



Lonsdale School

Children who are absent from School and/or REP Policy

Policy previously known as –
Pupil Whereabouts and Missing from School and/or REP (Residential
Education Provision) Policy

This overarching policy is designed to meet the needs of all pupils with the
exception of

- CLA
- Those who have had a missing episode
- Those at risk

All of whom will have an individual protocol

SLT approval:

September 2020

Next review date:

September 2024

Background

This policy and guidance sets out the framework across both the Lonsdale School and REP for ascertaining the whereabouts of pupils and the process to follow, if, pupils cannot be located and are 'missing'.

Pupils at Lonsdale School have a range of physical and neurological impairments that impact on their independence and their mobility. Pupils have a broad range of difficulties and as such Lonsdale School has a high ratio of staff to pupils. Some pupils have restricted mobility and require support with moving through the school, others have independently powered wheelchairs and can move around the school freely.

A key approach to ensuring that pupils do not 'go missing' is to provide a supportive and nurturing environment that ensures that pupils always approach staff if they have concerns or difficulties (in school or at home) and share these with staff rather than disengage or leave the school buildings and grounds if they are experiencing distress. However, it is also acknowledged that pupils will not always share difficulties and problems with school staff and may 'go missing' as a result of bullying and incidents that school staff may not always be aware of (either at home or school).

Where school staff are aware that a pupil is experiencing distress or difficulties, increased nurture support, supervision and monitoring may take place to preempt a 'missing' episode.

Pupils are encouraged to participate in a range of activities, which may include preparation for independence and life skills tasks that require pupils to leave the school's premises and grounds. In all situations where a pupil will leave the school site (accompanied or unaccompanied) a risk assessment will take place which will include consideration of the likelihood of a pupil 'going missing'.

As part of a pupil's induction and prior to a pupil commencing attendance at Lonsdale, key personal information will be gathered from parents/carers. This will include information about what may cause distress or unsettle a pupil, how any distress may be manifested and how it could be managed or mitigated. Contact details will be gathered from all parents/carers and those with parental responsibility; this will include emergency contact information for each parent, step parent/partner and those with parental responsibility. This information will be reviewed and up-dated each term by the Admin Team, when a pupil's is approved for residential provision and if there is a change of circumstances in the pupil's family. An accurate and up-to-date photograph of each pupil will be obtained each academic year and will also be up-dated should the pupil's appearance change.

Day School

Pupils arrive between 8.45am and 9.15am. Pupils arrive on specifically commissioned school transport, or are taken to school by parents/carers. Transport providers will call at, and collect the pupil from the home. All pupils are 'welcomed' into school and a formal register is taken as pupils arrive – between 8.45am and 9.15am. The Day School Register is recorded on the School Information Management System (SIMS). A printed copy is kept in case of evacuation. School staff contact the family of any pupil who is absent without authorisation. School staff will contact the first listed parent and if unavailable, the second listed parent to ascertain the reason for the pupil's absence. Where it is not possible to contact the parent/s, staff will phone those on the pupil's emergency contacts list, if the pupil's whereabouts and/or the reason for their absence are not ascertained at the end of this process the pupil's social worker will be contacted (generally by 11.00am). At the end of this process and if the reason for the pupil's absence cannot be ascertained and their whereabouts is not confirmed (12.00pm), a member of SLT will contact the Police Missing Unit to discuss the pupil and their family's circumstances and a decision will be taken regarding reporting the pupil missing.

A Pupil Register is taken at 1.50pm and when pupils leave the school at 3.30pm, or transfer to REP.

Pupils are taught in small class groups that provide a nurturing environment with a high ratio of staff to pupils. Where pupils leave the class room to go to the toilet or collect an item the teacher or teaching assistant who agreed to the request will monitor the pupil's absence from the class. If the pupil has not returned by the designated time, or within 15 minutes of leaving the class room, a member of staff will look for the pupil and clarify if the pupil requires assistance.

If the pupil cannot be located, a search of the school premises and school grounds will be instigated. At the same time the Admin Support Staff at Marriott's School will be contacted to clarify if the pupil has been seen within Marriott's School. If the pupil has not been located within 30 minutes of the last point of contact, a member of SLT will be contacted (if not already aware of the situation) who will contact the pupils parents and a decision will be made regarding checking locations that the pupil is familiar with and/or contacting the police. The decision will be informed by the pupil's level of distress, ability and vulnerability. If a pupil has not been located within 1 hour of the last point of contact they should be reported 'missing'¹.

Lunchtime

Primary and secondary age pupils eat together in the dining room with a high ratio of staff support. This comprises of Teaching, Support staff and specialist Midday Supervisory Assistants. The number of staff required is determined by a termly rota and an assessment of individual pupil needs. This is assessed on a daily basis. Staff absence will be taken into consideration and adequate oversight measures put in place.

Lunchtime Play and Social Time

The majority of pupils participate in activities on either the primary or main playgrounds, whilst others attend lunchtime clubs eg: drama, cooking and music. The number of staff required is determined by a termly rota and an assessment of individual pupil needs. This is assessed on a daily basis. Staff absence will be taken into consideration and adequate oversight measures put in place.

