



## Policy in the Event of a Child Going Missing from School/School Activities

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## 1 Statement

- 1.1 Mill Hill Education Group (the 'Group') is the trading name of The Mill Hill School Foundation. It is a group of independent mainstream Schools which together educate girls and boys aged 6 months to 18 years. This Policy relates to Cobham Hall School, one of the Group's Schools.
- 1.2 This policy is addressed to current or prospective parent/s or legal guardian/s or education guardian/s, governors, staff and volunteers. It is available, upon request to the School Office, to the parents and prospective parents, governors, staff and volunteers at the School.
- 1.3 The guidance and procedures in this policy have been approved by the Head, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Court of Governors of Mill Hill Education Group. Separate procedures apply in the event of a child protection issue (see the Safeguarding and Protecting the Welfare of Pupils Policy).
- 1.4 The safety and security of the children in our care at Mill Hill Education Group is paramount. Every care is taken to ensure that the children are accounted for at all times. This policy should be read in conjunction with:
  - Educational Visits Policy
  - Supervision Policy
  - Safeguarding and Protecting the Welfare of Pupils Policy
  - Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE guidance (September 2024)

## 2 Aims

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is:
  - To ensure that the school has regard to and is in compliance with the statutory framework
  - To inform Governors, staff, and parents of pupils of the procedures to be followed in circumstances where a pupil may be missing

## 3 Procedures

### 3.1 Introduction

The School takes rigorous measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils at all times:

- 3.1.1 Pupils are registered at the beginning of the School day at 8.30am with their tutor. Pupils will then be registered again at 2.20pm with their subject teacher and pupils are made aware that they must stay within the bounds of the School.
- 3.1.2 For Boarding students a duty rota is in place where children are supervised by staff before morning registration (in House) and in the Dining Room and at the end of the School day (in House). Pupils are supervised in the Dining Room at break time and there is a duty rota of staff patrolling the school from 13.50 at lunchtime.
- 3.1.3 All visitors to the School are issued with a Visitor Lanyard by Reception.



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## 3.2 Registration

- 3.2.1 Pupils are registered electronically in their Houses or tutor bases at 08.30.
- 3.2.2 Staff will need to check the dashboard of iSAMS for a 'live' absence list. The register absent tab and out of school tab need to be viewed in particular.
- 3.2.3 The School Office follows up any unauthorised absences by physically checking the pupil timetable, their class or other lesson, such as Private Study and the School Nurse. If this does not resolve the matter the School Office makes a telephone call to the pupil's home and the Deputy Head or /DDSL is made aware of any unaccounted absences on a daily basis.
- 3.2.4 During the week, boarding pupils are rolled three times during the evening; a formal roll is taken after school via Orah check in at 16:30hrs for all boarders and at 20:00hrs for sixth form pupils and 21:00hrs for all non-sixth form pupils. An informal roll is taken at pupil bedtimes. All non-sixth form pupils are also registered at supper and prep time via Orah check in (which is obligatory).
- 3.2.5 On Saturdays, boarding pupils are rolled in the morning in House or at breakfast, at the start of their activity) (where applicable), if there is no Saturday School pupils are rolled in house via Orah between 9:00hrs to 12:00hrs. Pupils are also rolled via Orah check ins over lunchtime, supper time, their house curfew and an informal roll at bedtimes. On Sundays, boarding pupils are rolled via Orah check in between 9:00hrs to 11hrs, at lunchtime for all non-sixth form pupils, over dinner for all pupils, at house curfews in the evenings and an informal roll at bedtimes.
- 3.2.6 When a pupil is collected from School during the school day, due to illness or a prearranged appointment, they may be collected from the School Office or a parent/guardian or taxi may collect the student from the Boarding House. A note is made in the register to record the fact that they are no longer on the School premises, and the School Office is informed. Pupils must be signed out in Reception before leaving the School premises. Boarding students will require a 'pass' through Orah which is visible to School office when activated on leaving the premises.

## 3.3 Missing Child During the Normal School Day

If it is suspected that a pupil is missing, in the first instance staff will maintain the safety and wellbeing of other pupils in their care.

