



## TALBOT HEATH SCHOOL “Honour Before Honours”

### MISSING PUPILS POLICY AND PROCEDURES DAY PUPILS (INCLUDING EYFS) AND BOARDERS

**Date adopted:** 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Date for next adoption:** Autumn Term 2025

**Reviewed by:** FGB Committee

***As a school, we will make reasonable adjustments to this policy, in line with the SEND Code of Practice (2014) and the Equality Act (2010), for students with SEND.***

#### 1. Aims

The procedures to be followed if a pupil is missing are designed to:

- protect the health and safety of all boarding and day pupils at the school;
- ensure that all school staff know how to respond if a pupil goes missing.

**NB.** *It is important to distinguish between a pupil's absence from school for an unknown reason and a pupil's disappearance from a lesson or activity after arrival at school.*

*If a pupil is absent from school without any note of explanation, Office Staff will follow this up by contacting parents to establish the reasons.*

#### 2. Responsibility

Talbot Heath School has a duty to supervise pupils to the standard of a prudent or careful parent.

All members of staff contribute to the safety of pupils at the School by providing appropriate supervision under the guidance of the Head, Head of Junior School and Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

To establish whether a pupil is missing it is a requirement to monitor the whereabouts of pupils. This includes the following procedures:

- during the School day, teachers must register pupils at morning and afternoon;
- there are additional routine pupil number checks for the Pre-Prep children;
- for boarders, house duty staff must ensure the signing in and out book is used correctly by pupils in boarding house;
- for boarders, house duty staff must employ sufficient roll calls in the boarding house at appropriate times;
- for boarders, house duty staff must be aware of arrival times back at the house after a journey from friends or parents/guardians;
- on school trips, the staff in charge should ensure that scheduled meeting times and locations are specified and adhered to by pupils and that more frequent pupil number checks are completed, dependent upon the age, nature and location of the trip.

It is the duty of staff in charge of any pupil supervision to check why a pupil is absent, although during the school day, this may be delegated if that member of staff is busy.

#### 2.1 Summary of missing EYFS pupil procedures

1. Establish that a pupil is suspected missing.
2. Conduct a brief risk assessment (vulnerability of the pupil etc.) but do not delay.
3. If a pupil is suspected missing, **a search must be initiated.**
4. If **after 5 minutes of thorough searching** a pupil cannot be found the Head/ an Assistant Head of Junior School will be informed

5. If **after a further 10 minutes of thorough searching** the pupil has still not been found, the Head/Assistant Heads of Junior School will inform the parents or guardians, police and their missing person procedures will be followed.

The same timings and procedure will be applied for school trips.

## 2.2 Summary of missing Junior School pupil procedures

1. Establish that a pupil is suspected missing.
2. Conduct a brief risk assessment (vulnerability of the pupil etc.) but do not delay.
3. If a pupil is suspected missing, **a search must be initiated**. This will include contacting the Head/Assistant Head of Junior School and questioning pupils and staff.
4. If **after 20 minutes of thorough searching** a pupil cannot be found, the Head/Assistant Head of Junior School will inform the parents/guardians.
5. If **after a further 10 minutes of thorough searching** the pupil has still not been found, the Head/Assistant Head of Junior School will inform the police and their missing person procedures will be followed.

The same timings and procedure will be applied for school trips.

## 2.3 Summary of missing Senior School pupil procedures

1. Establish that a pupil is suspected missing.
2. Conduct a brief risk assessment (vulnerability of the pupil etc.) but do not delay.
3. If a pupil is suspected missing, **a search must be initiated**. This will include contacting the DSL and questioning pupils and staff and trying to contact the pupil by mobile phone, if possible.
4. If **after one hour of searching** a pupil cannot be found, the Head, DSL or the member of the Boarding House staff\* on duty will inform the parents. The School will then work with the family to try to locate the pupil.
5. If **after two hours of searching\*\*** the pupil has still not been found, the Head or DSL inform the police and their missing person procedures will be followed. Parents/guardians and Housemistress will also be notified.

\*If a boarder is missing

\*\*For any school trip, the police will need to be informed after just one hour. This will be conducted by the Group Leader and the emergency contact person / Head will be kept informed. Where student vulnerability is identified in a Risk Assessment, Police will be informed sooner than 2 hours.

