



Missing Student Policy



Document History

| Version | Comments/Amendments | Name | Date |
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| 1 | First Issue | Chris Kelly | 22/04/2025 |
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1. Introduction

Oaktree Education Services College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all our students, many of whom have experienced significant challenges including Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), and the effects of trauma. All staff are trained in trauma-informed principles and respond to students in a way that promotes emotional regulation and psychological safety.

This policy outlines the procedures to be followed when a student is identified as missing from education, either during the college day or while off-site under college supervision. It recognises that our students' needs, behaviours, and risks are highly individual and may necessitate a flexible and responsive approach.

This policy complies with:

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) – most recent version
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- Ofsted School Inspection Handbook – Independent Schools
- DfE Guidance on Attendance, Behaviour and Safeguarding in SEND settings

2. Definition of a Missing Student

A student will be considered missing if their whereabouts cannot be established and the circumstances are out of character, raise concern for their safety, or present a safeguarding risk.

This includes:

- A student not arriving at college without prior notice or contact
- A student absent from their timetabled session without permission
- A student leaving the site or an off-site activity without authorisation or supervision

3. Principles and Contextual Safeguarding

All students at Oaktree Education Services College have an individual risk assessment. These include RAG-rated (Red/Amber/Green) risk levels for:

- Absconding or missing behaviour
- Known vulnerabilities
- Mental health needs
- Triggers for dysregulation

These risk assessments inform the college's response to any missing incident, ensuring that actions taken are proportionate, trauma-informed and prioritise the student's wellbeing.

Staff recognise that absence may indicate emotional dysregulation, a safeguarding concern, or a breakdown in trust. Each situation is handled without blame and with an awareness of the barriers and lived experiences that may influence behaviour.

4. Procedure When a Student Is Identified as Missing

4.1 Immediate Actions by Staff

- Notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL immediately
- Check the student's timetable, risk assessment and recent behaviour for context
- Conduct a search of the site, including toilets, communal spaces and calm rooms
- Ask peers and staff if the student has shared intentions to leave or concerns

4.2 Escalation and Contact

If the student is not found within 10 minutes:

- DSL (or SLT member) to review risk level using the student's individual risk assessment
- Contact parents/carers to inform them and ask if the student has returned home
- If the student is assessed as Red-risk, or there are concerns for immediate safety, contact the police via 999

- If the risk is Amber, and student has been missing more than 30 minutes, consider 101 or police safeguarding unit
- If Green-risk, monitor, contact home and await further information unless escalation is necessary

4.3 Off-site Situations

When a student goes missing during off-site provision:

- The member of staff in charge must notify college leadership and follow the steps above
- Do not attempt to physically restrain or chase a student unless there is immediate risk to life
- Ensure the safety of the wider group before pursuing missing individual

4.4 Once the Student Is Found

- Greet with calm, non-punitive language
- Complete a welfare check
- Allow time for regulation in a safe space
- Complete a Return to College Conversation, which includes:
 - Student voice on why they left
 - Identification of any unmet need or trigger
 - Review of risk assessment and support plan
- Consider whether any external referrals (e.g. CAMHS, social care) are required

5. Recording and Monitoring

- All missing incidents must be recorded on the college safeguarding system
- DSL to review trends and patterns as part of safeguarding oversight
- Risk assessments and support plans must be reviewed after any incident

6. Roles and Responsibilities

- All staff must remain vigilant, act promptly and record concerns accurately
- DSL/Deputy DSL coordinates safeguarding response and external reporting
- SLT monitors patterns and ensures policies are consistently followed
- Parents/Carers are partners in communication and post-incident planning

7. Policy Review

- This policy will be reviewed **annually** (or sooner, if required by legislative changes or significant developments in best practice).
- The review process will involve **teaching staff, support staff, senior leaders, and governors**, alongside student representatives (where appropriate).

Approval and Signature

- **Principle of Head of College:**
Chris Kelly, 22/04/2025
- **Chair of Governors/Trust Board:**
Name, Signature, Date