



MacIntyre Academies

Discovery Academy

Missing Child Policy

Version	Purpose/Change	Responsibility	Date
3	Updated from Executive Principal and Head of School to Principal Updated use of 'learner' to child or pupil respectively	Principal	March 2025

Person Responsible:	Principal
Type of Policy	Statutory
Date of first draft:	August 2021
Date of staff consultation:	September 2021
Date approved by LAB:	September 2021
Date of implementation:	September 2021
Date reviewed:	March 2025
Date of next review:	March 2027

Missing Child Policy

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1. Introduction

Discovery Academy, as part of MacIntyre Academies Trust, is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all pupils. The safety and welfare of our pupils is of the utmost importance. All staff should be aware of their responsibilities regarding pupil safety, including what to do if a pupil is absent from school for a period of time, if a pupil goes missing from Academy supervision or when a 'collected pupil' is not collected from school by their designated person or refuses to leave the site at the end of the day. This policy is so named to capture this duty in the context of our pupils.

This policy lays out the procedures that should be followed in the event of either occurrence.

This policy applies to all Discovery Academy pupils.

2. Responsibilities

Local Advisory Board (LAB)

- Monitor updated policies on a regular basis and receive termly reports on safeguarding that include any high-level missing pupil/vulnerable adult incidents within Discovery Academy.

The Group Director/CEO:

- Hold the Executive Leader of Education and Care and Principal to account in applying the policy and safeguarding children.

Principal:

- Ensure all staff within the Academy are aware of this policy and understand the procedure to be followed in the event of a missing pupil.
- Review any incidence of missing pupils to ensure that the Academy takes forward any lessons learned and continues to operate best practice.

Discovery Academy Senior Leadership Team:

- Ensure that this policy and related procedures are regularly reviewed and updated in line with government guidance and other best practice.
- Monitor incidences of missing pupils within Discovery Academy and provide termly reports to the LAB.
- In the absence of the Principal ensure the policy is applied and quick decisions are made to safeguard children.

All Staff:

- All staff must ensure they are familiar with this policy and adhere to all related policies and procedures, especially, but not exclusively, those relating to pupil protection, safeguarding, Risk Assessment, Health & Safety and Educational Visits & Learning outside the Classroom. All staff must ensure that attendance registers are completed accurately and promptly according to guidelines, and return attendance registers to the Academy office promptly each day or complete on designated system available, as appropriate.

Third Party Provider (Including an Alternative Provider or Work Experience):

- Inform the school immediately if a child does not attend their provision as expected and without explanation.

Parents/carers:

- Keep the Academy updated with information about a child who is unwell or otherwise unable to attend school on the first day of absence and each day thereafter.
- Allow appointed staff in person access to check on the wellbeing of pupils missing from school, regardless of the reason, so that the school can carry out its duty.
- Ensure that the Academy holds up to date contact information for at least two responsible adults, including named emergency contacts in the event that parents/carers are not available.
- Know the procedure for handover and collection of pupils where relevant, particularly where there may be safeguarding issues or concerns, including parental responsibility.
- Sign pupils out of school at the Academy office when collecting them during the school day.

3. Missing Child**3.1 Procedures aimed at reducing risk of a missing pupil**

It is important to note that pupils attending Discovery Academy are aged between 9 and 19 years and have additional needs associated with an autistic spectrum condition (ASC) or social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties. Some pupils attend school using LA transport or are brought to and from school by parents/carers; a smaller number are independent travellers. Pupils also experience time in the community, attending a wide variety of work experience, enrichment and learning opportunities.

