



## Missing Pupil Policy and Procedure 2024

The Link Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity, regulated by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). All Members of the Board of Trustees of the exempt charity are also Directors of the company; the term 'Trustee' used in this Policy also means Director. This Policy applies to all Academies within the Link Academy Trust.

### Policy statement

The safety and security of our pupils across The Link Academy Trust is paramount at all times, both on and off premises. Every care is taken to ensure that our pupils are accounted for at all times when they are in our care.

In summary the measures in place to ensure a pupil does not go missing include:

- Requirement for all visitors to register on arrival with the office, present evidence of identity on their first visit and obtain and wear visitor's badge.
- Boundary security regularly checked by health and safety and maintenance teams.
- Staff and pupils are trained and confident to challenge unknown persons. Information is immediately made available to staff about challenging unknown persons on the premises.
- Supervision of pupils at all times and overall staff vigilance as part of school culture
- Sufficient staff to maintain ratios appropriate to the venue and the nature of the activity being undertaken.
- Safe Collection policy for pupils
- Rigorous risk assessments for trips
- A full risk assessment in place for pupils who are known to be vulnerable to leave the school site.

Each pupil who arrives at the Academy is **registered first thing in the morning**. Staff maintain the appropriate high level of supervision throughout the lessons and are aware of the location of the pupils in their care at all times. If pupils are taken out of the class for interventions this is communicated to the class teacher who has the overarching responsibility at that time, similarly if they need to go to the toilets the teacher is aware. During the break times and lunch hours, the staff and Mealtime Assistants (MTAs) on duty have responsibility for knowing the locations of the pupils. **The register is taken again in the afternoon.**

The school has rigorous procedures for pursuing unexplained absences, including the aim to contact parents by 9.15 am if a child has not arrived in school and the reason for absence is not known. This

should ensure that staff become aware at the earliest opportunity of any child who may have gone missing on the way to school. In these circumstances, this policy along with the Attendance Policy will be followed.

No child is allowed to leave the school site with an adult other than a parent without permission being received from a parent either by telephone or email. This rule must be rigorously enforced. In cases where a parent is legally denied access to their child all staff must be informed of the circumstances and, if possible, the parent. If a child is seen (or believed) to be taken from the school site by an unapproved adult, the police and parents will be immediately informed.

In the unlikely event of a pupil going missing, our missing pupil procedure is followed.

## **Procedures**

### **1. Pupil going missing on the premises**

- As soon as it is noticed that a pupil is missing the key person/staff alerts the Academy Head (AH) or a senior member of staff if the AH is unavailable.
- The CEO is informed.
- The AH or a senior member of staff will be designated as the Missing Child Lead (MCL) and will organise a thorough search of the building and grounds using all available staff.
- The register is checked to make sure all other pupils are present and not involved.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a pupil could leave the site.
- The AH will talk to the staff and appropriate pupils, i.e. peers, teaching assistants, MTAs to find out when and where the pupil was last seen.
- Any information and relevant details need to be recorded and conveyed as quickly as possible to the MCL.
- After no longer than 20 minutes, the AH calls the parent/carer to ascertain whether the child has been collected.
- If the whereabouts of the pupil remains unknown, the AH or MCL will ring the police and update the CEO, giving all the information accumulated so far.
- Searches/ information continues to be explored.
- Once police arrive all relevant information about the child will be given. The police will then take over the search.
- The CEO reports the incident to the Chair of Trustees.
- Once the incident is concluded the CEO and or Chair, with the MCL, carries out an investigation to review the reasons and revise measures if necessary.
- A final report needs to be written up and held on the pupil's file.

## **2. Pupil going missing on an outing**

When on excursions off the Academy premises, staff implement strategies to maximise the safety and security of the pupils in accordance with the Academy's Educational Visits policy. The EVOLVE system is fully utilised and full risk assessments are carried out, a list of all the pupils' names is carried by the trip leader. The pupils are split into small groups according to staff/pupil ratios for the age of the pupils and the purpose of the trip or activity, and each group is managed by a separate member of staff. The number of pupils is checked regularly by the group leader with frequent roll calls. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) should be written for every off-site trip with a focus on Missing Child and age/ location/activity appropriate guidance. This should be added to Evolve. The SOP should be shared with all staff on the trip. To minimise the risk of missing children on an educational visit, children must be briefed before setting off on the importance of staying with the group leaders and reminded to encourage each other to keep with the group. Trip leaders should also agree a meeting point and ensure all children are aware of this point.

In the unlikely event of a pupil going missing on an outing, our missing pupil procedure is followed.

- As soon as it is noticed that a pupil is missing, staff on the outing ask pupils to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other pupil has gone astray. One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The venue is contacted by a staff member and alerted to the position in order to support the search.
- The AH is contacted immediately by the leader of the group / MCL, and the incident is reported to the CEO while the search is maintained by those available.
- After the initial search, no longer than 20 minutes, the AH or MCL contacts police and gives them all the details as accurately as possible.
- The CEO is updated.
- The AH or MCL contacts the parent, who makes their way to the setting or outing venue as agreed with the AH. The academy is advised as the best place to meet the parent, as by the time the parent arrives, the pupil may have been returned to the setting.
- Staff members take the remaining pupils back to the setting as soon as possible.
- The MCL or designated member of staff must stay at the venue until the police arrive.
- Once the position is resolved the CEO reports the incident to the Chair of Trustees.
- The CEO and or Chair, with MCL and AH, carries out an investigation to review the reasons and revise measures if necessary.

## **3. The investigation**

- Staff members keep calm and do not let the other pupils become anxious or worried.
- The AH/ MCL together with CEO speak with the parent(s).

- The CEO carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the area or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
  - a. The date and time of the report.
  - b. What staff/pupils were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing pupil.
  - c. When the pupil was last seen in the group/outing.
  - d. What has taken place in the group or outing since the pupil went missing.
  - e. The time it is estimated that the pupil went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation including interviewing staff. Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a pupil protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences) arrangements; the Local Authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted is informed.
- The insurance provider is informed.
- The Chair of Trustees and the CEO is kept informed at all times of all developments.

#### **4. Managing people**

- Missing pupil incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- The pupils may also be sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer pupils' questions honestly but also reassure them.
- Parents should be informed of any incident involving a missing pupil by a member of the AH/MCL or CEO.
- Staff may feel vulnerable during this process and will need support.
- There should always be two senior members of staff present when handling the situation with parents.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a pupil is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time.
- The CEO and Chair of Trustees will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Members of staff, volunteers and Trustees must not discuss any missing pupil incident with the press without permission from the CEO or Chair of Trustees who will have taken appropriate advice before appointing a spokesperson for the organisation.

This policy is linked with The Link Academy Trust's:

- Management of Outdoor Education Visits and Offsite Activities
- Safeguarding Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Safe collection of pupils
- Attendance Policy

This policy and procedure is reviewed by the Standards & Curriculum Committee on an annual cycle and approved by Board of Trustees.

*Reviewed by Standards & Curriculum Committee: 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023*

*Approved by Board of Trustees: 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023*

**Reviewed by Standards & Curriculum Committee: 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Approved by Board of Trustees: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Next review: Spring 2025**