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Missing Person Policy

High Close School

Contents

1. Introduction

High Close School aims to create an environment where young people can be supported in addressing their educational, emotional, spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs and strives to support young people in achieving their full potential.

The Barnardo's Basis and Values statement make it clear that all staff have a responsibility to all the young people in our care to 'protect them from harm' which also links with the Barnardo's and High Close's outcomes for young people.

It is therefore expected that all reasonable measures are taken to ensure that young people at High Close remain within the safe environment created. However, young people will sometimes leave the school premises without permission or the knowledge of staff, or not return to school after periods at home. This policy aims to support staff in protecting young people who are absent without authority or go missing and respond positively to them on their return in accordance with Department of Education Standards.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Department For Education's Guidance On Children Who Run Away Or Go Missing From Home Or Care
- The Local Children Missing from Care, Home and Education (Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership).
- High Close Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (2)
- High Close School Surveillance and CCTV Policy

2. Definitions

It is important that staff are aware of the differences between 'missing' and 'absent' when talking about young people to other professionals. Below are the definitions from Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership

- **Missing from care**: a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts is not known;
- **Away from placement without authorisation**: a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police;
- Care leavers cover young people from aged 16-24;
- For the purpose of this guidance, the definition of missing is that used by Police and issued by Association of Chief of Police Officers (ACPO) in April 2013 and is also the definition used throughout the Department of Education Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or go Missing From Home;

- **Missing**: anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

Since April 2013 police forces definitions of 'missing' and 'absent' in relation to children and adults reported as missing to the police are:

- **missing:** anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another; and
- **absent:** a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be. (and there is no apparent risk)

The police classification of a person as 'missing' or 'absent' will be based on ongoing risk assessment. Note that 'absent' within this definition would not include those defined as "away from placement without authorisation" above: a child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'missing' or 'absent' under the police definitions

For the purposes of recording safeguarding forms at High Close and behaviour records we use the police's definition of missing and absent. If a young person is not where they are meant to be but there is no apparent risk it should be recorded as absent. If a young person is not where they are meant to be and there is a concern about their wellbeing then it should be recorded as missing. The CPOMS categories define whether this incident was at home or at school and staff should ensure they select the correct subcategory.

Staff will not be required to make this definition to the police; however due to the vulnerabilities of all the young people at High Close staff must ensure they make clear to the police and any other external authorities the risk presented to the young person, and possibly others, if they go missing. This will be identified through their Behaviour Support Plans, any applicable risk assessments, Health Plans and Missing Person forms. According to the definitions within Children Missing from Care, Home and Education (Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership) the majority of young people at High Close will be classed as high risk by the police due to their vulnerability.

3. Procedures

High Close have access to CCTV throughout the school's campus. This can be reviewed in safeguarding and child protection concern of a missing young persons, once thorough grounds searches have taken place. Use of CCTV should be in line with High Close Surveillance and CCTV Policy and consent of the Senior Leadership Team.

When reporting a young person missing. Staff should consider the following:

- The age of the young person, their level of understanding and any medical considerations.
- Legal status (i.e. Looked After etc) or risk factors for the young person i.e. CSE, CCE radicalisation, trafficking, criminal activity etc.
- Are there any Safeguarding Concerns?

- Length of time at High Close School, knowledge of locality?
- Was the child distressed? What are the circumstances of them going missing?
- Is there a history of missing/absent? What are previous patterns? Any known associates, themes from previous incidences of absconding i.e. particular geographical areas etc?
- When the pupil was last seen, how long have they been missing? Young person's clothing, any items/money they may have with them?
- Is there another young person from the school with them?
- Length of time before outside agencies should be informed
- Is there a history of poor mental health?

