Missing Student and Unauthorised Leaving Site Procedure

Wayland Stables Care Farm

Policy owner: Jake Payne, Business Manager

Approval date: 06/08/2026

Effective date: 01/09/2026

Next review: August 2027, or sooner after every missing-on-site or unauthorised-departure incident, drill concern or material site change

> **No waiting period:** If a student is missing or has left and there is immediate danger, a high-risk vulnerability, an unknown location or urgent safeguarding concern, call 999 immediately. Staff do not wait a fixed period, seek managerial permission or delay while completing a search.

1. Purpose and language

This procedure protects students who do not arrive as expected, cannot be located during a session, leave an agreed area or leave the site without an authorised handover. WSCF uses factual language such as 'missing' or 'unauthorised departure'; the label 'absconding' must not be used to blame or obscure unmet need.

2. Scope and key distinctions

Situation	Meaning and route
Expected but not arrived	Attendance/non-arrival check; verify transport and notify commissioner/parent under the Attendance Policy. Escalate safeguarding if unexplained or risky.
Missing on site	Student cannot be found where expected and safety is not confirmed. Activate this procedure immediately.
Unauthorised leaving	Student crosses an agreed boundary or leaves without verified collection/permission. Treat as missing until location and safety are confirmed.
Authorised departure	Identity, permission, destination and handover are verified and recorded, including early collection/late arrival locked-gate process.
Child missing education	A statutory status concerning a child not registered and not receiving suitable education; local authority/school duties are distinct from today's missing-person response.

3. Prevention and individual planning

Maintain accurate daily attendance, movement/handover and visitor information; clear physical boundaries; locked-gate controls; suitable supervision; radios/phones; and awareness of water, roads, animals, machinery, chemicals, woodland and neighbouring land.

Before attendance, assess known missing/leaving, exploitation, self-harm, trauma, communication, sensory, mobility and transport risks. The individual plan records triggers, early signs, preferred regulation, safe spaces, likely destinations, approach, photograph/description access, key contacts, police threshold and adjustments. It must not use unlawful confinement.

4. Roles

The first staff member noticing concern keeps the remaining group safe, alerts the manager/supervisor and states the last confirmed location/time. The incident lead coordinates, but any worker may call 999. One person maintains the timeline and communications; one protects site access/known hazards; searchers work only within assigned safe areas.

The commissioner/registered school and parent/carer retain wider attendance and safeguarding responsibilities. WSCF leads the immediate on-site response and supplies prompt factual information.

5. Immediate dynamic assessment

Consider age and understanding; medical/emergency needs; clothing/weather/daylight; roads, water, machinery, animals, chemicals and strangers; self-harm/suicide or exploitation risk; previous patterns/destinations; elapsed time; phone/location information lawfully available; and risk to staff or other students.

Call 999 immediately for immediate danger or crime. For other missing-person concerns, contact police promptly using the appropriate channel based on risk; police determine their response. WSCF does not apply a universal waiting time or promise a specific police classification.

6. Response procedure

1. Confirm the concern: check the named location and immediate vicinity without assuming the student is hiding; note exact last seen time, clothing, mood, direction and hazards.
2. Raise the alert. Keep other students supervised, control vehicles/machinery/animals as needed and assign a recorder. Do not lock a student in or block a dangerous confrontation at the gate.
3. Call 999 when urgent; otherwise contact police promptly where the location/safety is not established or risk warrants. Provide description, photograph if lawful, vulnerabilities, likely locations, phone, hazards and actions taken.
4. Conduct only a rapid, coordinated search of pre-agreed safe zones. Use pairs where risk indicates; keep communications; do not enter water, roads, unstable structures, confined spaces, neighbouring property or other unsafe areas.

5. Notify parent/carer and commissioner/registered school promptly unless police or safeguarding direction requires a different sequence. Inform the DSL/adult safeguarding lead and activate exploitation/self-harm routes where relevant.
6. Preserve CCTV, messages, attendance/gate/visitor records and a factual timeline. Do not access accounts or devices unlawfully or circulate personal details publicly.

