

ST DOMINIC'S

Missing Pupil, Uncollected Child and Children Missing Education Policy

Whole school • Reception to Sixth Form

2026–2027

Safeguarding principle

Every unexplained absence or missing-child incident is treated first as a welfare and safeguarding concern. Action is immediate, proportionate to risk, recorded and reviewed.

Document control	
Policy owner	Headmaster
Operational leads	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Attendance Lead
Approved by	Proprietor / Governing Body: Sir Mike Griffiths
Approval date	____20-8-2026_____
Effective from	1 September 2026
Review date	By 31 August 2027, or earlier after statutory change or a significant incident
Status	Replacement policy; supersedes the 2026–27 Missing Student and Uncollected Child Policy

1. Purpose and safeguarding commitment

This policy establishes one coherent response when a pupil cannot be located while in the School's care, is not collected, fails to attend as expected, or may be a child missing education (CME). It applies on the School site, during transport and handover, at fixtures and educational visits, and to remote or alternative provision arranged by the School.

The School will not wait for a fixed period before acting. The response is determined by the child's age, vulnerability, known risks, circumstances and the developing information. Parent or carer consent is not required to contact the police or children's social care where this is necessary to protect a child.

2. Scope and definitions

Term	Meaning in this policy
Missing pupil	A pupil expected to be under School supervision, or at a known School-arranged activity, whose location cannot promptly be confirmed.
Unexplained absence	A pupil recorded absent without an acceptable explanation, or whose whereabouts are not verified.
Uncollected child	A child not collected at the agreed time and place, including after clubs, transport or a visit.
Child missing education (CME)	A child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise. A pupil on roll may trigger CME enquiries before the legal definition is met.
Persistent/severe absence	Attendance below statutory thresholds. It is distinct from CME but may indicate neglect, exploitation, mental ill health or another safeguarding need.

'Child' includes every pupil under 18. References to parents include carers and any person with parental responsibility. The EYFS requirements apply additionally to children in the early years provision.

3. Legal and regulatory framework

This policy has regard to the current versions of:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014: safeguarding welfare, admissions and attendance registers, and leadership and management standards.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, including the prescribed grounds and procedure for deletion from the admission register.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE).
- Children Missing Education: statutory guidance for local authorities and schools (September 2025).
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance (July 2026).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026; the Children Act 1989 and 2004.
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, where applicable.
- The School's safeguarding, attendance, educational visits, transport, behaviour, online safety, data protection and emergency procedures.

The policy is intended to evidence effective implementation, not simply publication. Records, staff understanding, incident response and leadership oversight will be available for inspection.

4. Responsibilities and incident command

Role	Core responsibility
Headmaster	Overall accountability; ensures resources, external notifications and post-incident action.

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DSL / deputy DSL	Safeguarding risk assessment; liaison/referrals to children's social care and police; child-centred return response.
Attendance Lead	Register accuracy, first-day enquiries, CME coordination and local-authority returns.
Senior incident lead	Directs a missing-pupil search, allocates sectors, sets review points and maintains supervision of other pupils.
Reception / office	Keeps the single timed incident log; checks contacts, signing-out, transport and messages; controls communications.
Trip/fixture/transport lead	Maintains live lists and headcounts; initiates the local emergency response and informs School.
All staff	Take immediate action, report concerns, preserve confidentiality and never assume another person has acted.

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is not the referral route for a missing child. The LADO is contacted only where there is an allegation that an adult working with children has harmed, may have harmed, or poses a risk to a child, in accordance with the safeguarding policy.

5. Prevention and readiness

- Accurate admission and attendance registers are maintained electronically, backed up and auditable. Morning, afternoon and lesson registers are completed at the required times; omissions are chased immediately.
- Late arrival, early departure, medical appointments, authorised off-site activity and changes to transport or collection are recorded centrally.
- Staff use registers and headcounts at handovers, transitions, clubs, transport, fixtures and visits. Trip leaders carry an accessible list, emergency contacts and relevant medical/SEND information.
- Emergency contacts are checked at least annually and when the School becomes aware of a change. Parents must provide at least two contacts where reasonably possible.
- Individual plans identify enhanced supervision, communication, medical, absconding, exploitation, self-harm or family-related risks. Reasonable adjustments are made for SEND.
- Site access, visitor management, gate arrangements and CCTV are used lawfully to support safety. Pupils are taught how to seek help and whom to contact if separated.
- Relevant staff receive induction and annual refresher training; leaders test the procedure through a tabletop exercise and act on learning.

