



St Paul's School
FOUNDED 1509

St Paul's School & St Paul's Juniors Missing Pupil Procedures

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This policy is available on the Handbook page of the School Intranet and can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required; such requests can be made by email to policyquery@stpaulsschool.org.uk

The School recognises its moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued and to always consider the best interests of the child. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children receive effective support, protection and justice. We operate within a culture of openness and recognise and accept that abuse can happen in any organisation.

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1. Introduction

This procedure is to be used for searching for, and if necessary, reporting, any pupil found to be missing from St Paul’s School (**SPS**) or St Paul’s Juniors (**SPJ**) or Boarding (**B**) on any given school day or school activity. The procedure includes the requirement to record any incident, the action taken and the reasons given by the pupil for being missing.

NB A child going missing from school or from home is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Staff should follow this procedure for dealing with children who go missing.

All staff (including teaching staff and support staff, governors, and vetted volunteers and freelance workers where they are likely to be involved in teaching/supervision of pupils) will be made aware of this procedure during their induction and through ongoing training.

Staff should act to identify any risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation. More information can be found in [this guidance](#) about children who run away or go missing from home or care.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or in his/her absence, a Deputy DSL) should always be informed when a pupil is found to be missing. The DSL, deputy DSL or (in the case of boarders) the Housemaster (or acting Housemaster) will always apply the locally agreed procedure in acting to safeguard any child who is missing from school (created in accordance with section B3 of London Child Protection Procedures: [Practice Guidance - Part 6: Children Missing Education](#) and [Appendix 8 Safeguarding Children Missing Education Processes for Schools](#)). In particular, the matter will be referred to other agencies, including children’s social care services and/or the police, in cases where a pupil has gone missing on repeat occasions, or where a single instance of truancy or running away gives rise to concerns of abuse or neglect or other risk of harm, or where there is evidence of a crime.

This policy details emergency actions in a case where a child is found to be missing from school or a school activity. It should be read in conjunction with the School’s Attendance policy, which details the School’s core attendance procedures and in addition, and its safeguarding and information-sharing obligations and processes to support children who are increasingly absent from education, or deemed more broadly to be ‘missing education’ (as

defined by DfE statutory guidance, [Children Missing Education](#)) such as by no longer attending school.

2. Missing Child Procedure for Day Pupils (SPS)

If a day pupil goes missing from St Paul's School, the pupil's tutor, or another responsible teacher (e.g. Undermaster, Head of Attendance, Registration Administrator, or DSL, the "Responsible Person") will make every effort to contact them and get them back into School, including contacting the child's parents. If the pupil cannot be traced within an hour of the pupil being reported missing, a member of the Senior Management Team (usually the DSL, Deputy DSL or Deputy Head Pastoral) will make a Risk Assessment Judgement of the situation (see below) and make a decision as to whether to inform the Police immediately; or whether a longer timescale should be created and what the Responsible Person and any other member of staff should do during any such time extension, including key check-points for a subsequent further action & re-assessment, and a cut-off point after which the police must be contacted. The Responsible Person will also keep the DSL (or, in their absence the Deputy DSL) informed of the situation as it develops.

Children missing on trips and visits (SPS)

The School's Educational Visits policy provide a framework for managing school visits, taking into account the School's safeguarding and health and safety responsibilities. Appropriate staff supervising ratios are agreed by the EVC and supervising arrangements will be relevant to the locality, age of pupils and type of activity. The following procedures apply if a pupil goes missing on a school trip or visit.

The member of staff in charge will:

- Attempt to contact the pupil (if numbers are known)
- Speak to pupils to ascertain when the pupil was last seen and where and what knowledge they have of the missing pupil's last known whereabouts
- Organise for accompanying staff/volunteers to search the immediate vicinity and/or the group's recent locations.

If the pupil cannot be located within fifteen minutes of them being reported missing, the trip leader (or their deputy) will contact the DSL (or, if they cannot be contacted, a Deputy DSL, or the Educational Visits' Coordinator) to inform them that a pupil is missing. At this point, both members of staff will conduct a full risk assessment of the situation and formulate a plan to locate the pupil. Following this telephone call, the DSL will ensure the missing pupil's parents are contacted and kept informed of the situation. If deemed necessary, the trip leader, will contact the police and provide the information listed in Section 6. The member of staff in charge and DSL will continue to liaise at regular intervals until the pupil can be found.

