THE PERSE
PREP SCHOOL
CAMBRIDGE

Prep School Missing Pupil Procedure

The Perse School

September 2026

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This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

Introduction

This policy is applicable to all pupils in the Prep School (the **School**). It is available on the School's website or on request from the School Office. It has been drafted in compliance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025)* and should be read in conjunction with the School's S*afeguarding and Child Protection Policy*, *Risk Assessment Policy for Pupil Welfare and Attendance Policy* which are available on the School's website.

This policy applies at all times when a pupil is, or is intended to be, in the care of the School.

The School expects parents to make any application for authorised absence at the earliest opportunity and wherever possible before the start of the School day (details of this procedure are in the Parent Handbook). Parents are also expected to notify the School of any absence or delay as soon as reasonably possible in accordance with the School's *Attendance Policy* and when doing so, give an accurate explanation of this. The School will follow up any unexplained absences as soon as is practicable using the procedures detailed below. Where reasonably possible the School will hold more than one emergency contact for each pupil so that the School has additional options to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

It is important to distinguish between a pupil's absence from school for an unknown reason (Children Missing from Education) and a pupil's disappearance from a lesson or activity after arrival at school. Please also see the School's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* for details of the procedures to follow for Children Missing from Education.

Children going missing, particularly persistently (including during the school day), can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities including neglect, sexual abuse, and child sexual and criminal exploitation. The School's policies are designed to assist in identifying such abuse and also help prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. The School's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* sets out the School's approach, both to support early help assessments when problems are first emerging and also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as those on a child in need or child protection plan, or as a looked after child), where going missing from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. School attendance registers are carefully monitored to identify any trends. Action should be taken in accordance with the School's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*, if any absence of a pupil from the School gives rise to a concern about their welfare.

Responsibility

The Board of Governors (the Proprietor of the School) has overall responsibility for matters which are the subject of this policy.

All staff have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.

All members of staff contribute to the safety of pupils at the School by providing appropriate supervision under the guidance of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), the Head and Prep Senior

Management Team (Prep SMT), which consists of the Head, The Deputy Head, Assistant Head (Academic) and Assistant Head (Pastoral).

It is the duty of staff in charge of any pupil supervision to check why a pupil is absent, although during the school day this may be delegated if that member of staff is busy.

To ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, the Board of Governors has allocated the following tasks:

Task	Allocated to	When / frequency of review
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	Designated Safeguarding Lead	As required, and at least annually
Monitoring the implementation of the policy, relevant risk assessments and any action taken in response and evaluating effectiveness	Designated Safeguarding Lead	As required, and at least termly
Seeking input from interested groups (such as pupils, staff, Parents) to consider improvements to the School's processes under the policy	Designated Safeguarding Lead	As required, and at least annually
Maintaining up to date records of all information created in relation to the policy and its implementation as required by the UK GDPR	Designated Safeguarding Lead	As required, and at least termly
Formal annual review	Board of Governors	Annually

Procedures for Monitoring the Whereabouts of Pupils

To establish whether a pupil is missing it is a requirement to monitor the whereabouts of pupils. This includes use of the following procedures:

- Statutory registration: form teachers will register classes in the morning (8:30-9:00am) and class teachers will register in the afternoon, during Period 7 (2:00-2:30pm) via SIMS.
- In all school activities on site, staff should be aware of the pupils they should have in their care. This includes taking registers for extra-curricular clubs after school.
- In school activities off site, the list of pupils in attendance should be presented to Reception. This includes taking registers for extra-curricular clubs off site.

Absence Recording and Registration

- Form teachers, when notified, should ask the Prep Receptionist to record planned absences onto SIMS, or the Prep Receptionist should do so as soon as the School is notified, and permission is granted by the Head/Deputy Head.
- Parents are expected to contact the School every day their child is absent unless previous permission has been granted. Such absences must be recorded on SIMS when notified to the School.
- Form teachers will register classes in both the morning and afternoon via SIMS.
- If a pupil is present, mark with: /. If a pupil is absent, mark with: N. The Receptionist will follow up all absences marked "Unknown reason: N" before 9:30 in the morning, and 2:45 in the afternoon.
- Musical activities in the morning have full and comprehensive paper registers to be taken and passed onto the Receptionist before the start of period 1. The Receptionist will input this data.
- Late pupils who miss registration must sign in at Reception.
- Off site, staff must make meeting times and locations clear to all pupils. Regular head counts must be undertaken, especially when moving from one location to another.
- On site after school, pupils are registered in after-school clubs. At the end of the session, pupils must be signed out by the person collecting them. Registers are also kept by those operating Late Stay.