This policy therefore seeks to set out the general principles and procedures that should be followed whenever Discovery Academy staff suspect a pupil may be considered missing, Such situations might include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to arrive for a scheduled school day or session, whether on Academy premises or in the community such as Alternative Provision.
- Absconding from a scheduled school day or session, whether on Academy premises or in the community
- Becoming lost while out in the community e.g. through separation from Academy staff and peers
- Prolonged absence from school without reasonable explanation and contact with the Academy

Everyday measures that Discovery Academy takes to safeguard pupils include:

- If a pupil is absent and no notification of absence has been received by the Academy, class staff will contact (or arrange for contact to be made with) the named contact/s on the pupil's file to ascertain their whereabouts as soon as possible on the first day of absence.
- The Academy will ensure parents/carers are fully aware of the points at which responsibility for the care of the pupil passes from staff to them and vice versa.
- Clear procedures are in place for welcoming pupils into Discovery Academy, including signing in and out and where needed escorting pupils to classrooms.
- Teaching and support staff supervise closely or at distance to ensure that pupils go to the relevant classroom or appropriately allocated area.
- Staff mark registers promptly and accurately morning and afternoon.

- If pupils leave the classroom to work in other parts of the school, the class teacher must ensure that a suitable level of supervision, as appropriate, is maintained at all times and that all pupils are accounted for on return to the classroom.
- Pupils who travel to and from school using LA transport are escorted by appropriate named staff onto their bus or taxi unless otherwise agreed by parents/carers. A formalised system of checking pupils onto their transport is in place.
- Thorough risk assessments and adequate staff/pupil ratios/staff expertise are provided when pupils leave the Academy premises for educational visits or learning outside the classroom.
- Where pupils do not have capacity to consent, permission from parents/carers for educational trips should be obtained generically at the beginning of each academic year and specifically for each trip where that visit is not covered in global permissions
- School mobile phones are taken on every visit. The offsite risk assessment clearly records the contact numbers of mobile phones taken on the trip.

3.2 Procedure to be followed in the event of a pupil going missing on or from the Academy premises

1. If a teacher, TA or other key adult (for example, therapist or lunchtime supervisor) suspects that a pupil is missing from a lesson or activity, they must contact the nearest member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the Principal and office staff immediately. Following an assessment of the circumstances, a senior staff member will coordinate, where necessary, an initial search of the building, including classrooms, toilets, storage areas, communal areas, resource rooms, outside areas and Academy grounds.
2. The following lists should be held in the school office and/or electronically and will be checked:
 - Attendance registers
 - Offsite record (trips and visits)
 - Lists of those attending other provisions (e.g. work placements or other alternative provision)
3. Staff will count and name check all the pupils present against the register.
4. A thorough check of all exits will be made, to ascertain if all relevant gates/doors were secure and there are no other ways a pupil could have left the premises. If something is discovered, this needs to be drawn to the attention of senior staff immediately. Where it is in use CCTV should be quickly reviewed by a staff member with quick access e.g. facilities manager or pastoral team.
5. Senior staff will conduct a 'dynamic' risk assessment to establish whether, and when, parents/carers should be notified at the time. The Principal or next most senior member of staff on site will decide at which point the police need to be contacted, if necessary. The Appendix 2 flowchart will inform this decision, please refer to it.
6. Staff must try to remember and write down a description of what the pupil was wearing and any distinguishing features. A recent photo of the pupil, for example their ID photo, will be provided to those searching where this is necessary.
7. Any specific special medical or learning needs relating to the missing pupil should be disclosed to police or other agencies as appropriate.
8. Senior staff will speak to all staff members and if relevant pupils who have had contact with the missing pupil that day, in order to try and build up a clear picture of the pupil's movements.

3.3 Additional procedures in the event of a pupil going missing while off Academy premises:

On arrival at a location a meeting point should always be established for the group in case a child becomes lost or detached from the group or peers.

1. The teacher or the allocated group leader must ensure the safety of remaining pupils. At least one member of Academy staff must stay with them, which will be informed by a dynamic risk assessment. The teacher or allocated group leader must make a professional judgement at the time with respect to the size of the pupil group, the needs of that group and the available staff: pupil ratios.
2. One or more staff members should immediately start searching for the pupil.
3. If the place/venue has a loudspeaker system a call should be requested to ask the pupil to return to a muster/meeting point
4. Senior staff, including the Principal and/or next most senior staff member, and Designated Safeguarding Lead must be contacted immediately.
5. If the pupil is not found promptly, the teacher must contact police by telephoning 999 (Please refer to appendix 2 for further guidance) Where they have done so, the teacher or allocated group leader should alert the Academy that the police have been contacted and the Academy will make arrangements to notify parents/carers, after which the procedures described above will be followed.