## 3. Procedure for staff checking missing pupils during the day

Staff taking registers in class must mark any missing pupil absent. Staff must not rely on the information of other pupils. It is the teacher's duty to check why a pupil is absent from their class, although this may be delegated to office staff if the teacher is busy. The checks will include:

- the nurses
- Learning Support teachers (SENDCo, EAL and Mentors)
- visits/trips lists in the school office
- the signing out book
- the Music School
- the relevant tutor
- the School Office staff
- The Boarding House (if a boarder is involved)

### 3.1 Unexplained absence from statutory registration

If a **boarding pupil** is missing from morning registration up to morning break, the office staff

will contact the Boarding House duty staff and a search of the House will be initiated. The Health Centre will also be checked. If the pupil is not located, a whole School search will be initiated.

If a **day pupil** is absent without explanation at morning registration, School Office staff will check the signing in book for any late arrivals as well as ensuring the pupil is not in their current timetabled lesson. They will also check for transport difficulties, Music Centre, Sports Hall, Library, STEAM Hub, Science Centre and the Health Centre which may help to explain the absence.

Following this, if there is a suspicion the pupil has been absent from school without explanation, office staff will text/email parents on all available contact details regarding the “unexplained absence”. If a reason for absence is provided, ISAMs is updated and the office staff will update the paper absentee list.

This procedure forms part of the School Office daily absence monitoring process.

If there is a suspicion that the pupil arrived at school and then went missing, see 3.2.

If a pupil has been in School for the morning and fails to attend **statutory afternoon registration** the staff in charge of the pupil must inform the school office and the Head, DSL, Junior Head or Assistant Head Pastoral.

### **3.2 Following up suspicion of a missing pupil**

If there is a suspicion that a pupil has been in school but subsequently gone missing after arrival, Office Staff will inform:

- the Head, DSL, Junior Head or Assistant Head Pastoral.
- Form tutor for day/boarding pupils;
- the House staff for boarders.

A brief risk assessment of the pupil’s vulnerability will be conducted and a whole school search will be initiated.

As part of the whole school search, the tutor, House Staff or member of SLT leading the search should:

- question friends of the pupil if age appropriate;
- question friends and staff who have recently been in contact with the pupils about their emotional state;
- try to contact the pupil using their mobile phone number (senior pupils only).

### **3.3 Informing parents/guardians after thorough searching for a missing pupil**

If **after the designated times as specified in 2.1, 2.2, 2.3** a day or boarding pupil cannot be found, the Head, DSL, Junior Head, Assistant Head Pastoral or House staff will inform the parents. The School will then work with the family to try to locate the pupil.

### **3.4 Informing the police after further thorough searching for a missing pupil**

If **after the designated additional thorough searching time specified in 2.1, 2.2, 2.3** the pupil has still not been found, the Head, DSL, Junior Head or Assistant Head Pastoral will inform the police and their missing person procedures will be followed. (N.B. the police will conduct a risk assessment when receiving the call). Parents/Guardians and House staff will also be notified.

## **4. Pupils missing from the Boarding House**

If a pupil is missing from the Boarding House outside School hours (8.40am – 3.55pm Monday to Friday), the member of staff on duty should:

- check the signing-out book in the house;
- check any paper work or emails which may have given the pupils permission to be out of the house;
- conduct a brief risk assessment (vulnerability of the boarder etc.)
- conduct an initial search of the house and immediate surroundings;
- ring the Health centre during their working hours;
- check other obvious and nearby locations;
- if necessary, contact other available members of staff on site to conduct an initial search of the School site;
- question friends of the boarder;
- question friends and staff who have recently been in contact with the boarder about their emotional state;
- try to contact the pupil using their mobile phone number.

If there is no discernible reason for absence, the staff on duty will:

- immediately phone the House mistress
- immediately phone the Head or DSL to inform that the boarder is missing.

#### **4.1 Informing parents/guardians after one hour of searching**

If **after one hour of searching** a pupil cannot be found, inform the Housemistress and Head or DSL. The Head, DSL or Housemistress will then inform the parents/guardians. The School will then work with the family to try to locate the pupil.

#### **4.2 Informing the police after two hours of searching**

If **after two hours of searching** the pupil has still not been found, the Head or DSL will inform the police and their missing person procedures will be followed. (N.B. the police will conduct a risk assessment when receiving the call). Parents/guardians and House staff will also be notified. Where student vulnerability is identified in a Risk Assessment, Police will be informed sooner than 2 hours.

