



**L A L E H A M L E A**

A Catholic Independent Primary School for boys and girls aged 3 to 11

Headteacher: Mrs, M Reece

## **L A L E H A M L E A S C H O O L & N U R S E R Y**

### **M I S S I N G C H I L D P O L I C Y A N D P R O C E D U R E S**

*This is a whole school policy which applies to all sections of the school, including Early Years Foundation Stage, Out of School Care and Clubs.*

**Person responsible for this policy:**

Maria Reece

Acting Headteacher

**Date:** March 2024

**Review Date:** March 2026



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The welfare of all of our children at Laleham Lea School is our paramount responsibility. Every adult who works at the school has been trained to appreciate that he or she has a key responsibility for helping to keep all of the children safe at all times. Making sure the pupils are present, accounted for and safe is a vital role of the staff at the school. Every member of our staff who works with children has read Part 1 of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

We take all possible measures to ensure that pupils do not go missing whilst on school premises or on school trips. Formal registers are taken twice a day, before morning and afternoon lessons, and any absences are followed up promptly. During the school day, teachers are also expected to be aware of any students missing from their lessons and to follow up any concerns they might have about a pupil's absence from a lesson. Laleham Lea School understands a 'missing' pupil to be a pupil not present, without authorisation or explanation.

This policy applies to all pupils in the school including Nursery. Laleham Lea School is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). The school seeks to implement this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.

Laleham Lea School understands missing pupils to belong to two distinct categories:

- (i) pupils who are present on any given day on the school site but then go missing at some point during the day without authorisation or explanation.
- (ii) (ii) pupils who are absent from school without authorisation or explanation and who have not been marked present in the attendance register i.e. they have not disappeared from the school premises; rather they are missing from school altogether. Any child missing from education must be treated as potentially vulnerable.

Note: 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 and refer to the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy if appropriate.

## **Ensuring all pupils are present during the school day.**

All new pupils are placed on the School's admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the



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School has agreed that the pupil will attend the School. Pupils are registered at the start of each day and before the start of the afternoon session. A record of their attendance is kept on the school's MIS system.

Parents are responsible for making sure their children come to, and are delivered to, the school safely. There is an absence email which is checked to establish whether a parent has informed us of an absence. If a pupil is not present, the office staff will attempt to make immediate contact with the parents or carers of the pupil to establish the reason for the absence. If the school is unable to establish a reason for the absence, the Head will consider notifying the Local Authority.

Staff will do informal checks on the class during the day, particularly if they are moving around, leaving the building or going on transport. A register is taken at the start of each club activity and any unexpected absence is followed up with the parents by the office staff.

## **Procedure for pupils missing during the school day.**

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is found and returned to effective supervision as soon as possible.

If a child appears to be missing while they should be on school grounds (and toilets and areas where the child may be having been checked) the teacher will immediately check with the office to see if the child has been sent home/signed out or to see if there is any explanation for the absence. If this is not the case and the child appears to be genuinely missing, office staff will immediately notify the Headteacher, members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the site manager. The Senior Leadership Team will immediately organise a search of the premises.

If the child is still missing following an initial search of the school premises (both inside and out), the following steps will be taken:

- The Head (or in their absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team) will conduct a second search of the entire premises, inside and out and if necessary, a search of the surrounding areas, ensuring that all other children remain supervised throughout.
- The child's teacher must establish where and when the child was last seen.

If the child is still missing:



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- In the event that the pupil is not found the Site Supervisor may be asked by a member of the search party (at the request of SLT) to ring the fire bell. The search party will continue to search the premises whilst the rest of the school evacuates the building.
- If the evacuation fails to locate the missing pupil, the Headteacher should contact the police (by calling 101 or 999) to report a missing child. Although there is usually an explanation for a missing child, it is still better to contact the police earlier rather than later.
- The Headteacher will also contact the parents of the missing child.
- During this period, staff will be continually searching the rest of the school premises and grounds.
- If the pupil's home is within walking distance, a member of staff will be sent out on foot to the home address, to see if the child is walking home.
- Other staff maintain as normal a routine as possible for the rest of the children in school.

The Headteacher will meet the police and the parent/carers.

The Headteacher will then await instructions from the police.

If the child is still missing:

- The School's Designated Safeguarding Lead will inform the local Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- The Head or School Business Manager will inform the Chair of Governors and the Safeguarding Governor.
- The school's insurers will be informed.
- If the pupil is injured a report would be made under RIDDOR to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

## **Following a missing child incident:**

The Head will give a full account of events to the parents of the pupil and the Chair of Governors. An Incident Report Form must be completed. The School will undertake a full written investigation of the incident up to the stage at which the child was found and, if necessary, the School's procedures will be adjusted. The School will cooperate fully with any investigation by the Police and any safeguarding investigation by the local authority.



