THE SOLENT SCHOOLS

Missing Child Protocol (September 2026)

1. Purpose

This protocol sets out the procedures to be followed when a child leaves the school site without permission or cannot be located on the premises. The safety and welfare of our pupils is our highest priority.

2. Definition

A child is considered 'missing' when:

- They cannot be located on the school premises during the school day
- They have left the school site without permission
- They have not returned from an off-site activity at the expected time
- Their whereabouts are unknown during a time when they should be under the school's supervision

3. Immediate Actions (First 10 Minutes)

3.1 Staff member who discovers child is missing MUST:

Immediately:

1. Alert the nearest member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or the school office
2. Note the time the child was last seen and their last known location
3. Check the immediate area thoroughly

3.2 Senior Leadership Team MUST:

Within 5 minutes:

1. **Initiate an immediate search** of the school premises:
   - Classrooms (including toilets, cloakrooms, storage areas)
   - Playground and outdoor areas
   - Hall, dining areas, library
   - Any areas the child is known to frequent
   - Check all exits and gates
2. **Assign search teams:**
   - Minimum of 2 staff members per team
   - Provide walkie-talkies or mobile phones for communication
   - Designate a central coordinator (usually a member of SLT)
3. **Alert the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or deputy DSL immediately
4. **Check the class register** to confirm:
   - The child was present at registration
   - When they were last marked present
   - Any known medical conditions or vulnerabilities

5. **Gather key information:**
    - What the child is wearing
    - Any known friendship groups or siblings in school
    - Recent behaviour or concerns
    - Home circumstances or known issues
    - Possible reasons for leaving/hiding

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4. If Child Not Found Within 10 Minutes

4.1 Contact Parents/Carers

The DSL or headteacher **MUST**:

1. **Telephone parents/carers immediately** to:
    - Inform them that their child cannot be located
    - Ask if the child has made contact with them
    - Ask if there are any known reasons the child might have left
    - Establish if there are any places the child might go
    - Ask parents to check if the child has returned home (if appropriate)
2. **Keep parents informed** throughout the incident

4.2 Contact the Police Call 999 immediately if:

- The child is under 7 years old
- The child has any medical condition, disability or vulnerability
- There are safeguarding concerns (e.g., child protection plan, known risks)
- The child is believed to be in immediate danger
- Weather conditions pose a risk
- It is getting dark
- The child has been missing for 15 minutes and all reasonable steps have been taken

Call 101 (non-emergency) if:

- The child is older and there are no immediate safety concerns
- You need to report the incident but it is not an emergency

Provide the police with:

- Child's full name, date of birth, address
- Physical description and what they are wearing
- Recent photograph (from school records)
- Time last seen and circumstances
- Any known vulnerabilities or medical conditions
- Possible locations or contacts
- Details of any safeguarding concerns

4.3 Extend the Search

1. **Search the local area:**
    - Routes to/from home
    - Local parks or play areas
    - Shops or places the child is known to visit
    - Friends' houses (if known)
2. **Staff should search in pairs** and maintain regular contact with the coordinator
3. **Do not put staff at risk** - staff should not enter private property without permission

5. Ongoing Actions

5.1 Designated Coordinator (SLT Member) MUST:

1. **Maintain a log** recording:
   - Time child was discovered missing
   - Actions taken and by whom
   - Time of each action
   - Who has been contacted and when
   - Any information received
2. **Liaise with emergency services** and follow their instructions
3. **Keep parents/carers updated** at regular intervals (at least every 15 minutes)
4. **Manage staff deployment** and ensure staff welfare
5. **Maintain normal school operations** as far as possible for other pupils

5.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead MUST:

1. **Consider safeguarding implications:**
   - Is this a child protection concern?
   - Are there known risks to the child?
   - Does this indicate wider safeguarding issues?
2. **Contact local authority children's social care** if:
   - The child has a social worker
   - There are child protection concerns
   - The child is looked after
   - There are known safeguarding risks
3. **Prepare to make a safeguarding referral** if appropriate

6. When the Child is Found

6.1 Immediate Actions:

1. **Ensure the child's safety and wellbeing:**
   - Check for any injuries
   - Provide first aid if needed
   - Offer comfort and reassurance
   - Do not reprimand the child immediately
2. **Inform all parties immediately:**
   - Parents/carers
   - Police (if involved)
   - All staff involved in the search
   - Local authority (if involved)
3. **Arrange for the child to be checked by a first aider** or medical professional if there are any concerns

6.2 Initial Conversation with the Child:

1. **Speak to the child calmly** to establish:
   - Why they left/were hiding
   - Where they went
   - Whether anyone else was involved
   - How they are feeling

2. **Do not conduct a formal interview** - this should be done later when the child is calm
3. **If safeguarding concerns arise,** follow the school's child protection procedures immediately

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7. Follow-Up Actions (Within 24 Hours)