- 3.3.1 The member of staff concerned will immediately alert the School Office to ascertain if the pupil has been collected. The pupil's friends will be asked to contact them first if possible and then the School Office will try to contact the pupil directly.
- 3.3.2 The Office will contact the School Nurse in case the pupil is there.
- 3.3.3 The Office staff will also look at all other registers to locate a student first eg LAMDA, Music, tennis, counselling, private study, Student Support
- 3.3.4 Staff will speak to other pupils to see if they have any helpful information
- 3.3.5 The Head or a member of the School Senior Management/Leadership Team (SMT/LT) will be informed.
- 3.3.6 A search of School premises and other reasonable areas will be undertaken by as many staff as are available. The Housemaster/mistress will be contacted to see if he or she has any helpful information. If the pupil cannot be located within approximately 30 minutes,



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a member of SMT/LT will liaise with the Estates Manager to activate the fire alarm. If the pupil is still unaccounted for a member of the LT will contact home to see if the child has gone home and immediately ensure parents are informed if they themselves are not at home.

- 3.3.7 If the pupil's whereabouts are still unknown The Head or a member of the School LT will contact the Police.
- 3.3.8 The Head will inform the Director of Safeguarding and the CEO of the Group, who will inform the Chair of the Court of Governors.
- 3.3.9 The Police will take over the search and all relevant information will be passed to them
- 3.3.10 A written record will be made as soon as possible of the incident; it will include details of all action taken by staff and be placed in the pupil's file (Appendix A).

## 3.4 End of Day/After School Fixtures and Activities/Weekend Programme

- 3.4.1 Pupils staying to attend after school activities are briefed about the need to inform parents in advance of their commitments. Details of the Saturday Programme will be provided to pupils at the start of term and House Staff monitor schedules. Activity commitments are outlined to parents at the start of each academic year and each term. Boarders' Saturday commitments are clearly displayed in Boarding Houses and students are reminded to check their Saturday activities.
- 3.4.2 In the event of a pupil not being collected at the end of the day, or after a co-curricular activity or sports fixture, Students can contact boarding house staff, and the emergency numbers are on the wall in Stone corridor. Students can also go straight down to Bligh House after 5pm until collected by parents. Any day students still on site after 6pm must return to the boarding house to be collected from there.
- 3.4.3 All pupils participating in the Saturday Programme must register with the member of staff leading their chosen activity. At the start of each session a register is taken by the teacher in charge. In the event of a pupil failing to register and/or attend an activity session, the member of SMT/LT on duty will contact home.
- 3.4.4 A register is kept in the school office of children who travel on the various School minibuses.

## 3.5 Missing Child Outside the School Day

- 3.5.1 **Boarders:** If it is suspected that a pupil is missing, for example they fail to return to the boarding house after weekend leave or are absent at night, the Housemaster/mistress will determine, as far as is possible, whether the pupil is a 'missing person' or an 'unauthorised absence':
  - The pupil's last known sign in location via Orah will be checked and searched.
  - Housemasters/mistresses to check Orah for any scheduled/activated passes.
  - The Boarding House and likely whereabouts, i.e. other Housemasters/mistresses will be contacted and the other Boarding Houses, will be fully searched.
  - The pupil will be contacted directly to ascertain their whereabouts.
  - The School Calendar, and other possible sources of information will be checked to see if the pupil may be involved in an event and has forgotten to inform appropriately/activate an Orah pass.
  - A search of School premises and other reasonable areas will be undertaken by as



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many staff as are available.

- Friends of the missing pupil will be questioned if the pupil remains unaccounted for and if appropriate, they will call the missing child, a member of the LT will be informed, according to the nature of the situation, e.g. the Head or in the Head's absence, Deputy Head.
- A Broadcast will be sent out via Orah informing all boarders and boarding staff, with the intent to find out as much information as possible.
- If the pupil cannot be located within approximately 30 minutes, a member of LT will liaise with the Estates Manager/Night caretaker to activate the fire alarm.
- If the pupil is still unaccounted for a member of the LT, in consultation with the Head will contact the parents, or guardians as appropriate, it will be decided when to ring the Police

The following factors should be considered at all stages of the decision-making process: previous behaviour patterns; state of health and any requirement for medication; state of mind at time of absence; time of day/night; history of self-harm; physical or learning difficulties; whether the pupil is perceived as running to someone or from a situation.