### **5. Pupils missing during a return journey to the boarding house**

For pupils returning to a boarding house after a holiday or a visit to parents/guardians or friends, the member of boarding staff on duty will:

- attempt to contact the pupil by mobile phone;
- check with parents, guardians and friends regarding whereabouts or delays or changes to the journey;

If **after one hour\* of searching** the pupil has not been found, the member of house staff should inform the Housemistress and Head or DSL.

The Head, DSL or Housemistress will then inform the parents/guardians;

The School will then work with the family to try to locate the pupil.

If **after two hours\* of searching** the pupil has still not been found, the Head or DSL will inform the police and their missing person procedures will be followed. Parents/guardians and Housemistress will also be notified.

\*Where student vulnerability is identified in a Risk Assessment, action may be taken sooner than the 1 or 2 hour frameworks

### **6. Senior Pupils missing on a School trip**

On school trips, ensure that scheduled meeting times and locations are specified and adhered to by pupils.

If a pupil is suspected as being missing, the member of staff in charge will:

- contact the Group Leader
- attempt to contact the pupil by mobile phone, if phones are permitted on the trip;
- interview friends about their possible whereabouts and conduct a search if possible;

- when it is clear the pupil is missing, inform the emergency contact person and Housemistress (if they are a boarder).

If **after one hour of searching** the pupil has not been found, inform the emergency contact, Housemistress (if they are a boarder) and parents; the Group Leader will inform the police and their missing person procedures will be followed;

Parents/guardians, Housemistress and emergency contact member of staff will be kept informed.

## **7. EYFS and Junior pupils missing on a school trip**

The same timings and procedure for EYFS and other Junior pupils as specified in 2.1 and 2.2 will be applied for school trips.

## **8. Once a pupil has been found**

- If the reason for absence is not deliberately intended, but due to some form of distress, sanctions will not apply.
- When the pupil has been located, the pupil must see the Head, DSL, Junior Head or Assistant Head Pastoral as soon as possible.
- The relevant teaching staff and Boarding Housemistress must be kept informed.
- Each case will be discussed on its merits, but should the absence be deliberate and without good reason, a sanction will be imposed, for example being grounded in the case of a boarder or a series of detentions / community service for a day pupil.
- In the case of a longer-term deliberate and unauthorised absence, the pupil could be suspended, at the discretion of the Head.

## **Appendix**

### **A.1 Information to be provided to the police**

When the School contacts the police during the day or night, the following information should be provided:

1. the pupil's name;
2. the pupil's age/date of birth;
3. an up to date photograph if possible;
4. the pupil's height and any other physical description that is not shown by the photograph;
5. a description of the clothing the pupil is thought to be wearing;
6. any physical disability, learning difficulty or special educational needs that the pupil may have, or anything else that would make the pupil particularly vulnerable;
7. the pupil's home address and telephone number and details of their parents/guardians;
8. any relevant comments made by the pupil;
9. last known sighting and direction of travel of the pupil;
10. mobile phone number of the missing pupil

### **A.2 Questions that could be asked when interviewing during a missing pupil investigation**

1. When was the pupil last seen?
2. Who was the pupil with?
3. What emotional state did the pupil appear to be in?
4. Has anything upset the pupil recently?
5. Did the pupil speak to anyone about leaving?
6. Who are the pupil's main friends at school?
7. Does the pupil have a mobile phone and what is the number?
8. Is there any reason to believe the pupil might have been abducted (e.g. family custody dispute)?

### **A.3 Record keeping**

The School will keep a full written record of any incident of a missing pupil. This written record will be kept on My Concern.

The written record will include:

1. the pupil's name;
2. relevant dates and times (e.g. when it was first noticed that the pupil was missing)
3. the action taken to find the pupil;
4. whether the Police or Social Services were involved;
5. outcome or resolution of the incident;
6. any reasons given by the pupil for being missing;
7. any concerns or complaints about the handling of the incident;
8. a record of the staff involved.

### **A.4 Registration during the normal school day 8.40am – 3.50pm**

Compulsory statutory registration takes place:

- in the morning and afternoon during the tutor period;

**All** pupils that are given permission to leave school must sign out at the School Reception before leaving the premises.