3. Missing Child Procedure for Day Pupils (SPJ)

If a pupil goes missing from St Paul's Juniors, the Pastoral Deputy Head and DSL should be informed immediately, or in their absence, a member of the School Leadership Team. An initial search should be conducted to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts. If the pupil cannot be located, the School Office will attempt to contact the pupil's parents to check whether the pupil should be in School. If the parents confirm that the pupil should be at School, a further and more thorough search of the School site will be conducted, utilising key staff. At this point, the School Office will inform the Head and the School Leadership Team that a pupil is missing and a search is underway. If after extensive attempts to contact the pupil and search of the School premises, the pupil's whereabouts cannot be ascertained, the Pastoral Deputy Head and DSL (or in their absence, an appropriate member of the School Leadership Team) will make a Risk Assessment of the situation (see below) and make a decision as to whether to inform the Police immediately; or whether a longer timescale should be created and what the School Office and any other member of staff should do during any such time extension, including key check-points for a subsequent further action & re-assessment, and a cut-off point after which the police must be contacted. The Pastoral Deputy Head and DSL will contact the parents again at this point to seek their thoughts on the risk assessment conducted. If a decision is made to contact the police, the information listed in Section 6, as well as any other information reasonably requested will be provided. The School Office will also keep the Head, DSL (or, in their absence the Deputy DSL) and the Form Tutor informed of the situation as it develops.

Children missing on trips and visits (SPJ)

The School's Educational Visits policy provide a framework for managing school visits, taking into account the School's safeguarding and health and safety responsibilities. Appropriate staff supervising ratios are agreed by the EVC and supervising arrangements will be relevant to the locality, age of pupils and type of activity. The following procedures apply if a pupil goes missing on a school trip or visit.

The member of staff in charge will:

- Attempt to contact the pupil (if numbers are known)
- Speak to pupils to ascertain when the pupil was last seen and where and what knowledge they have of the missing pupil's last known whereabouts
- Organise for accompanying staff/volunteers to search the immediate vicinity and/or the group's recent locations.

If the pupil cannot be located within fifteen minutes of them being reported missing, the member of staff in charge will contact the Pastoral Deputy Head and DSL to inform them that a pupil is missing. At this point, both members of staff will conduct a full risk assessment of the situation and formulate a plan to locate the pupil. Following this telephone call, the Pastoral Deputy Head and DSL will contact the pupil's parents and inform the Heads and School Leadership Team. If deemed necessary, the member of staff in charge, will contact the police and provide the information listed in Section 6. The member of staff in charge and Pastoral Deputy Head and DSL will continue to liaise at regular intervals until the pupil can be found.

4. Missing Child Procedure for Boarders

If a boarder does not return to their boarding house within a reasonable period from when their return was anticipated, every effort will be made to communicate with them and to ascertain their whereabouts. Should it not prove possible to contact the boarder, then unless the Duty Master is reassured that their continued absence can be safely explained and is not of immediate concern, the pupil will be treated as missing and, in consultation with the Housemaster/and or DSL, the Duty Master will contact the police.

Suggested Timeline:

This is not a strict protocol, but a guideline for the Duty Master on how to respond. The Duty Master should risk assess the situation and confirm a specific timeline for action with the Housemaster (or DSL) on each separate occasion. In the case of a younger pupil, or a pupil about whom there are specific additional welfare concerns, or where information otherwise indicates increased concern, swift action will be necessary and this will almost always involve contacting the police.

0 mins - Indicated Return Time (recorded in Boardingware)/End of formal registration period (e.g. registration at supper/commencement of prep).

0-30 mins - 'Late Return' indicated. Try to establish whereabouts of the boarder by speaking to other boarders, House Staff and try to make contact with the pupil. Unless your investigation raises specific concerns, do not at this stage contact the Housemaster or DSL.

30 – 60 mins – Duty Master should continue to seek to contact the pupil, as 'late return' has now become 'not returned'. If unable to contact the pupil, the Duty Master should also seek to make contact with the pupil's friends, parents, check for school trips, conduct a basic room check for notes/clothes missing, etc, seeking information as to the pupil's whereabouts. If for any reason there has been a delay in the pupil's absence being discovered, the timescale for action should be tightened accordingly – but there will still need to be a 'seek contact' phase, however compressed. If the parents are overseas, then an email may suffice. However, a phone call must be made if at any stage hereafter the situation indicates there are serious concerns for the pupil's safety or welfare.

