



MISSING CHILD POLICY 2025/2026

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Designated Safeguarding Lead

Date: 1st September 2025

POLICY REVISION RECORD (annual reviews)

Date	Section	Revision	Updated by
21/08/19	7.3	Additional helpline added	Karen Pickles
09/09/20	update KCSIE 2020	updating all references to KCSIE	Karen Pickles
06/10/21	update KCSIE 2021	updating all references to KCSIE	Karen Pickles
10/10/22	update KCSIE 2022	updating all references to KCSIE	Karen Pickles
09/02/23	Re-written policy	Re-styled to include all above as required	Karen Pickles
14/09/23	Update KCSIE + change to annual review date	Updating all references to KCSIE	Karen Pickles
01/09/24	Update KCSIE	Update and review	Karen Pickles
01/09/25	Updated KCSIE etc.	Updated and reviewed	Karen Pickles

Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to:

- Protect the health, safety, and welfare of all pupils in our care
- Ensure Homestay providers and staff know how to respond if a pupil goes missing
- Outline specific steps required should a Child Student (formerly Tier 4) pupil go missing
- Align with the latest safeguarding expectations under KCSIE 2025 and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by:

- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (DfE, September 2025)
- *Boarding Schools: National Minimum Standards* (DfE, September 2022)
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE, 2023)
- *Children Missing Education Guidance* (DfE, August 2024)
- *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (DfE, November 2024)

Responsibilities of Berkeley Guardians Staff and Homestays

- Any staff member who notices a pupil is missing or in an unexpected location must immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or their deputy.
- Homestay providers must hold up-to-date contact details for their assigned pupils, including mobile numbers.
- Pupils are expected to ensure their Homestay and Berkeley Guardians have accurate contact information.
- All staff must be familiar with the signs of contextual safeguarding risks, including online harm, exploitation, and radicalisation.

Definition of a “Missing Pupil”

A pupil is considered missing when:

- Their whereabouts cannot be established
- The circumstances are out of character or suggest risk of harm, exploitation, or criminal involvement
- The pupil may be the subject of a crime or at risk to themselves or others

Risk Consideration

A missing pupil is considered a significant risk if:

- There is immediate danger due to vulnerability, including:

- Children on a safeguarding plan (Early Help, CIN, LAC, CP)
- Disabilities or special educational needs
- Substance misuse
- Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- There is risk to public safety
- There are signs of harm (e.g. CSE, grooming, radicalisation)

Other contributory factors include:

- Past safeguarding concerns about the child or family
- History of domestic violence, substance misuse, or parental incapacity
- Sudden and unexplained behaviour
- Concerns about the child's online activity or exposure to harmful content

Immediate Actions

If a pupil is missing:

1. Attempt contact via mobile, messaging apps, and known friends
2. Notify the DSL and escalate to the Head of Guardianship if unresolved within 30 minutes
3. Contact the Homestay and check the local area
4. Inform the school and request attendance records
5. Report to police if risk is deemed significant or pupil remains missing after 60 minutes
6. Notify UKVI if the pupil is a Child Student and missing for over 24 hours
7. Record all actions and outcomes in the safeguarding log

Additional Risk Indicators

When assessing whether a missing pupil may be at significant risk, staff should also consider:

- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Has the child been a victim of bullying?
- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk (e.g. essential medication or healthcare needs)?
- Was the child noted to be depressed or withdrawn prior to the unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk (e.g. rites of passage, female genital mutilation, or forced marriage)?

These indicators should be considered alongside contextual safeguarding concerns and recorded in the safeguarding log.

Prevention Strategies

To reduce the risk of a pupil going missing, Berkeley Guardians will:

- Ensure Homestays are secure and prevent access by unknown individuals
- Ensure pupils are supervised appropriately during social activities, with supervision tailored to their age and stage of development
- Confirm that pupils have read and understood the Pupil Handbook, including safety procedures if separated from staff or Homestay
- Remind pupils of the dangers of wandering off and the cultural differences they may encounter in their Homestay or local area
- Encourage pupils to walk with staff or Homestay providers, not at a distance
- Advise pupils on what to do if they find themselves lost, including who to contact and where to go
- Identify a clear meeting point on arrival at any social activity, appropriate to the pupil's age and understanding

Procedure

If a pupil is suspected to be missing, the following steps must be taken immediately:

1. Conduct a thorough search of the surrounding area or home.
2. Call the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) on 07565 493818.
3. Request help from people nearby, including staff, Homestay providers, or members of the public.
4. If in a public building, alert staff and request assistance in searching for the child.
5. If possible, seal off exits and request access to CCTV footage.
6. Provide all searchers with a description of the child and details of what they were wearing.
7. Reassure other children in your care, as the situation may be distressing.
8. If the child is lost while with a Berkeley Guardians staff member, the staff member must contact the Host Family and attempt to reach the child via mobile.
9. If the child is lost while in the care of a Host Family, the Host Family must contact Berkeley Guardians immediately — during working hours via the office, and outside office hours via the emergency phone.
10. If the child cannot be located within 20 minutes, the DSL must be informed and a formal missing child report initiated.
11. The DSL, in consultation with staff and/or the Host Family, must assess the child's vulnerability and any inherent risks.
12. If the child remains missing 20 minutes after being identified as such, the Police must be contacted without delay.
13. Once the Police are informed, the DSL must contact the parent/carer immediately, providing:
 - Details of the incident
 - Steps taken to locate the child
 - Planned actions until the child is found
 - Regular updates throughout the search
 - Immediate notification once the child is located

Notifying the Police

When contacting the Police, the following information must be provided:

- Child's full name and date of birth
- Immigration status (e.g. Child Student) and responsible authority
- Location and time the child was last seen
- Any previous missing episodes and known destinations
- Whether the child was alone or with others
- Description of clothing and belongings (e.g. bag, phone)
- Mobile phone number
- Recent photograph if available
- Medical history, if relevant
- Name of school attending
- Circumstances or events around going missing, including safeguarding concerns
- Details of family, friends, and known associates
- Contact details of Berkeley Guardians' Designated Safeguarding Lead

Berkeley Guardians will continue to liaise with the Police throughout the search and act in accordance with Police instructions.

Scenarios

Option 1 – If the child returns before the Police arrive, the Police must still be informed. The DSL will refer to the safeguarding policy to determine next steps.

Option 2 – If the child returns after the Police have begun their investigation, the Police must be updated. The DSL will follow safeguarding procedures to assess wellbeing and risk.

Option 3 – If the Police locate and return the child to Berkeley Guardians, they will conduct a safe and well interview. The DSL will then follow safeguarding procedures to ensure appropriate support and documentation.

Reporting and Risk Assessment

- If a child has a known risk of going missing, a personalised risk assessment must be created and reviewed regularly.
- The school and parents/carers must be informed of any missing child incident as soon as reasonably practicable.
- Any missing child incident is considered a **significant event** and will trigger a review of policy and procedure to identify improvements.
- A **Missing Child Incident Form** must be completed and submitted to the DSL.

For further guidance, refer to the Children Missing Education statutory guidance (DfE, August 2024).

Duty of Care Summary

Berkeley Guardians holds a fundamental duty of care to safeguard every pupil entrusted to its guardianship. This includes ensuring pupils are supervised appropriately, their whereabouts are known, and any risks to their safety are swiftly identified and addressed. Staff and Homestay providers must act with vigilance, compassion, and professionalism, recognising the unique vulnerabilities of international pupils. In the event of a missing child, Berkeley Guardians is committed to taking immediate, coordinated action in line with statutory guidance, maintaining clear communication with families, schools, and authorities, and reviewing procedures to uphold the highest standards of care.