorded on CPOMS.

4 Procedure for boarding pupil missing after school hours or during the night

- 4.1 Boarding staff undertake routine registration, signing in/out procedures and accountability checks throughout the day, evening and overnight in accordance with boarding procedures to ensure that the whereabouts of boarders are known, or can be readily established, at all times.

When the Housemaster or Housemistress discovers that a boarding pupil is missing outside the normal school day and under boarding supervision (usually 5:30pm onwards), including the evening and overnight, he / she will:

- establish when and where the pupil was last seen or otherwise accounted for;
- check the boarding house records, signing-out arrangements and any other relevant information;
- check with other boarding pupils (if awake) and ask them if they have any knowledge of the missing pupil's whereabouts;
- conduct an immediate search of the House and its immediate surroundings, provided this can be done safely;
- check the pupil's room and other appropriate areas;
- notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead in their absence, in accordance with the circumstances and level of risk and without delay where there is any safeguarding concern;
- contact other available members of staff and, where appropriate, other suitably trained staff on site to conduct a wider search of the College site;
- consider whether the pupil may have left the College site and identify likely routes or destinations;
- consider the pupil's age, maturity, vulnerabilities, known safeguarding concerns, medical or mental-health needs and any other relevant circumstances;
- contact the parents as soon as reasonably practicable where appropriate, taking account of the circumstances and any safeguarding considerations;

- contact the Police without delay where the circumstances indicate that the pupil may be at risk of harm, where the pupil has left the site and cannot safely be located, or where police involvement is otherwise appropriate;
- contact children's social care where appropriate and in accordance with the College's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and local protocols;
- provide the police and/or children's social care with the information requested and continue to cooperate with them until the incident has been appropriately resolved.

The College will not wait for a fixed period before contacting the DSL, parents, police or children's social care where the circumstances require earlier action.

5 Procedure for pupils missing during a school trip or during or following a journey

5.1 If a pupil is missing from a school trip or has not arrived at the College following a journey, the member of staff in charge will:

- immediately establish when and where the pupil was last seen or otherwise accounted for;
- attempt to contact the pupil using the contact details available;
- check whether there were any delays or changes to the journey;
- check whether the pupil has been collected, transferred to another authorised person or otherwise authorised to be elsewhere;
- check with other pupils and ask them if they have any knowledge of the missing pupil's whereabouts;
- contact the pupil's accommodation, if applicable;
- contact the venue or the people that the pupil had visited, if applicable;
- contact the transport provider, driver or other relevant transport contact, where applicable;
- contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead or College contact (who will contact the DSL or DDSL);
- liaise with the College in all instances;
- establish whether the pupil may have suffered an accident, injury or medical emergency;
- If there is concern about injury, accident or medical emergency dial 999 to contact the emergency services without delay. Contact parents where the circumstances warrant it, while keeping the College informed;
- provide the College and any relevant emergency service with the pupil's last known location, itinerary, description and any other relevant information;
- continue to follow the directions of the DSL, Head, Police or other relevant agency until the incident has been appropriately resolved.

The member of staff in charge must not delay contacting the Police or emergency services where there is an immediate concern for the pupil's safety or welfare.

6 Information to be provided to the Police

6.1 When the College contacts the Police during the day or night, the following information should be provided where available and appropriate:

- the pupil's name;

- the pupil's age and date of birth;
- relevant information about the pupil's vulnerability or safeguarding concerns;
- the time and place the pupil was last seen or otherwise accounted for;
- an up-to-date photograph if possible;
- the pupil's height, physical description and any physical peculiarities;
- any disability, learning difficulty, special educational needs, medical condition or other relevant need that may affect the search or the pupil's safety;
- the pupil's home address and telephone number;
- a description of the clothing the pupil is thought to be wearing;
- details of any mobile telephone or other relevant device, where appropriate;
- the pupil's likely destinations, routes or known associates, where relevant;
- any relevant comments, messages, disclosures or behaviour by the pupil;
- any known risks, including concerns about self-harm, exploitation, criminal activity, abduction or other harm;
- details of the searches already undertaken and their outcome;
- details of any relevant CCTV, access-control or transport information;
- the names and contact details of relevant College staff;
- any other information reasonably requested by the Police.

6.2 The College will cooperate fully with the Police and provide any further information or assistance requested. The College will maintain appropriate contact with the Police and other relevant safeguarding agencies until the incident has been appropriately resolved.

The College will record the Police incident/reference number where one is provided.

7 Review

7.1 This policy shall be reviewed every year as part of the College's annual review of safeguarding, and updated as necessary.

In undertaking the review, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will take into account:

- any incidents in the Missing Pupil Incident record;
- any incidents that indicate that there may be a problem with supervision, pupil support, attendance or security at the College;
- any safeguarding concerns or patterns identified;
- the effectiveness and timeliness of the College's response to individual incidents;
- any issues raised by individual members of staff, parents and pupils;
- any relevant changes to legislation, statutory guidance, DfE guidance, National Minimum Standards or local safeguarding and police protocols;
- any recommendations or findings arising from inspections, reviews or serious incident learning.

Where an incident identifies a significant concern, the College will review the relevant procedure without waiting for the annual policy review.

8 Missing pupil incident record

8.1 The College keeps a full written record on CPOMS of any incident of a missing pupil including:

- the pupil's name;
- relevant dates and times, including when the pupil was last seen or otherwise accounted for and when the pupil was first identified as missing;
- the pupil's last known location;
- the circumstances in which the pupil was identified as missing;
- the action taken to establish and confirm the pupil's whereabouts;
- the areas and locations searched;
- the staff involved in the search and response;
- any relevant CCTV, access-control, transport or other information considered;
- the risk assessment undertaken and the reasons for significant decisions;
- the time and method of contact with the parents;
- whether the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Head, Police, children's social care or other agencies were involved;
- any Police incident/reference number;
- the information provided to external agencies;
- the outcome or resolution of the incident;
- any reasons given by the pupil for being missing;
- any safeguarding concerns identified before, during or after the incident;
- any follow-up action or support provided to the pupil;
- any concerns or complaints about the handling of the incident;
- a record of the staff involved;
- any lessons learned and any action taken as a result.

8.2 A full written record of the incident will be kept on the pupil's file (CPOMS), in accordance with the College's safeguarding-recording, data-protection and retention arrangements.

Where the incident gives rise to a safeguarding concern, the record will be maintained in accordance with the College's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

Authorised by

The Head



Date

September 2026

Reviewed by

DHP

Date

September 2026



Effective date of the policy

September 2026

References

1. *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*, Department for Education, effective from 1 September 2026.
2. *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools*, Department for Education, May 2026. In particular, Standards 8 and 20.
3. *Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools*, Department for Education, September 2025.
4. *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*, Department for Education, July 2026.
5. *The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014*, as amended.