60mins – the Duty Master should contact the Housemaster (or DSL/Deputy DSL), informing them of the pupil's details and of the steps taken to locate them, and any information that search has yielded. In discussion, a Risk Assessment Judgement will be taken about the level of concern for the pupil; whether sensible/possible avenues for exploration remain; whether the Police should be contacted immediately; or whether a longer timescale should be created and what the Duty Master and any other member of staff should do during any such time extension, including key check-points for a subsequent further action & re-assessment, and a cut-off point after which the police must be contacted.

4.1 Missing Boarders: Making the Risk Assessment Judgement

A number of contextual factors will be taken into account, including:

- Possible threat factors: Time of day; darkness; weather conditions; known local concerns;
- Proximity of School (and/or School House) timings (e.g. morning or afternoon registration, 6pm dinner registration, 10pm/11pm curfew times) from which the pupil would not have been absent without good reason or which are worth waiting until before considering them to be missing.
- Individual pupil circumstances: age, judgement, known personal, pastoral or disciplinary issues, (including whether the pupil is an EAL student or has little experience of navigating the city or area), mood and/or communications prior to going missing, previous instances of going missing;
- Any reassurances/likelihood as to their whereabouts;
- Any parental indication of concern.

Specifically:

- In the case of a pupil about whom there are pre-existing welfare concerns then the time-frame must be compressed and the Police must be contacted by the one-hour point (see below).
- If the pupil is under 16 and staff have received no assurance as to the pupil's whereabouts, then the Police should be contacted at the one-hour point.

All Staff should remember that:

- Early contact with the police may help to save a child's life/save them from significant harm;
- Failing to act within a reasonably responsive time frame could prove costly;
- Staff must feel confident in making sensible judgements as to the whereabouts of the pupil, as a normal parent would – but always erring on the side of caution, and believing that 'sooner is better than later'.

5. Contacting the Police

Generally, before the Police are called, the DSL/Deputy DSL and the pupil's parents should be informed.

However, where attempts to contact the DSL/Deputy DSL and/or the parents are unsuccessful, this should not delay making contact with the Police.

When contacting the Police to report a Missing Child, call 101 (not 999). Pass to the Police all pertinent details as they request.

Ask for their direct contact number, so that you can make swift contact should the situation change.

Where the School contacts the Police during the day or night, the following information should be provided:

- the pupil's name
- the pupil's age
- an up-to-date photograph if possible
- the pupil's height, physical description and any physical peculiarities
- any disability, learning difficulty or special educational needs that the pupil may have
- the pupil's home address and telephone number
- a description of the clothing the pupil is thought to be wearing
- any relevant comments made by the pupil such as "I'm going to run away to Brighton".
- Any suspicion/evidence of a crime.

The information will then be passed to the various police stations through police channels and no further notifications from the School should be necessary – except if the pupil turns up, when the school will notify the police of the pupil's return.

6. Child Student Visa Students

The School holds additional reporting responsibilities for those children whom it sponsors as Child Student Visa holders. If a child who is noted as missing school is the holder of a Child Student Visa, the Responsible Person should notify the Director of Admissions and the Registrar, who will decide upon whether there are further reporting obligations to UKVI.

7. Record-Keeping

Depending on the incident, the DSL will ensure a record is kept of the incident on the Pastoral Manager Module.

As such, as soon as possible following the conclusion of the incident, the member of staff responsible for leading the School's response should provide to the DSL (and in the case of boarders, the Housemaster) a written record of:

- the pupil's name;
- relevant dates and times;
- the decisions and actions taken to find the pupil and the reasons for them;
- whether the police or social services were informed;

- outcome or resolution of the incident;
- any reason given by the pupil for going missing;
- any concerns or complaints about the handling of the incident;
- a record of the staff involved;
- Any other salient information.

8. Follow-up to a Missing Pupil Incident

Once a pupil returns from being missing they will be provided with support and the opportunity to discuss the incident with the DSL, the School Counsellor, and in the case of boarders, the Independent Listener. They may also be provided with the contact details for external support services (e.g. NSPCC).

The pupil's parents will also be given the opportunity to discuss the incident with the DSL, who will provide advice and support where required.

Any residual concerns about the pupil's welfare resulting from an incident will be acted upon and, where appropriate, Children's Social Care Services and/or the Police will be informed, in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures.