

Review Initiated by	The Head at the direction of the Governing Body
Last Review	Autumn Term 2025
Next Review	Autumn Term 2026 (or sooner in response to any revised guidance / legislation) *

SAINT CHRISTINA'S SCHOOL: CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION AND MISSING CHILDREN

This Policy can be found in the Policy Library and is publicly available on the School website and on request a copy may be obtained from the School Office.

Equal Opportunities

At Saint Christina's School we are committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers receiving services from the School, irrespective of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy / maternity or marriage / civil partnership. We aim to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected with the School feel proud of their identity and able to participate fully in School life.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. All who work, volunteer or supply services to our school have an equal responsibility to understand and implement this policy and its procedures both within and outside of normal school hours including activities away from school. This policy should be read and understood in conjunction with our Safeguarding – Child Protection, Behaviour Management, Whistleblowing Policies, the Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct) and the Lost and Missing Children Procedures. This policy takes full account of the child protection procedures agreed by the LSCP and statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023*.
- 1.2. This policy should also be read alongside *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, 2024)* which places statutory duties on schools, governing bodies, and local authorities to promote good attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- 1.3. This policy applies to all:
 - activities undertaken by the school inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours and away from the school site
 - who, work, volunteer or supply services to our school - that is all staff (teaching and support staff), children on placement, the Proprietors and volunteers working in the school.
- 1.4. Our staff will follow the School's separate procedures for dealing with children who go missing, particularly on repeat occasions. They should act to identify any risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation. The school will put in place appropriate safeguarding policies, procedures and responses for children who go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. Staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage. More information can be found in 'Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care' and KCSIE (DfE: September, 2025).

2. Children who are absent from Education:

In line with *KCSIE 2025* and *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*, Saint Christina's School recognises that good attendance is essential for safeguarding and achieving positive outcomes. Persistent

absence (below 90% attendance) and severe absence (below 50% attendance) are treated as safeguarding concerns. The DSL will oversee attendance monitoring and ensure referrals are made to the Local Authority where thresholds are met or where there are concerns that absence places a child at risk of harm. The DSL has overall responsibility for monitoring patterns of attendance, overseeing referrals to the Local Authority where persistent absence may indicate safeguarding concerns, and ensuring compliance with *KCSIE 2025* and *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024*.

The school will provide attendance data to the Local Authority as required to support joint work in reducing persistent absence. The School is obligated to work closely with the local authority, including sharing data on individual cases

Our staff are aware that children being absent from school, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future.

3. Children Missing from Education:

3.1. Patterns of children missing education can be an indicator of either abuse, exploitation or safeguarding risks. A relatively short length of time a child is missing does not reduce the risk of harm to that child, and all absence or non-attendance should be considered with other known factors or concerns.

3.2. DSLs and staff should consider:

Missing lessons:

- Are there patterns in the lessons that are being missed? Is this more than avoidance of a subject or a teacher?
- Does the child remain on the school site or are they absent from the site?
- Is the child being sexually exploited during this time?
- Are they late because of a caring responsibility?
- Have they been directly or indirectly affected by substance misuse?
- Are other pupils routinely missing the same lessons, and does this raise other risks or concerns?
- Is the lesson being missed one that would cause bruising or injuries to become visible?

Single missing days:

- Is there a pattern in the day missed?
- Is it before or after the weekend suggesting the child is away from the area?
- Are there specific lessons or members of staff on these days?
- Is the parent informing the school of the absence on the day?
- Are missing days reported back to parents to confirm their awareness?
- Is the child being sexually exploited during this day?
- Do the parents appear to be aware?
- Are the pupil's peers making comments or suggestions as to where the pupil is at?

Continuous missing days:

- Has the school been able to make contact with the parents? Is medical evidence being provided?
- Are siblings attending school (either our or local schools)?
- Did we have any concerns about radicalisation, FGM, forced marriage, honour-based violence, sexual exploitation?

- Have we had any concerns about physical or sexual abuse?

The school will view absence as both a safeguarding issue and an educational outcomes issue. The school may take steps that could result in legal action for attendance, or a referral to children's social care, or both.

4. Children Missing from Home or Care

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care>
<http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-lobbying/children-risk/runaways>

- 4.1. Children who run away from home or from care provide a clear behavioural indication that they are either unhappy or do not feel safe in the place that they are living. Research shows that children run away from conflict or problems at home or school, neglect or abuse, or because children are being groomed by predatory individuals who seek to exploit them. Many run away on numerous occasions.

- 4.2. The association of chief police officers has provided the following definitions and guidance.

"Missing person is: 'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.'

An absent person is: 'A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.'