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### **Missing Pupil from an off-site activity (trips, visits and/or sporting fixtures)**

Procedures to prevent pupils going missing during school activities off-site:

- Risk assessments for educational visits and off-site activities must take supervision into account.
- An adult must always supervise pupils.
- Pupils should be given a clear meeting point in the event of them being separated from the group.
- A briefing should take place before going on any off-site activity
- The teacher in charge of the trip must ensure that all students know who to approach in case they get lost and/or where to go.

In the event that a pupil's absence cannot be explained or accounted for in any off-site activity, the protocol below will be followed:

- An immediate head count will be carried out in order to ensure that all the other pupils are present.
- A search will be initiated by the activity leader involving the organisation responsible for the area used.
- The teacher in charge will check the agreed meeting point.
- The event security or ticket office must be informed immediately and requested to make an announcement over their PA system if possible.
- The Headteacher (or the member of Senior Leadership Team) will be contacted and will be kept informed of developments throughout.
- If the initial search proves unsuccessful, the Headteacher or nominated person will call the police using 999 immediately.
- The Headteacher will contact the parents/carers.
- The designated person (if the event is far away) will meet with the police, or the Headteacher will meet the police if the event is easy to reach.
- The Headteacher will meet the parent/carers.
- The Chair of Governors and the school insurers will be informed.
- If the child is found to be injured, a report may be required under RIDDOR, to the HSE and a full record of all activities taken up to the stage at which the child was found will be made for the incident report. The school will review its procedures and, if appropriate, these will be adjusted.



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Once the child is found, talk to, take care of and, if necessary, comfort the child. Speak to the other pupils to ensure they understand why they should not leave the premises or separate from a group on an outing. The Headteacher will speak to the parents to discuss events and give an account of the incident (having discussed this beforehand with the LADO, if necessary).

A full investigation will be carried out involving all concerned with written statements provided. Incident Report Form to be completed. All reports should be detailed covering time, place, numbers of staff and children, when the child was last seen, what appeared to have happened, the purpose of the outing, the length of time that the child was missing and how he appeared to have gone missing as well as lessons for the future.

## **Dismissal at the end of the School day**

At the end of the School day, the form teachers or club staff wait with their pupils until an authorised person has collected them. Staff will only release a child into the care of a parent or other individual whose name has been notified to us in writing in advance. If such notice has not been received, the School will contact the parents before the child is released. Staff will not hand a child over, or let them go, unless a known adult is collecting.

If a pupil is being collected from an off-site sports location, the parent must sign their child out with the teacher before leaving the site. If a pupil is being collected by anyone other than their parent, the School is to be advised in advance in writing. If the collecting adult is not known to staff, the pupil will have to return to School with a member of staff.

Year 6 pupils are permitted to leave school unaccompanied only if parents have advised the school, in writing, that they may do so.

Children are always fully supervised until they are collected.

## **Procedures to be followed when a child is not collected on time.**

If a child is not collected within 15 minutes of the agreed collection time, the school will call the contact numbers for the parent/carers. If there is no answer, the school office will begin to call the emergency numbers for the child. During this time, the child will be safely looked after by our Late Leavers after school provision.



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If there is no response from any of the contact numbers called within a 2-hour period, or when the premises are closing for the evening (5.30pm), the Headteacher will contact Social Services and/or the Police in order to prioritise the child's safety. The child will remain, fully supervised, in the care of school staff until collected.

The school's DSL will keep a record of incidents where parents/carers do not collect a child from school or are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeated incidents. If any concerns about the child's safety and welfare result, these will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Child Safeguarding Policy.

## **Procedures for pupils missing from school**

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Pupils whose absence from school gives rise to concern are potentially a Child Protection concern. The School has a duty to inform the Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission (unauthorised) for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, as this may be an indicator of abuse or neglect. In Croydon, referrals for CME are accepted after 10 working days of reasonable checks being carried out by the educational provider and their Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The school would have concerns about a pupil who was absent from school without explanation or authorisation and where the School Office or teaching staff had been unable to contact the parents/guardians for an explanation. The procedure is for the School Office to contact parents to ascertain the reason for any unexplained absences. The School Office will phone and email the main contacts, and then try to contact emergency contacts listed. Usually, such matters are resolved promptly when the parent responds.

The School Office staff must pass on the names of any pupils whose absence is still unexplained to the Headteacher. As a school we have a duty of care for all of our pupils and for this reason, house visits may be made if no contact has been made.

If after 48 hours, there has been no contact from parents or the pupil and the school is unable to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts through additional emergency contacts listed on the school's database, the Headteacher will decide about how to proceed. Legally the school must take action within 10 days and inform



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the local authority (two days in the case of a pupil on a child protection plan) but in practice, it is very unusual for a pupil to be absent from Laleham Lea School without any explanation for any length of time, and so the school would give consideration to contacting external services before the ten-day period had expired.