6. Unexplained absence and expected arrival

Any unexpected or unexplained absence is enquired into promptly. The office checks the register entry, known appointments, transport, messages, signing-in records and sibling information, then contacts parents and emergency contacts using all available numbers. Enquiries are recorded even where the child is subsequently located.

1. At morning and afternoon registration, teaching staff submit an accurate mark immediately. Missing or incomplete marks are escalated to the Attendance Lead.
2. Where no acceptable reason is recorded, the School begins first-day contact without delay and in line with the current attendance protocol. If contact cannot be made, the Attendance Lead and DSL assess risk rather than merely repeating calls.
3. The School verifies that the child has been seen or is in a confirmed safe location; a text or unverified message alone may be insufficient where risk is elevated.
4. Where information suggests immediate danger, abduction, exploitation, self-harm, a medical emergency or another serious risk, call 999. Otherwise seek police advice through 101 when proportionate and refer to children's social care where safeguarding thresholds are met.

5. For a child expected to start but who does not attend, or a pupil whose absence and whereabouts remain unexplained, the Attendance Lead promptly contacts the local authority CME service. The School does not wait for a prescribed number of days before making a safeguarding referral.

7. Missing pupil on the School site

The first staff member aware of a possible missing pupil must remain calm, protect the other pupils and immediately notify Reception. Reception records the time and activates the senior incident lead and DSL.

1. Confirm the facts: name and description; last confirmed sighting; expected location; register and timetable; signing-out, medical, club and transport records; known destination, phone and companions.
2. Complete an immediate dynamic risk assessment. Decide at once whether the circumstances require 999, police advice, children's social care and/or parent contact alongside the search.
3. Secure supervision of the pupil's group. Do not leave other pupils unsupervised and do not deploy pupils to search.
4. Allocate staff to defined sectors and record who searched where and when. Check the last-known route, classrooms, toilets and changing areas (respecting privacy), library, medical room, offices, grounds, boundaries, vehicles, transport points and other plausible locations. Check CCTV/access information where lawful.
5. A nominated member of staff telephones the pupil if appropriate, then parents/emergency contacts. Ask about likely destinations, recent distress, family issues, online contact, clothing, medication and travel means. Do not delay police contact while waiting for a parent response.
6. Control entrances/exits and inform relevant gate, transport and site staff without creating alarm. Preserve messages, CCTV and other potentially relevant evidence.
7. The incident lead sets frequent review points, reassesses risk and broadens or stops the School search on police instruction. Staff must not enter unsafe places or pursue a pupil in a way that increases danger.
8. Once found, follow section 11. The police must be told immediately if they were involved; only the police may close their missing-person investigation.

8. Risk factors requiring accelerated escalation

One factor may be sufficient for immediate 999 action. The list is not exhaustive:

- very young age; EYFS; SEND, communication needs or inability to keep safe independently;
- medical need, medication, mobility difficulty, pregnancy or exposure to severe weather;
- proximity to roads, railways, water, heights, construction or other hazards;
- distress, suicidal ideation, self-harm, bullying, sanction, family conflict or a recent upsetting event;
- risk of criminal/sexual exploitation, radicalisation, trafficking, abduction, forced marriage, honour-based abuse or harmful online contact;
- a suspicious adult/vehicle, an unauthorised collector, or information that the child is being concealed;
- previous missing episodes, an unfamiliar environment, no phone/coat/money, unknown direction of travel, night-time or increasing elapsed time.

9. Off-site visits, fixtures and alternative provision

1. The leader stops movement where safe, completes a headcount and confirms the pupil was present and is not with another authorised group or adult.
2. The remaining group is kept safe and adequately supervised. One adult must not abandon the group to search alone.
3. Notify the venue/security, School senior contact and DSL. Search the immediate last-known area and agreed rendezvous points, maintaining phone contact and a timed log.
4. Apply the section 8 risk test. Call the local emergency services immediately where risk requires it; otherwise seek police advice. Contact parents concurrently when safe and appropriate.
5. For overseas visits, follow local emergency arrangements and contact the British consular service where necessary. The School's senior lead coordinates UK communications.
6. For alternative provision, the provider must notify the School immediately of non-arrival or disappearance. The School retains safeguarding oversight and confirms which organisation is leading each action.

