MISSING CHILDREN POLICY

COPPICE PRIMARY SCHOOL

March 2022	Changes made to DH (Deputy Head)became AH (Acting Head)
November 24	No changes made
January 2025	Purpose and aims (from their class) added Walkie talkie channel changed throughout

Emergency Procedures When a Child is Discovered to be Missing
(Policy Statement)

Introduction
This policy is written and should be read in conjunction with the whole school health and safety, safeguarding of children and the Lock down policy.

Purpose and Aims of this Policy Statement
The purpose of this policy statement is to give all staff, both teaching and non- teaching, a clear understanding of how to respond and who to inform should they discover a child is missing from their class.

The aims of this policy statement are to:
- provide a clear procedure which is understood and effectively implemented by all staff,
- enable the missing child to be located as quickly as possible and given the appropriate level of safety and security consummate with the pupil's age and emotional/behavioural maturity.

Occasions when a child may go missing

Staff need to be mindful that a child can go missing at any time of the day. These times and examples of the occasions providing opportunities for a child to go missing are:-

a) ***From an indoor lesson***
This could occur when a child is allowed to leave the classroom unaccompanied by an adult and fails to return; e.g.
- to go to the toilet,
- to collect something from his/her bag in the cloakroom, - being sent to another class or teacher as a sanction,
- undertaking errands for the teacher such as taking the register to the office.

b) ***From an outdoor lesson***

This could occur when the class are outside the building with the children spread out and/or engaged in a variety of activities that make it is easy for a child to wonder away unnoticed. e.g. - during games lessons on the playground or field

- during other outdoor lessons, (e.g. measuring parts of the building) - at the beginning or end of outdoor lessons when children are getting changed or using the toilet, running and errand for the class teacher.

c) ***Travelling about the school***

This could occur when the children are spread out and beyond the teacher's direct total supervision.

e.g. - going to and from the hall or outdoors before and after a PE lesson,
- going to and from the hall before and after assembly,
- going to and from the classroom at the beginning/end of lunch/break times.

d) ***Other Times*** These include:

- at the start of the school day when children are freely moving about the grounds and building to get to their cloakroom and classroom.
- At break and lunch times.
- At the end of the school day when children and parents are freely moving about.

Upon Discovering a child is Missing .....

It is important that the person discovering a child is missing knows what to do. What action is taken depends on who discovers the child is missing. Therefore, the following action should be taken by the following personnel.

...Voluntary helpers will:
Notify immediately the class teacher. If the teacher is not available for whatever reason they must inform the classroom support staff if there is one, or, if there is not, the nearest available teacher. They should state the name of the child (if known) or a description of the child (if the child's name is not known to them), what the child was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child as directed by the class teacher or the Head teacher.

...Classroom Support Staff will:

Notify immediately the class teacher. If the teacher is not available for whatever reason they must inform the main office via the Walkie-Talkie system (Channel 12 initially then ask to switch to another agreed upon channel). They should state the name of the child and what he/she was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child.

Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the class as directed by the class teacher or the Head teacher.
[NB a member of staff must supervise the class while any search away from the class takes place. A class should never be left unattended].

...Lunchtime supervisors will:
Notify immediately a teacher, or the Head Teacher or Assistant Head (whoever is found first). They should state the name of the child (if known) or a description of the child (if the child's name is not known to them), what the child was last seen doing and where, and how long since they last saw the child. Thereafter they should assist with any organised search for the child or supervision of the rest of the children as directed by the Senior Midday Supervisor or the Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher.

...The Class Teacher will:

Notify a member of the SLT immediately so that lockdown can be put in place ensuring a child is unable to leave the premises; assist with conducting a search of the immediate surroundings as directed by either the Headteacher, Assistant Head or member of the SLT , i.e.:
Indoors - in the classroom (looking under tables, work surfaces and other possible hiding places such as cupboards), adjacent work areas and classrooms, nearby cloakrooms and toilets.
Outdoors - in the immediate area where the child was last seen including looking under bushes and up trees etc.