- 4.3. All cases classified as 'missing' by the police will receive an active police response – such as deployment of police officers to locate a child. Cases where the child was classified as 'absent' will be recorded by the police and risk assessed regularly but no active response will be deployed. The absent case will be resolved when a young person returns, or new information comes to light suggesting that he/she is at risk. In the latter instance, the case is upgraded to 'missing'.
- 4.4. Within any case of children who are missing both push and pull factors will need to be considered. Push factors include:
- Conflict with parents/carers; Feeling powerless;
 - Being bullied/abused; Being unhappy/not being listened to;
 - The Toxic Trio (domestic violence, mental ill-health and drug/alcohol misuse as defined by Ofsted). Working Together notes these issues rarely exist in isolation. There is a complex interaction between the three issues.
- 4.5. Pull factors include:
- Wanting to be with family/friends;
 - Drugs, money and any exchangeable item; Peer pressure
 - For those who have been trafficked into the United Kingdom as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children there will be pressure to make contact with their trafficker
- 4.6. As a school we will inform all parents of children who are absent (unless the parent has informed us). If the parent is also unaware of the location of their child, and the definition of missing is met, we will either support the parent to/directly contact the police to inform them.

5. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

<http://paceuk.info/>

- 5.1. Sexual exploitation of children is not limited by the age of consent and can occur up until the age of 18. CSE

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involves children being in situations, contexts or relationships where they (or a third person) typically receive 'something' as a result of them performing sexual activities. The 'something' can include food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, or money. Child sexual exploitation can happen via technology without the child being aware; for example, being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.

- 5.2. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. CSE can happen to a child of any age, gender, ability or social status. Often the victim of CSE is not aware that they are being exploited and do not see themselves as a victim.
- 5.3. **Characteristics of Child Sexual Exploitation and abuse:** CSE is generally planned and systematic—people do not sexually abuse children by accident, through sexual abuse can be opportunistic; grooming the child—people who abuse children take care to choose a vulnerable child and often spend time making them dependent; grooming the child's environment—abusers try to ensure that potential adult protectors (parents and other carers especially) are not suspicious of their motives.
- 5.4. **Indicators of sexual abuse:** Some of the following signs may be behavioural indicators of sexual exploitation:
- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions; who associate with other young people involved in exploitation; have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
 - children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant; who suffer from changes in emotional well-being; children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
 - children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education; staying away from certain people or avoiding being alone with someone; displaying sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age;
 - inappropriate masturbation or self-harm (including eating disorders) and an unwillingness to remove clothes when changing for PE etc.
- 5.5. Physical observations include damage to genitalia, anus or mouth; sexually transmitted diseases; unexpected pregnancy, especially in very young girls; soreness in genital area, anus or mouth and other medical problems such as chronic itching; unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain. The concerns listed are not exhaustive. Staff can and should also record and report other concerns about a child, such as general welfare concerns.
- 5.6. As a school we educate all staff in the signs and indicators of sexual exploitation. We identify pupils who are at risk and the DSL will share this information as appropriate with children's social care. We recognise that we may have information or intelligence that could be used to both protect children and prevent risk. Any relevant information that we have will be shared on the community partnership information (CPI) form.

6. Trafficked Children

- 6.1. Human trafficking is defined by the UNHCR in respect of children as a process that is a combination of:
- Movement (including within the UK);
 - For the purpose of exploitation
- 6.2. Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a victim of trafficking.
- 6.3. There is significant evidence that children (both of UK and other citizenship) are being trafficked internally within the UK, and this is regarded as a more common form of trafficking in the UK. There are a number of indicators which suggest that a child may have been trafficked into the UK and may still be controlled by the traffickers or receiving adults. These are as follows:

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- Shows signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection or has an unwanted pregnancy;
- Has a history with missing links and unexplained moves;
- Is required to earn a minimum amount of money every day; Works in various locations;
- Has limited freedom of movement; Appears to be missing for periods;
- Is known to beg for money;
- Is being cared for by adult/s who are not their parents and the quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good;
- Is one among a number of unrelated children found at one address;
- Has not been registered with or attended a GP practice; Is excessively afraid of being deported.

6.4. For those children who are internally trafficked within the UK indicators include:

- Physical symptoms (bruising indicating either physical or sexual assault);
- Prevalence of a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy;
- Reports from reliable sources suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation / the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation;
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse;
- Being in the community in clothing unusual for a child i.e. inappropriate for age, or borrowing clothing from older people
- Relationship with a significantly older partner;
- Accounts of social activities, expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding;
- Persistently absent, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for despite having not been at home;
- Having keys to premises other than those known about;
- Low self- image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour including cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity;
- Truancy / disengagement with education;
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links; and/or
- Possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming on-line relationships, particularly with adults.