When would a pupil be identified as missing?

A pupil may be identified as missing:

- If an absence from school is not confirmed by contacting the home contact.
- Off site, if there is a no show at a regular head count.
- On site, if a pupil does not show at a school activity. The member of staff should contact Reception.
- By a report of a missing child by a fellow pupil.

Any member of staff discovering a discrepancy must immediately notify the School Reception in person, or on extension 3920 (external line 01223 403920).

Missing Pupil Procedures

Anyone who suspects or believes that a pupil is missing during the School day should contact a member of Prep SMT immediately.

1. **Pupils absent from School for an unknown reason:**
   - At 9.00am the Receptionist will produce a list of pupils unaccounted for – i.e. those pupils who are not marked as present but for whom the School has not received a message from home regarding absence through sickness etc. The Receptionist should first check the list

of children who have permission to travel to school alone and start by going to the relevant classes to check on these pupils' attendance, followed by all other pupils whose attendance is unknown. The same routine occurs after pm registration (which takes place at the start of Period 7), with a check carried out if necessary, finishing no later than 2.45pm.

- If a pupil is found to be absent from school and no notification has been received from parents/guardians, the Receptionist will then find a member of Prep SMT to inform them. This should be asap and no later than 9.30am. The member of SMT, not the Receptionist, will ring home for confirmation of absence.
- Where the home contact is not immediately available, the member of SMT will continue to try all contact numbers and also send emails to the home contact(s) where necessary.

2. Pupils identified as missing during the school day:

On receiving notification of a discrepancy, Reception will:

- Check the sign out book to see if the pupil has signed in/out.
- Check the trips/visits lists (check: SharePoint/Staff/Educational Visits), fixtures and calendar to see if the pupil can be located.
- Phone home if the pupil has not been registered at an after-school club so that the School can ascertain if the parents have collected that pupil early for any reason.
- Contact a member of Prep SMT who will make the necessary checks such as with the form teacher to assess whether the absence is expected and ask pupils in the class where appropriate if they know the pupil's whereabouts.
- If the pupil is identified as missing on a trip off site, then the trip leader will contact the member of Prep SMT who is on call. The procedures in step 3 below will then be followed.

3. Pupils identified as missing on a school trip:

The trip leader will immediately contact the member of SMT acting as the designated home contact who will inform the DSL or, in their absence, a Deputy DSL. Following initial searches of likely places including the previous venue, the trip leader will liaise with the designated home contact to discuss contacting local police, the British Embassy (if overseas) and local hospitals.

4. Member of Prep SMT managing the incident:

The member of Prep SMT will manage the incident, immediately inform the Deputy Head (in their role as Designated Safeguarding Lead) and, where appropriate, initiate and oversee a search of the site. That member of Prep SMT will advise all teachers (via email) that they must immediately inform Prep Reception if the pupil appears. If the pupil is not found after an initial site search, no later than 1 hour after commencing searching, the DSL or other member of Prep SMT managing the incident will:

- Ring reception to register the pupil as missing and record any suggestions as to where the pupil might be based on information gained from speaking to staff and other pupils.
- Report the situation to other members of Prep SMT along with the relevant details.

- Contact the pupil's parents. If the parents are abroad, there may need to be a delay in contacting them.
- If appropriate, initiate a search of the local area.
- Make arrangements for dealing with media enquiries.

At their discretion, and in consultation with the parents where possible (and usually not later than 2 hours of a search commencing), the DSL will arrange for the police and Children's Social Care to be informed and will decide at what point it is appropriate to inform the Chair of Governors and / or invoke the School's Critical Incident Plan.

Please see Appendix 1 for further details of the information that will be provided to the police and Children's Social Care.

Any decision to contact Children's Social Care will be taken in accordance with the School's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy* and procedures.