Ascertaining a Pupils Whereabouts

A log of all actions (including phone calls/discussions) undertaken in connection with and to ascertain the whereabouts of the pupil should be recorded, see appendix 1.

Where a 'missing' incident has occurred school staff will ascertain the reason for the absence and address the course. Where a 'missing' episode has resulted in a pupil leaving the school site the pupil will be offered an opportunity to discuss/explore the issue with an independent person and in line with the Hertfordshire Missing from Home and Care Policy. The return interview should be recorded on the Hertfordshire Children's Services – Return Interview Form.

Where pupils are returned home on commissioned transport the pupil is transferred into the care of a parent/carer. If there is no one (suitable) present at home, the pupil is returned to school and attempts will be made to contact the parent/s or carers. Depending on the circumstances and situation, the pupil's social worker may be contacted.

REP

Pupils (who are scheduled to use REP) transfer from Lonsdale Day School to Lonsdale REP at 3.30pm. A printed copy of the Day School SIMS Register of attendance/absence is given to the REP Manager and a check is made with the Nursing Staff regarding any health issues and whether any pupil due to stay in REP that night has returned home. A register is then produced and taken of the pupils who will be staying in REP that night. A register is taken and kept in case of evacuation.

A tea time register is taken at 5.00pm; a home work register is taken at 6.30pm, a supper time register is taken at 8.00pm, followed by a bed time register which is taken at 9.00pm. A night register is taken by the night staff at 10.00pm, each pupil has a written individual handover summary produced by the night staff which is shared with the day staff at 7.00am.

Where a pupil is not present at the point of the register being taken (or at any set 'check-in time') a member of SLT will be informed and a check of the residential provision will be undertaken, if the pupil cannot be located a search of the residential provision, the school buildings and the school grounds will be instigated in that order. If, after this process, which should take 15 minutes to 30 minutes, the pupil cannot be located, a member of the SLT will contact the parents/carers. A search will be made of any location that the pupil may know and may have gone to. A decision will also be made at the 30 minute point regarding contacting

¹ The Police categorise reports of young people that have gone missing in two ways – Missing or Absent. The Absent category should only be used when a young person is not in a place where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk.

NOTE: If someone is Absent there is no police response.

the police and reporting the pupil missing. The decision to report a pupil missing at this point will depend on the time of day and year, the weather, the vulnerability and ability of the pupil and any knowledge available of any factor thought to have caused the pupil's absence. If a pupil cannot be located within 1 hour (as a maximum) of last being seen, they should be reported missing and the Police Missing Persons Unit informed.

Information to be Made Available

When reporting the matter to the Police, the following information should be made available.

- Description of child
- A recent photograph (Care Plan)
- When pupil was last seen and with whom
- Who has parental responsibility
- Family addresses
- Any known acquaintances
- Any previous history of going missing/absconding and information about where they were found
- Circumstances which increase the risk to pupil should be drawn to the attention of the Police, including any relevant medical needs

Lonsdale REP is based around four 'flats'. Each 'flat' has a number of responsible staff who provide key support for the pupil's resident in that 'flat' and general support to all pupils using REP. All staff are aware of all the individual pupils who are staying in REP on any given night.

In circumstances where pupils are undertaking an evening activity without a member of staff a time will be set when the activity should finish. Staff members should ensure the whereabouts of each pupil undertaking the activity at the given end point.

Night staff check on pupils every 15 minutes throughout the night and a register of each check on each pupil is taken.

Wherever a pupil cannot be located and their whereabouts ascertained, every effort will be made to locate them. The decision to report the pupil missing immediately or search the school to find the pupil and then report them missing if not found, will be based on an assessment of the pupils vulnerability, level of needs, ability and disability, medical needs and specific circumstances and giving consideration to the time of day, year and weather. Where a pupil cannot be located they should always be reported missing within an hour (maximum) of the last 'check-in' point or last being seen.

A log of all actions (including phone calls/discussions) undertaken in connection with and to ascertain the whereabouts of the pupil should be recorded².

Planning for Return

If a pupil's absence continues beyond an hour and after they have been reported missing contingency plans for when a pupil is located should be implemented. These should include:

- Informing and liaising with the family and carers;
- Will the pupil return to school or home;
- How will he/she be conveyed there;
- Do the Police wish to interview the child before he/she is returned to his/her parents/placement?
- Who will be an appropriate and/or 'independent person' to talk with the pupil after his/her return?

This planning should also involve liaison with Children's Services and the pupil's family.

² Use Appendix 1

Following Location and Return

On a pupil's return, their medical condition should be assessed by the nurses and appropriate treatment and advice given (if required). Further medical attention may be needed.

Parents, Police and Children's Services staff and all others informed of the absence should be advised of the pupil's return without delay.

Pupils who 'go missing' from the residential provision will always be offered a return interview, this should be recorded on the Hertfordshire Children's Services – Return Interview Form.

RECORD OF ACTIONS TAKEN WHERE A PUPIL IS DEEMED MISSING			
Date/ Time	Action taken	Who by	Comments