- Although parents will have a significant say in the School's decision, if a pupil has gone missing under the School's care and control, parental wishes may be overruled - e.g. the School may wish to ring the Police even though parents do not. If the parents insist upon police involvement sooner than the School advises, the parent's wishes will be respected
- If neither parents nor guardians are contactable then the SMT/ LT will decide when to inform the Police
  - When reporting to the Police the following information will be passed on: a full description of the child; precise details of when the child was last seen, by whom and with whom; a recent photograph and family addresses. Any circumstances, which may increase the risk to the child, should be drawn immediately to the attention of the Police
  - On receiving a report of a 'missing' child, the Police will record and make enquiries in accordance with their policy and procedures. Ownership of a 'missing' person enquiry remains with the Police

A boarding pupil who is suspected to be missing during the School day, for example from a day time registration, will be searched for in accordance with the procedures outlined in 3.3 above.

- 3.5.2 Day pupils: If it is suspected that a pupil is missing, the person leading the activity/event will determine, as far as is possible, whether the pupil is a 'missing person'. The immediate vicinity and likely whereabouts, e.g. school buildings and other Houses, will be fully searched. Staff also attending the event/activity and friends of the missing pupil will be questioned to ascertain his/her whereabouts. If the pupil remains unaccounted for, the procedures outlined in the "Boarders Section" will be adhered to.
- 3.5.3. Weekly boarders: In cases where parents have previously arranged with the appropriate Housemaster/mistress for a pupil to stay in the boarding House on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night, and it is suspected that a pupil is missing during the period specified, the



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Housemaster/mistress will follow the procedures laid down in 3.5.1. If it is suspected that a pupil is missing outside the School day, but the pupil is not expected to be resident in the House that evening, then the Housemaster/mistress will follow the procedure laid down for Day pupils outlined in 3.5.2.

## 3.6 Missing Child on an Educational Visit (Introduction)

3.6.1 When on an Educational Visit outside the School environment staff will ensure they take precautions to ensure the safety of all pupils in accordance with the School's Educational Visits Policy and refer to the individual Risk Assessment prepared for that trip. They also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Teachers should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation.

If a pupil goes missing, the priorities are to:

- assess the situation
- safeguard the other members of the group
- seek for and then attend to the pupil(s) involved
- inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know of the incident

The Group Leader would usually take charge in an emergency and would need to ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that back up cover is arranged. The Group Leader should liaise with the representative of the tour operator if one is being used.

All those involved in the School trip, including supervisors, pupils and their parents, should be informed of who will take charge in an emergency, and what they are expected to do in an emergency. The member of staff leading the trip will have the contact details for the LT member on staff on duty. This will also be clear in the risk assessment. The member of LT will assist the trip leader in the coordination of the emergency.

### 3.6.2 Day Educational Visits (General Principles)

- On trips away from the School setting, pupils should be divided into groups in accordance with the Educational Visits policy. The groups will be decided in advance
- Each adult will have details of which pupils they are responsible for, including names and any special requirements (dietary/medical). For trips that occur out of School hours, consent forms and contact details for Parents/Carer will be accessible on the trip so that Parents/Carer can be contacted in case of an emergency
- The Group Leader will make sure that the pupils know who is responsible for them, including the adult's name and what they are wearing. The pupils will also be briefed to ensure that they know not to stray and that if they want to go anywhere e.g. to a shop or to the toilet they must ask
- The pupils will be given the school trip phone number to put into their mobile phones. Pupils will be in groups of no less than 3 and must stay together. Those pupils without a mobile phone will be allocated to a group with students who do have a phone.
- The pupils will be told what to do if they become separated from the group:
  - Stay where you are – we will come back to look for you