7. Search boundaries and staff safety

Staff do not pursue in vehicles, physically grab except where lawful immediate safety intervention is necessary, split unsafely, leave the remaining group under-supervised, trespass, or place themselves in danger. Police/fire and rescue lead high-risk searches.

The locked gate is an access control, not a restraint. Emergency services receive immediate access. If a student is at or beyond the gate, use calm communication and distance, reduce hazards and call for appropriate help rather than creating a struggle near traffic.

8. Communication and information

Recipient	Information/action
Police / 999	Identity and description; last seen; vulnerabilities/medical needs; immediate hazards; likely destinations; contact; current search and safe rendezvous.
Parent/carer	Known facts, police involvement/reference where appropriate, actions and contact route; avoid speculation or identifying other students.
Commissioner / registered school	Same-day absence/safeguarding notice, placement risk, attendance impact and participation in review/interim arrangements.
Staff/students/visitors	Only operationally necessary instructions. Protect privacy, avoid rumours and do not request untrained public searching.
Media/public	No staff comment or social-media appeal. Police/authorised communications lead decides any public information.

9. When the student is located or returns

Confirm immediate safety and identity; inform police and all notified parties; obtain urgent first aid/medical or safeguarding help; receive the student calmly and do not punish before welfare assessment. Do not conduct a coercive interrogation.

Record where found, condition, account in the student's own words, contact/exploitation/self-harm concerns and property/evidence. Arrange verified handover or continued supervision. Police or social care may advise a return-home interview or further safeguarding process; WSCF does not substitute an internal chat for statutory follow-up.

10. Review and placement action

Complete same-day incident and safeguarding records. Within the earliest safe period, review with the student, parent/carer and commissioner: antecedents, unmet need, supervision, boundaries, transport, gate, staffing, communication, reasonable adjustments and education continuity.

Update the individual plan and whole-site/placement risk assessment. Any temporary restriction or pause is proportionate and reviewed through an urgent placement meeting, not informal exclusion. Repeated incidents trigger multi-agency review rather than automatic removal.

11. Drills, training and assurance

Staff practise the alert, roles, search map, communication, gate and accounting method without simulating distress for a student. New staff know they may call 999 and where controlled contacts and plans are held.

Jake Payne reviews every event and at least termly examines non-arrival, missing and leaving patterns, response times, police/commissioner notifications, plan updates and overdue actions. Do not publish identifiable details or invented rates.

Appendix A - Immediate action card

7. MISSING: keep group safe - alert - last seen/details - dynamic risk - 999/police - safe-zone search only - notify - preserve records - welfare on return - review.
8. Never wait a fixed period; never search unsafe terrain; never delay 999 for permission; never post on social media; never release a returned student to an unverified adult.

Appendix B - Minimum incident log

Field	Record
Trigger	Expected location, last confirmed sighting/time, who noticed and initial checks.
Risk	Vulnerabilities, weather/clothing, hazards, likely destination, medical/safeguarding factors.
Actions	Alert, assigned roles, zones checked, police/999 time/reference, notifications and advice.
Outcome	Located time/place/by whom, condition, student's account, medical/safeguarding action and handover.
Review	Contributing factors, plan/assessment changes, commissioner actions, owner/date and closure.

Sources and related guidance

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 — Department for Education.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 — HM Government.

Children Missing Education: statutory guidance — Department for Education.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2026 — Department for Education.

WSCF Attendance, Safeguarding, Visitor, Behaviour, Emergency Response and Serious Incident policies — Wayland Stables Care Farm.

Approval record

Approved by	Role	Signature	Date
Jake Payne	06/08/2026	Jake Payne	06/08/2026

Next review due: August 2027, or sooner under the review triggers in this policy.