4. Pupil not collected

This procedure outlines what should happen when a 'collected pupil' i.e. one who is collected from school by a parent, carer or designated adult, is not collected. The guiding principle in dealing with any situation of this type must be to minimise distress to the pupil and for him or her to remain in familiar surroundings and/or with familiar people for as long as possible.

The Academy will ensure that it is aware of all pupils who are collected by a parent, carer or designated adult, if they are not collected by LA transport and do not travel to and from school independently.

The following general principles should be adhered to by all parties:

- Parents/carers who know they are going to be late must inform the main office in advance.
- On occasions when a pupil is due to be collected by someone other than their parent/carers or normally authorised person (e.g. when all of the above are unexpectedly unavailable), parents/carers must advise how to verify the identity of the person who is to collect the pupil. This will normally be through the use of a pre-determined password if the adult is not known to the school.

In the event of a 'collected pupil' not being collected at the end of the day, the following procedures will be activated:

- If a provided Taxi fails to arrive, this will be escalated to the Special Needs Transport Provider/manager for the child's local authority and family will be kept updated.
- If a pupil is not collected promptly by a family member without explanation, and regardless, if that time exceeds 15 minutes, a member of staff will call the parent/carers or designated adult and use any other emergency contact details available in order to determine the nature and length of delay in collection. If contacts go to voicemail/ answerphone, staff members should leave messages giving their name and the Academy telephone number and requesting a prompt return call. If the taxi is late and a pupil will not arrive at home at the normal time the school will contact home to make them aware of the situation

- If there is a known risk around the collecting adult e.g. risk of mental health crisis or self-harm the Academy will inform the front door service and request a safe and well check immediately.
- While waiting to be collected, the pupil will be supervised by a member of staff who will offer them as much support and reassurance as is necessary.
- Pupils awaiting collection will be taken to the school Hall (or other safe place) where they will be supervised by Academy staff.
- If a pupil has not been collected within the 30 minutes following agreed collection time (without explanation or contact), the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed and a decision taken as to whether an advice call to Social Services needs to be called where the child has an allocated worker.
- If all attempts within this period to contact a parent/carer, designated person or emergency contact fail then the DSL or other senior staff member should inform the Integrated front door services /allocated social worker of the situation without delay and ask that arrangements are made for the child as soon as possible, to avoid undue distress.
- The duty social worker should take ownership of the situation and decide what happens next, including whether the police need to be involved in helping to trace the parent/carer of the pupil. The pupil will not leave the premises with anyone other than those named on the Registration Form or in their file, unless alternative arrangements have been made and a pre-determined password is in place or unless Social Care or the Police direct the school to hand the child to an agreed adult.
- The Academy will ensure that there are at least two members of staff present whilst waiting for the parent/carer to collect the pupil in order to safeguard the child and staff.
- Under normal circumstances, staff should not look for the parent/carer or take the pupil home. In exceptional circumstances, if the parent/carer or responsible adult has been contacted but is unable, for a given and accepted reason, to come to the school, the school may escort the pupil home with that parent/carer or responsible adult's permission. Where this does occur, this must occur in line with the MAT Driving at Work Policy.
- In the event that transporting the pupil somewhere is agreed to be necessary, this must be in line with the MAT Driving at Work Policy.
- Continual incidents of late collection will be recorded and discussed with parents/carers at the earliest opportunity and should be reported to the Front Door or allocated worker if they cause concern.

In an extremely rare event a child or young person maybe transported in a staff members car, with a minimum of two staff members present for the entirety of the journey. Where this may (rarely) occur, it must be with the prior permission of the Executive Principal and in each instance, this must be reported to the Group Director.