10. School transport and handover

If a pupil is missing at boarding, disembarkation or handover, the driver/escort immediately checks the entire vehicle, passenger list, seating and last confirmed stop; informs the transport lead and School; and keeps other pupils safe. The route, stops, possible early departure and authorised collection change are checked. Parents are contacted and police escalation follows the same risk-based standard. No child is left without an agreed responsible adult unless the School has a lawful, age-appropriate written arrangement.

11. When the pupil is found or returns

1. Confirm identity, location and immediate safety. Arrange first aid or emergency medical care where indicated.
2. Notify the incident lead, DSL, parents, searchers, venue/transport staff and external agencies. Tell police immediately if they have been involved.
3. A trained adult holds a private, child-centred return conversation as soon as appropriate. The initial response is calm and non-punitive. Record the child's account in their own words, including where they were, who they were with, how they travelled and whether anyone harmed, threatened or influenced them.
4. The DSL considers exploitation, abuse, neglect, self-harm, bullying, online contact and family risk; makes referrals; and offers an independent return interview through the local authority or another service where appropriate.
5. Agree a proportionate support and safety plan, including SEND adjustments, supervision, attendance support, transport/collection changes and communication with parents. Avoid public questioning or unnecessary disclosure.
6. Complete the incident record and leadership review. Any disciplinary response is considered only after welfare and safeguarding needs have been assessed.

12. Uncollected child

1. Keep the child in a safe, familiar place with appropriate supervision. Follow lone-working arrangements and, where practicable, ensure two adults are present or another adult knows the location.
2. Check the agreed collection/transport arrangement and messages. Contact parents promptly after the collection time, then all authorised emergency contacts. Continue recorded attempts using available methods.
3. Reassure the child; provide water, food, medication and access to a toilet as appropriate. Do not make promises about timing or blame the parent.
4. Release the child only to an authorised person whose identity is verified. If an adult appears intoxicated, violent, unauthorised or otherwise unsafe, do not release the child; contact the DSL and police/children's social care as required.
5. If nobody can be contacted by the end of the School's safe staffing/closing arrangements, or concern arises sooner, the DSL seeks advice from children's social care and/or police and follows their directions. A child must never be left alone.
6. Staff must not take a child home or transport them in a private vehicle unless expressly authorised under a risk-assessed School procedure or directed by emergency services/social care.
7. Record the incident, handover and advice received. Repeated late collection is reviewed by the DSL as a possible safeguarding or early-help concern.

EYFS: parents are informed of the procedure at admission. The Headmaster/DSL considers any required notification to the relevant authority or inspectorate where an incident is serious or indicates a breach of safeguarding or welfare requirements.

13. Children missing education and reasonable enquiries

The School acts early when a pupil's whereabouts or education are uncertain. CME action is not delayed until attendance has reached a particular threshold or until deletion from roll becomes possible.

1. The Attendance Lead and DSL review all information and risk, including safeguarding records, attendance history, siblings, SEND, social worker or other agency involvement and known family plans.
2. The School makes and records reasonable enquiries: all contacts; email/letter; previous or proposed school; authorised relatives; transport/alternative provision; and liaison with the local authority and relevant professionals. Any home visit follows the School's risk assessment and lone-working procedure.
3. If the child may be in immediate danger, make a children's social care referral and contact police as appropriate. If the family may have moved, the School works with the local authority so national tracing routes can be used.

4. The School promptly refers to the local authority CME service where the child's location or education cannot be verified, an expected starter fails to attend, a destination school does not confirm admission, or a parent says the family is leaving without reliable destination details.
5. The School shares information lawfully and proportionately. Data protection law does not prevent necessary safeguarding information sharing.

14. Elective home education, transfers and removal from roll

A pupil's name is deleted from the admission register only when a current prescribed ground in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 is fully satisfied. Deletion is never used as an attendance-management shortcut, because a destination is assumed, or merely because a parent has stopped sending the child.

- The Attendance Lead completes the checklist in Appendix C and obtains Headmaster approval. The exact statutory ground, evidence, effective date and local-authority communication are recorded.
- Required returns are made to the local authority when a pupil is added to or deleted from the admission register, within the statutory timescale and with the prescribed information.
- Where the deletion ground requires joint reasonable enquiries or a period of continuous absence, the School cooperates with the local authority and does not delete early. Safeguarding referrals continue irrespective of register status.
- For a school transfer, the destination and start are confirmed; records are transferred securely. If confirmation is not obtained, the case is treated as a potential CME concern.
- For elective home education, the School obtains and retains the parent's written notification, informs the local authority promptly and, in line with KCSIE, seeks a coordinated discussion with parents and relevant professionals where appropriate before the child leaves roll. The School does not assess or approve the home education, but shares safeguarding and SEND information lawfully.
- The electronic admission and attendance registers, amendments and backups are retained for the period required by the 2024 Regulations (normally six years from the last entry).