6.5. These behaviours themselves do not indicate that a child is being trafficked but should be considered as indicators that this may be the case. If staff believe that a child is being trafficked, this will be reported to the designated safeguarding lead for referral to be considered to children's social care.

6.6. We will follow-up unexplained absences of any child with a telephone call from the school on the morning of the first day of absence (see **Attendance Policy**) and notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than one day of a child who is on a child protection plan. The DSL shall also inform the applicable Local Authority of any child who has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the Local Authority. Additionally, the DSL will notify the applicable Local Authority (within which the child resides) of any child who is going to be deleted from the admission register where the child:

- has been taken out of school by his/her parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education; has ceased to attend Saint Christina's School and no longer live within reasonable distance of Saint Christina's School;
- has been certified by a doctor as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend Saint Christina's School before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend Saint Christina's School after ceasing to be of compulsory school age;
- has been permanently excluded;
- is in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and Saint Christina's School does not reasonably believe he/she will be returning at the end of the period or, has been permanently excluded;

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- where the child fails to attend school regularly or is absent without leave for more than 10 school days (continuous);
 - when we remove or add a pupil's name to the admissions register at non-standard transitions ie where a compulsory school-aged child leaves a school before completing the school's final year or joins a school after the beginning of the school's first year
- 6.7. The applicable Local Authority must be notified as soon as the grounds for deletion are met, but no later than the time of deleting the child's name from the register. This will assist the Local Authority to fulfil its duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing in education and follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.
- 7. Children being withdrawn from school:** If a child is withdrawn from the school, all efforts will be made to identify the school to which the child is being admitted; their confidential educational and child protection records will be sent separately. If the parent/guardian/carer fails to provide information regarding the new school, an urgent referral will be made to Children's Services. Educational records sent to our school concerning a child who is not registered by the parent will be returned and the school advised to refer to their Local Authority Education Welfare Service. A child's name will only be removed from the School's Admission Register in accordance with the Child Registration Regulations. Further information is contained in our Admissions Policy.
- 7.1. We also understand our duty to provide information to the Local Authority for standard transitions if requested.
- 7.2. We also appreciate that there is an overlap with *Keeping Children Safe in Education* which recognises Children Missing Education as a safeguarding issue particularly when a child leaves with no known destination. In addition to reporting to the Westminster Local Authority we also inform the Local Authority where the child is normally resident. We also understand that our right to remove a child is also subject to the terms and conditions of our school/parent contract.
- 7.3. We recognise that from September 2016 (due to the absence of illness or unavoidable cause) that we have the right to delete a pupil for non-return within 10 school days after authorised leave of 10 school days or more, or after 20 school days unauthorised absence, but this will not be done until Saint Christina's School and the Local Authority have jointly made reasonable enquiries as to the pupil's whereabouts and failed. As such, Saint Christina's School recognises that it is a criminal offence not to report, as required.
- 8. Notifiable Incidents:** This is an incident involving the care of a child that meets any of the following criteria:
- a child has died (including cases of suspected suicide) and abuse or neglect is known or suspected;
 - a looked after child has died (including cases where abuse is **not** known or suspected);
 - a child has been seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect is known or suspected;
 - a child in a regulated setting or service has died (including cases where abuse is **not** known or suspected).

Any such incident should be reported to Northwest London Child Death Review Service (NWL CDR). Notification should be made via the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP): Telephone: 020 3350 4330 Email: CLCCG.tri-bCDOP@nhs.net

Also Ofsted and the DfE are to be informed along with the *Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences* (RIDDOR) in accordance with the regulations of 2013.

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Further information from Westminster Council and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, including their Children Missing Education policy can be found here:

<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/children-and-education/education-and-learning/children-missing-education-cme>

** Where legislation is revised or official guidance updated subsequent to the publication of this policy, this will be deemed to have immediate effect and will be applied by the school, pending formal review and redrafting of this document. Such legislation and guidance will automatically override any associated sections of this policy.*

Admissions and Access to Education Service

children missing education

**Do you know
of a child*
who you
believe is
not receiving
education?**

If so, please contact the Admissions and Access to Education Service who can offer parents and carers advice on school placements and monitor progress in placing children. The team can be contacted on 020 7745 6448

Every child has a right to an education and in this country, it is illegal for a parent/carer to fail to provide a child, of compulsory school age, with an education. Apart from the vital contribution education can make to the life chances of young people, school attendance is a unique opportunity to monitor all children and to detect early warning signs of possible difficulties or concerns, both educational and social.

- * A child is of compulsory school age from the beginning of the term immediately following their 5th birthday, when he/she should be legally receiving education.
- * A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the academic year in which the child has their 16th birthday.
- * A parent/carer can decide to educate their child at home but they should notify the local authority of their intention to enable the local authority to assess the provision and offer support as necessary.
- * The academic year runs from 1 September to 31 August.

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