



RUNNING AWAY AND MISSING

Policy & Procedure No.

ECS02

Reviewed & Updated:

Nov 19, Mar 20, Sept 20, Sept 21, Sept '22, Sept 23, Jan 25

Next Review:

September 2025

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Reference to

OP04 Incident Management, Reporting and Investigation

OP02 Safeguarding & Child Protection

ECS01 Positive Behaviour Support

1. Overview

This policy outlines the procedures to be followed in the event of a student going missing from Seadown or running away from the school premises or during school-organized activities. This policy applies to all students attending Seadown.

Seadown recognises that students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities may be particularly vulnerable when missing or running away. This policy aims to ensure the safety and well-being of all students by providing a clear and consistent framework for responding to such incidents, in line with West Sussex County Council's statutory responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people, including those missing from education and home, referencing "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance. This policy is written in accordance with West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSSCP) procedures and relevant legislation (Children Act 1989, Education Act 2002, and any subsequent amendments).

Children should never be allowed to leave the premises during school time without a member of the senior staff's permission. It is possible that despite precautions, a child may leave the premises without the knowledge or permission of the school. This policy is put in place to ensure that every action possible is taken to ensure the quick and safe return of that child to school.

2. Objectives

- To locate any missing child quickly.
- To ensure that all children are kept safely on the school premises during school hours (and during extended school provision) unless they have permission to leave.
- To ensure the safety and well-being of all students at Seadown, prioritising the child's welfare in line with Section 175 of the Education Act 2002.
- To ensure that children who leave school during the school day (and during extended school provision) only do so with permission and that they are accompanied by an authorised adult/s unless otherwise stated by the authorised adult/s (i.e. Independent travel training etc).
- To ensure that the building, grounds and play areas are safe and secure during school hours (and during extended school provision).
- To ensure that teachers and staff always keep children under proper supervision.
- To ensure that if a child 'goes missing', he/she is located quickly and returned safely to the school.

3. Prevention Strategies

- Individual Risk Assessments: Conduct individual risk assessments for students identified as being at risk of going missing or running away. These assessments will be informed by the West Sussex Levels of Need guidance and reviewed regularly, involving parents/carers and relevant professionals.
- Personalised Support Plans: Develop personalised support plans for at-risk students, which may include strategies such as:
 - Increased supervision.
 - Buddy system.
 - Regular check-ins with a designated staff member.
 - Social skills training.
 - Emotional regulation strategies.

4. Procedures when a student is missing

- Staff Responsibility: Any staff member who suspects a student is missing must immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or, in their absence, the Deputy DSL and the Headteacher
- The remaining children will be left safe in the care of suitable staff.
- Initial Search: Conduct an immediate search of the school premises and surrounding areas, including known hiding places. Involve other staff members as needed.
- If the child is not found within a short period of time, parents/carers and then the police must be called. Timings for this escalation can vary due to vulnerability. These times are stated in individual risk assessments and on a list with the pastoral team and a copy within the school office. If a child goes missing during an outing or school visit, the teacher in charge must ensure that the remaining children are safely cared for by the other staff and adults. An urgent but thorough search should be made of the immediate vicinity and if the child is not found quickly the police must be called and the head teacher notified.
- **During the Search:**
 - Coordination: The DSL (or Deputy) will coordinate the search efforts and maintain communication with the police, Children's Services (if involved), and parents/carers.
 - Staff Briefing: Brief staff members on the situation and provide them with clear instructions.
 - Student Support: Provide support to other students who may be affected by the student's disappearance.
 - Documentation: Continue to document all actions taken and any new information received.
- As soon as possible, the parents will be notified that their child is missing.
- If a member of staff finds the child, the head teacher must be told at once. Parents, police and other authorities will be notified.
- The head teacher will investigate how the incident occurred and will take appropriate action to ensure that similar events do not happen again.

5. Children who Run

If a child runs away from school and is in the eye line of adults, the adult should call after the child or try and talk to the child in order to get them to come back. Under no circumstances should a member of staff physically restrain or grab the child, unless the child is in immediate danger of hurting themselves or putting themselves in a dangerous situation e.g. running onto the road. Please see guidance on restrictive physical intervention guidelines set out in the schools' Policy and Procedure on Positive Behaviour Support. A member of staff should never put themselves at risk in the process and should not attempt to intervene without assistance unless it is an obvious emergency. The member of staff should ring the police in accordance with the Misper protocol, inform the Headteacher and ring parents. A student is not considered a missing person if there is supervision from a trusted adult. This includes being able to just keep the pupil in sight yet giving them the space, they require to de-escalate. A dynamic risk assessment will be done in each case regarding support required and length of time this should go on for until other agencies or parents/carers are contacted.

6. Outcomes

The safety of all children will be given our highest priority. A missing child should be an extremely rare happening. This policy is designed to put into place swift and effective actions to locate any missing child and to notify and involve parents and the authorities at every appropriate point. A risk assessment update should be made if a child does abscond unsupervised and, in each case, if there are more than one, when a child behaves in a new manner for example runs into town as opposed to running to the place of residence. Absconding is of the highest priority and a negative level 5 MyConcern safeguarding report will be made every time. Mitigating strategies will be discussed both in the debrief and risk assessment update review and in the weekly safeguarding meeting and disseminated to all staff during staff briefings.

If any further actions are required such as a bespoke CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) risk assessment, CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation) risk assessment or similar, the safeguarding team will notify the relevant staff, usually the tutor, and this will be implemented. Parents / carers will then be informed and asked to provide input.

END

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| POSITION | Headteacher | NAME | Sam Norton | SIGNATURE | S. Norton | DATE | 20/01/25 |
| POSITION | Governor | NAME | Steve Alexander | SIGNATURE | S.ALEX | DATE | 18/02/25 |