There is a full list of questions that should be considered in the missing persons form (Appendix A on Pen picture and Missing Persons form) Staff should use these if they have to make a missing person report to the police. The Pen Picture and Missing Persons form should be completed within the first 6 weeks of a young person starting (within the first week if there are previous concerns about missing incidents within the young persons referrals papers). Appendix A of the Pen Picture/Missing Persons form should only be completed in the event of an incident where a young person goes missing and this is reported to the police.
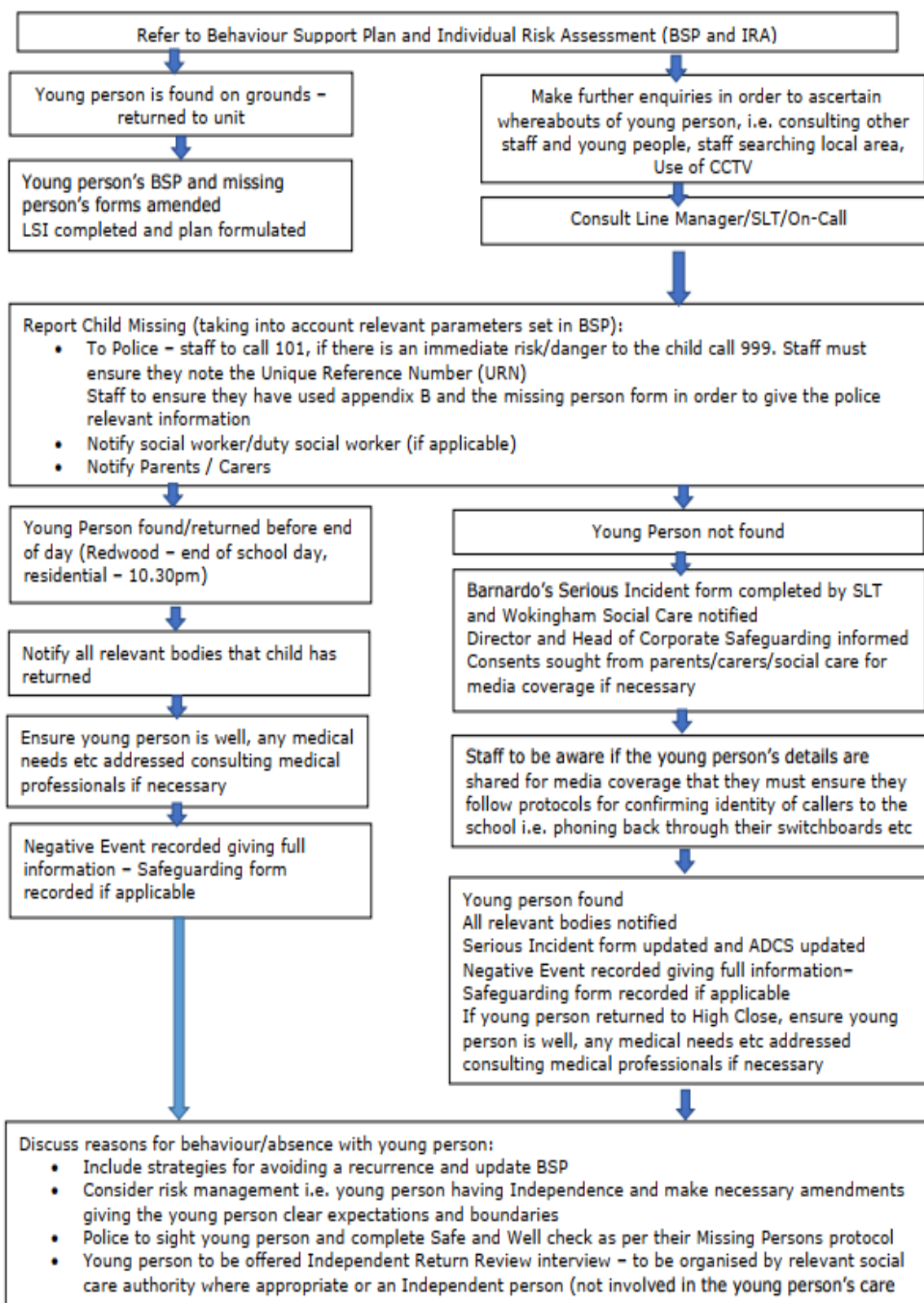
When the young person returns to the school, the child should be seen by a member of staff to complete a Life Space Interview (LSI) to consider the reasons for them leaving. There is also a return to placement interview form that can take place at this point if staff feel it will be useful to help inform them fully about the incident. Staff should ensure that any concerns raised by the young person are recorded and addressed and if necessary, passed onto relevant professionals for action. Staff must ensure they update the young person's Behaviour Support Plan and Individual Risk Assessment following any incident where a young person has gone missing. It may be that there is a need for a person independent of the school to conduct an interview with the young person dependent on the nature of the missing episode, staff should seek advice from the DSL's.

If staff have any concerns as to the reasons why the young person went missing then they should follow the safeguarding and child protection procedures and ensure that a record of this is completed. A Negative Event should be fully recorded on Sleuth (High Close's Behavioural Recording System) with the outcome and actions.

It is important that staff liaise closely with other professionals involved when a young person leaves campus/does not return from home and that all relevant information is shared so that the causes and reasons for going missing can be addressed and a plan to support the young person to prevent further reoccurrences can be put in place and be supported by all.