[NB The teacher should quickly arrange for another adult (e.g. support staff or neighbouring teacher) to supervise their class while they conduct any search away from the class for which they are responsible. A class should never be left unattended].

If this initial search does not find the child a wider search of the school buildings and grounds including searching public areas in other parts of the school e.g. library areas, toilet and cloakroom areas, corridors, hall etc. (it is not necessary at this stage to search classrooms unless they are empty). The task of undertaking this search can be done either by the teacher personally or they can delegate this to a member of the support staff depending on the teacher's knowledge of the child including their emotional and behavioural characteristics. At all times the rest of the class must be supervised by either the class teacher or a member of the support staff.

The teacher must inform the Headteacher (directly or via the school office) of the missing child and the facts surrounding the child's disappearance.

...The Headteacher will:
Take charge of the situation. If satisfied that the class is adequately supervised the Headteacher will join the teacher (and support staff if applicable) in searching the school premises for the missing child directing the teacher (and others) where to search (e.g. while she searches externally, the teacher searches internally)

Alternatively, the Headteacher may direct the teacher (or support staff) to return to their class in order to continue supervising the class and to be a familiar adult should the missing child return to their classroom. In this situation the Headteacher will continue the search alone or with other available adults.

When the Headteacher is satisfied that the child is not on the premises he will instruct the office staff to contact the child's parents and inform them of the situation and to enquire if the child has returned home.

If the child is at home the parents will be informed by telephone of the known facts surrounding the child going missing. If the child is not at home the Headteacher will, in consultation with the parents, begin a search outside of the school premises. If the parents cannot be contacted at home the Headteacher (or other adults as directed by the Headteacher) will begin a search outside of the school's immediate premises.

This may include a visit to the child's home if this is near the school. If the child is not found within 30 minutes the Head teacher (or other staff if so directed by the Headteacher) will inform the police and, as appropriate, the social services and the Chair of Governors of the child's disappearance. Thereafter the Headteacher will follow the instructions of the police regarding the continuation of the search for the child.

...The Office staff will:

Inform the Headteacher of the missing child and then await further instructions. They will not take part in the search but will instead contact the child's parents when instructed by the Headteacher to do so and inform them of the situation and enquire if the child has returned home.

They will then hand communication with the parents over to the Headteacher unless directed otherwise by the Headteacher. If the parents cannot be contacted the office staff will, if directed to do so by the Headteacher, telephone the police, social services and Chair of the school governors to inform them of the missing child and giving them such information as they may request. The school staff, including the Headteacher, will then continue the search as directed by the police and the office staff will continue to try to contact the child's parents.

Missing Children Seen Running Off the Premises

If, during the search, the missing child is seen leaving the premises, the member of staff witnessing this must inform the most senior member of staff immediately available or, if none is available, send a message to the office via walkie-talkie or a reliable messenger.

As a general rule staff should not pursue a child beyond the school boundary. Instead they should report to the Head Teacher where they last saw the child and the direction the child was heading so that this information can be communicated to the parents or police as appropriate. The member of staff should then return to their normal duties unless directed otherwise by the Head Teacher.
In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the member of staff to go beyond the school boundary, e.g. to retrieve a child who has accidentally wondered out of an open gate, or to follow/retrieve a child with special needs who has deliberately left the premises but in doing so does not understand the gravity of their action.

Staff are expected to use their professional discretion in deciding whether or not it is appropriate to go beyond the school boundary in pursuance of such children. If a child is followed beyond the school boundary the member of staff must behave in a manner that is not threatening to the child. They must not run after the child as this may cause the child to run into a dangerous situation, e.g. the child might run into a road without looking out for traffic in an attempt to evade the pursuing, running adult.

In exceptional circumstances where a child is known to be liable to run off the premises, the school may prepare and enact contingency search plans involving named staff. When enacting these plans staff should be mindful not to put themselves or the child at risk.

Investigations
When a missing child has been located and safely returned to school, the Headteacher will conduct an investigation into the circumstances of the child going missing. This is in order to identify any factors that need to be addressed by the school or communicated to the parents to prevent a recurrence of the child going missing.