



# Children Missing in Education Policy

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## Summary of changes and reviews

Version	Date	Summary of amendments	By
1.0	1 Sept 2021	Policy reviewed and new template incorporated.	JO
1.1	1 Sept 2022	Policy updated with staff changes	NR



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# CHILDREN MISSING IN EDUCATION POLICY

## (WHOLE SCHOOL INCLUDING EYFS)

This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Missing Child Policy
- KCSIE 2022

It takes full account of the child protection procedures agreed by Gloucestershire LA and statutory guidance.

### Children Missing from Education (CME)

A child who is missing from an education setting is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect. Hatherop Castle School will put in place appropriate safeguarding responses if children are missing from school. We will follow-up unexplained absences of any student with a telephone call from the school office on the morning of the first day of absence and priority will be given to vulnerable children especially those on a Child Protection Plan. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a student who is on the student safeguarding register. Hatherop Castle School works within the remit of Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Executive (GSCE) safeguarding partners and as such, access the services for Children Missing Education within Gloucestershire Local Authority. [The school will follow the set protocol to identify children missing from education, the point of contact being the 'Access to education Team'](#). (See Appendix A). This applies to all starters and leavers at non-standard transition points.

The school will view absence as both a safeguarding issue and an educational issue. Termly Persistent Absence data of 85% or below, after review, will be reported to Gloucestershire Local Authority. The Admissions Secretary will also inform them of any student who has been absent without the school's permission for 10 continuous school days. Additionally, the Admissions Secretary will notify them of any student who is going to be deleted from the admissions register where the student:

- has been taken out of school by his/her parents and is being educated outside the school system e.g. elective home education; has ceased to attend Hatherop Castle School and no longer lives within reasonable distance;
- has been permanently excluded;
- has been removed from the admissions register at non-standard transitions i.e. where a child leaves Hatherop Castle School before completing Year 8.

### Requests for special leave

Parents requesting special leave have to fill in an absence form which is then passed to the Head. The absence may be declared authorised or may be refused. If the parents then take the child out of school, this becomes an unauthorised absence. The school will be mindful of risks to children including FGM and travelling to conflict zones.

### Absence after a holiday

After every holiday, including half term, the parents of any absent children are immediately contacted to ensure that the children have not gone on unauthorised extended leave. Any requests for extended leave in school time are refused unless parents can provide evidence of an emergency e.g. sickness, bereavement etc. In all cases parents are asked to provide a return date.



Patterns of children missing education can be an indicator of either abuse or safeguarding risks. A relatively short period a child is missing does not reduce the risk of harm to that child, and all absence or non-attendance should be considered with other known factors or concerns.

### Designated Safeguard Leads (DSLs) and staff should consider

Single missing days:

- Is there a pattern in the day missed?
- Is it before or after the weekend suggesting the child is away from the area?
- Are there specific lessons or members of staff on these days?
- Is the parent informing the school of the absence on the day?
- Are missing days reported back to parents to confirm their awareness?
- Is the child being sexually exploited during this day? Do the parents appear to be aware?
- Are the pupil's peers making comments or suggestions as to where the pupil is?

Continuous missing days:

- Has the school been able to contact the parents? Is medical evidence being provided?
- Are any siblings attending school (either our or local schools)?
- Did we have any concerns about radicalisation, FGM, forced marriage, honour-based violence or sexual exploitation?
- Have we had any concerns about physical or sexual abuse?

## Children Missing from Home or Care

Children who run away from home or from care provide a clear behavioural indication that they are either unhappy or do not feel safe in the place that they are living. Research shows that children run away from conflict, neglect, abuse, problems at home or school, or because children are being groomed by predatory individuals who seek to exploit them.

The association of chief police officers has provided the following definitions and guidance.

*A "Missing" person is: 'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.'*

*An "Absent" person is: 'A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.'*

All cases classified as Missing by the police will receive an active police response – such as deployment of police officers to locate a child. Cases where the child is classified as Absent will be recorded by the police and risk assessed regularly but no active response will be deployed. The Absent case will be resolved when a young person returns or new information comes to light suggesting that he/she is at risk. In the latter instance, the case is upgraded to Missing.

Within any case of children who are missing both push and pull factors will need to be considered.

Push factors include:

- Conflict with parents/carers;
- Feeling powerless;
- Being bullied/abused;
- Being unhappy/not being listened to;
- The Toxic Trio (domestic violence, mental ill-health and drug/alcohol misuse (as defined by Ofsted)). Working Together notes these issues rarely exist in isolation. There is a complex interaction between the three issues.



Pull factors include:

- Wanting to be with family/friends;
- Drugs, money and any exchangeable item;
- Peer pressure;
- For those who have been trafficked into the United Kingdom as unaccompanied asylum seeking children there will be pressure to make contact with their trafficker

As a school we will inform all parents of children who are absent (unless the parent has informed us). If the parent is also unaware of the location of their child, and the definition of Missing is met, we will either support the parent to/directly contact the police to inform them.

## Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Sexual exploitation of children is not limited by the age of consent and can occur up until the age of 18. CSE involves children being in situations, contexts or relationships where they (or a third person) receive 'something' as a result of them performing sexual activities. The something can include food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, or money. Child sexual exploitation can happen via technology without the child being aware; for example, being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. CSE can happen to a child of any age, gender, ability or social status. Often the victim of CSE is not aware that they are being exploited and do not see themselves as a victim.

### Characteristics of Child Sexual Exploitation and abuse

It is often planned and systematic—people do not sexually abuse children by accident, though sexual abuse can be opportunistic; grooming the child—people who abuse children take care to choose a vulnerable child and often spend time making them dependent; grooming the child's environment—abusers try to ensure that potential adult protectors (parents and other carers especially) are not suspicious of their motives.

### Indicators of sexual abuse

Some of the following signs may be behavioural indicators of sexual exploitation. Children who:

- appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant;
- suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late;
- regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education;
- stay away from certain people or avoid being alone with someone;
- display sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age;
- an unwillingness to remove clothes when changing for PE

## Students being withdrawn from school

If a student is withdrawn from Hatherop Castle School, GCC will be notified so that all reasonable efforts can be made to confirm the school to which the student is being admitted; their confidential educational and



student protection records will be sent separately. Educational records sent to our school concerning a student who is not registered by the parents will be returned and the school advised to refer to their Local Authority Education Welfare Service.



## Appendix 1 - Proposed timeline for reporting a child missing from education

### Day 1 - Phone call

A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent or carer that the child is safe at home.

Response from parent	Next step from school
There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers	Call back. Risk assess after 2 hours
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is safe with them	Ask for reason for absence and record on your school's attendance management system
The person answering is not the parent/carer and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe	The school's designated lead for child protection should be consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child.
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned	School to advise the parent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing</li><li>• Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searing for the child</li><li>• Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school, in case he/she has sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment</li><li>• Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing</li></ul>

### Day 2 - Follow up phone call

A subsequent telephone call must be made either from the school landline or preferably a mobile phone.

### Day 3 – Write/email parents

Write or email to the parent in plain English, asking for contact to be made with the school immediately. Please give the parents/carers 3 working days to make contact and if you are aware that English may not be the parent's first language, copy the letter into a language that may be more accessible.

### Day 5/6 - Home visit

Arrange a visit to the home address ensuring that risk assessments are in place

### Once you have completed these checks (or within 10 days, whichever is earlier)

If the child has not been seen and the parents or carers have not contacted either, schools must report the child as missing from education.