5. If a Child refuses to go home from school:

A child may refuse to go home for a number of reasons, including but not limited to:

- A safeguarding issue they are worried about in the home or community
- Worries about consequences at home due to an incident at home or school.
- In the case of a child on the Autism Spectrum, they may be struggling to transition for a reason they may or may not be able to communicate.
- There may have been a point of conflict in the day the child is struggling to leave unresolved – it is help for check this with class staff.
- If in a shared vehicle the child may have a concern about another traveller – this should be checked.

In response we may need to consider:

- If the child is on the Autism Spectrum it is important to check their transition home was supported in line with their personal plan as this may have impacted on their ability to travel

home. If this is the case, go back and start their transition routine again with them. If not please follow the steps below.

- A DSL should speak to the child to ascertain the reason and ensure it is not related to a safeguarding issue (if it is the DSL should enact the safeguarding policy immediately and seek advice from the front door, allocated worker or duty team).
- If it is not the above trusted staff should encourage the child to go home in their transport and make arrangements to check on them later by telephone and check in with them in the morning after an evening at home.
- If the child still refuses to leave with a parent we should encourage the parent to wait.
- If the child refuses to get into a taxi, the taxi leaves and we have been assured there is no safeguarding concern at home, we should inform parents asap, check there are not issues we need to talk through with the child and ask them to make arrangements to collect the child.
- If the family cannot make arrangements to collect, or refuse or the child still refuses to go home the most senior member of staff present will make the decision to call the front door, allocated worker or duty team to report the issue and ask for support. The senior person may need to clearly state what support is needed and by when e.g. Can you please arrange for someone to come and speak to the child and arrange for their transport and care this evening as we only have staff available until x pm.

6. Pupils who do not attend school for a prolonged period of time

Where pupils are absent for a period of time:

Parents/Carers must:

- Call the school on each day of absence and provide a doctor's note/evidence of seeking medical advice where absence is over 5 day, unless the child has a known long term or critical health issue e.g. recovering from surgery.
- Make every attempt to support their child to attend school every day when they are well.
- Inform the school if they begin to spot early warning signs of school refusal or absence that might manifest as low mood or other anxiety-based behaviour so that early help can be initiated.

The academy will:

- Monitor patterns of absence for all children and agree thresholds of response for absent pupils based on their circumstance and history.
- Maintain close contact with families to check on the progress of pupils who need to return to school.
- Ensure that a DSL or other named colleague carries out a safe and well check within every 10 school days to ensure the pupil is safe and does not show signs of abuse or neglect.
- Wherever possible safe and well checks should be done in person, but where this is not possible e.g. risk of communicable disease, this should be done virtually to ensure that the child is seen on screen wherever possible and school should consider providing a device for this purpose if a significant absence is expected.
- Refer to third party organisations persistent issues of concern around attendance
- Immediately refer any case to the integrated front door or allocated worker, if there is any concern or suggestion of abuse or neglect for a child not attending and follow the safeguarding policy in this regard.
- Follow the Warwickshire 'Children Missing Education Protocol for Warwickshire Pupils' (appendix 1)

7. Related Policies and Procedures:

- Discovery Safeguarding Policy

- Discovery Health & Safety Policy
- Discovery Risk Assessment Policy
- Discovery Off-site Visits Policy
- MAT Driving at Work Policy