Staff should follow the flowchart below if a young person goes missing from school

Procedure for managing incident of absenting/going missing (Runaway and missing from home and care, (RMFHC) Protocol)

Refer to Behaviour Support Plan and Individual Risk Assessment (BSP and IRA)

Young person is found on grounds – returned to unit

Make further enquiries in order to ascertain whereabouts of young person, i.e. consulting other staff and young people, staff searching local area, Use of CCTV

Young person's BSP and missing person's forms amended
LSI completed and plan formulated

Consult Line Manager/SLT/On-Call

Report Child Missing (taking into account relevant parameters set in BSP):
- To Police – staff to call 101, if there is an immediate risk/danger to the child call 999. Staff must ensure they note the Unique Reference Number (URN)
  Staff to ensure they have used appendix B and the missing person form in order to give the police relevant information
- Notify social worker/duty social worker (if applicable)
- Notify Parents / Carers

Young Person found/returned before end of day (Redwood – end of school day, residential – 10.30pm)

Young Person not found

Notify all relevant bodies that child has returned

Barnardo's Serious Incident form completed by SLT and Wokingham Social Care notified
Director and Head of Corporate Safeguarding informed
Consents sought from parents/carers/social care for media coverage if necessary

Ensure young person is well, any medical needs etc addressed consulting medical professionals if necessary

Staff to be aware if the young person's details are shared for media coverage that they must ensure they follow protocols for confirming identity of callers to the school i.e. phoning back through their switchboards etc

Negative Event recorded giving full information – Safeguarding form recorded if applicable

Young person found
All relevant bodies notified
Serious Incident form updated and ADCS updated
Negative Event recorded giving full information–Safeguarding form recorded if applicable
If young person returned to High Close, ensure young person is well, any medical needs etc addressed consulting medical professionals if necessary

Discuss reasons for behaviour/absence with young person:
- Include strategies for avoiding a recurrence and update BSP
- Consider risk management i.e. young person having Independence and make necessary amendments giving the young person clear expectations and boundaries
- Police to sight young person and complete Safe and Well check as per their Missing Persons protocol
- Young person to be offered Independent Return Review interview – to be organised by relevant social care authority where appropriate or an Independent person (not involved in the young person's care

4. Looked after children/ Children In Care

Looked after Children/Children in Care are particularly vulnerable. Though the number of looked after children going missing is a small percentage of the overall number of children that go missing, it is disproportionately high compared with the children's population as a whole. Further responsibilities on local authorities for looked after children who go missing are detailed in [Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care.](#)

5. Vulnerabilities of young people at High Close

All young people who attend High Close present with their own individual vulnerabilities. Staff should ensure that young people's behaviour support plans and risk assessments and missing person's forms are kept up to date with any risk factors or identified concerns.

If a young person goes missing, staff should be aware of the below and consider the risk factors for that individual child. The list is not exhaustive and should also be considered as factors that may cause a young person to go missing

- Motivation for going missing
- Previous frequency/pattern of absence
- Additional needs – SEN etc
- Are there any issues of bullying?
- Family or cultural background
- Trafficking/CSE/FGM/CCE
- Substance misuse
- Legal status/Contact restrictions – Looked After/Child Protection/CIN etc
- Concerns over known associates, grooming, sexualised behaviour
- Radicalisation
- Homelessness
- Drawn into offending behaviour
- Medical conditions, mental health concerns, Medication
- Risk to members of the public

6. Dangers a young person can face if they go missing/absent

Young people at High Close School are all vulnerable due to their additional needs, without the support and safety High Close provide, they are more likely to encounter dangerous situations. The below list is not exhaustive but highlights some of the dangers they may face -

- Trafficking
- CSE

- CCE
- Grooming
- Radicalisation
- Substance misuse

Staff can find more information on these risks in the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.

As well as being at risk of the above, young people who leave High Close campus may not be in the right frame of mind to keep themselves safe from environmental dangers such as cars and the local train station/railway crossing.

High Close make every effort to support young people by educating them on dangers they can face and how to cope with potentially stressful situations. High Close offer -

- ASDAN Lessons
- Independent Travel Training
- Keeping Safe Workshops
- Life Space Interviews
- Key working/Link working sessions
- Work Experience Preparation
- Independence programme
- Detailed documentation (Behaviour Support plans, Individual Risk Assessments etc)

7. Serious Incidents of Children Going Missing

If a young person is missing for a significant period of time it is the responsibility of the Principal/Senior Leadership Team to liaise with the Director of the region and Head of Safeguarding for Barnardo's about media coverage and further actions to take. If staff are contacted by outside agencies whilst at work, they should ensure they take all measures to ensure they are following data protection/information sharing guidelines. If someone phones asking for information take their official contact details and phone them back through the switchboard i.e. if someone phones from the police, staff should take their badge number and area and phone back through 101. Alternatively, staff can ask the person to email them from their professional email to confirm who they are.

