

Missing Child Policy

1. Policy Statement

Learn With Confidence (LwC) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all students under its care, both on-site and during off-site activities. This Missing Child Policy outlines the procedures to be followed in the event that a young person goes missing, either from the LwC centre or during an off-site visit. The policy is designed to ensure a prompt, coordinated response, with a clear focus on safeguarding the child and minimising any potential harm. LwC acknowledges that some students, particularly those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) challenges, may be at greater risk of absconding, and this policy takes these factors into account.

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of students by responding swiftly and effectively to incidents where a child goes missing.
- Set out clear procedures for staff to follow in the event that a student absconds, either from the LwC centre or during an off-site visit.
- Comply with safeguarding legislation and local authority procedures.
- Collaborate with parents, guardians, and external agencies to ensure the swift return and safety of the missing child.

3. Relevant Legislation and Guidance

This policy is informed by the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- **Children Act 1989**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024**
- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**
- **Equality Act 2010**

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 LwC Leadership Team

- Ensure that all staff are trained in the procedures for dealing with a missing child, both on-site and during off-site visits.
- Review and update this policy regularly to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and best practices.
- Liaise with external agencies, including the local authority and police, when necessary.

4.2 Staff

- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy to locate the missing child and ensure their safety.

Learn with Confidence
5 King Court, Harwood Road, Horsham, RH13 5UR
Email: kat.perry@learnwithconfidence.co.uk
Tel: 01403 586029
Learnwithconfidence.co.uk

- Conduct risk assessments for all students, particularly those identified as being at higher risk of absconding.
- Supervise students in line with the **Off-Site Visit Policy** and **Attendance Policy**, ensuring staff-to-student ratios are adequate.
- Ensure safeguarding protocols are followed at all times, reporting any concerns to the designated safeguarding lead.

4.3 Parents and Guardians

- Inform LwC of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour, including any history of absconding, so that appropriate measures can be put in place.
- Provide up-to-date contact information and remain accessible during off-site visits and LwC sessions.

4.4 Students

- Follow the instructions of staff and adhere to behavioural expectations set out in the **Positive Relationship (Behaviour) Policy**.

5. Procedures for Managing a Missing Child Incident

5.1 If a Child Goes Missing from the LwC Centre

1. **Immediate Action:** Upon noticing that a child is missing, staff should conduct a quick and thorough search of the premises, including any nearby areas where the child may have gone.
2. **Notification:** If the child is not located within **10 minutes**, the senior staff member on-site must be notified immediately. Parents or guardians should also be contacted to inform them of the situation.
3. **Further Action:**
 - Continue searching the surrounding area while other staff remain with the rest of the students to ensure their safety.
 - If the child is not found within **30 minutes**, the police should be notified, and a missing child report filed. The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** will liaise with the police and local authorities as necessary.
4. **Documentation:** Record the incident in the safeguarding log, including the actions taken, timeframes, and any conversations with parents, guardians, or the police.

5.2 If a Child Goes Missing During an Off-Site Visit

1. **Immediate Action:** As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the staff member in charge must stop the activity and take an immediate roll call to determine the missing child.
2. **Search:** A designated staff member should begin searching the area, while others supervise the rest of the group. The **Off-Site Visit Policy** will guide staff in maintaining safety during such an event.
3. **Contact the Venue:** If the visit is taking place at a venue, the staff should notify venue security or management immediately to assist with the search.

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Learnwithconfidence.co.uk

4. **Notification:**
 - If the child is not found within **10 minutes**, parents or guardians should be informed.
 - After **30 minutes** of searching, the police must be contacted to file a missing child report.
5. **Return to the Centre:** If it is safe to do so, staff may return the rest of the group to the LwC centre while designated staff remain with the authorities to continue the search.
6. **Follow-Up:** After the incident, a full report will be submitted to the LwC leadership, and the event will be logged in accordance with safeguarding protocols.

6. Risk Assessments

Risk assessments will be conducted for all students who are considered at higher risk of absconding due to their behavioural, emotional, or mental health needs. These assessments will be carried out in line with the **Risk Management Policy** and will guide decisions on additional supervision or safeguarding measures.

7. Preventative Measures

- **Positive Relationship (Behaviour) Policy:** Clear expectations for student behaviour will be communicated to minimise the risk of absconding.
- **Mental Health and SEND Support:** Students identified as at higher risk will receive additional emotional and behavioural support, in accordance with the **Mental Health Policy** and **SEND Policy**.
- **Staff Training:** All staff will receive training on managing absconding risks, including how to conduct searches and liaise with external authorities.

8. Post-Incident Review

After any incident where a child goes missing, a thorough review will take place to:

- Understand the circumstances leading to the event.
- Identify any gaps in supervision, communication, or risk management.
- Adjust risk assessments and procedures to prevent future incidents.
- Provide support to the student and their family, as well as the staff involved, ensuring their wellbeing after the event.

9. Additional Policies Referenced

This Missing Child Policy should be read in conjunction with the following LwC policies:

- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**
- **Positive Relationship (Behaviour) Policy**
- **Attendance Policy**
- **Off-Site Visit Policy**
- **Risk Management Policy**
- **Mental Health Policy**

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10. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the LwC leadership team to ensure it remains in line with safeguarding best practices, legal requirements, and the needs of the students. Incidents involving missing children will be used to inform future reviews and updates.

Version Control			
Version No.	Date	Author	Notes
1.0	15 th October 2024	K Perry	Initial Draft
1.1	01.09.2025	KP	