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- Look around you – can you see your group or one of the other groups?
- If it seems like a long time before we find you, whom can you talk to:
  - o Someone in uniform or wearing a badge from the attraction you are visiting
  - o a uniformed policeman or woman
- A regular headcount of the group will be taken. This will depend on the children and the activity. If, on taking a headcount, a pupil appears to be missing, the Group Leader will be contacted immediately
- The group should stay still and keep together. If there is another adult with the group, one of them will retrace their steps (to a pre agreed distance, for no more than five minutes away), to look for the pupil
- If the pupil is still missing after 5 minutes, the member of staff will inform a member of staff from the venue and ask for their help in finding the pupil. Following consultation with the Head/Deputy Head and the Group Leader, the Group Leader will ask the member of staff from the venue to contact the police on 999. Staff should be prepared to give them the following information:
  - The adult's name and phone number and where the group is
  - What has happened
  - Name and age of the pupil
  - Description of the missing child
  - Time of incident
- The Group Leader will consult with the Head/Deputy Head who will then inform the Parent/Carer of the missing pupil giving them details of what has happened and the steps that are being taken to find their child
- The Group Leader will ensure the Head/Deputy Head knows what actions have been taken
- The search will continue after calling the Police although staff should be guided by the Police as to the action taken to locate the child
- The Group Leader involved will complete an Incident Form (Appendix A) as fully as possible on return to School
- No one in the group should speak to the media. Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Media enquiries should be referred to the Head.
- No one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties.

### 3.6.3 Missing Child on a Residential Trip in UK or Abroad

If an emergency involving a missing child (or children) occurs on an Educational Visit the Group Leader will normally take responsibility and will consider the following main factors:

- Establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible
- Ensure that all the group are safe and looked after
- Establish the names of all children involved
- Ensure that all group members who need to know are aware of the incident and that all group members are following the emergency procedures
- Ensure that the rest of the group are adequately supervised at all times and kept together





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- Notify the Police if necessary
- Notify the British Embassy/Consulate if an emergency occurs abroad and the pupil(s) is not found within the first two hours
- Inform the emergency School contact based back at School. The School contact number should be accessible at all times during the visit
- Details of the incident to pass on to the School should include: nature, date and time of incident; location of incident; names of missing pupil(s); names of others involved so that parents can be reassured; action taken so far; action yet to be taken (and by whom)
- Notify insurers, if medical assistance is required (this may be done by the School contact)
- Notify the provider/tour operator (this may be done by the School contact)
- Ascertain telephone numbers for future calls (e.g., Group Leader's personal phone to be used for contact with School; School mobile phone to be used for contact with parents, where considered appropriate, or this may be undertaken by the School).
- Write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence
- Keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident
- No-one in the group should speak to the media. Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Media enquiries should be referred to The Head or Deputy Head at the School dealing with the situation will identify a designated media contact at the School
- No-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties

The main factors for the nominated emergency contact based back at School to consider include:

- Ensuring that the Group Leader is in control of the emergency and establishing if any assistance is required from the School base
- Contacting parents. Details of parents' contact numbers need to be available at all times while the group is on the visit. The School contact should act as a link between the group and parents. Parents should be kept as well informed as possible at all stages of the emergency
- Liaison with the governing body. The School contact should act as a link between the group and/or chair of governors and arrange for the group to receive assistance, if necessary
- Liaison with media contact. If a serious incident occurs, the School contact should liaise with the designated media contact as soon as possible
- The reporting of the incident using appropriate forms (Appendix A)
- In some cases, it may be helpful to contact local community support services and to seek professional advice on how to help individuals and the School as a whole cope with the effects of an incident of this type
- Review of Missing Child procedures
- When the situation has been resolved, the Head will review the reasons for the event happening and make any necessary amendments to School procedures
- A written record of any pupil who goes missing from School, the action taken and the reason given by the pupil for going missing, will be held centrally by the





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Designated Safeguarding Lead who is responsible for matters relating to child protection and welfare. These records will be reviewed annually by the Head and members of the LT and the review with any recommendations will be reported to the Governors' Pastoral Committee

## **4 Review**

The Head will monitor the operation of these procedures, their efficiency and effectiveness, and make an annual report to the Court of Governors.

The Court of Governors will undertake an annual review of this document through the Court of Governors' Education Sub-Committee and the Heads.

This Review: September 2024

Next Review: September 2025

This policy was approved by the Education Committee of The Court of Governors, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024.



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## Appendix A

**CONFIDENTIAL  
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SERIOUS INCIDENT RECORD**

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Those involved:</b>                                      | <b>Date:</b> |
| <b>Witnesses:</b>   |              |
| <b>Nature of incident:</b>                                  |              |
| <b>Record:</b>  |              |
| <b>Follow up/outcome:</b>                                   |              |
| <b>Copy to: WMB</b>   |              |
| <b>This form completed by (please sign and print name):</b> |              |
| <b>Date:</b>  |              |