5. **Resolution of the incident:**
   If the pupil is found on site or in the vicinity, the School staff will make a concerted effort to persuade the pupil to return to the School or to re-join the main group if on an educational visit. If the pupil refuses to do so, staff members at the scene will attempt to continue to monitor the pupil's whereabouts. Staff should consider contacting the parents in such circumstances.

   When the pupil is found, or the incident is otherwise resolved, the member of Prep SMT managing the incident will inform the Head, the DSL and parents, directly.

   The DSL will inform the police and Children's Social Care if they have been involved.

6. **Investigation:**
   Following resolution of the incident, the Head will initiate a full investigation and require a written report from the member of Prep SMT managing the incident. This report and the incident log will be kept on the pupil's file and in a central record of all such incidents. All incidents will be reported to the Head of the Upper School who will advise the Chair of Governors as appropriate.

Training

The School ensures that regular guidance and training is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles. The level and frequency of training depends on the role of the individual member of staff.

Risk Assessment

The School has a *Risk Assessment Policy for Pupil Welfare* which is available on the School's website. Where a concern about a pupil's welfare is identified, the risks to that pupil's welfare will be assessed and appropriate action will be taken to reduce the risks identified.

The format of risk assessment may vary and may be included as part of the School's overall response to a welfare issue, including the use of individual pupil welfare plans (such as behaviour, emotional regulation, healthcare and education plans, as appropriate). Regardless of the form used, the School's approach to promoting pupil welfare will be systematic and pupil focused.

The Head has overall responsibility for ensuring that matters which affect pupil welfare are adequately risk assessed and for ensuring that the relevant findings are implemented, monitored and evaluated.

Day to day responsibility to carry out risk assessments under this policy will be delegated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who has been properly trained in, and tasked with, carrying out the particular assessment.

Record Keeping

The School will keep a full written record of any incident of a missing pupil. This written record will be kept on the pupil file and in a central record of all such incidents. The written record will include:

- the pupil's name;
- relevant dates and times (e.g. when it was first noticed that the pupil was missing), and whether the incident was a single occurrence or part of a repeating pattern;
- the action taken to find the pupil;
- whether the Police or Children's Social Care were involved;
- outcome or resolution of the incident;
- any reasons given by the pupil for being missing;
- any concerns or complaints about the handling of the incident;
- a record of the staff involved;
- any recommendations concerning future incidents.

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's *Records Management Policy* and *Records Retention Schedule*.

The information created in connection with this policy may contain personal data. The School's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law. The School has published privacy notices on its website which explain how the School will use personal data. The School's approach to data protection compliance is set out in the School's data protection policies and procedures. In addition, staff must ensure that they follow the School's data protection policies and procedures when handling personal data created in connection with this policy. This includes the School's *Data Protection Policy* and *Information Security and Sharing Data Guidance*.

Policy Review

The Board of Governors will undertake an annual review of this policy, its procedures and its operation as part of the School's annual review of safeguarding and update it, as necessary.

Version Control

Date of adoption of this policy	3 September 2026
Date of last review of this policy	June 2026
Date for next review of this policy	June 2027
Policy owner (SLT)	Designated Safeguarding Lead – Prep School
Authorised by	Jonathan Scott On behalf of the Board of Governors
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Appendix 1

Questions that could be asked when interviewing during a missing pupil investigation

- When was the pupil last seen?
- Who was the pupil with?
- What were they wearing?
- What emotional state did the pupil appear to be in?
- Has anything upset the pupil recently?
- Did the pupil speak to anyone about leaving?
- Who are the pupil's main friends at School?
- Is there any reason to believe the pupil might have been abducted (e.g. custody dispute) or otherwise at risk?
- Does the pupil have family or family friends in the vicinity?
- Are there any medical and/or wellbeing issues which may be relevant?

Information to be provided to the police/Children's Social Care

- the pupil's name;
- the pupil's age/date of birth;
- an up-to-date photograph if possible;
- the pupil's height and any other physical description that is not shown by the photograph;
- a description of the clothing the pupil is thought to be wearing;
- any physical disability, learning difficulty, medical issues or special educational needs that the pupil may have;
- the pupil's home address and telephone number and details of their parents/guardians;
- the pupil's mobile phone number if known;
- any relevant background information on the pupil's school record or home situation;
- any relevant comments made by the pupil or other pupils.