



Lost Child Procedure Policy

Policy owner	Safeguarding Team/H&S	February 2022
Endorsed by	Trustees	February 2022
Review date		February 2024

Lost Child Procedure Policy

St Paul's Steiner School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff, Trustees and volunteers to share this commitment.

This policy outlines the procedure for when a child goes missing during the school day without explanation after morning registration. A different policy deals with Attendance, including procedures if a child is absent from morning registration (8:30am).

If a child goes missing from the school, at any time during the day, from the premises, from break time or the boundaries on an outing, this procedure will be followed.

If a child's absence is unexplained at afternoon registration (2:00pm), the other children in the class should be asked of the absent child's whereabouts and the office (receptionist) must be informed immediately. If the child's absence remains unexplained the Head Teacher and the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) should be informed. Siblings and children in other classes will be asked for information, if relevant. The parents will be called. If the absence is still unexplained, the procedure for lost child will be followed, taking into account the length of time since the child was last seen.

A lost child situation should be prioritised as a serious incident and take priority over all other activities. Key members of staff during the incident are the Head Teacher, DSL, DDLs, Class Teacher, Receptionist and Facilities Officer. All other available members of staff and volunteers should assist when asked.

The following actions should be taken when a child goes missing:

- Remember the safety of the other children, with regard to supervision and security.
- Once the remaining children are sufficiently supervised and secure; check all registers to ensure all remaining children are accounted for.
- Available staff and/or volunteers should begin the *initial search* in the immediate vicinity of where the child was last seen, organised by (class) teacher in charge.
- After an initial, maximum 5 min. search, alert the Headteacher or DSL who will make enquiries to when and where the child was last seen and the child's state of mind.
- The DSL should together with the Class/KG teacher assess the child's vulnerability.
- A Kindergarten child is always vulnerable and police should be called after initial + extended search has been unsuccessful after **10 minutes (or immediately depending on the situation)**. The parent will subsequently be informed.
- They should risk assess the urgency of the situation and deciding on the timeframe for calling the police and parents (**immediately to 20 min** from when child in school is last seen).
- They should create a description of the child and assemble relevant members of staff.

- An *extended search* should be organised by "the search co-ordinator", a key member of staff (usually the Head Teacher or DSL) or class teacher on an outing will be the "the search co-ordinator", extending from where the child was last seen, around the whole building including toilets, Hall including toilets, Shed, KG Garden, Garden, Green and Shrubbery. Available staff (all assistants and teachers not teaching) should participate in search, bringing mobile phones if possible and report back within 5 minutes to the search co-ordinator.
- School staff and volunteers will continue to try to locate the child, searching a wider area if the child is still not found, using mobile phones to communicate, if available.
- If the child cannot be found within maximum 20 minutes (or 10 minutes for kindergarten) from being lost – earlier depending on child's vulnerability (for e.g. KG) – then the Police and parents must be informed. Police to be provided with a photograph of the missing pupil, if available.
- Once the police have been called and have arrived at the school, all staff who are searching the local area may be asked to return to the school premises, if the police wish to take over the coordination of the search. Office staff are to remain in contact with police and parents. Continue to search, opening up the area and keeping in touch with mobile phone, if available, until the police give other instructions.
- If the child is seen leaving the boundaries, or when found, take care when approaching, do not run after but follow, noting if child is distressed. Avoid causing panic, which can lead to child running into traffic. Stay calm and use common sense to de-escalate the situation when approaching. Use own judgement, if necessary. Aim to bring child back to school but don't use force unless absolutely necessary to keep child safe. Call the office or 999, depending on vulnerability of child and situation and stay with child or keep child in sight.

Calling the police (999):

The information required by the Police to assist in locating and returning the pupil to a safe environment:

- The pupil's name and date of birth
- Where and when the child went missing
- Who, if anyone, they went missing with
- Circumstances or events around going missing
- Description – picture if available
- What the child was wearing and any belongings such as bags, phone etc., include mobile number
- Medical history, if relevant
- Relevant safeguarding information
- Details of family, friends and associates
- Previous missing episodes and where they went, if relevant
- Contact details of Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Details of responsible local authority

Calling the parents:

The Class teacher, DSL or "Search co-ordinator" will call the parents. Note time of call/s. The best place for parents to be during search might be the home, as child might be heading home.

After the incident:

When a child is found the focus will be on their welfare. Class teacher with the DSL will look after the child. Possible sanctions will be considered later.

An incident report will be written as soon as practically possible. DSL and class teacher will meet with child and parents as soon as appropriate.

When the situation has been resolved the Leadership Group should review the reasons for it happening and ensure measures are taken to ensure that it does not happen again.

A detailed incident report must be completed with accounts from any staff involved and the Chair of Trustees and Insurance provider informed.

Any new measures arising from the review of any incident will be circulated amongst staff by DSL and shared in Early Years and Teachers Meeting.

Every serious incident or near miss will trigger a review of the Lost Child Procedure Policy.