15. Recording, confidentiality and communications

Reception or the incident lead creates one contemporaneous record. It includes: date/time; reporter; pupil description and risk factors; last confirmed sighting; register/contact checks; search sectors and staff; calls/messages; decisions and rationale; advice/referral reference numbers; parent communication; location/outcome; child's account; medical response; support plan; and review actions with owners and dates.

Information is shared on a need-to-know basis. Only the Headmaster or authorised nominee communicates with media or the wider parent body. Staff do not post details on personal or School social media unless directed as part of an agreed police communication strategy.

16. Review, monitoring and assurance

- The Headmaster and DSL review every missing-pupil incident and significant uncollected-child/CME case, normally within five working days, without delaying immediate remedial action.
- The review tests register accuracy, speed and quality of escalation, supervision, child voice, equality/SEND impact, information sharing, police/social-care liaison and whether practice matched this policy.
- Actions have a named owner and completion date. The DSL checks for recurrence and links with bullying, behaviour, exploitation, online safety, attendance and transport concerns.
- At least termly, leaders provide the Proprietor/Governing Body with anonymised assurance on incidents, repeat cases, response times, register errors, referrals, training and overdue actions. Serious incidents are reported sooner.
- The policy is reviewed annually and immediately after material statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or inspection findings change.

Appendix A — Missing pupil immediate action card

First minutes	Action
1. Alert	Tell Reception/office immediately. Give name, description, last confirmed sighting and known risk. Start a timed log.
2. Protect	Keep other pupils supervised. Activate senior incident lead and DSL.
3. Assess	Check age, SEND, medical needs, distress, hazards, exploitation/abduction indicators, weather and elapsed time.
4. Escalate	999 for immediate danger/high risk. Otherwise police 101 when proportionate. Refer to children's social care where needed. Do not wait for parental consent.
5. Search	Allocate recorded sectors; check registers, sign-out, transport, likely routes and lawful CCTV. Never send pupils or enter unsafe areas.
6. Contact	Call pupil/parents/emergency contacts concurrently as risk permits. Preserve evidence and control communications.
7. Found	Confirm welfare; notify police and all parties; DSL return conversation, referral/support plan; complete record and review.

Appendix B — Uncollected child action card

Stage	Action
Immediately	Keep child safe and supervised; check collection/transport changes and messages.
Contact	Call parents, then every authorised emergency contact; log all attempts.
Risk	If collector is unsafe/unauthorised, do not release. Consult DSL and police/social care.
Closing	If unresolved by safe closing arrangements—or concern arises sooner—seek social-care/police direction. Never leave child alone or take them home informally.
Afterwards	Record handover and advice; DSL reviews repeat late collection and support/referral needs.

Appendix C — Admission register deletion compliance checklist

- Identify the exact current regulation 9 ground; attach evidence that every condition is satisfied.
- Check current KCSIE, CME guidance and local-authority procedure; involve the DSL where any welfare concern exists.
- Complete any required joint reasonable enquiries with the local authority; do not use a historic 2006-regulations checklist.
- Confirm destination/admission where relevant; securely transfer the pupil file and safeguarding information.
- For elective home education, retain written parental notice, notify the local authority and record any offered coordinated meeting.
- Prepare the prescribed local-authority return, including full name, address, parents' details, destination/reason and deletion date as applicable.
- Obtain Headmaster authorisation; make a dated, auditable register amendment showing the reason and author.
- Continue safeguarding/CME action after deletion if location or education remains uncertain; record final outcome.

Appendix D — Key external routes and source documents

Emergency: 999. Non-emergency police advice: 101. The School must keep its current local children's social care, out-of-hours and local-authority CME contact details in Reception and the safeguarding response pack; operational contact details are checked termly rather than embedded in this annual policy.

Source	Current reference
KCSIE 2026	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2
Children Missing Education (2025)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education
Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2026)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance
Pupil Registration Regulations 2024	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/208/contents
Independent School Standards	https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule
ISI inspection framework	https://www.isi.net/inspection-explained/inspection-framework/

Compliance note: this policy uses the law and guidance current at 20 August 2026. It must be read with the School's live local contact sheet and reviewed if any cited source is amended.