A member of SLT will co-ordinate any actions and may delegate particular tasks to a member of unit staff to complete. Wokingham Social Care should be informed of any serious incidents of going missing if they occur within the Wokingham area.

If the incident is covered through the media staff must not comment or share any details of this through their own social media.

8. Young people missing from home

Young people may leave from their home placement. Staff should note this in contacts, speak to DSLs (Designated Safeguarding Leads) and record as Safeguarding where appropriate. If the young person is missing from home and does not attend school as a result the normal safeguarding procedures should be followed. If a young person returns to school after being missing from home staff should ensure they notify all relevant parents/carers/professionals and ensure an independent person (someone not involved in the young person's care) carries out an Independent Return interview within 72 hours of the child returning home or to school and that the Safe and Well check is completed by the police. If young people persistently missing/absent from their home placement but return to school staff should follow safeguarding procedures to notify relevant professionals.

9.Young people missing from Education

Young people who are regularly absent from school or have missed 10 school days or more without permission should be followed up. Schools must monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register. Schools should agree with their local authority the intervals at which they will inform local authorities of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or have missed ten school days or more without permission.

Schools should monitor attendance closely and address poor or irregular attendance. It is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority. Staff should ensure they contact parents or carers if a young person does not attend school as expected on the first day of absence and if necessary, notify relevant professionals involved. If this becomes a regular occurrence without satisfactory explanation and/or without any other factors (medical issues etc) staff should refer to their line manager to consider notifying the Local Education Authority and/or Local Authority Social Care. Please see Children Missing Education for further information.

Attendance is monitored regularly by the Education Leadership Group (ELG) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Young people whose attendance is below required levels are monitored and letters to parents/carers are sent with expectations around attendance levels. Should this not be effective the school will liaise with the placing authority Education Welfare Officer/Team for further actions.

If a young person does not attend school and no reasonable explanation is given or staff are unable to contact parents/ carers or the young person then should follow the schools Child Protection and Safeguarding policy and notify the DSL. If no contact has been made within 2 days a referral to the Local Authority Social Care will be made.

Designated Safeguarding Leads also can ask to attend meetings and refer in to the Local EMRAC (Exploitation & Missing Risk Assessment Conference), also contacting the young person's local authority.

If staff have concerns about local areas in terms of Contextual Safeguarding they should notify the DSL's. Concerns could be that staff become aware of areas where it is known that drug dealing occurs or areas where there have been violent incidents. Further information on Contextual Safeguarding can be found in the Child Protection and Safeguarding summary

11.   Young people who repeatedly go missing

Young people who frequently go missing may be subject to some form of abuse that is an underlying reason for the missing episodes. This can include gang involvement, forced marriage, maltreatment or abuse at home, bullying or sexual exploitation amongst other concerns.

Should a young person go missing frequently staff should discuss with the DSL's about making a referral to Social Care (if they are not already involved). If Social Care are already involved staff should discuss with the social worker about further intervention to reduce the risk of the young person going missing in future. Things to consider include:

- Their individual circumstances;
- Family circumstances and background history;
- Their motivation for running away;
- Their potential destinations and associates;
- Their recent pattern of absences;
- The circumstances in which the child was found or returned; and
- Their individual characteristics and risk factors such as whether a child has learning difficulties, mental health issues, depression and other vulnerabilities.

Staff should also ensure that information gathered through the procedure for managing missing person episodes is incorporated into the young person's Behaviour Support Plan and Risk Assessment to ensure appropriate measures are in place to reduce the risk of further missing episodes.

Staff must ensure that an independent return interview is completed with a young person if they have been missing more than once within the space of 6 months.

Appendix A – IMEI and MAC addresses

IMEI

Dial *#06# from the phone to find out the IMEI number

MAC address

IOS:

Select **Settings > General > About.**
 A Wi-Fi Address displays. This is your device's MAC address.

Android:

In most cases, you can follow this procedure to locate your MAC address:

Select **Settings > About Device > Status.**
 A WiFi Address or WiFi MAC Address displays. This is your device's MAC address.

If this does not work, refer to your device's user manual.

Kindle/Kindle Keyboard

1. Tap the Menu button on the home screen.
2. Select Settings.
3. Tap the Menu button again.
4. Select Device Info.
5. Scroll down to find the Wi-Fi MAC address.