Missing Child Procedure

Purpose

This procedure outlines the immediate response required if a pupil becomes missing or unaccounted for while under the supervision of TAO Independent School, whether on the school site, during outdoor learning, educational visits or other off-site activities. Given the needs of our pupils and the environments in which we operate, all actions prioritise the immediate safety and swift recovery of the child

This procedure relates to a pupil who becomes missing or unaccounted for while under the School's supervision. Concerns regarding unexplained absence from school, a pupil whose whereabouts are unknown, or a child who may be missing education are managed through the Attendance & Punctuality Policy and the School's safeguarding procedures, including liaison with the relevant Local Authority where required.

Stage 1: Immediate Actions

- **Conduct an Immediate Headcount:**
  - Check that all pupils and staff are accounted for.
  - Immediately consider the pupil's age, SEND, known vulnerabilities, behaviour, emotional state, terrain, weather, proximity to roads, water, cliffs or other hazards, and any known risk of self-harm, exploitation or absconding.
- **Call the Child's Name & Conduct a Local Search:**
  - Look in the immediate surroundings, checking likely hiding places.
  - Use whistles or pre-agreed signals to call the child.
  - Where staffing and risk allow, one staff member remains responsible for the other pupils while another conducts an immediate local search. Staff must not create additional risk by leaving pupils inadequately supervised
- **Establish Time Last Seen & Direction of Travel:**
  - Ask pupils and staff for the last confirmed sighting.
  - Note what the child was wearing and any distinguishing features.

  -Escalate immediately to Stage 2 where the pupil's vulnerability, environment, known risks or circumstances indicate that delay would be unsafe. Where immediate risk is not indicated, Stage 1 actions should be completed without unnecessary delay before escalation.

Stage 2: Extended Search & Emergency Activation

- Alert the Headteacher/DSL immediately. If the DSL is unavailable, alert the SENDCo/DDSL. The Proprietor must be informed of any serious or high-risk missing pupil incident
- Provide the child's details, last seen location, and any vulnerabilities.
- Maintain safe supervision of all remaining pupils. Any search must be coordinated, proportionate and appropriate to the environment, with staff avoiding actions that create additional risk.
- Use available communication systems, including radios, phones, whistles or agreed emergency signals, and maintain contact between staff where practicable.
- Immediately identify and prioritise any high-risk areas relevant to the location, including roads, water, cliffs, steep ground, woodland, caves, buildings, transport routes or other hazards.

Emergency services must be contacted without delay where the pupil's vulnerability, location, behaviour, environmental conditions or other circumstances indicate immediate or significant risk. Staff must not wait for a fixed period before calling 999 where earlier police or emergency-service involvement is necessary.

Stage 3: Emergency Services & Family Notification

- Call 999 where required and provide the pupil's name, age, description, last known location, relevant SEND or medical vulnerabilities, known risks, clothing, direction of travel and precise location or GPS coordinates/OS grid ref/ What three words where available.
- Contact parents/carers as soon as appropriate, unless doing so would increase safeguarding risk or conflict with police or safeguarding advice.
- Follow police instructions and assist search teams.
- Where the incident gives rise to wider safeguarding concerns, including exploitation, self-harm, domestic abuse, criminal involvement or concerns about a person responsible for the pupil, the DSL will follow the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and make any required referral to Children's Social Care, Police, LADO or other relevant agency.

Recovery & Follow-Up Actions

- Conduct an immediate welfare check, assess for injury, distress, medical need and safeguarding concerns, and provide appropriate first aid or emergency support where required.
- Support the pupil using calm, trauma-informed and non-punitive practice. The immediate focus is safety, regulation and understanding what happened.

- Inform parents/carers and any involved emergency or safeguarding agencies that the pupil has been located, subject to any specific safeguarding or police instructions**.**
- Complete the School's incident and safeguarding records promptly, including the circumstances, timeline, actions taken, agencies contacted and outcome.
- Debrief relevant staff and pupils where appropriate, identify any immediate support needs and consider whether supervision, pastoral support or further safeguarding action is required.

All missing pupil incidents must be reported to the DSL immediately and recorded as soon as practicable after the pupil has been located and immediate safety has been secured.

Preventative Measures

- Pre-activity briefings on boundaries, meeting points, and emergency signals.
- Identify pupils whose SEND, communication needs, trauma history, emotional state, known behaviours or other vulnerabilities may increase the risk of becoming missing or leaving supervision.
- Use appropriate headcounts, supervision checks and agreed boundaries according to the environment, activity and individual pupil risk**.**
- Use enhanced staff supervision or agreed group-management arrangements where individual risk requires it.
- Ensure staff have immediate access to emergency contacts, pupil information, communication devices and location information appropriate to the activity.

Review & Oversight

The Headteacher/DSL has operational oversight of this procedure. The Proprietor provides strategic assurance. The procedure is reviewed at least annually and following any significant missing pupil incident, serious near miss, change in statutory guidance or identified weakness in arrangements.

Legal & Statutory Framework

This protocol has been developed with reference to the following legislation and guidance:

- Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004 (as amended), where applicable
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended) – Part 3
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
- Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures
- Outdoor Education Advisors Panel (OEAP) National Guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

Linked Policies & Documents

• Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

• Attendance & Punctuality Policy

• Health & Safety Policy

• Educational Visits / Off-Site SOPs

• Behaviour Management Policy

• Individual Pupil Risk Assessments

• Emergency Response Procedures

Version Updates

Version	Date	Author	Review / Changes	Approved By
2.0	09/09/2026	Daniel Giblin	09/09/2027	Headteacher / Proprietor