7.1 The Headteacher and DSL MUST:

1. **Conduct a thorough investigation:**
   - Interview the child (with parents present if appropriate)
   - Speak to staff and other pupils who may have information
   - Review CCTV footage if available
   - Establish the full circumstances
2. **Complete a detailed incident report** including:
   - Full timeline of events
   - All actions taken
   - Who was involved
   - Outcome and lessons learned
3. **Assess whether this is a safeguarding concern:**
   - Consider the child's reasons for leaving
   - Review any known vulnerabilities
   - Consider whether a referral to children's social care is needed
   - Update the child's safeguarding file if appropriate
4. **Meet with parents/carers** to:
   - Discuss what happened
   - Share the school's findings
   - Agree on support for the child
   - Discuss any consequences (if appropriate)
   - Agree on preventative measures
5. **Consider disciplinary action** in line with the school's behaviour policy (if appropriate)
6. **Put support in place for the child:**
   - Pastoral support
   - Risk assessment
   - Individual safety plan if needed
   - Referral to external agencies if appropriate

7.2 Review Security and Procedures:

1. **Conduct a site security review:**
   - How did the child leave?
   - Were there weaknesses in supervision or security?
   - Do gates, fences or exits need attention?
2. **Review risk assessments** for:
   - The individual child
   - Site security
   - Supervision arrangements
3. **Update procedures if necessary**
4. **Brief all staff** on lessons learned

8. Recording and Reporting

8.1 Records to Complete:

1. **Incident log** (detailed timeline)
2. **Safeguarding concern form** (if appropriate)
3. **Accident/incident form** (if any injuries)
4. **Individual pupil record** (add to child protection file if safeguarding concern)

8.2 Reporting Requirements:

Report to:

- **Parents/carers** - immediate verbal report, followed by written summary
- **Governors** - report to chair of governors and safeguarding governor
- **Local authority** - if safeguarding concerns or if child has a social worker
- **Ofsted** - if this constitutes a serious incident (seek advice from your local authority)
- **Health and Safety Executive** - if required under RIDDOR regulations

All records must be:

- Factual and objective
- Dated and timed
- Signed by the author
- Stored securely in line with GDPR requirements

9. Prevention Strategies

9.1 Site Security:

- Regular checks of perimeter fencing, gates and exits
- Ensure gates are locked during the school day
- Staff positioned at key points during transitions
- Visitors sign in/out and wear identification
- CCTV coverage of key areas (if applicable)

9.2 Supervision:

- Clear supervision rotas for all times of the day
- Adequate staff:pupil ratios
- Clear handover procedures between activities
- Regular headcounts, especially during transitions
- Clear procedures for pupils leaving class (e.g., toilet breaks)

9.3 Individual Risk Assessments:

For pupils identified as being at risk of leaving site:

- Individual risk assessment
- Personal safety plan
- Additional supervision arrangements
- Regular review meetings with parents/carers
- Possible referral to external agencies

9.4 Staff Training:

- All staff trained on this protocol during induction
- Annual refresher training
- Regular reminders about vigilance
- Clear understanding of safeguarding responsibilities

9.5 Pupil Education:

- Age-appropriate teaching about staying safe
- Clear expectations about remaining on site
- Encouraging pupils to report concerns
- PSHE curriculum covering personal safety

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10. Key Contacts Internal Contacts:

Role	Name	Contact Number
Executive Headteacher	Mrs L Wilby	02392 371073 or 02392 375459
Head of School	Mrs E Curthoys (SIS) Mrs L Peterkin-Aldred (SJS)	02392 371073 02392 375459
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mrs E Curthoys (SIS) Mrs L Peterkin-Aldred (SJS)	02392 371073 02392 375459
Deputy DSL	Mrs L Wilby (TSS) Mrs S Eades (SIS) Mrs S Smith (SJS)	02392 371073 02392 371073 02392 375459
School Office		SIS 02392 371073 SJS 02392 375459

External Contacts:

Organisation	Contact Number	Notes
Emergency Services	**999**	For immediate danger
Police (non-emergency)	**101**	For reporting incidents
Portsmouth Local Authority Children's Social Care	02392 688793	During office hours
Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team	0300 555 1373	Outside office hours
Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Partnership	0845 6710271 02392 688793	For advice
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	02392 882500	

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11. Staff Responsibilities

All Staff:

- Know and follow this protocol
- Remain vigilant at all times
- Report concerns immediately
- Participate in searches if required
- Maintain confidentiality

Senior Leadership Team:

- Coordinate response
- Make key decisions
- Liaise with emergency services
- Support staff and pupils
- Ensure follow-up actions

Designated Safeguarding Lead:

- Consider safeguarding implications
- Make referrals if needed
- Update safeguarding records
- Provide support to the child
- Review and update risk assessments

Head of School:

- Overall responsibility
- Communicate with parents and governors
- Ensure investigation is thorough
- Report to relevant authorities
- Review and update protocol

12. Review and Monitoring

This protocol will be:

- **Reviewed annually** or after any incident
- **Shared with all staff** and included in staff induction
- **Made available to parents** upon request and following an incident
- **Tested through practice drills** (at least annually)

Date of Protocol:	September 2026
Date of Next Review:	September 2027
Approved by:	L Wilby, Executive Headteacher

This protocol should be read in conjunction with:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Relationships and Behaviour Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Site Security Procedures
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026