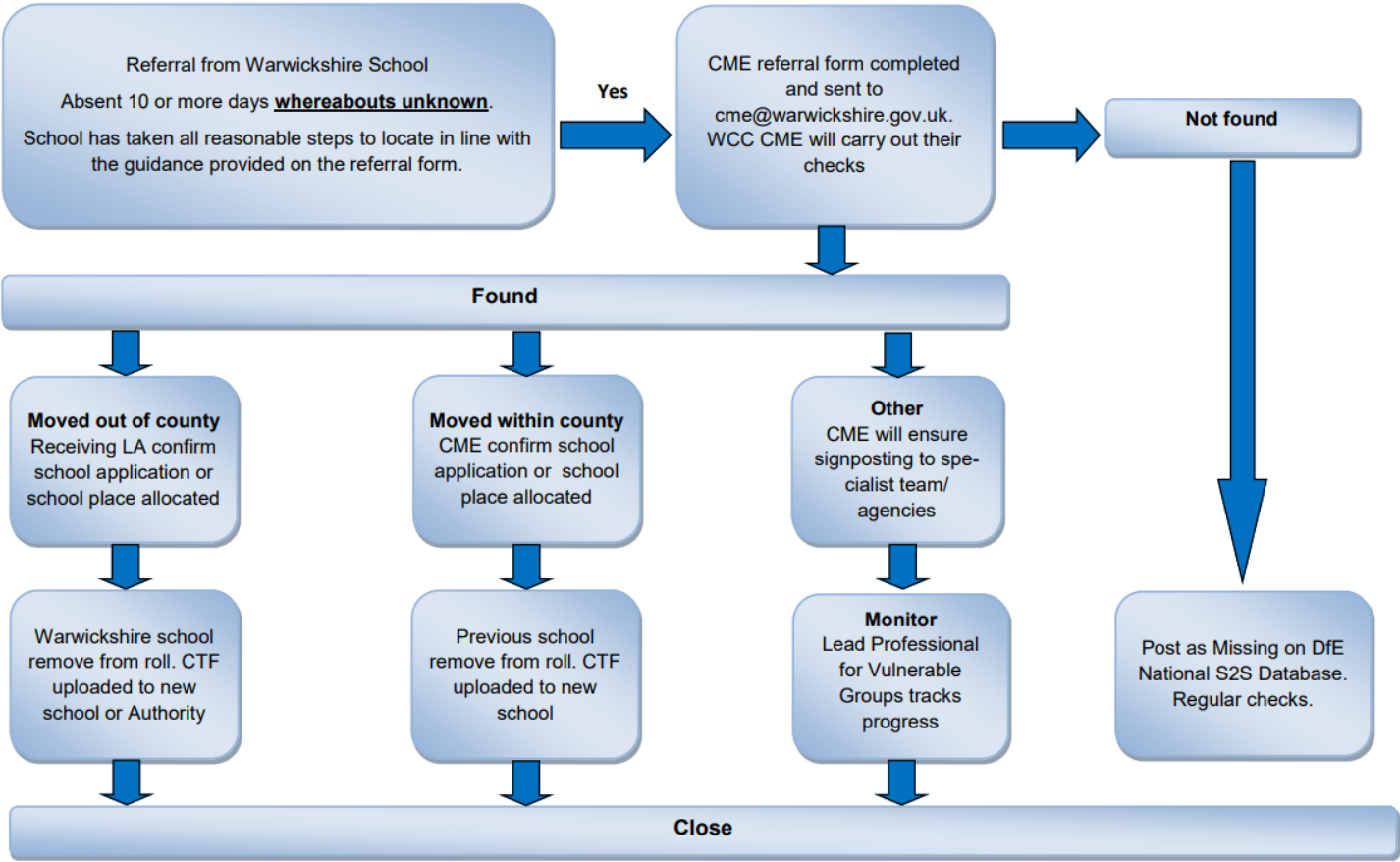
8. Changes at previous review

Version	Purpose/Change	Responsibility	Date
2	New section added: (6) If a child refuses to go home Roles updated throughout Updated to align to MAT Driving at Work Policy throughout	Executive Principal	November 2022

Appendix 1 – Warwickshire Child Missing in Education Protocol

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrenmissingeducation T. 01926 736323

Children Missing Education Protocol for Warwickshire Pupils



Please Note: Where it is identified that a child may have been off rolled, the previous school will be required to place this child back onto their roll immediately.

Appendix 2 – Academy Escalation Protocol for a Missing Child during the school day

